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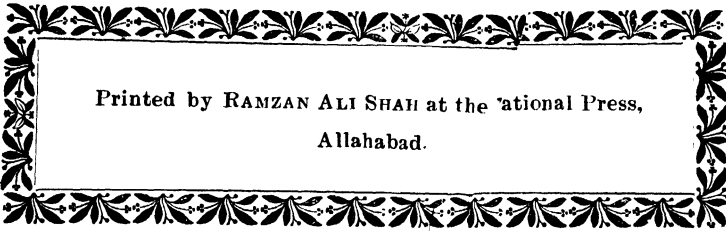
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THE CLOSTER AND THE HEARTH

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THE VICTORY SERIES FOR INDIAN STUDENTS NO. 3

THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

BY

CHARLES READE

ABRIDGED AND SIMPLIFIED

BY

J. S. ARMOUR, M. A., I. E. S.

Professor of English at Patna College, Fellow and
Lecturer of Patna University



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PREFACE

In making this abridgment of Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* the editor has kept continually before him the observation of the Calcutta University Commissioners recorded in Chapter XII, paragraph 9, of their Report, that on visiting a certain school they found "English being taught from a bad abridgment of *The Cloister and the Hearth* which omitted all the best parts of the work." It is unfortunate that the statement ends here and that as a consequence we gather no hint of the Commissioners' taste in novels generally or of the features of Reade's celebrated work which most attract them. More unfortunate still, they refrain from indicating even generally their idea of the principles that should govern abridgment. But it is clear that they demand in any popular edition of this book a very definite standard of merit which it must be the editor's aim to achieve.

It is true that an abridgment can never be completely satisfactory. Certain excisions appear injudicious, certain retentions seem unnecessary. A more serious danger is that when an inferior artist works upon a great artistic production, he evolves something proportionately inferior, as with Dryden's *Fables* from Chaucer, or, worse still, something entirely different, as with Pope's translation of Homer. The editor trusts, however, to have disarmed criticism, so far as that is possible, by retaining throughout this edition the actual words of the author and by merely pruning the luxuriance which Reade's fertile imagination and exhaustive knowledge beget. The following are typical of the excisions so made; (1) all matter that is extraneous to the story and its movement, however interesting in itself, *e.g.*, the pedantic lore of the Dusseldorf apothecary, and the hopeless love affair of Luke ;

(2) matter which is illuminating with regard to the middle ages without being particularly interesting to people who are not students of history but merely novel-readers, *e.g.*, the descriptions of Bon Bec and 15th century mendicancy, and Fra Colonna's views on comparative mythology ; (3) whatever is perhaps gruesome and repulsive rather than attractive to modern taste, *e.g.*, the fight with the " Abbot " at the inn. In addition one or two parts have been cut out with regret owing to the scope of the edition, *e.g.*, the vivid sketches of Jerome the Dominican and of the Princess Clælia. It is hoped, however, that within the prescribed limits the reader has been given a consecutive narrative in the author's own words and style throughout of the sad mediæval love-story of Gerard of Tergou and Margaret of Sevenbergen.

1st January 1922.

J. S. A.



INTRODUCTION

Charles Reade, born in 1814, was educated at Magdalen College in Oxford. He was elected a Fellow of the College in 1835, became Vice-President in 1851, and remained a Fellow until his death in 1884, although he usually resided in London. He also read for the Law and was called to the Bar in 1843. His ambitions were, however, always literary. His first play appeared in 1851 and was followed two years later by *Peg Woffington*, his first novel. Despite his success as a dramatist and the popularity of his most famous play, *The Lyons Mail*, his reputation rests chiefly upon his novels, particularly *It's Never too Late to Mend*, *Hard Cash* and *The Cloister and the Hearth*.

The Cloister and the Hearth, published in 1861, is written around a theme of perennial and universal interest, a theme immortalized by Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*, and one that has been varied by story-tellers of every age and country—the theme of ‘a pair of star-crossed lovers.’ It tells the sad love-story of Gerard of Bergou in Holland, the father of Erasmus, and Margaret, the ‘Queen of Sevenbergen.’

The setting of the story is 15th century Europe. It thus treats of the same age as George Eliot's *Romola*, Scott's *Quentin Durward* and Lytton's *Last of the Barons*. Immeasurably more than in any of these, however, we get in Reade's novel a brilliant and vivid picture of a century which was, in war, art, religion, literature, politics and society, at once the end of the old and the beginning of the new.

It was the age of the cross-bow of Denys the mercenary : of the illuminating and the calligraphy of Gerard the artist :

of the empiricism of the Dusseldorf apothecary : of the feudal absolutism of the Bastard of Burgundy : of the religious ecstacy of hermits and the frenzied zeal of itinerant preachers ; but it was also the age of gunpowder in war : of Sweynheim and Pannartz, the disciples of Fust the printer : of the medical science of Peter Brandt : of the growing power of the democratic burghers of the Rhine cities : of the critical agnosticism of Fra Colonna : and of the laxity of Roman morals which inspired Luther's denunciations and the religious cleavage of the Reformation.

Such are the materials to Reade's hand, and the methods employed by him are those which are calculated to bring home to us most surely all the varied aspects of the life and thought of this 15th century. His education, combined with his systematic pigeon-holing of every variety of information for use in writing his novels, gave him a unique command of historic resource. His imagination and inventiveness permitted him to create an inexhaustible fund of stirring incident. His dramatic training made him dexterous in devising situations, and he told his story not only with an obvious mastery over his materials and a remarkable unity of interest but also with a depth of feeling and much sympathetic insight. Here we find humour, there pathos, and even the very least of his characters are life like. A genius in story-telling, there is nothing in literature to excel Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* for the diversity and manysidedness of the life which it portrays. All the features of mediæval society, by road and river, in convent and inn, are here in the plenty which hitherto only Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* had given us. The simple love-story, 'woven through a web of many-coloured adventure,' is given a background of numberless living people.

There are faults to be found in Reade's work. He is not a master of style. We seldom pause in his chapters to admire a jewelled phrase. He lacks entirely the restraint of Stevenson and the self-effacement of Scott ; his style reveals

everywhere his striving after effect and dramatic surprise. He freely employs capital letters and italics and other mechanical devices to make his meaning clearer, and he is rhetorical, intimate and colloquial, rather than elegant. This is largely due to Reade's self-assertiveness. He has a full consciousness of his own powers: he assumes always that the reader thinks and feels with him at every point and in every turn and crisis of the story. He confides, as it were, in the ordinary reader, whose point of view he has accurately gauged, and whom he feeds with sentiment. Like Thackeray, he comes before the curtain frequently to point the moral and teach the lesson.

The two principal characters are skilfully portrayed. Margaret Brandt especially is much more than a charming heroine. In her loyalty to her father, her faith in her husband, her maternal love, her purity and innocence, and the true womanliness which combines resolution and timidity, she is a fascinating psychological study. Reade has certainly escaped the charge levelled at Scott of failing to vivify his heroes and heroines. Generally, however, he is content in his characterisation to exhibit the surface emotions, and his knowledge of humanity and his dramatic skill contribute to the success he achieves. As with Scott we often fail to get enough of his subsidiary characters. We would gladly know more of Catherine, Giles, Richart, Reicht Heynes, and, above all, Denys of Burgundy with his uplifting 'consigne.' We part with regret even from Hans Cloterman the clerk and Hans Memling the painter to whom we have been no more than introduced.

Swinburne's felicitous words may fittingly sum up what need be said about *The Cloister and the Hearth*:—"The variety of life, the vigour of action, the straightforward and easy mastery displayed at every step, in every stage of the fiction, would of themselves be enough to place *The Cloister and the Hearth* among the very greatest masterpieces of narrative; while its tender truthfulness of sympathy, its

ardour and depth of feeling, the constant sweetness of its humour, the frequent passion of its pathos, are qualities in which no other tale of adventure so stirring and incident so inexhaustible can pretend to a moment's comparison with it—unless we are foolish enough to risk a reference to the name by which no contemporary name can hope to stand higher or shine brighter, for prose or for verse, than does that of Shakespeare's greatest contemporary by the name of Shakespeare."

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THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

CHAPTER I

GERARD.

It was past the middle of the fifteenth century ; Louis XI was sovereign of France : Edward IV was wrongful king of England ; and Philip “ the Good,” reigned in Holland, where our tale begins.

Elias, and Catherine his wife, lived in the little town of Tergou. He traded in cloth, silk, brown holland, and curried leather, a material highly valued by the middling people, because it would stand twenty years’ wear, and turn an ordinary knife. The couple were well to do, and would have been free from all earthly care, but for nine children. By prudence and selfdenial they managed to clothe all the little bodies, and feed all the great mouths, and yet put by a small hoard to meet the future ; and, as it grew and grew, they felt a pleasure the miser hoarding for himself knows not.

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 ! ”

“ Mother,” said Richart gravely, but the tear was in his eye, “ it all lies in a word, and nothing can change my mind. There will be one mouth less for you to feed.”

Catherine began to cry. For she saw her first young bird on the edge of the nest trying his wings to fly into the

world Richard had a calm, strong will, and she knew he never wasted a word.

It ended as nature has willed all such discourse shall end : young Richard went to Amsterdam with a face so long and sad as it had never been seen before, and a heart like granite.

Two years passed, and he found a niche in commerce for his brother Jacob. The little coffer was empty again ; but they denied themselves the humblest luxuries, and in three years more had gleaned enough to set up their fourth son as a master-tailor, and their eldest daughter as a robe-maker in Tergou.

Here were two more provided for. Alas ! there remained on hand two that were unable to get their bread, and two that were unwilling. The unable ones were, (i) Giles, a dwarf, half stupidity, half malice, all head and claws and voice ; (ii) 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-well, too much in love with play to work ; and Cornelis, the eldest, who had made calculations, and stuck to the hearth, waiting for dead men's shoes. The anxious couple would often say, " What will become of all these when we shall be no longer here to take care of them ? " But when they had said this a good many times, suddenly the domestic horizon cleared, and then they added brightly and cheerfully, " But thanks to St. Bayon and all the saints, there's Gerard."

Young Gerard was a son apart and distinct. He was going into the Church, and the Church could always maintain her children in those days. His trivialities were reading and penmanship, and he was so wrapped up in them that the day was never long enough for him. Endured at home, his

practices were encouraged by the monks of a neighbouring convent. They had taught him penmanship, and continued to teach him until one day they discovered, in the middle of a lesson, 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? Answer me, my son." 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.

Soon after this a fellow-enthusiast came on the scene in the unwonted form of an old lady. Margaret, sister and survivor of the brothers Van Eyck, left Flanders and 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. She and Reicht soon turned him inside out like a glove: among other things, they drew from him what the good monks had failed to hit upon, the reason why he did not illuminate, *viz.*, that he could not afford the gold, the blue, and the red. 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.

Backed by an acquaintance so venerable, and strengthened by female sympathy, Gerard advanced in learning and skill. His spirits too rose visibly; likewise a gay humour, that had hitherto but peeped in him, shone out, and often he set the table in a roar, and kept it there, sometimes with his own wit, sometimes with jests which were glossy new to his family, being drawn from antiquity.

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 loved jewels like a woman, and gorgeous apparel. He had also a rage for giants, dwarfs, and Turks. For anything singularly pretty or diabolically ugly, this was your customer. The best of him was, he was openhanded to the poor; and the next best was, he fostered the arts in earnest: whereof he now gave a signal proof. He offered prizes for the best paintings on panel, silk, or metal, as the artists chose; for the best illuminating and borderpainting on glass; and for the fairest writing on vellum.

When this was cried by the bellman through the streets of Tergou, one heart beat—Gerard's. He told his family timidly he should try for two of those prizes. They stared in silence; but one horrid laugh exploded on the floor like a petard. Gerard looked down and there was the dwarf, slit and fanged from ear to ear, and laughing like a lion. Nature, relenting at having made Giles so small, had given him as a set-off the biggest voice on record. Gerard turned red with anger, the more so as the others began to titter. White Catherine saw, and said softly, "Why do you laugh? Is it because he is our brother you think he cannot be capable? Yes, Gerard, try with the rest."

When the time came, Gerard longed to go to Rotterdam 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 to his surprise he found it was addressed to the Princess Marie, at the Stadthouse in Rotterdam. So Gerard started off in his holiday suit, on his hat a purple silk ribbon knotted neatly by little Kate.

CHAPTER II

MARGARET

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 purse at his girdle was lean, the gown rusty, the fur worn, sure signs of poverty. The young woman was dressed in plain russet cloth : yet snow-white lawn covered that part of her neck the gown left visible ; and 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. Gerard's quick eye took in all this, and the old man's pallor, and the tears in the young woman's eyes. So when he had passed them a few yards, he turned back, and 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 put her arms round his neck with tender concern, but took that opportunity of whispering, " Father, a stranger—a young man !"

But it was too late. Gerard, with simplicity, and quite as a matter of course, fell to gathering sticks with great expedition. This done, he took down his wallet, out with the manchet of bread and the iron flask his careful mother had put up, and his everlasting tinder-box ; lighted a match, then

a candle-end, then the sticks; and put his iron flask on it. Then down he went on his stomach, and took a good blow: then looking up, he saw the girl looking down at him and his energy with a demure smile. He laughed back to her. "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 at some distance.

Whilst he was gone, there came by, on a mule with rich purple housings, 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. 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. He reined in his mule. "Why, Peter,—Margaret," said he, almost fiercely, "what mumfery 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, and his hand went into his purse; but it did not seem at home there: it fumbled uncertainly, afraid too large a coin might stick to a finger and come out.

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 burgomaster, he coloured all over. Ghysbrecht Van Swieten started and glared at him, and took his hand out of his purse. "Oh!" said he bitterly, "I am not wanted," and went slowly on, casting a long look of suspicion on Margaret, and hostility on Gerard, that was not very intelligible. However, there was something about it that Margaret could read only enough to blush at, and almost toss her head. Gerard only stared with surprise. "By St. Bavon, I think the old miser grudges us three our quart of

THE CLOISTER AND THE HEARTH

soup," said he. When the young man put that interpretation on Ghysbrecht's strange look, Margaret was relieved, and smiled gaily on the speaker.

Meanwhile Ghysbrecht plodded on, more wretched in his wealth than these in their poverty. And the curious thing is that the mule, the purple housings, and one-half the coin in that plethoric purse, belonged to that faded old man and that comely girl, who sat by a roadside fire to be fed by a stranger. They did not know this ; but Ghysbrecht knew it, and carried in his heart a scorpion of his own begetting—remorse.

"The soup is hot," said Gerard.

"But how are we to get it to our mouths?" inquired the senior despondingly.

"Father, the young man has brought us straws." And Margaret smiled slily.

"Ay, ay!" said the old man; "but my poor bones are stiff."

While he stated his difficulty Gerard removed it. He untied the knotted ribbon and 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.

This gave Gerard an opportunity of telling Margaret how proud his mother would be her soup had profited a man of learning.

"Ay! but," said Margaret, "it would like her ill to see her son give all and take none himself. Why brought you but two straws?"

"Fair mistress, I hoped you would let me put my lips to your straw, there being but two."

Margaret smiled and blushed. "Never beg that you may command," said she. "The straw is not mine, 'tis yours: you cut it in yonder field."

"I cut it, and that made it mine; but after that, your lip touched it, and that made it yours."

"Did it? Then I will lend it you. There—now it is yours again: *your* lip has touched it."

"No, it belongs to us both now. Let us divide it."

"By all means; you have a knife."

"No, I will not cut it—that would be unlucky. I'll bite it. There! I shall keep my half: you will burn yours, once you get home, I doubt."

"You know me not. I waste nothing. It is odds but I make a hairpin of it, or something."

This answer dashed the novice Gerard, instead of provoking him to fresh efforts, and he was silent. 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 sily eyeing his efforts for some time, offered to help him. Then a fair head, with its stately crown of auburn hair, glossy and glowing through silver, bowed sweetly towards him; and two white supple hands played delicately upon the stubborn ribbon, and moulded it with soft and airy touches. Then a heavenly thrill ran through the innocent young man, and vague glimpses of a new world of feeling and sentiment opened on him.

"There, that is how it was," said Margaret, and looking up for simple approval of her skill, received full in her eyes a longing gaze of such ardent adoration, as made her lower them quickly and colour all over. An indescribable tremor seized her, and 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 down-cast and conscious, and propped the senior along in silence.

They entered Rotterdam by the Schiedamse 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, and so, almost on entering the gate, their roads lay apart. They bade each other a friendly adieu, and Gerard dived into the great town. Soon he emerged upon a large meadow by the side of the Maas, where games of all sorts were going on ; and in due course came to the Hooch Straet which led to the Stadthouse. When he was within four yards 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.”

“ What is that to me, old man ? ”

“ If you will not let us pass in to him, at least take this leaf from my tablet to my cousin. See, I have written his name : he will come out to us.”

“ For what do you take me ? I carry no messages. I keep the gate.”

The porter then bawled, in a stentorian voice, inexorably :

“ No strangers enter here, but the competitors and their friends.”

Gerard was quick to seize the opportunity.

“ I am a competitor, sir, and these are my friends.”

“ 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.

“Open the gates, ye knaves! Way there for Gerard Eliassoen and his company.”

The gate swung open as by magic. Eight soldiers lowered their pikes half-way, and made an arch, under which the three marched in triumphant.

Once past the guarded portal, a few steps brought the trio upon a scene of Oriental luxury. Gerard and his friends stood dazzled, spell-bound. 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. The Duke pointed the newcomers out to a knot of valets. Instantly seven of his people went headlong at our friends, 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, with patties of lobster and almonds mixed, and of almonds and cream, and an immense variety of *brouets* known to us as *rissoles*. After this, twenty different tarts of fruits and herbs, and, last of all confectionery on a titanic scale.

But before our party arrived at this final stage Gerard had remembered he was the bearer of a letter to the Princess Marie, and had asked one of the servants 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. But he forbore to speak to them. 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.”

Gerard was silent all but his eyes; observing which—

“What do you admire most of all these beautiful things, Gerard?”

“You know my name? How is that?”

“White magic. I am a witch.”

“Angels are never witches. But I can’t think how you ——”

“Foolish boy! was it not cried at the gate loud enough to deave one?”

“So it was. Where is my head? 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, fairer than I could have conceived; but the fairest of all, to my eye, is your lovely hair in its silver frame, and the setting sun kissing it. It minds me of what the Vulgate praises for beauty, ‘*an apple of gold in a network of silver*,’ and oh, what a pity I did not know you before I sent in my poor endeavours at illuminating! I could illuminate so much better now. I could do everything better. 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? Oh, Gerard! I thought you were a good young man." And Margaret was shocked apparently.

Gerard tried to explain. "I am no worse than the rest; but 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. I am ungrateful to call you a stranger. Oh, how one may be mistaken! If I had known you were so bold——" And Margaret's bosom began to heave, and her cheeks were covered with blushes, and she looked towards her sleeping father, very much like a timid thing that meditates actual flight.

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. When she thought it had been there long enough, she tried gently to draw it away. He held it tight: it submitted quite patiently to force. What

is the use resisting force? She turned her head away, and her long eyelashes drooped sweetly. Gerard lost nothing by his promise. Words were not heeded here ; and silence was more eloquent.

Gerard and Margaret sat hand in hand in silence ; and Gerard's eyes sought hers lovingly : and hers now and then turned on him timidly and imploringly ; and presently two sweet unreasonable tears rolled down her cheeks, and she smiled deliciously while they were drying : yet they did not take long.

And the sun declined ; and the air cooled ; and the fountain plashed more gently ; and the pair throbbed in unison and silence, and this weary world looked heaven to them.

CHAPTER III

THE PRINCESS'S PROMISE

A grave white-haired seneschal came to their table, and 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.”

Gerard gone, William Johnson came forward, acted surprise, and claimed his relations.

He insisted on their coming home with him at once, and he would show them whether they were welcome to Rotterdam or not.

“ Who doubts it, cousin ? Who doubts it ? ” said Peter.

Margaret thanked him graciously, but demurred to go just now : said she wanted to hear the minstrels again. In about a quarter of an hour Johnson renewed his proposal. Then her real reason came out.

“ 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 secretary shall sit here and wait, and bring him on to my house.”

“ But if your young man should be thoughtless, and go play, and Gerard miss him ? ”

“He go play? He leave that spot where I put him, and bid him stay? Ho! stand forth, Hans Cloterman.”

A figure clad in black serge stood before them: a solemn precise young man, the very statue of gravity and starched propriety. At his aspect Margaret could hardly keep her countenance. But she whispered Johnson, “I would put my hand in the fire for him. We are at your command, cousin.”

Hans was then instructed to sit at the table and wait for Gerard: and Margaret, Peter, and William Johnson went away together.

“And, indeed, it is time you were abed, father, after all your travel,” said Margaret. This had been in her mind all along.

Hans Cloterman sat waiting for Gerard, solemn and business-like. He improved the time by quaffing solemnly, silently and at short intervals, 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 imbibed the notion that Creation expected Cloterman to drink the health of all good fellows. With this view he 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 face, which, in the total eclipse of reason, retained its gravity, primeness, and infallibility.

The seneschal led Gerard through several passages and introduced him into a room where three ladies sat working, and a pretty little girl tuning a lute. The ladies were richly but not showily dressed, and one turned towards Gerard with a smile, and beckoned him to come near her.

“Margaret Van Eyck is an old friend of mine, sir, and I am right glad to have a letter from her hand. She requests me to be serviceable to you. It is the first favour she has

done us the honour of asking us, and the request is sacred. 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. A benefice will do to begin your career with ; and I must take care it is not too far from— what call you the place ?”

“ Tergou, madam.”

“ Good ! You shall have a church near Tergou. Your mother will thank me. And now, sir, we must not detain you too long from those who have a better claim on your society than we have.”

Gerard bowed low to the Countess and the Princess, and backed towards the door.

“ I hope it will be a nice benefice,” said the Princess to him, with a pretty smile, as he was going out.

Gerard’s heart was warm with gratitude ; but ere he reached the banquet-ball a chill came over him. While with the Countess the excitement of so new a situation, the unlooked-for promise, the joy and pride it would cause at home, possessed him wholly ; but now it was passion’s turn to be heard again. What ! give up Margaret, whose soft hand he still felt in his, and her deep eyes in his heart ? resign her and

all the world of love and joy she had opened on him to-day ?

Being now at the entrance of the banqueting-hall, he ran hastily forward with joyful eyes. He came in sight of the table—she the 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 ran wildly round the hail, which was now comparatively empty. She was not there. He left the palace, and 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, after he had once more been through every street, 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.

It was near four o'clock in the afternoon. Catherine and her little crippled daughter had long been anxious about Gerard.

Suddenly he tottered in pale, dusty, and worn out ; and amidst uplifted hands 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. “ When they came to the writing, said he, “ 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. They thrust me forward. 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 golden angels. I had seen one before, but I never handled one. Here they are."

"Good lad ! good lad !" cried the hosier, with some emotion. "I must go and tell the neighbours. Lend me the medal."

"Stay a minute, father ; there is better news behind," said Gerard, flushing with joy at the joy he caused.

"Better ! better than this ?"

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

"Now, God bless the good lady, and bless the dame Van Eyck ! A benefice ? our son ! My cares are at an end. Eli, my good friend and master, now we two can die happy whenever our time comes. This dear boy will take our place, and none of these loved ones will want a home or a friend."

From that hour Gerard was looked upon as the stay of the family. He was a son apart. The wound love had given him throbbled duller and duller. His success and the affection and admiration of his parents made him think more highly of himself, and resent with more spirit Margaret's ingratitude and discourtesy. Now for every reason he wished to be ordained priest. 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.

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.”

“ Well, he is the burgomaster : I will go.”

CHAPTER IV

SEVENBERGEN

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 record," said he, "are crabbedly written, and the ink rusty with age." He offered Gerard the honour of transcribing them fair.

Gerard inquired what he was to be paid.

Ghysbrecht offered a sum that would have just purchased the pens, ink, and parchment.

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

"Your labour? Call you marking parchment labour? Little sweat goes to that, I trow."

"'Tis labour, and skilled labour to boot; and that is better paid in all crafts than rude labour, sweat or no sweat. 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 Gerard 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.”

“ Burgomaster,” said Gerard 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.

Half way to Sevenbergen Gerard looked into his own heart, and asked it why he was going to Sevenbergen. His heart replied without a moment’s hesitation, “ We are going out of curiosity to know why she jilted us, and to show her it has not broken our hearts, and that we don’t want her nor any of her fickle sex.”

He soon found out Peter Bandt’s cottage ; and there sat a girl in the doorway, plying her needle, and a stalwart figure leaned on a long bow and talked to her : an old soldier, whom Gerard remembered to have seen shoot at the butts with admirable force and skill. Another minute and the youth stood before them. Margaret looked up and dropped her work, and uttered a faint cry, and was white and red by turns. But these signs of emotion were swiftly dismissed, and she turned far more chill and indifferent than she would if she had not betrayed this agitation.

“ What ! is it you, Master Gerard ? What on earth brings you here, I wonder ? ”

“ I was passing by and saw you ; so I thought I would give you good day, and ask after your father.”

“ My father is well. He will be here anon.”

“ Then I may as well stay till he comes.”

“ As you will. Good Martin, step into the village and tell my father here is a friend of his.”

“ And not of yours ? ”

“ My father’s friends are mine.”

“ That is doubtful. It was not like a friend to promise to wait for me, and then make off the moment my back was turned. Cruel Margaret ! you little know how I searched the town for you ; how for want of you nothing was pleasant to me.”

“ These are idle words ; if you had desired my father’s company, or mine, you would have come back. There I had a bed laid for you, sir, at my cousin’s, and he would have made much of you, and, who knows, I might have made much of you too.”

“ Margaret, I came back the moment the Countess let me go ; but you were not there.”

“ Nay, you did not, or you had seen Hans Cloterman at our table ; we left him to bring you on.”

“ I saw no one there, but only a drunken man, that had just tumbled down.”

“ At our table ? How was he clad ? ”

“ Nay, I took little heed : in sad-coloured garb.”

At this Margaret’s face gradually warmed. She put many shrewd questions, all of which Gerard answered most loyally. Finally, the clouds cleared, and they guessed how the misunderstanding had come about. Then came mutual confessions. Neither had been happy since ; neither ever would have been happy but for this fortunate meeting.

And Gerard found a MS. Vulgate lying open on the table, and pounced upon it like a hawk. MSS. were his delight ; but before he could get to it two white hands quickly came flat upon the page, and a red face over them.

“ Nay, take away your hands, Margaret, that I may see, where you are reading, and I will read there too at home ; so shall my soul meet yours in the sacred page. You will not ? Nay, then I must kiss them away.” And he kissed them so often, that for very shame they were fain to withdraw, and, lo ! the sacred book lay open at

“ An apple of gold in a network of silver.”

“ There, now,” said she, “ I had been hunting for it ever so long, and found it but even now —and to be caught ! ” and with a touch of inconsistency she pointed it out to Gerard with her white finger.

“ Ay,” said he, “ but to-day it is all hidden in that great cap.”

“ It is a comely cap, I’m told by some.”

“ May be ; but what it hides is beautiful.”

“ It is not : it is hideous.”

“ Well, it was beautiful at Rotterdam ”

“ Ay, everything was beautiful that day ” (with a little sigh). And now Peter came in, and welcomed Gerard cordially. And Margaret disappeared ; and reappeared with her hair in her silver net, and shot a glance half arch, half coy, and glided about them, and spread supper. and beamed bright with gaiety and happiness. And in the cool evening Gerard coaxed her out on to the road to Tergou ; and there they strolled up and down, hand in hand ; and when he must go, they pledged each other never to quarrel or misunderstand one another again ; and they sealed the promise with a long loving kiss, and Gerard went home on wings.

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 ; the rest they counted and underwent.

One afternoon Catherine and her daughter were chatting together about their favourite theme, Gerard. Their good luck had come to them in the very shape they would have chosen ; besides the advantages of a benefice, there was the feminine delight at having a priest, a holy man, in their own family.

“ I feel so bright and happy, that—mother, can you keep a secret ? ”

“ Nobody better, child. Why, you know I can.”

“ Then I will show you something so beautiful. You never saw the like, I trow. Only Gerard must never know ; for sure he means to surprise us with it ; he covers it up so, and sometimes he carries it away altogether.”

Kate took her crutches, and moved slowly away. She returned with something in a cloth, uncovered it, and there was a lovely picture of the Virgin, with all her insignia, and wearing her tiara over a wealth of beautiful hair, which flowed loose over her shoulders. Catherine, at first, was struck with awe.

“ It is herself,” she cried ; “ it is the Queen of Heaven. And to think I have a son that can make the saints live again upon a piece of wood ! ”

Ere they had half done admiring it, a strange voice was heard at the door. The next moment in came 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 ! ” in a tone so expressive, that Ghysbrecht felt compelled to answer it.

“ Yes ! I own the last time I came here was not on a friendly errand. Men love their own interest—Eli’s and mine were contrary. Well, let this visit atone the last. To-day I come on your business, and none of mine. Know you that 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.

"Nay, nay!" cried Kate. "Gerard is too good to love a creature of earth. His love is for our Lady and the saints. Ah! I will show you the picture—there: if his heart was earthly, could he paint the Queen of Heaven like that—look! look!" and she held the picture out triumphantly. The burgomaster's eyes and mouth opened, and remained open.

"Why, it is herself," he gasped.

"Isn't it!" cried Kate, and her hostility was softened. "You admire it?"

"Am I in a mad-house?" said Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, thoroughly puzzled. "You show me a picture of the girl; and you say he painted it; and that is a proof he cannot love her."

"A picture of the girl?" exclaimed Kate, shocked. "Fie! this is no girl; this is our blessed Lady."

"No, no; it is Margaret Brandt."

"Oh blind! It is the Queen of Heaven."

"No; only of Sevenbergen village."

"Profane man! behold her crown!"

"Silly child! look at her hair! Would the Virgin be seen in red hair?"

At this moment an anxious face was insinuated round the edge of the open door: it was their neighbour Peter Buyskens.

"What is to do?" said he in a cautious whisper. "We can hear you all across the street. What on earth is to do?"

"Oh, neighbour! What is to do? Why, here is the burgomaster blackening our Gerard."

"Stop!" cried Van Swieten. "Peter Buyskens is come in the nick of time. He knows father and daughter both. Now, Peter, look and tell me who is that? and you be silent, women, for a moment, if you can; who is it, Peter?"

Peter Buyskens smiled. "Why, you know as well as I do; but what have they put a crown on her for? I never saw her in a crown, for my part."

"Man alive! Can't you open your great jaws, and just speak a wench's name plain out to oblige three people?"

"I'd do a great deal more to oblige one of you than that, burgomaster. If it isn't as natural as life!"

"Curse the man! he won't, he won't—curse him!"

"Why, what have I done now?"

"Oh, sir!" said little Kate, "for pity's sake tell us; are these the features of a living woman, of—of—Margaret Brandt?"

"A mirror is not truer, my little maid."

Catherine and her daughter threw their aprons over their heads, and rocked to and fro in deep distress. The next moment Elias came in from the shop, and stood aghast. Catherine, though her face was covered, knew his footstep.

"That is my poor man," she sobbed. "Tell him, for I have not the courage."

Ghysbrecht then told him all that he told the women, and showed the picture in evidence.

"Is that all?" said Eli, profoundly relieved. "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 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 ?"

"I know," said Ghysbrecht ; "he is at Sevenbergen."

Supper passed in gloomy silence. Evening descended—no Gerard ! Eight o'clock came—no Gerard ! Then the father sent all to bed, except Catherine.

"You and I will walk abroad, wife, on the road to Sevenbergen."

"Oh no ; no hasty words, father. Poor Gerard ! he never vexed you before."

"Fear me not. But is must end ; and I am not one that trusts to-morrow with to-day's work."

The old pair walked hand in hand.

"It is a many years since we walked so late, my man," said Catherine softly.

"Ay, sweetheart, more than we shall see again—(Is he never coming, I wonder ?)"

"Not since our courting days, Eli."

"No. Ay, you were a buxom lass then."

"And you were a comely lad, as ever a girl's eye stole a look at. I do suppose Gerard is with her now, as you used to be with me. Nature is strong, and the same in all our generations."

"Nay, I hope he has left her by now, confound her, or we shall be here all night."

"Eli !"

"Well, Kate ?"

"I have been happy with you, sweetheart. You won't speak harshly to the poor child ? One can be firm without being harsh."

“ Surely.”

“ Have you been happy with me, my poor Eli ? ”

“ Why, you know I have. Friends I have known, but none like thee.”

“ A heart to share joy and grief with is a great comfort to man or woman. Isn't it, Eli ? ”

“ It is so, my lass.

‘ It doth joy double,
And halveth trouble,’

runs the byword. And so I have found it, sweetheart. Ah ! here comes the young fool.”

Catherine trembled, and held her husband's hand tight. The moon was bright, but they were in the shadow of some trees, and their son did not see them. He came singing in the moonlight, and his face shining.

To-night Gerard had stayed with Margaret longer than usual, and had left for home prouder than ever of her, and happy as a prince. Some little distance from home, under the shadow of some trees, he encountered two figures : they almost barred his way.

It was his father and mother.

A chill fell on him.

He stopped and looked at them : they stood grim and silent. He stammered out some words of inquiry.

“ Why ask ? ” said his father ; “ you know why we are here.”

“ Oh, Gerard ! ” said his mother, with a voice full of reproach and yet of affection.

Gerard's heart quaked ; he was silent.

Then his father pitied his confusion, and said to him :

"Nay, you need not to hang your head. You are not the first young fool that has been caught by a red cheek and a pair of blue eyes."

'Nay, nay !' put in Catherine, "it was witchcraft ; Peter the Magician is well known for that."

"Come, Sir Priest," resumed his father, "you know you must not meddle with women folk. But give us your promise to go no more to Sevenbergen, and here all ends ; we won't be hard on you for one fault."

"I cannot promise that, father. I love Margaret ; and call me not a priest, for a priest I will never be. I will die sooner."

"That we shall see, young man. Come, gainsay me no more ; you will learn what 'tis to disrespect a father."

Gérard held his peace, and the three walked home in gloomy silence, broken only by a deep sigh or two from Catherine.

CHAPTER V

PRISON

From that hour the little house at Tergou was no longer the abode of peace. Gerard was taken to task next day, and every voice was loud against him, except little Kate's and the dwarf's who was apt to take his cue from her without knowing why.

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. 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, and not love and duty, try force, father; but force shall not serve you, for the day I see the burgomaster come for me, I leave Tergou for ever, and Holland too, and my father's house, where 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 Gerard came out of the house, his cheeks pale and his heart panting, he met Reicht Heynes: she had a message for him: Margaret Van Eyck desired to see him. He found the old lady awaiting him. She wasted no time in preliminaries.

Gerard; I look on you as my son. You are good, you are handsome, you are a painter. I will not let you throw your youth away as I did mine: you shall marry this Margaret. I have inquired, and she is a good daughter.

Reicht here is a gossip. She has told me all about it. But that need not hinder *you* to tell me."

Poor Gerard was overjoyed to be permitted to praise Margaret aloud, and to one who could understand what he loved in her.

Soon there were two pair of wet eyes over his story ; and when the poor boy saw that, there were three.

" Madam ! I sometimes think if I could but marry her secretly, and then take her away to some country where my craft is better paid than in this ; and after a year or two, when the storm had blown over, you know, could come back with money in my purse, and say, ' My dear parents, we do not seek your substance, we but ask you to love us once more as you used, and as we have never ceased to love you'—but, alas ! I shall be told these are the dreams of an inexperienced young man."

The old lady's eyes sparkled.

" It is no dream, but a piece of wonderful commonsense in a boy ; it remains to be seen whether you have spirit to carry out your own thought. There is a country, Gerard, where certain fortune awaits you at this moment. Here the arts freeze, but there they flourish."

" 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. 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."

They sat till midnight over this theme. And Gerard recovered his spirits, and seemed to carry a secret talisman against all the gibes and the harsh words that flew about his ears at home. He went to Sevenbergen earlier than usual, and told Margaret of the Dame Van Eyck's goodness, and

the resolution he had come to at last, and invited her co-operation

“She refused it plump.

“No, Gerard; you and I have never spoken of your family, but when you come to marriage—” She stopped, then began again. “I do think your father has no ill-will to me more than to another. But so long as he is bent on your being a priest I could not marry you, Gerard, dearly as I love you.”

Gerard strove in vain to shake this resolution. He found it very easy to make her cry, but impossible to make her yield. Then Gerard was impatient and unjust.

“Very well” he cried; “then you are on their side, and you will drive me to be a priest, for this must end one way or another. My parents hate me in earnest, but my lover only loves me in jest.”

And with this wild, bitter speech, he flung away home again, and left Margaret weeping

To her great surprise, scarce an hour and a half after he left her, Gerard came running back to her with the fragments of a picture in his hand, and panting with anger and grief.

“There, Margaret! see! see! the wretches! Look at their spite! They have cut your portrait to pieces.”

Margaret looked, and, sure enough, some malicious hand had cut her portrait into five pieces. She turned red to her very forehead.

“Who did it?”

“Nay, I know not. I dared not ask; for I should hate the hand that did it, ay, till my dying day. My poor Margaret! See, they have hacked through your very face; the sweet face that every one loves who knows it. Oh, heartless, merciless vipers!”

“Never mind, Gerard,” said Margaret, panting. “Since this is how they treat you for my sake—Ye rob him of my

portrait, do ye ? Well, then, he shall have the face itself, such as it is."

" Oh, Margaret ! "

" Yes, Gerard ; since they are so cruel, I will be the kinder : forgive me for refusing you. I will be your wife to-morrow, if it is your pleasure."

Gerard 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.

The next morning Gerard and Margaret were in the church at Sevenbergen, he radiant with joy, she with blushes. 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 stood at the altar, and called them to him. They went 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.

“ We take him to Rotterdam to abide the sentence of the Duke.”

At this Margaret uttered a cry of despair, and the young creatures fell to sobbing in one another's arms so piteously, that the instruments of oppression drew back a step and were ashamed ; but one of them that was good-natured whispered to Margaret :

“ Rotterdam ? it is a lie. We but take him to our Stadthouse.”

They took him by sly detours to Tergou, and secretly conveyed him 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.

Gerard keeled 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 instantly showed that he was watching much harder than fishing. He turned hastily round and saw Gerard ;—made him a signal, and taking up his line and bow, went quickly off.

Martin went with all speed to Sevenbergen ;

“ Courage ! ” he cried, “ I have found him. He is in the haunted tower, right at the top of it.”

Peter, contrary to custom, was keenly attentive to what was going on.

“ Give me but one crown, and the young man shall sup with us this night.”

Peter spoke so eagerly and confidently, that for a moment Margaret felt hopeful ; but she caught Martin’s eye dwelling upon him with an expression of benevolent contempt.

“ It passes the powers of man’s invention,” said she, with a deep sigh.

“ Invention ! ” cried the old man. “ A fig for invention. What need we invention at this time of day ? Everything has been said that is to be said, and done that ever will be done. I shall tell you how a Florentine knight was shut up in a tower higher than Gerard’s ; yet did his faithful squire stand at the tower foot and get him out, with no other engine than that in your hand, Martin, and certain kickshaws I shall buy for a crown.”

CHAPTER VI

ESCAPE

It was nine o'clock on a clear moonlight night. A figure stood by the dwarf's bed. It was white, and the moonlight shone on it.

With an unearthly noise the gymnast rolled off his bed and under it. A soft voice followed him in his retreat.

"Why, Giles, are you afraid 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."

Kate then revealed to Giles that she had made a fearful discovery. Gerard was in prison, in the haunted tower of the Stadthouse.

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.

As the sun declined, Gerard's heart too sank and sank. He sat upon the chest, his arms and his head drooping before him, a picture of despondency. Suddenly something struck the wall beyond him, and then rattled on the floor at his feet. It was an arrow; he saw the white feather

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. He waved his bonnet : then he undid the silk, 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. Gerard drew the whipcord line up till he came to another knot, and found a cord of some thickness take the place of the whipcord. He had no sooner begun to draw this up, than he found that he had now a heavy weight to deal with. Then the truth suddenly flashed on him, and he went to work and pulled and pulled till a stout new rope touched his hand. He dragged the end into his prison, passed it through both handles of the chest, and knotted it firmly. 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.

He now mounted the chest, and from the chest put his foot through the window, and sat half in and half out. The free air breathed on his face, and gave him the courage to risk what we must all lose one day—for liberty. He clenched his teeth, and nipped the rope tight with his feet and gripped it with his hands, fixed his eyes steadily on the wall close to him, and went slowly down.

“ Take care, Gerard ! oh, take care ! ”

“ Fear me not,” cried Gerard joyfully.

In another minute his feet were at their hands. They seized him ere he touched the ground, and Margaret, Gerard, and Martin 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 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. They had barely rounded it when a light shot trembling past them, and flickered uncertainly into the distance.

"A lantern!" groaned Martin in a whisper. "They are after us. But I carry six lives at my shoulder;" and with the word, he strung his bow, and fitted an arrow to the string: "in war never wait to be struck: I will kill one or two ere they shall know where their death comes from."

But who may foretell the future, however near? The bow, instead of loosing the deadly shaft, was seen to shake violently, and the stout soldier let his arrow fall, and clutched Gerard's shoulder.

"Let me feel flesh and blood," he gasped. "The haunted tower! the haunted tower!"

His terror communicated itself to Margaret and Gerard. More than half way up the tower, a creature with a fiery head, like an enormous glowworm, 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 glowworm disappeared in Gerard's late prison, but its light illuminated the cell inside and reddened the window. The white figure stood motionless below.

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 dwarf. "Our Gerard has come down this rope. He has got clear. Up I go and see."

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

"A light scares the ill spirits," said she.

Giles went up the rope faster than his brother came down it. His sister watched his progress, with trembling anxiety. Suddenly a female figure started out of the solid masonry.

Kate uttered a feeble cry, and sank upon her knees, hiding her face and moaning :

"Take my body, but spare my soul !"

Margaret (panting). "Why, it is a woman !"

Kate (quivering). "Why, it is a woman !"

Margaret. "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 ?"

"Nay, why are you ?"

"Perhaps we are on the same errand ? Ah ! you are his good sister, Kate !"

"And you are Margaret Brandt."

"Yea."

"All the better. You love him ; you are here. Then Giles was right. He has won free."

Gerard came forward, and put the question at rest. But all further explanation was cut short by a horrible unearthly noise:

“PARCHMENT!—PARCHMENT!—PARCHMENT!”

At each repetition, it rose in intensity. They looked up, and there was the dwarf, with his hands full of parchments, and his face lighted with fiendish joy and lurid with diabolical fire. With the word, the awful imp hurled parchment at the astonished heads below. Down pattered and sailed flocks of documents: they whitened the grass. Finally, the fire-headed imp slid down the rope like a falling star, and (business before sentiment) proposed to his rescued brother an immediate settlement for the merchandise he had just delivered.

“Hush!” said Gerard; “you speak too loud. 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.”

“You shall not say so. Who is more welcome than you will be, after this cruel wrong, to your father’s house?”

“Father! I have no father,” said Gerard sternly. “He that was my father is turned my gaoler. I have escaped from his hands; I will never come within their reach again.”

“Oh! Gerard! Gerard!”

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

Kate turned quickly towards her. “Let me look at your face?” The inspection was favourable, it seemed, for she whispered: “It is a comely face, and no mischief-maker’s.”

“Fear me not,” said Margaret. “I could not be happy without your love, as well as Gerard’s.”

"These are comfortable words," sobbed Kate. Then, looking up, she said, "I little thought to like you so well. My heart is willing, but my infirmity will not let me embrace you."

At this hint, Margaret kissed her lovingly.

"You, too, Gerard," said Kate; "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. Then the tears came and stood thick in Margaret's eyes.

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."

"But may they not make this a handle for fresh violence?"

"How can they? Think you I shall stay in Tergou after this? The burgomaster robbed me of my liberty; I doubt I should take his life for it, if I could."

"Oh, fie! Gerard."

"What! Is life worth more than liberty? Well I can't take his life, so I take the first thing that comes to hand."

He gave Giles a few small coins, with which the urchin was gladdened, and shuffled after his sister.

Gerard and Margaret went gaily to Sevenbergen in the first flush of recovered liberty. But these soon yielded to sadder thoughts. Gerard was an escaped prisoner, and liable to be retaken and perhaps punished; and therefore he and Margaret would have to part for a time. He had already told her all that the demoiselle Van Eyck had said to him. He repeated it, and reminded Margaret that the gold pieces were only

given him to go to Italy with. The journey was clearly for Gerard's interest. He was a craftsman and an artist, lost in this boorish place. In Italy they would know how to value him. On this ground above all the unselfish girl gave her consent ; but many tender tears came with it, and at that Gerard, young and loving as herself, cried bitterly with her.

They sat hand in hand till midnight, now deploring their hard fate, now drawing bright and hopeful pictures of the future.

The morning found them resigned to part, but neither had the courage to say when ; and much I doubt whether the hour of parting ever would have struck.

But about three in the afternoon, Giles rode up to the door.

"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. She hath seen your death in the men's eyes ; 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.

Then Giles put in a word of his own.

"All the constables were at our house after you. Kate is wise, Gerard. Best give ear to her rede, and fly !"

"Oh, yes, Gerard," cried Margaret wildly. "Fly on the instant. Ah ! those parchments ; my mind misgave me : why did I let you take them ?"

"Margaret, they are but a blind : Giles says so. No matter : the old caitiff shall never see them again ; I will not go till I have hidden his treasure where he shall never find it."

Within an hour Gerard had dug a deep hole to bury the parchments in. He threw them in, one by one. 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.

The thunder came nearer and nearer till it crashed overhead : the flashes followed one another close, and the rain fell in torrents Gerard blessed the storm that gave him a few hours more with Margaret. The sun set unperceived, and still the thunder pealed, and the lightning flashed, and the rain poured. 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.

Poor things ! they were happy. To-morrow they must part. But that was nothing to them now. While there is life there is hope ; while there is hope there is joy. Separation for a year or two, what was it to them, who were so young. The future was bright, the present was Heaven : so passed the blissful hours.

Alas ! their innocence ran other risks besides the prison and the grave. They were in most danger from their own hearts and their inexperience, now that visible danger there was none

CHAPTER VII

THE PARTING

Gerard, warned by recent peril, went before daybreak and waked Martin. Peter's house was but a furlong and a half from the forest. They started, Martin with his bow and arrows ; Gerard with nothing but a stout oak staff Peter gave him for the journey.

Margaret pinned up her kirtle and farthingale, for the road was wet. Peter went as far as his garden hedge with them, and then with more emotion than he often bestowed on passing events, gave the young man his blessing.

The sun was peeping above the horizon as they crossed the field and made for the wood. They had crossed about half, when Margaret who kept nervously looking back, uttered a cry and began to run towards the wood, screaming with terror all the way

Ghysbrecht and his men were in hot pursuit.

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 a good start, and their hearts bounded with hope at Martin's words, for the great trees seemed now to stretch their branches like friendly arms towards them and their leaves like a screen.

The next moment the three were in the wood.

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

" Boy ! " roared Martin ; " the GALLOWS ! Follow me," and he fled into the wood.

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 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.

When they had gone some way in this, "Hush !" said Martin.

"What is it ?"

"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 ; "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."

"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" she said. "Take us to some thick place, where numbers will not avail our foes."

"I am going," said Martin sulkily. "Hurry avails not; we cannot shun the hound, and the place is hard by;" then turning to the left, he led the way, as men go to execution.

He had brought them to a thick hazel coppice, when 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, and rolled head-over-heels dead as a stone, literally spitted with an arrow from the bow 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.

Suddenly they heard hooping and hallooing behind them.

"No matter," whispered Martin. "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. Martin muttered a terrible oath, and cautiously strung his bow. Margaret put her hands to her face, but said nothing. She saw this man must die or Gerard.

The bow was raised, and the deadly arrow steadily drawn to its head, when at that moment an active figure leaped on Ghysbrecht from behind, 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.

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.

"Oh, my beloved, fly!" she gasped. "Leave me, for I am faint"

"No! no!" cried Gerard. "Death together, or safety. Ah! the mule! mount her, you, and I'll run by your side."

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.

"Help! treason! murder! murder!" shrieked Ghysbrecht, suddenly rising.

"Silence, cur," roared Gerard, and trode him down again by the throat as men crush an adder.

Life and liberty, while safe, are little thought of: for why? they are matter of course. Endangered, they are rated at their real value. In this, too, they are like sunshine, whose beauty men notice not at noon when it is greatest, but towards evening when it lies in flakes of topaz under shady elms. Yet it is feebler then; but gloom lies beside it, and contrast reveals its fire. Thus Gerard and Margaret, though they started at every leaf that rustled louder than its fellows, glowed all over with joy and thankfulness as they glided among the friendly trees in safety and deep tranquil silence, baying dogs and brutal voices yet ringing in their mind's ears.

Suddenly they emerged upon a beaten path and Martin stopped.

"This is the bridle-road I spoke of," said he, hanging his head; "and there away lies the hostelry."

Margaret and Gerard cast a scared look at one another.

"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—it was for my journey; it is no use my asking her to take it—she would not; but you will for her, will you not? Oh, Heaven! and is this all I can do for her? You will not let her want for anything, dear Martin?"

“Thou art a good lad, Gerard. Neither want nor harm shall come to her. I care more for her little finger than for all the world; and were she nought to me, even for thy sake would I be a father 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!”

By this means Gerard escaped a witness of his anguish at leaving her he loved, and Martin escaped a piteous sight. He did not see the poor young things kneel and renew before Heaven those holy vows cruel men had interrupted. He did not see them cling together like one, and then try to part, and fail, and return to one another, and cling again, like drowning, despairing creatures. But he heard Gerard sob, and 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, drooped suddenly with arms and legs all weak, and sat down and sobbed bitterly upon the foreign soil.

CHAPTER VIII

DENYS OF BURGUNDY

When the young exile had sat a while bowed down, he rose and dashed the tears from his eyes like a man ; and not casting a single glance more behind him, to weaken his heart, stepped out into the wide world.

His love and heavy sorrow left no room in him for vulgar misgivings. Compared with rending himself from Margaret, it seemed a small thing to go on foot to Italy in that rude age.

Thanks to his good friends the monks he could speak most of the languages needed on that long road. He said to himself, " I will soon be at Rome ; the sooner the better now."

When the sun was nearly setting, 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 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.

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

His hair bristled ; but he grasped his cudgel, and prepared to sell his life dear.

There was no wind ; and his excited ear heard light feet patter at times over the newly fallen leaves, and low branches rustle with creatures gliding swiftly past them.

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. But the dark and rugged way soon stopped that. The light

was more distant than he had thought. But at last he found an inn with lighted candles and loud voices inside it. He made for the door that led to the voices, found his way to the stove (as the public room was called from the principal article in it), and sat down near the oven.

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.

The grisly tyrant resented the rebellious sound. "Inns are not built for one," said he; "if you can't wait for the rest, look out for another lodging."

Gerard sighed.

At this the greybeard frowned.

The room gradually filled with guests. When perspiration and suffocation were far advanced, they brought in the tablecloths; but oh, so brown, so dirty, and so coarse. The Hollander, who had never seen such linen even in nightmare, uttered a faint cry.

"What is to do?" inquired a traveller. Gerard pointed ruefully to the dirty sackcloth. The other looked at it with lacklustre eye, and comprehended nought.

A Burgundian soldier with his arbalest at his back came peeping over Gerard's shoulder, and seeing what was amiss, laughed so loud that the room rang again, then slapped him on the back and cried, "Courage ! le diable est mort", and he seated himself by Gerard, and in a moment was talking volubly of war, women, and pillage, interlarding his discourse with curious oaths, at which Gerard drew away from him more or less.

When hope was extinct, patience worn out, and hunger exhausted, a huge vessel was brought in, the lid was removed,

and behold some thin broth with square pieces of bread floating. This, though not agreeable to the mind, served to distend the body. Slices of Strasbourg ham followed, so highly salted that Gerard could hardly swallow a mouthful. Then came 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 Burgundian swore the natives had outwitted him. Then turning to Gerard he said, " Courage, l'ami, le diable est mort," as loudly as before, but not with the same tone of conviction. 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, damp and dirty.

At peep of day Gerard rose and went in search of milk and air.

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

" He rises betimes that lies in a dog's lair," answered Gerard crossly.

" Courage, l'ami ! le diable est mort," was the instant reply. The soldier then told him his name was Denys, and he was passing from Flushing to the Duke's French dominions ; a change the more agreeable to him, as 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, and in a way that invited no further confidences.

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

“ That is not my road.”

“ All roads take to Rome.”

“ Ay, but the shortest road thither is my way.”

“ 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. They who travel should learn to read faces : methinks you might see lealty in mine sith I have seen it in yourn. Look hither ! ” and he undid his belt, and poured out of it a double handful of gold pieces. “ 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.”

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

“ I’ll cheer you, mon gars.”

“ I think you would,” said Gerard sweetly ; “ and sore need have I of a kindly voice in mine ear this day.”

“ Oh ! no soul is sad alongside me. I lift up their poor little hearts with my consigne : ‘ 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 ; and he was one of those who *make* little incidents wherever they go. 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 ; and indeed he did shoot one old crow with laudable neatness and despatch, and carried it to the nearest hen-roost, and there slipped in and set it upon a nest. “ The good-wife will say, ‘ Alack, here is Beelzebub ahatching of my eggs.’ ”

“ No, you forget he is dead,” objected Gerard.

“ So he is, so he is. But she doesn't know that, not having the luck to be acquainted with me, who carry the good news from city to city, uplifting men's hearts.”

Such was Denys in time of peace.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIGHT WITH THE BEAR

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.

One day, being in a forest a few leagues from Düsseldorf, as Gerard was walking like one in a dream, thinking of Margaret, his companion laid a hand on his shoulder, and strung his crossbow with glittering eye.

"Hush!" said he, in a low whisper. Gerard grasped his axe tight, and shook a little: he heard a rustling in the wood hard by, and at the same moment Denys's crossbow went to his shoulder. 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, with Gerard hacking it.

"Hallo! stop! you are mad to spoil the meat."

"I took it for a robber," said Gerard, panting. "I mean, I had made ready for a robber, so I could not hold my hand."

"Ay, these chattering travellers have stuffed your head full of thieves and assassins; they have not got a real live

robber in their whole nation. Nay, I'll carry the beast ; bear thou my crossbow."

" We will carry it by turns, then," said Gerard, " for 'tis a heavy load."

Gerard, examining the crossbow, asked Denys to lend him a bolt. " I have often shot with a long bow, but never with one of these ! "

Denys gave him three out of his quiver.

Gerard strung the bow, and levelled it at a bough. The power of the instrument surprised him ; the short but thick steel bow jarred him to the very heel as it went off, and the swift steel shaft was invisible in its passage ; only the dead leaves, with which November had carpeted the narrow road, flew about on the other side of the bough.

" Ye aimed a thought too high," said Denys.

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 ! "

Oh ! the concentrated horror of that one word whispered hoarsely, with dilating eyes ! 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.

All this in a moment of time. The next, 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, how, her Creator only knows, that it was dead, quite dead. She gave a yell such as neither of the hunted ones had ever heard, nor dreamed to be in nature, and flew after Denys. She reared and struck at him 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.

Of this combat the result was not doubtful.

The monster’s head and neck were scarce vulnerable for bone and masses of hair. The man was going to sting the bear, and the bear to crack the man like a nut.

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 ! ”

Denys poured a volley of oaths down at him. “ Get away, idiot ! ”

He was right : 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

tough ! ” 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 eyes 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.

As the fearful monster crawled growling towards him, incongruous thoughts coursed through his mind. Margaret : the Vulgate, where it speaks of the rage of a she-bear robbed of her whelps—Rome—Eternity.

The bear crawled on. And now the stupor of death fell on the doomed man ; he saw the open jaws and bloodshot 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 cross-bow twanged, and the bear snarled, and came nearer. Again the cross-bow 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. At this, by a convulsive effort, she raised her head up, up, till he felt her hot fetid breath. Then huge teeth snapped together loudly close below him in the air, with a last effort of baffled hate. 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 it may be doubted whether this alone would have saved him from breaking his neck, or a limb. 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.

“ Courage,” cried Denys, “ le diable est mort.”

“ Is it dead ? quite dead ? ” inquired Gerard from behind a tree ; for his courage was feverish, and the cold fit was on him just now, and had been for some time.

“ Behold,” said Denys, and pulled the brute's ear playfully and opened her jaws and put in his head, with other insulting antics.

“ 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. "It was to please thee, little one. C'est égal : 'twas well and orderly prayed, and edified me to the core while it lasted. A bishop had scarce handled the matter better ; so now our evensong being sung, and the saints enlisted with us—marchons."

Ere they had taken two steps, he stopped.

"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, and hurried him on.

Ere they had walked many furlongs, the muscles of the wounded leg contracted and stiffened, till presently Gerard could only just put his toe to the ground, and that with great pain.

At last he could bear it no longer.

"Let me lie down and die," he groaned, "for this is intolerable."

Denys represented that it would be unreasonable to lose heart, a certain great personage being notoriously defunct.

So Gerard leaned upon his axe, and hobbled on ; but presently he gave in, all of a sudden, and sank helpless in the road.

Denys drew him aside into the wood, gave him his crossbow and bolts, enjoining him strictly to lie quiet, snatched up Gerard's axe, and set off running on the road they had come.

Just before sunset he returned, almost sinking under a hairy bundle. It was the bear's skin.

He scraped together a heap of leaves, and made Gerard lie on it. He then lay down beside him and drew the bear-skin over them, hair inward. They were soon as warm as toast, and fast asleep.

But long before the dawn Gerard woke his comrade.

"What shall I do, Denys, I die of famine?"

"Do? why, go to sleep again."

"But I tell you I am too hungry to sleep," snapped Gerard.

"Let us march, then," replied Denys, with paternal indulgence.

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

"I hate pain," said Gerard viciously.

"Therein you show judgment," replied Denys smoothly.

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.

The light of the watch-tower at Düsseldorf was visible as soon as they cleared the wood, and cheered Gerard. When, after an hour's march, the black outline of other buildings stood out clear to the eye.

"Courage!" cried Denys, "Here is a convent."

The next moment they were safe within its walls.

CHAPTER X

CONVENT HOSPITALITY

Here Gerard made acquaintance with a monk, who had made several psalteries and was now attempting a little organ for the choir.

Now Gerard played the humble psaltery a little ; but the monk touched that instrument divinely, and showed him most agreeably what a novice he was in music. He also illuminated finely, but could not write so beautifully as Gerard. Comparing their acquirements with the earnestness and simplicity of an age in which accomplishments implied a true natural bent, Youth and Age soon became like brothers, and Gerard told his old new friend whither he was going, and described their late adventures.

“ Alack ! ” said the good old man, “ I have been a great traveller in my day.” He then told him to manage each day’s journey so as to lie at some peaceful monastery ; then suddenly breaking off he asked him how long since he had been shriven ? Gerard coloured up and replied feebly —

“ Better than a fortnight.”

“ And thou an exorcist ! No wonder perils have overtaken thee. Come, thou must be assoiled out of hand.”

“ Yes, father,” said Gerard, “ and with all mine heart. Where shall I find a confessor more holy and clement ? ”

“ In each of these cells,” replied the monk. “ Go to Brother Anselm, yonder.”

Father Anselm was a venerable monk, with an ample head, and a face all dignity and love. Confession over, he took Gerard’s head delicately in both hands, and kissed him on the

brow, and almost before the cell door had closed on him, was back to his pious offices. Gerard went away chilled to the heart by the isolation of monastic life, and saddened too. "Alas!" he thought, "here is a kind face I must never look to see again on earth; a kind voice gone from mine ear and my heart for ever. There is nothing but meeting and parting in this sorrowful world. Well-a-day! well-a-day!" This pensive mood was interrupted by a young monk who came for him and took him to the refectory; there he found several monks seated at a table, and Denys standing like a poker, being examined as to the towns he should pass through: the friars then clubbed their knowledge, and marked out the route, noting all the religious houses on or near that road; and this they gave Gerard. Then supper, and so to bed.

Our travellers on their weary way experienced that which most of my readers will find in the longer journey of life, *viz.*, that stirring events are not evenly distributed over the whole road, but come by fits and starts, and as it were, in clusters. 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. 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.

Gerard was almost as eager for this promised land as Denys; for the latter constantly chanted its praises, and at every little annoyance showed him "they did things better in Burgundy."

Towards sunset they found themselves at equal distances from a little town and a monastery, only the latter was off the road. Denys was for the inn, Gerard for the convent. Denys.

gave way, but on condition that once in Burgundy they should always stop at an inn.

In the refectory allusion was made, at the table where Gerard sat, to the sudden death of the monk who had undertaken to write out fresh copies of the charter of the monastery.

Gerard timidly offered his services. A monk smiled approvingly ; but hinted that the late brother's work could not be continued but by a master. Gerard on this drew from his wallet with some trepidation a vellum deed, the back of which he had cleaned and written upon by way of specimen. The monk gave quite a start at sight of it, and very hastily went up the hall to the high table, and bending his knee presented it to the prior. Instantly a dozen knowing eyes were fixed on it, and a buzz of voices was heard ; and soon Gerard saw the prior point more than once, and the monk came back, looking as proud as Punch, with a savoury game pie for Gerard, and a silver grace cup full of rich pimentum. This latter Gerard took, and bowing low quaffed and circulated the cup.

Instantly, to his surprise, the whole table hailed him as a brother : " Art convent bred, deny it not ? " He acknowledged it, and gave Heaven thanks for it. " But 'tis passing strange how you could know," said he.

" You drank with the cup in both hands," said two monks, speaking together.

The voices had for some time been loudish round a table at the bottom of the hall ; but presently came a burst of mirth so obstreperous and prolonged, that the prior sent the very sub-prior all down the hall to check it, and inflict penance on every monk at the table. And Gerard's cheek burned with shame ; for his ear had caught the word " courage ! " and the trumpet tones of Denys of Burgundy.

Soon Gérard was installed in feu Werter's cell, with wax lights, and a little frame that could be set at any angle, and all the materials of caligraphy.

Gerard's work was vastly admired ; they agreed that the records of the monastery had gained by poor Werter's death. The sub-prior forced a rix-dollar on Gerard, and several brushes and colours out of the convent stock, which was very large. He resumed his march warm at heart, for this was of good omen ; since it was on the pen he relied to make his fortune and recover his will-beloved. Talking of this to Denys up came a " bearded brother " from the monastery, spurring his mule, and waving a piece of vellum in his hand. It was the deed between Ghysbrecht and Floris Brandt. Gerard valued it deeply as a remembrance of home : he turned pale at first but to think he had so nearly lost it, and to Denys's infinite amusement not only gave a piece of money to the lay brother, but kissed the mule's nose.

" I'll read you now," said Gerard, " were you twice as ill written ; and — to make sure of never losing you "—here he sat down, and taking out needle and thread, sewed it with feminine dexterity to his doublet, and his mind, and heart, and soul were away to Sevenbergen.

At length they reached the promised land, and Denys, who was in high spirits, doffed his bonnet to all the females ; who curtsied and smiled in return ; fired his consigne at most of the men ; at which some stared, some grinned, some both ; and finally landed his friend at one of the long-promised Burgundian inns.

CHAPTER XI

SEPARATION

They met the landlord in the passage.

"Welcome, messieurs," said he, taking off his cap, with a low bow.

"Come, we are not in Germany," said Gerard.

In the public room they found the mistress, a buxom woman of forty. She curtsied to them, and smiled right cordially. "Give yourself the trouble of sitting ye down, fair sir," said she to Gerard, and dusted two chairs with her apron, not that they needed it.

"Thank you, dame," said Gerard. "Well," thought he, "this is a polite nation : the trouble of sitting down ? That will I with singular patience ; and presently the labour of eating, also the toil of digestion, and finally, by Hercules his aid, the strain of going to bed, and the struggle of sinking fast asleep. "Why, Denys, what are you doing ? ordering supper for only two ?"

"Why not ?"

"What, can we sup without, waiting for forty more ? Burgundy for ever !"

"Aha ! Courage, comrade. Le dia——"

They fell to. The mistress drew her chair a little toward the table ; and provided company as well as meat ; gossiped genially with them like old acquaintances. When she left them Gerard said, "This an inn ? Why, it is like home."

The clearing away of supper was the signal from them all to draw round the fire, like one happy family, travellers, host,

hostess, and even servants in the outer ring, and tell stories till bedtime. And Gerard in his turn told a tremendous one out of his repertory, a MS. collection of "acts of the saints," and made them all shudder deliciously : but soon after began to nod, exhausted by the effort, I should say. The mistress instantly lighted a rush, and laying her hand on Gerard's shoulder, invited him to follow her. She showed him a room where were two nice white beds, and bade him choose. "Either is paradise," said he. "Do you know, I have not lain in a naked bed once since I left my home in Holland."

"Alack ! poor soul ! " said she ; " The Virgin guard thy head, and the holy Evangelists watch the bed where lies a poor young wanderer far from home ! Amen ! "

In a very few minutes he was in a dry bath of cold, clean linen, inexpressibly refreshing to him after so long disuse : then came a delicious glow ; and then—Sevenbergen.

In the morning Gerard, infinitely refreshed, awoke Denys, and soon they had broken their fast, settled their score, and said farewell.

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. "Indeed, I marvelled to see thy face turned this way."

"I go to embrace my folk that I have not seen these three years. Ye can quell a bit of a rising without me, I trow."

Suddenly Denys gave a start. "Dost hear, Gerard ? this comrade is bound for Holland."

“ What then ? ah, a letter ! a letter to Margaret ! but will he be so good, so kind.”

The soldier with a torrent of blasphemy informed him he would not only take it, but go a league or two out of his way to do it.

In an instant out came inkhorn and paper from Gerard's wallet ; and he wrote a long letter to Margaret, dwelling 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. He ended with comforting her again as hard as he could. 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 and true finger execute such rare penmanship.

Denys, proud of his friend's skill, let him alone, till presently the scalding tears began to run down his young cheeks, one after another, on the paper where he was then writing comfort, comfort. Then Denys rudely repulsed the curious, and asked his comrade with a faltering voice whether he had the heart to let so sweet a love-letter miscarry ? The other swore by the face of St. Luke he would lose the forefinger of his right hand sooner.

Seeing him so ready, Gerard charged him also with a short, cold letter to his parents ; and in it he drew hastily with his pen two hands grasping each other, to signify farewell.

Gerard now offered money to the soldier. He hesitated, but declined it. “ No, no ! art comrade of my comrade : and thy love for the wench touches me. I'll break another bottle at thy charge and thou wilt, and so cry quits.”

"Well said, comrade," cried Denys. "Hadst taken money, I had invited thee to walk in the courtyard and cross swords with me."

"Whereupon I had cut thy comb for thee," retorted the other.

"Hadst done thy endeavour, drôle, I doubt not."

They drank the new bottle, shook hands, and parted on opposite routes.

When this was disposed of, Gerard was almost unmanned with the thought that each step was taking him farther from Margaret. "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, "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."

"Denys! Denys!"

"Denys not me! 'Tis settled. Gainsay me not! or I'll go with thee to Rome. Why not? his Holiness the Pope hath ever some little merry pleasant war toward, and a Burgundian soldier is still welcome in his ranks. I'll go with thee to Rome. There is my hand on it."

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

"I tell thee, 'tis settled. At Remirement 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; but he ran twice round his companion

as he walked, then danced backwards in front of him, and finally took his hand, and so on they went hand in hand like sweethearts, till a company of mounted soldiers 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."

"How gorgeous is the standard in the sun," said Gerard; "and how brave are the leaders with velvet and feathers, and steel breastplates like glassy mirrors!"

When they came near, Denys uttered an exclamation: "Why, 'tis the Bastard of Burgundy, as I live. Nay, then; there is fighting a-foot since he is out: a gallant leader. Gerard, rates his life no higher than a private soldier's, and a soldier's no higher than a tomtit's, and that is the captain for me."

"And see, Denys, the very mules with their great brass frontlets and trappings seem proud to carry them; no wonder men itch to be soldiers;" and in the midst of this innocent admiration the troop came up with them.

"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, "that may not be. 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 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 held Gerard’s hand the tighter, and 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, awaking from the stupor into which this thunderbolt of tyranny had thrown him. “ He shall go with you on this 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 ! he will go with you. 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, followed by all the band but the young count and six archers, one of whom held the spare mule.

Denys and Gerard gazed at one another haggardly. Oh, what a look !

And after this mute interchange of anguish, 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. Let me think : have I nought to say to thee, Denys ? my head ! my head ! ”

“ Ah ! I have it. Make for the Rhine, Gerard ! And down the current to Rotterdam. Margaret is there : I go thither. I’ll tell her thou art coming. We shall all be together.”

"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.

"Cursed be the land I was born in ! cursed be the race of man ! and he that made them what they are !" screamed Denys.

"Hush, Denys, hush ! blaspheme not ! Oh, God forgive him, he wots not what he says. Be patient, Denys.—be patient : though we meet no more on earth, let us meet in a better world, where no blasphemer may enter. To my heart, lost friend ; for what are words now ?" He held out his arms, and they locked one another in a close embrace. They kissed one another again and again, speechless, and the tears rained down their cheeks. 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 putting him in the middle of them, spurred after their leader. And Gerard ran wildly after (for the lane turned), 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, choking piteously.

After a bitter struggle he got his breath again. He staggered on, but scarce feeling or caring whither he was going ; and every now and then he stopped, and his arms fell and his head sank on his chest, and he stood motionless : then he said to himself, "Can this thing be ? This must be a dream. 'Tis scarce five minutes since we were so happy, walking handed, faring to Rome together, and we admired them and their gay banners and helmets—oh hearts of hell !"

CHAPTER XII

MARGARET'S LETTER TO GERARD

The wily Ghysbrecht set his emissaries to learn from the family at Tergou whither Gerard had fled, and "to his infinite surprise" they did not know. This added to his uneasiness. It made him fear Gerard was only lurking in the neighbourhood: he would make a certain discovery, and would come back and take a terrible revenge. From this time Ghysbrecht Van Swieten became a moody, irritable man. A dread lay on him. His eyes cast furtive glances, like one who expects a blow, and knows not from what quarter it is to come. Making others wretched had not made him happy. It seldom does.

The little family at Tergou were still the same outward features, but within was no longer the simple happy family this tale opened with. Mistrust and suspicion sat at the table, poor substitutes for Gerard's intelligent face, that had brightened the whole circle, unobserved till it was gone. As for the old hosier, his pride had been wounded by his son's disobedience, and so he bore stiffly up, and did his best never to mention Gerard's name; but underneath his Spartan cloak, Nature might be seen tugging at his heart-strings. One anxiety he never affected to conceal. "If I but knew where the boy is, and that his life and health are in no danger, small would be my care," would he say; and then a deep sigh would follow. I cannot help thinking that if Gerard had opened the door just then, and walked in, there would have been many tears and embraces for him, and few reproaches, or none.

One thing took the old couple quite by surprise—publicity. 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 busybody the burgomaster," who must put his nose into a business that nowise concerned him."

" Mother," said Kate, " it all over the town that Margaret is down with a fever—a burning fever."

" Margaret ? what Margaret ? " inquired Catherine, with a treacherous assumption of calmness and indifference.

" Oh, mother ! whom should I mean ? Why, Gerard's Margaret."

" Gerard's Margaret," screamed Catherine ; " how dare you say such a word to me ? And I rede you never mention that hussy's name in the house, that she has laid bare. She is the ruin of my poor boy, the flower of all my flock. She is the cause that he is not a holy priest in the midst of us, but is roaming the world, and I a desolate broken-hearted mother. There, do not cry, my girl, I do ill to speak harsh to you. But oh, Kate ! you know not what passes in a mother's heart. I bear up before you all ; it behoves me swallow my fears ; but at night I see him in my dreams, and still some trouble or other near him : sometimes he is torn by wild beasts ; other times he is in the hands of robbers, and their cruel knives uplifted to strike his poor pale face, that one should think would move a stone. Oh ! when I remember that, while I sit here in comfort, perhaps my poor boy lies dead in some savage place, and all along of that girl : there, her very name is ratsbane to me. I tremble all over when I hear it "

" I'll not say anyting, nor do anything to grieve you worse, mother," said Kate tenderly ; but she sighed.

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."

One day, waking from an uneasy slumber, she found two women in her room. One was a servant, the other by the deep fur on her collar and sleeves was a person of consideration. The looks of both were kind and friendly. Margaret tried to raise herself in the bed, but the old lady placed a hand very gently on her.

"Lie still sweetheart; we come not here to put you about, but to comfort you, God willing. Now cheer up a bit, and tell us, first, who think you we are?"

"Nay, madam, I know you, though I never saw you before: you are the demoiselle Van Eyck, and this is Reicht Heynes. Gerard has oft spoken of you, and of your goodness to him. Madam, he has no friend like you near him now," and at this thought she lay back, and the tears welled out of her eyes in a moment.

The good natured Reicht Heynes began to cry for company: but her mistress scolded her. "Well, you are a pretty one for a sick-room," said she; and she put out a world of innocent art to cheer the patient; and not without some little success. An old woman, that has seen life and all its troubles, is a sovereign blessing by a sorrowful young woman's side. She knows what to say, and what to avoid. She knows how to soothe her and interest her. Ere she had been there an hour, she had Margaret's head lying on her shoulder instead of on the pillow, and Margaret's soft eyes dwelling on her with gentle gratitude.

This was only the first of many visits. In fact either Margaret Van Eyck or Reicht came nearly every day until their patient was convalescent; and she improved rapidly under their hands. Reicht attributed this principally to certain nourishing dishes she prepared in Peter's kitchen; but Margaret

herself thought more of the kind words and eyes that kept telling her she had friends to live for.

“Sweetheart,” said she, “I did desire he should stay in Italy five or six years, and come back rich, and 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.”

“Ah, madam! you see my very thoughts.” And the young woman hung her head a moment and blushed. “But how to let him know, madam? That passes my skill. He is gone to Italy; but what part that I know not,”—and she looked imploringly at her friend for counsel.

“You are come to the right place, and at the right time,” said the old lady. “Here was this Hans Memling with me to-day: 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. What are you smiling at? And now what makes your cheeks so red? And what you are smothering me for, I cannot think. Yes! happy days are coming to my little pearl.”

This Hans Memling was an old pupil of Jan Van Eyck and his sister, and she knew he would not trifle with any commission she should entrust to him.

So 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.”

But 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 ; but when he offered to pay, they would not hear of it. No ; he was going a long journey ; they would treat him ; everybody must treat him, the landlord and all.

It resulted from this treatment that his tongue got as loose as if the wine had been oil ; and among the miscellaneous matters that oozed out, he must blab that he was entrusted with a letter to a townsman of theirs, one Gerard

Sybrandt, listening to every word, learned for the first time that Gerard was gone to Italy. However, to make sure, he affected to doubt it.

“ My brother Gerard is never in Italy.”

“ Ye lie, ye cur,” roared Hans. “ If he is ten times your brother, he is in Italy. What call ye this ? There, read me that superscription ! ” and he flung down a letter on the table.

Sybrandt took it up, and examined it gravely ; but eventually laid it down, with the remark, that he could not read. However, one of the company took it, and read it out : “ To Gerard Eliassoen, of Tergou. These by the hand of the trusty Hans Memling, with all speed.”

“ ’Tis excellently well writ,” said the reader, examining every letter.

“ Ay ! ” said Hans bombastically, “ and small wonder : ’tis writ by a famous hand ; by Margaret, sister of Jan Van Eyck. She is an old friend of mine, is Margaret Van Eyck.”

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

They put their heads together over the news : Italy was an immense distance off. If they could only keep him there ?

They went to Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, and he received them at once.

“ You have news of Gerard ? said he eagerly.

Then they told about the letter and Hans Memling. He listened with restless eye. “ Who writ the letter ? ”

“ Margaret Van Eyck,” was the reply ; for they naturally thought the contents were by the same hand as the superscription.

“ Are ye sure ? ” And he went to a drawer and drew out a paper written by Margaret Van Eyck. “ Was it writ like this ? ”

“ Yes. ‘Tis the same writing,” said Sybrandt boldly.

“ Good. And now what would ye of me ? ” said Ghysbrecht, with a carelessness so well feigned that it staggered them. They 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 Memling’s wallet for the one he carried. Ghysbrecht drew his inkhorn towards him, and laid the specimen of Margaret Van Eyck’s writing before him, and made some inquiries as to the size and shape of the letter. He then addressed the black sheep with a sudden coldness that amazed them—

“ I prize the peace of households ; but this is not a thing to be done in a hurry : we will see about it, we will see.”

“ But, burgomaster, the man will be gone. It will be too late.”

“ Where is he ? ”

“ At the hostelry, drinking.”

“ Well, keep him drinking ! We will see, we will see.” And he sent them off discomfited.

The black sheep sat disconsolate amidst the convival crew, and eyed Hans Memling's wallet. For more ease he had taken it off, and flung it on the table. How readily they could have slipped out that letter and put in another. For the first time in their lives they were sorry they had not learned to write, like their brother.

And now Hans began to talk of going. The brothers went again to the burgomaster with all speed.

They found Ghysbrecht seated at a table, pale and agitated. Before him lay Margaret Van Eyck's handwriting. "I have written what you desired," said he. "Now for the superscription.

"I heard the words read," said Sybrandt. They were, 'To Gerard Eliassen, these by the hand of the trusty Hans Memling, with all speed.'

"'Tis well. Where is he?"

"At the hostelry."

"Come, then, take you this groat, and treat him. Then ask to see the letter, and put this in place of it. Come to me with the other letter."

The brothers assented, took the letter, and went to the hostelry.

They came out almost immediately, with downcast looks.

"Too late!" they cried hurrying once more to the burgomaster; "too late! He is gone."

Ghysbrecht Van Swieten was not the man to accept a defeat. "Well," said he, on hearing the ill news, "suppose he is gone. Is he mounted?"

"No."

"Then what hinders you to come up with him?"

"But what avails coming up with him! There are no hostelries on the road he is gone."

"Fools !" said Ghysbrecht, "is there no way of emptying a man's pockets but liquor and sleight of hand ? He opened a drawer, and showed them a pile of silver coins.

"Change but those letters for me," he said, "and each of you shall take away as many as you can hold."

The effect was magical. Their eyes glittered with desire. Their whole bodies seemed to swell, and rise into male energy.

The next minute the brothers were on the road, in pursuit of Hans Memling. They came in sight of him about two leagues from Tergou, but they were too prudent to venture on him in daylight ; so they fell back.

But being now three leagues from the town, and on a grassy road—sun down, moon not yet up—honest Hans suddenly found himself attacked by men with uplifted knives who cried, "Stand and deliver !"

The attack was so sudden that Hans was dismayed. "Slay me not, good fellows," he cried, "and ye shall have my all."

"So be it then. Live ! but empty thy wallet."

"There is nought in my wallet, good friend, but one letter."

"That we shall see," said Sybrandt. "Well, it is a letter."

"Take it not from me, I pray you. 'Tis worth nought, and the good dame would fret that writ it."

"There," said Sybrandt, "take back thy letter ; and now empty thy pouch. Come ! tarry not !"

But by this time Hans had recovered his confusion ; and from a certain flutter in Sybrandt, and hard breathing of Cornelis, felt sure the pair he had to deal with were no heroes. He suddenly thrust his staff into Sybrandt's face, and drove him staggering, and lent Cornelis a back-handed slash on the

ear that sent him twirling like a weathercock in March ; then whirled his weapon over his head and danced about the road like a figure on springs, shouting " Come on, ye thieving loons ! Come on ! "

It was a plain invitation ; yet they misunderstood it so utterly as to take to their heels, with Hans after them, he shouting " Stop thieves ! " and they howling with fear and pain as they ran.

CHAPTER XIII

GERARD'S LETTER TO HIS PARENTS

A change came over Margaret Brandt. She went about her household duties like one in a dream. She went less often to her friend Margaret Van Eyck, and was ill at her ease when there. Instead of meeting her warm old friend's caresses, she used to receive them passive and trembling, and sometimes almost shrink from them. But the most extraordinary thing was, she never would go outside her own house in daylight. When she went to Tergou it was after dusk, and she returned before daybreak. She would not even go to matins. At last Peter, unobservant as he was, noticed it, and asked her the reason.

"Methinks the folk all look at me."

Margaret Van Eyck, turning possibilities over in her mind, thought Margaret must be mortified at the contempt with which she was treated by Gerard's family. "I will take them to task for it;" and the very next day she went to the hosier's house. Catherine received her with much respect, and thanked her with tears for her kindness to Gerard. But when her visitor diverged to Margaret Brandt, Catherine's eyes dried, and she looked as only obstinate, ignorant women can look. Margaret Van Eyck at last went out hastily with an abrupt and mutilated curtesy, which Catherine returned with an air rather of defiance than obeisance. Outside the door Margaret Van Eyck found Reicht conversing with a pale girl on crutches and was pushing by them with heightened colour when suddenly a little delicate hand glided timidly into hers, and looking round she saw two dove-like eyes that sought hers imploringly. The old lady read this look. She stopped and kissed Kate's brow. "I see," said she. "Mind, then,

I leave it to you." Returned home, she said—"I have been to a house to-day, where I have seen a very common thing and a very uncommon thing; I have seen a stupid, obstinate woman, and I have seen an angel."

Little Kate did not belie the good opinion so hastily formed of her. She waited a better opportunity, and told her mother what she had learned from Reicht Heynes, that Margaret had shed her very blood for Gerard in the wood.

"See, mother, how she loves him."

"Who would not love him?"

"Oh, mother, think of it! Poor thing."

"Ay, wench. She has her own trouble, no doubt, as well as we ours. I can't abide the sight of blood, let alone my own."

This was a point gained; but when Kate tried to follow it up she was stopped short.

About a month after this a soldier of the Dalgetty tribe brought a letter one evening to the hosier's house. He was away on business; but the rest of the family sat at supper. The soldier laid the letter on the table by Catherine, and refusing all guerdon for bringing it, went off to Sevenbergen.

The letter was unfolded and spread out; and curiously enough, though not one of them could read, they could all tell it was Gerard's handwriting.

"And your father must be away," cried Catherine. "Are ye not ashamed of yourselves? not one that can read your brother's letter."

But although the words were to them what hieroglyphics are to us, there was something in the letter they could read.

When, therefore, they saw what Gerard had drawn with his pencil between the two short paragraphs, of which his letter consisted, they read it, and it went straight to their hearts.

Gerard was bidding them farewell.

As they gazed on that simple sketch, in every turn and line of which they recognized his manner, Gerard seemed present, and bidding them farewell.

The women wept over it till they could see it no longer.

Even Cornelis and Sybrandt sat silent and gloomy.

But how to get the words read to them. They were loth to show their ignorance and their emotion to a stranger.

“ The Dame Van Eyck ? ” said Kate timidly.

“ And so I will, Kate. She has a good heart. She loves Gerard, too. She will be glad to hear of him, and she will tell me what my poor child says to me.”

She was soon at Margaret Van Eyck's house. 'Reicht took her into a room, and said, “ Bide a minute ; she is at her orisons.”

There was a young woman in the room seated pensively by the stove ; but she rose and courteously made way for the visitor.

“ Thank you, young lady ; the winter nights are cold ” Catherine then, while warming her hands, inspected her companion furtively. The young person's gown was trimmed with fur, which was, in those days, almost a sign of superior rank or wealth. But what most struck Catherine was the candour and modesty of the face. She felt sure of sympathy from so good a countenance, and began to gossip.

“ Now, what think you brings me here, young lady ? It is a letter ! a letter from my poor boy that is far away in some savage part or other. And I take shame to say that none of us can read it. I wonder whether you can read ? ”

“ Yes.”

"Can ye, now? It is much to your credit, my dear. I dare say she won't be long; but every minute is an hour to a poor longing mother."

"I will read it to you."

"Bless you, my dear; bless you!"

In her unfeigned eagerness she never noticed the suppressed eagerness with which the hand was slowly put out to take the letter. She did not see the tremor with which the fingers closed on it.

"Come, then, read it to me, prithee. I am wearying for it."

"The first words are, 'To my honoured parents.'"

"Ay! and he always did honour us, poor soul."

"God and the saints have you in His holy keeping, and bless you by night and by day. Your one harsh deed is forgotten; your years of love remembered."

Catherine laid her hand on her bosom, and sank back in her chair with one long sob.

"Then comes this, madam. It doth speak for itself; 'a long farewell.'"

"Ay, go on; bless you, girl; you give me sorry comfort. Still 'tis comfort."

"'To my brothers Cornelis and Sybrandt—Be content; you will see me no more!'"

"What does that mean? Ah!"

"'To my sister Kate. Little angel of my father's house. Be kind to *her*—' Ah!"

"That is Margaret Brandt, my dear—his sweetheart, poor soul. I've not been kind to her, my dear. Forgive me, Gerard!"

"—for poor Gerard's sake: since grief to her is death—to—me——' Ah!" And nature, resenting the poor girl's

struggle for unnatural composure, suddenly gave way, and she sank from her chair and lay insensible, with the letter in her hand, and her head on Catherine's knees.

Experienced women are not frightened when a woman faints. Catherine laid the girl down, opened the window, and unloosed her dress. Not till she had done all this did she step to the door and say, rather loudly :

“ Come here, if you please.”

Margaret Van Eyck and Reicht came, and found Margaret lying quite flat, and Catherine beating her hands.

“ Oh, my poor girl ! What has happened ? ”

“ Nothing, madam ; nothing more than is natural in her situation.”

Margaret Van Eyck coloured with ire.

“ You do well to speak so coolly,” said she, “ you that are the cause of her situation.”

“ That I am not,” said Catherine bluntly, “ nor any woman born.”

“ What ! was it not you and your husband that kept them apart ? and now he has gone to Italy all alone. Situation indeed ! You have broken her heart amongst you.”

“ Why, madam ? Who is it then ? in Heaven's name ! To hear you, one would think this way my Gerard's lass. But that can't be. This fur never cost less than five crowns the ell ; besides, this young gentlewoman is a wife ; or ought to be.”

“ Of course she ought. And who is the cause she is none ? Who came before them at the very altar ? ”

“ God forgive them, whoever it was,” said Catherine gravely ; “ me it was not, nor my man.”

“ Well,” said the other, a little softened, “ now you have seen her, perhaps you will not be quite so bitter against her, madam. She is coming to, thank Heaven.”

“ Me bitter against her ? ” said Catherine ; “ no, that is all over. Poor soul ! trouble behind her and trouble afore her ; and to think of my setting her, of all living woman, to read Gerard’s letter to me. Ay, and that was what made her go off, I’ll be sworn. She is coming to. What, sweetheart ! be not afeard. none are here but friends.”

They seated her in an easy chair. As the colour was creeping back to her face and lips, Catherine much to Margaret Van Eyck’s surprise, went up to the girl, and taking her round the neck, kissed her warmly. “ I suffered for Gerard, and you shed your blood for him I do hear : his own words show me that I have been to blame, the very words you have read to me. Ay, Gerard, my child, I have held aloof from her ; but I’ll make it up to her once I begin. You are my daughter from this hour.”

Another warm embrace sealed this hasty compact, and the woman of impulse was gone.

Margaret lay back in her chair, and a feeble smile stole over her face. Gerard’s mothers had kissed her and called her daughter.

The little party at the hosier’s house sat at table discussing the recent event, when their mother returned, and casting a piercing glance all round the little circle, laid the letter flat on the table. She repeated every word of it by memory. Then, suddenly lifting her head, she cast another keen look on Cornelis and Sybrandt ; their eyes fell.

“ We will borrow Peter Buyskens’ cart,” said she, “ and go comfort Gerard’s wife under her burden. She is his wife. Who is Ghysbrecht Van Swieten ? Can he come between a couple and the altar, and sunder those that God and the priest

make one ? She is my daughter, and I am as proud of her as I am of you, Kate, almost ; and as for *you*, keep out of my way awhile."

Cornelis and Sybrandt took the hint and slunk out. They avoided her eye as much as ever they could ; and for many days she never spoke a word, good, bad, or indifferent, to either of them.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PILGRIM OF FRIENDSHIP

Catherine was a good housewife who seldom left home for a day, and then one thing or another always went amiss. She was keenly conscious of this, and watching for a slack tide in things domestic, put off her visit to Sevenbergen from day to day, and one afternoon that it really could have been managed, Peter Buyskens' mule was out of the way.

At last, one fine day, after dinner, she whispered to Kate, "Keep the house from going to pieces, an ye can;" and donned her best kirtle and hood, and trudged briskly off to Sevenbergen, troubling no man's mule.

When she got there she inquired where Margaret Brandt lived. A man told her that Peter Brandt's cottage was just outside the town on the east side. "You may see the chimney hence;" and he pointed it out to her. "But you will not find them there, neither father nor daughter; they have left the town this week, bless you."

"Say not so, good man, and me walken all the way from Tergou."

"From Tergou? then you must ha' met the soldier."

"What soldier? ay, I did meet a soldier."

"Well, then, yon soldier was here seeking that self-same Margaret."

"He seemed right civil: doffed his bonnet to me as I had been a queen, and I did drop him my best reverence, for manners beget manners. Can you tell me what sort this Margaret was?" said she, as she turned to go.

"Well, somewhat too reserved for my taste. But she bore a high character for being a good daughter."

"'Tis no small praise. A well-looking lass, I am told?"

"Oh, ay. Well you shall judge: the lads clept her 'the beauty of Sevenbergen;' the lasses did scout it merrily, and terribly pulled her to pieces, and found so many faults no two could agree where the fault lay."

"That is enough," said Catherine, and returned to Tergou dejected.

Kate met her outside the town and they went home together.

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.

"What is to do?" said a grave manly voice. It was Eli: he had come in from the shop. "We are no poor enough to grudge a seat at our hearth in a cold day to a wayfarer with an honest face, and, as I think, a wounded man"

"Wounded?" cried mother and daughter in a breath.

"Think you a soldier slings his arm for sport?"

"Nay, 'tis but an arrow," said Denys cheerfully.

"But an arrow?" said Kate, with concentrated horror. "Where were our eyes, mother?"

"Nay, in good sooth, a trifle. 'Tis these little foolish trifling wounds that fret a man, worthy sir. Why, look ye now, sweeter temper than our Gerard never breathed, yet, when the bear did but strike a piece no bigger than a crown out of his calf, he turned so hot and choleric y'had said he was no son of yours; who is this? a dwarf? your servant, Master Giles."

"Your servant, soldier," roared the newcomer.

Denys's words had surprised his hosts, but hardly more than their deportment now did him. They all three came

creeping up to where he sat, and looked down into him with their lips parted, as if he had seen some strange phenomenon.

And growing agitation succeeded to amazement.

“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, and that shake our hearts speaking to us of—the absent—our poor rebellious son: whom Heaven forgive and bless? How came you to know Gerard, our son? Prithee now think on a parent’s cares, and answer me straightforward, like a soldier as thou art.”

“And shall. I was paid off at Flushing, and started for Burgundy. On the German frontier I lay at the same inn with Gerard. I fancied him. I said, ‘Be my comrade.’ He was loth at first; consented presently. Many a weary league we trôd together. Never were truer comrades: never will be while earth shall last. First I left my route a bit to be with him: then he his to be with me. 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. But just when all was fair, and I was to see him safe aboard ship for Rome, if not to Rome itself, met us the Lord Anthony of Burgundy, and his men, making for Flanders, then in insurrection, tore us by force apart, took me where I got some broad pieces in hand, and a broad arrow in my shoulder, and left my poor Gerard lonesome. At that sad parting, soldier though I be, these eyes did rain salt scalding tears, and so did his, poor soul. His last word to me was, ‘Go, comfort Margaret!’ so here I be. Mine to him was, ‘Think no more of Rome. Make for Rhine, and down stream home.’ Now say, for you know best, did I advise him well or ill?”

“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.

Catherine did not answer at all, but she darted from the room and returned with wood in both arms, and heaped the fire, and took out a snow-white cloth from the press, and was going in a great hurry to lay it for Gerard's friend, when suddenly she sat down and all the power ebbed rapidly out of her body.

"Father!" cried Kate, whose eye was as quick as her affection. Denys started up; but Eli waved him back and flung a little water sharply in his wife's face. This did her instant good. She gasped, "So sudden. My poor boy!" Eli whispered Denys, "Take no notice! she thinks of him night and day." They pretended not to observe her, and she shook it off, and bustled and laid the cloth with her own hands; but as she smoothed it, her hands trembled and a tear or two stole down her cheeks.

They could not make enough of Denys. They stuffed him, and crammed him; and then gathered round him and kept filling his glass in turn, while by that genial blaze of fire and ruby wine and eager eyes he told them all.

But how different the effect on my readers and on this small circle! To them the interest was already made before the first word came from his lips. It was all about Gerard, and he, who sat there telling it them, was warm from Gerard and an actor with him in all these scenes.

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 when the rough soldier had unconsciously but thoroughly betrayed his better qualities, and above all his rare affection for Gerard, Kate, though timorous as a bird, stole her little hand into the warrior's huge brown palm, where it lay like a tea-spoonful of cream spilt on a platter.

It was eleven o'clock, an unheard-of hour, but they took no note of time this night; and Denys had still much to tell them, when the door was opened quietly, and in stole Cornelis and Sybrandt looking hang-dog.

Catherine feared her husband would rebuke them before Denys ; but he only looked sadly at them, and motioned them to sit down quietly.

Denys it was who seemed discomposed. He knitted his brows and eyed them thoughtfully and rather gloomily. Then turned to Catherine. " What say you, dame ? the rest to-morrow ; for I am somewhat weary, and it waxes late."

" So be it," said Eli. But when Denys rose to go to his inn, he was instantly stopped by Catherine. " And think you to lie from this house ? Gerard's room has been got ready for you hours ago ; the sheets I'll not say much for, seeing I spun the flax and wove the web."

" Then would I lie in them blindfold," was the gallant reply. " Ah, dame, our poor Gerard was the one for fine linen. He could hardly forgive the honest Germans their coarse flax. But indeed he beat all for bywords and cleanliness."

" Oh, Eli ! Eli ! doth not our son come back to us at each word ? "

" Ay. Buss me, my poor Kate. You and I know all that passeth in each other's hearts this night. None other can, but God."

Denys took an opportunity next day and told mother and daughter the rest.

The adventures he related cost them a tumult of agitation and grief, and sore they wept at the parting of the friends, which even now Denys could not tell without faltering. But at last all merged in the joyful hope and expectation of Gerard's speedy return. In this Denys confidentially shared ; but reminded them that was no reason why he should neglect his friend's wishes and last words. In fact, should Gerard return next week, and no Margaret to be found, what sort of figure should he cut ?

Catherine had never felt so kindly towards the truant Margaret as now ; and she was fully as anxious to find her, and be kind to her before Gerard's return, as Denys was ; but she could not agree with him that anything was to be gained by leaving this neighbourhood to search for her. " She must have told somebody whither she was going ; and dear heart, Denys, you can't hunt all Holland for her."

" Can I not ? " said Denys grimly. " That we shall see." He added, after some reflection, that they must divide their forces ; she stay here with eyes and ears wide open, and he ransack every town in Holland for her, if need be. " But she will not be many leagues from here. They be three. Three fly not so fast, nor far, as one."

That same afternoon Denys set out on a wild goose chase. His plan, like all great things, was simple. He should go to a hundred towns and villages, and ask in each after 'an old physician with a fair daughter, and an old long-bow soldier. He should inquire of the burgomasters about all new-comers, and should go to the fountains and watch the women and girls as they came with their pitchers for water.

And away he went, and was months and months on the tramp, and could not find her. And so we leave him on the tramp, " Pilgrim of Friendship," as his poor comrade was of Love.

Now, in matters domestic the learned Peter was simple as a child, and Margaret, from the age of sixteen, had governed the house gently but absolutely. It was therefore a strange thing in this house the faltering, irresolute way in which its young but despotic mistress addressed that person, who in a domestic sense was less important than Martin Wittenhaagen, or even than the little girl who came in the morning and for a pittance washed the vessels, etc., and went home at night.

" Father, I would speak to thee."

“ Speak on, girl.”

“ Alas,” said she. “ I cannot, will not, bide in Sevenbergen.”

And she wrung her hands impatiently.

“ Be calm now,” said the old man soothingly, “ nor torment thyself for nought. Not bide in Sevenbergen ? What need to bide a day, as it vexes thee, and puts thee in a fever ; for fevered thou art, deny it not.”

“ What ! ” cried Margaret, “ would you yield to go hence, and—and ask no reason but my longing to be gone ? ” and suddenly throwing herself on her knees beside him, in a fervour of supplication she clutched his sleeve, and then his arm, and then his shoulder, while imploring him to quit this place, and not ask her why.

“ Foolish child, who seeks thy girlish secrets ? Is it I, whose life hath been spent in searching Nature’s ? And for leaving Sevenbergen, what is there to keep me in it, thee unwilling ? What is’t to me where we sojourn ? Choose thou that, as did thy mother before thee.”

Margaret embraced him tenderly, and wept upon his shoulder.

Next week they went to Rotterdam, bag and baggage, and lodged above a tailor’s shop in the Brede-Kirk Street.

Only one person in Tergou knew whither they were gone.

The Burgomaster.

He locked the information in his own breast.

Among strangers Margaret Brandt was comparatively happy. But one evening, in bidding her good-night, Peter’s voice seemed rather inarticulate

The next morning he was found speechless, and only just sensible.

Margaret, who had been for years her father’s attentive pupil, saw at once that he had had a paralytic stroke.

Peter lived, but was never the same man again. His memory became much affected, and of course he was not to be trusted to prescribe. Misery stared her in the face.

Something must be done. She hawked initial letters and illuminated vellums all about the town. Printing had by this time dealt caligraphy in black and white a terrible blow in Holland and Germany. But some copies of the printed books were usually illuminated and lettered. The printers offered Margaret prices for work in these two kinds.

"I'll think on't," said she.

She took down her diurnal book, and calculated that the price of an hour's work on those arts would be about one-fifth what she got for an hour at the tub and mangle. "I'll starve first," said she; "what, pay a craft and a mystery five times less than a handicraft!" She took in washing.

Martin, carrying the dry clothes-basket, got drunk and babbled her story. The girls got hold of it and gibed her at the fountain.

Now Margaret was brave, and a coward; brave to battle difficulties and ill fortune; brave to shed her own blood for those she loved. Fortitude she had. But she had no true fighting courage. She was a powerful young woman, rather tall, full, and symmetrical; yet had one of those slips of girls slapped her face, the poor fool's hands would have dropped powerless, or gone to her own eyes instead of her adversary's. Nor was she even a match for so many tongues; and besides, what could she say? She knew nothing of these girls, except that somehow they had found out her sorrows, and hated her; only she thought to herself they must be very happy, or they would not be so hard on her.

So she took their taunts in silence; and all her struggle was not to let them see their power to make her writhe within.

Here came in her fortitude; and received their blows with well-feigned, icy hauteur. They slapped a statue.

But one day, when her spirits were weak, a dozen assailants followed suit so admirably, that her whole sex seemed to the dispirited one to be against her, and she lost heart, and the tears began to run silently at each fresh stab.

On this their triumph knew no bounds, and they followed her half way home casting barbed speeches.

After that exposure of weakness the statue could be assumed no more. So then she would stand timidly aloof out of tongue-shot, till her young tyrants' pitchers were all filled, and they gone ; and then creep up with hers. And one day she waited so long that the fount had ceased to flow. So the next day she was obliged to face the phalanx, or her house go dry. She drew near slowly, but with the less tremor, that she saw a man at the well talking to them. He would distract their attention, and besides, they would keep their foul tongues quiet if only to blind the male to their real character. This conjecture, though shrewd, was erroneous. They could not all flirt with that one man ; so the outsiders indemnified themselves by talking at her the very moment she came up.

" Any news from foreign parts, Jacqueline ? "

" None for me Martha. My lad goes no farther from me than the town wall."

" I can't say as much," says a third.

" But if he goes t' Italy I have got another ready to take the fool's place."

" He'll not go thither, lass. They go not so far till they are sick of us that bide in Holland."

Surprise and indignation and the presence of a man, gave Margaret a moment's fighting courage.

" Oh, flout me not, and show your ill nature before the very soldier. In Heaven's name, what ill did I ever to ye ? what harsh word cast back, for all you have flung on me, a

desolate stranger in your cruel town, that ye flout me for my bereavement and my poor lad's most unwilling banishment ? Hearts of flesh would surely pity us both, for that ye cast in my teeth these many days, ye brows of brass, ye bosoms of stone."

They started at this novelty, resistance ; and ere they could recover and make mincemeat of her, she put her pitcher quietly down, and threw her coarse apron over her head, and stood there grieving, her short-lived spirit oozing fast. " Hallo ! " cried the soldier, " why, what is your ill ? " She made no reply. But a little girl, who had long secretly hated the big ones, squeaked out, " They did flout her, they are aye flouting her ; she may not come nigh the fountain for fear o' them, and 'tis a black shame."

" Who spoke to her ? Not I for one."

" Nor I. I would not bemean myself so far."

The man laughed heartily at this display of dignity. " Come, wife," said he, " never lower thy flag to such light skirmishers as these. Hast a tongue i' thy head as well as they."

" Alack, good soldier, I was not bred to bandy foul terms."

" Well, but hast a better arm than these. Why not take 'em by twos across thy knee, and skelp 'em till they cry Meculpee ? "

" Nay, I would not hurt their bodies for all their cruel hearts."

" Then ye must e'en laugh at them, wife. Come, gie me thy pitcher." The pitcher was soon filled, and the soldier put it in Margaret's hand. She murmured, " Thank you kindly, brave soldier."

He patted her on the shoulder. " Come, courage, brave wife ; the divell is dead ! " She let the heavy pitcher fall on

his foot directly. He cursed horribly, and hopped in a circle, saying, "No, the Thief's alive and has broken my great toe"

The apron came down, and there was a lovely face all flushed with emotion, and two beaming eyes in front of him, and two hands held out clasped.

"Nay, nay, 'tis nought," said he good-humouredly, mistaking.

"Denys?"

"Well?—But—Hallo! How know you my name is——"

"Denys of Burgundy!"

Why, ods bodikins! I know you not, and you know me."

"By Gerard's letter. Crossbow! beard! handsome! The divell is dead."

"Sword of Goliah! this must be she. Red hair, violet eyes, lovely face."

"Tell me my name," said she quickly.

"Margaret Brandt."

"Gerard? Where is he? Is he in life? Is he well? Is he coming? Is he come? Why is he not here? Where have ye left him? Oh tell me! prithee, prithee, prithee, tell me!"

"Ay, ay, but not here. Lass, I have been three months a-foot travelling all Holland to find ye, and here you are. Oh, be joyful!" and he flung his cap in the air, and seizing both her hands kissed them ardently. "Ah, my pretty she-comrade, I have found thee at last. I knew I should. Shall be flouted no more. I'll twist your necks at the first word, ye little trollops. And I have got fifteen gold angels left for thee, and our Gerard will soon be here. Shalt wet thy purple eyes no more."

But the fair eyes were wet even now, looking kindly and gratefully at the friend that had dropped among her foes as if from heaven; Gerard's comrade. "Prithee come home with me, good, kind Denys. I cannot speak of him before these." They went off together, followed by a chorus. "She has gotten a man. She has gotten a man at last. Hoo! hoo! hoo!"

Margaret quickened her steps; but Denys took down his crossbow and pretended to shoot them all dead: they fled quadrivious, shrieking.

The reader already knows how much these two had to tell one another. 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 feebly hectored it over him as well as over Martin, and would not let him eat a single meal out of her house, and forbade him to use naughty words. "It spoils you, Denys. Good lack, to hear such ugly words come forth so comely a head: forbear, or I shall be angry: so be civil." Whereupon Denys was upon his good behaviour.

The very next day another 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,” said 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.

As she did not come back. Ghysbrecht went away. Margaret was hours alone with her letter.

CHAPTER XV

GERARD'S LETTER TO MARGARET

WHEN she came down again she was a changed woman. Her eyes were wet, but calm, and all her bitterness and excitement charmed away.

"Denys," said she softly, "I have got my orders. I am to read my lover's letter to his folk. Therefore, Denys, tell his mother I have got a letter, and if she and hers would hear it, I am their servant ; let them say their hour."

Denys went off to Catherine with this good news. He found the family at dinner, and told them there was a long letter from Gerard. Then in the midst of the joy this caused, he said, "And her heart is softened, and she will read it to you herself."

Margaret made her toilet in the same spirit that a knight of her day dressed for battle—he to parry blows, and she to parry glances—glances of contempt at her poverty, or of irony at her extravagance. Her kirtle was of English cloth, and her farthingale and hose of the same material. Not an inch of pretentious fur about her, but plain snowy linen wristbands. Her front hair still peeped in two waves ; but instead of the silver net, the rest of her head was covered with a very small tight-fitting hood

Beauty knew its business then as now.

And with all this she kept her enemies waiting, though it was three by the dial.

At last she started, attended by her he-comrade. And when they were half-way, she stopped and said thoughtfully, "Denys !"

“ Well, she-general ? ”

“ I must go home ” (piteously).

“ What, have ye left somewhat behind ? ”

“ Ay,”

“ What ? ”

“ My courage. Oh ! oh ! oh ! ”

“ Nay, nay, be brave, she-general. I shall be with you.”

“ Ay, but wilt keep close to me when I be there ? ”

Denys promised, and she resumed her march, but gingerly.

Meantime they were all assembled, and waiting for her with a strange mixture of feelings

Mortification, curiosity, panting affection, aversion to her who came to gratify those feelings, yet another curiosity to see what she was like, and what there was in her to bewitch Gerard and make so much mischief.

At last Denys came alone, and whispered, “ The she-comrade is without.”

“ Fetch her in,” said Eli. “ Now whisht, all of ye. None speak to her but I.”

They all turned their eyes to the door in dead silence.

A little muttering was heard outside ; Denys’s rough organ and a woman’s soft and mellow voice.

Presently that stopped ; and then the door opened slowly, and Margaret Brandt, dressed as I have described, and somewhat pale, but calm and lovely, stood on the threshold, looking straight before her.

They all rose but Kate, and remained mute and staring.

“ 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 sue was there for that single purpose.

And now she began to read her Gerard, their Gerard, to their eager ears, in a mellow, but clear voice, so soft, so earnest, so thrilling, her very soul seemed to cling about each precious sound.

“ I do nothing doubt, my Margaret, that long ere this shall meet thy beloved eyes, Denys, my most dear friend, will have sought thee out, and told thee the manner of our unlooked for and most tearful parting. Therefore I will e'en begin at that most doleful day. What befell him after, poor faithful soul, fain, fain would I hear, but may not. But I pray for him day and night next after thee, dearest. 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.

And so the sweetheart and the friend held hands while the sweetheart read.

“ 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 oe'r 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.”

“ But oh ! how I missed my Denys at every step ! often I sat down on the road and groaned. And in the afternoon it chanced that I did so set me down where two roads met, and

with heavy head in hand, and heavy heart, did think of thee, my poor sweetheart, and of my lost friend, and of the little house at Tergou, where they all loved me once ; though now it is turned to hate."

Catherine. "Alas! that he will think so."

Eli. "Whisht, wife!"

"And I did sigh loud, and often."

The reader stopped, and the tears trickled down her cheeks. Gerard crying in Lorraine, made her cry at Rotterdam. The leagues were no more to her heart than the breadth of a room.

Eli, softened by many touches in the letter, and by the reader's womanly graces, said kindly enough, "Take thy time, lass. And methinks some of ye might find her a creepie to rest her foot."

"I'd do more for her than that an I durst," said Catherine. "Here, Cornelis," and she held out her little wooden stool, and that worthy, who hated Margaret worse than ever, had to take the creepie and put it carefully under her foot.

"You are very kind, dame," she faltered. "I will read on ; 'tis all I can do for you in turn."

"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, sleeping yet gliding still. '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, not, as now I must, defeated and shamed, and thee with me, it did withhold me ; and so, with many sighs, and often turning of the head to look on beloved Rhine, I turned sorrowful face and heavy heart towards Augsburg."

"Alas, dame, alas ! Good master Eli, forgive me ! But I ne'er can win over this part all at one time. It taketh my

breath away. Well-a-day ! Why did he not listen to his heart ? Had he not gone through peril enow, sorrow enow ? Well-a-day ! well-a-day ! ”

The letter dropped from her hand, and she drooped like a wounded lily.

Then there was a clatter on the floor, and it was little Kate going on her crutches, with flushed face, and eyes full of pity, to console her. “ Water, mother,” she cried. “ I am afraid she shall swoon.”

“ Nay, nay, fear me not,” said Margaret feebly. “ I will not be so troublesome. Thy good-will it maketh me stouter hearted, sweet mistress Kate. For, if thou carest how I fare, sure Heaven is not against me.”

Catherine. “ D’ye hear that, my man ! ”

Eli “ Ay, wife, I hear ; and mark to boot.”

Little Kate went back to her place, and Margaret read on. “ The Germans are fonder of armorials than the French. So I found work every day.”

“ Ah ! *what is that ?* ”

A lump, as of lead, had just bounced against the door, and the latch was fumbled with unsuccessfully. Another bounce, and the door swung inwards with Giles arrayed in cloth of gold sticking to it like a wasp. He landed on the floor, and was embraced ; but on learning what was going on, trumpeted that he would much liever hear of Gerard than gossip.

“ This Augsburg it is an enchanted city. I lay at an inn called ‘ The Three Moors,’ over an hundred years old ; and this morning, according to my way of viewing towns to learn their compass and shape, I mounted the highest tower I could find, and setting my dial at my foot surveyed the beautiful city : whole streets of palaces and churches tiled with copper burnished like gold ; and the house fronts gaily painted and

all glazed, and the glass so clean and burnished as 'tis most resplendent and rare."

"*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. But oh, Margaret, the workmen of all the guilds are so kind and brotherly to one another, and to me. Here, methinks, I have found the true German mind, loyal, frank, and kindly, somewhat choleric withal, but nought revengeful. Sir Printing Press—sore foe to poor Gerard, but to other humans beneficial—plieth by night and day, and casteth goodly words like sower afield; while I, poor fool, can but sow them as I saw women in France sow rye, dribbling it in the furrow grain by grain."

"*January 10.*—This day started for Venice with a company of merchants. We be many and armed, so fear not the thieves which men say lie on the borders of Italy. 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."

Catherine. "Here, help! water! Stand aloof, you that be men!"

Margaret had fainted away.

When she recovered, her head was on Catherine's arm, and the family stood round her uttering rough homely words of encouragement, especially Giles, who roared at her that she was not to take on like that. "Gerard was alive and well, or he could not have writ this letter."

"Ay, good Master Giles," sighed Margaret feebly, "he was alive. But how know I what hath since befallen him? Oh, why left he Holland to go among strangers fierce as lions? And why did I not drive him from me sooner than

part him from his own flesh and blood? Forgive me, you that are his mother!"

And she gently removed Catherine's arm, and made a feeble attempt to slide off the chair on to her knees, which, after a brief struggle with superior force, ended in her finding herself on Catherine's bosom. 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—and—and—loth to leave my comfort;" and she wreathed her other arm round Catherine's neck.

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

Richart took the letter. "Well," said he, "such writing saw I never. A writeth with a needle's point; and clear to boot. Why is he not in my counting-house at Amsterdam instead of vagabonding it out yonder!"

"*January 25.*—Safe at Venice. A place whose strange and passing beauty is well known to thee. 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?"

"*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 took a hand litter, and was carried to St. Mark his church; afterwards 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 ELIASOEN, AMSTERDAM

‘ Put me down,’ I said ; ‘ for our Lady’s sake put me down.’ 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. Kisses many he has given me, unkind word from him had I never.’ 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.”

Denys. “ Courage, good Master Richart ! Take your time. Here are more eyne wet than yours. Ah, little comrade ! would God thou wert here, and I at Venice for thee.”

Richart. “ Poor little curly-headed lad, what had he done that we have driven him so far ? ”

"That is what I would fain know," said Catherine drily, then fell to weeping and rocking herself, with her apron over her head.

"Kind dame, good friends," said Margaret trembling, "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. Thereat was the good skipper all agog to serve him."

Richart. "So ! so ! skipper ! Master Richart aforesaid will be at thy wedding and bring's purse to boot."

Margaret. "Sir, 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 "

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. None may take her place at my left hand. Such as can welcome her are welcome to me. Such as cannot, I force them not to abide with me. The world is wide and free. 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 Cornelis exchanged a gloomy wink, and stole out. Margaret, seeing Giles deep in meditation, asked him to bring her the letter. "You have heard but half, good master Giles," said she. "Shall I read you the rest ?"

"I shall be much beholden to you," shouted the sonorous atom,

She gave him her stool ; curiosity bowed his pride to sit on it ; and Margaret murmured the first part of the letter into his ear very low, not to disturb Eli and Richart. And to do this, she leaned forward and put her lovely face cheek by jowl with Giles's hideous one : a strange contrast, and worth a painter's while to try and represent. And in this attitude Catherine found her, and all the mother warmed towards her.

" Get him home on the instant," roared Giles. " I'll make a man of him."

" Hear the boy ! " said Catherine, half comically, half proudly.

" We hear him," said Richart ; " a mostly make himself heard when a do speak."

Sybrandt. " Which will get to him first ? "

Cornelis (gloomily). " Who can tell ? "

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 ; 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.

" What ho ! " cried the leader, 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, who is somewhat small of stature : why gainsay what gainsayed may not be ? "

"Ay!" cried the man, "that is he, and discourseth like the big taber."

"His breast is sound for that matter," said Catherine sharply.

"'Tis well said, dame. Art as ready with thy weapon as he; art his mother, likely. So bring him forth, and that presently. See, they lead a stunted mule for him. The Duke hath need of him, sore need; 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."

"And think you I'll let my darling go to such an ill-guided house as you, where the reckless trollops of servants close not the well mouth, but leave it open to trap innocents, like wolvern?"

How long the dispute might have lasted. I know not; but it was cut short by a party whom neither disputant had deigned to consult.

The bone of contention walked out of the house, and sided with monarchy.

"If my folk are mad, I am not," he roared. "I'll go with you and on the instant."

At this 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. 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."

"Good sense lies in little bulk," said the emissary approvingly. "Therefore, Master Giles, buss the old folk, and—ho! you—bring hither his mule."

And so the dwarf mounted and rode away.

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.

CHAPTER XVI

ROME AND ROTTERDAM

Gerard took a modest lodging on the west bank of the Tiber, and every day went forth in search of work.

There was none.

Day after day passed and left him heartsick.

And strange to say this was just the time when Margaret was fighting so hard against odds to feed her male dependents at Rotterdam.

Gerard was ruin staring him in the face. One day, after weeks of varied success and privation, 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 at the door.

"Am I not happy, dame?" said he, "I am going back to my sweetheart." And he fell to dancing round her.

"Well," said she, "I trow nothing could make you happier."

"Nothing, except to be there."

"Well, that is a pity, for I thought to make you a little happier with a letter from Holland."

“ A letter ? for me ? where ? how ? who brought it ? Oh, dame ! ”

“ 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 ; and a puts the letter down, and a nods and smiles, and I nods and smiles, and gives him a pint o’ wine, and it went down him like a spoonful.”

“ That is Hans, honest Hans. Oh, dame, I am in luck to-day. Sure some saint helped me ; Anthony belike. But my reward is come.”

“ Ay, is it, lad ; and no farther off than my pocket. Come out, Gerard’s reward,” and she brought a letter out of her capacious pocket.

“ Alas ! it is not from Margaret. This is not her hand.” And he turned it about.

“ Alack ; but may be her bill is within. The lasses are aye for gliding in their bills under cover of another hand.”

“ True. Whose hand is this ? sure I have seen it. 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 sennight 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, for her father was useless, as you shall know.

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. But it is Reicht Heynes I blame for humouring the old woman and letting her do it; as for the old woman herself, she dotes, she has lost her head, she is fourscore. Oh, my heart, I’m choking. For all that she ought to be locked up, or her hands tied. Say this had come to a fool; say I was idiot enough to believe this; know ye what I should do? run to the top of the highest church tower in Rome and fling myself off it, cursing Heaven. 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.”

Some wretched fools try to drown care in drink.

The fumes of intoxication vanish; the inevitable care remains, and must be faced at last—with an aching head, disordered stomach, and spirits artificially depressed.

To survive his terrible blow Gerard needed all his forces; his virtue, his health, his habits of labour, and the calm sleep that is labour’s satellite; above all, his piety.

Yet all these balms to wounded hearts he flung away, and trusted to moral intoxication.

Its brief fumes fled; the bereaved heart lay still heavy as lead within his bosom; but now the dark vulture Remorse sat upon it rending it.

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.

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?

He took his measures with a dogged resolution not uncommon in those who are bent on self-destruction. He filled his pockets with all the silver and copper he possessed, that he might sink the surer; and so provided, hurried to a part of the stream that he had seen was little frequented.

There are some, especially women, who look about to make sure there is somebody at hand.

But this resolute wretch looked about him to make sure there was nobody.

And to his annoyance, he observed a single figure leaning against the corner of an alley. So he affected to stroll carelessly away; but returned to the spot.

Lo! the same figure emerged from a side street and loitered about.

"Can he be watching me? Can he know what I am here for?" thought Gerard. "Impossible."

He went briskly off, walked along a street or two, made a detour and came back.

The man had vanished. But lo ! on Gerard looking all round, to make sure, there he was a few yards behind, apparently fastening his shoe.

Gerard saw he was watched, and at this moment observed in the moonlight a steel gauntlet in his sentinel's hand.

Then he knew it was an assassin.

Strange to say, it never occurred to him that his was the life aimed at. To be sure he was not aware he had an enemy in the world.

He turned and walked up to the bravo. " My good friend," said he eagerly, " sell me thine arm ! a single stroke ! See, here is all I have ; " and he forced his money into the bravo's hands. " Oh, prithee ! prithee ! do one good deed, and rid me of my hateful life ! " and even while speaking he undid his doublet and bared his bosom.

The man stared.

" Why do ye hesitate ? " shrieked Gerard. " Have ye no bowels ? Is it so much pains to lift your arm and fall it ? Is it because I am poor, and can't give ye gold ? Useless wretch, canst only strike a man behind : not look one in the face. There, then, do but turn thy head and hold thy tongue ! "

And with a snarl of contempt he ran from him, and flung himself into the water.

" Margaret ! "

At the heavy plunge of his body in the stream the bravo seemed to recover from a stupor. He ran to the bank, and with a strange cry the assassin plunged in after the self-destroyer.

A woman has her own troubles, as a man has his.

And we made writers seldom do more than indicate the griefs of the other sex. The intelligence of the female reader

must come to our aid, and fill up our cold outlines. So have I indicated, rather than described, what Margaret Brandt went through up to that eventful day, when she entered Eli's house an enemy, read her sweetheart's letter, and remained a friend.

And now a woman's greatest trial drew near, and Gerard far away.

Catherine went to see her everyday, and persuaded Eli to let her stay at Rotterdam.

"The poor lass hath not a soul about her, that knows anything about anything. What avail a pair o' soldiers? Why, that sort o' cattle should be putten out o' doors the first, at such an a time."

Need I say that this was a great comfort to Margaret.

Poor soul, she was full of anxiety as the time drew near.

She should die; and Gerard away.

But things balance themselves. Her poverty, and her father's helplessness, which had cost her such a struggle, stood her in good stead now.

Adversity's iron hand had forced her to battle the lassitude that overpowers the rich of her sex, and to be for ever on her feet, working. She kept this up to the last by Catherine's advice.

And so it was, that one fine evening, just at sunset, she lay weak as water, but safe: with a little face by her side, and the heaven of maternity opening on her.

"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 do but bethink thee it might have been a girl."

" Ay, mother, I am but a sorry, ungrateful wretch to weep. If only Gerard were here to see it. 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 ; for she could not restrain her own tears at hearing her own absent child thus earnestly addressed.

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. But that might be the distance. All voices go off sad like at a distance. 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 ! "

Account for it those who can. I cannot

CHAPTER XVII

BROTHER CLEMENT

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 huge wood fire burned on the hearth, and beside it hung the patient's clothes.

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 knelt 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 deeply pondering.

Saved from death, by an assassin !

Was not this the finger of Heaven ?

Of that Heaven he had insulted, cursed, and defied.

He shuddered at his blasphemies. He tried to pray.

He found he could utter prayers. But he could not pray.

“ I am doomed eternally,” he cried, “ doomed, doomed.”

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. The days of his own boyhood flowed back upon him in those sweet, pious harmonies. No earthly dross there, no foul, fierce passions, rending and corrupting the soul.

Peace, peace ; sweet, balmy peace.

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

The phase, through which this remarkable mind now passed, may be summed in a word—Penitence.

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.

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 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.

Therefore the sagacious men, who watched and directed the interests of the order, were never so anxious to incorporate able and zealous sons and send them forth to win back the world.

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.

" Clement," said he, " has the milk of the world still in his veins, its feelings, its weaknesses ; let not his new-born zeal and his humility tempt us to forego our ancient wisdom. 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 took Clement to many death-beds. And then into noisome dungeons ; places where the darkness was appalling, and the stench loathsome, pestilential ; and men looking like wild beasts lay coiled in rags and filth and despair. It tried his body hard ; but the soul collected all its powers to comfort such poor wretches there as were not past comfort. And Clement shone in that trial. Jerome reported that Clement's spirit was willing, but his flesh was weak.

But there was a greater trial in store.

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. Clement embraced him too, though his flesh quivered with repugnance ; and held the crucifix earnestly before his eyes. The man was garrotted, 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, almost with satisfaction, uttered a piteous cry at each stroke of the axe upon his corpse that could feel nought. Clement too shuddered then, but stood firm, like one of those rocks that vibrate but cannot be thrown down. 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 ; and 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 told them this robber's history, warm from his own lips in the prison, and showed his hearers by that example the gradations of folly and crime, and warned them solemnly not to put foot on the first round of that fatal ladder. And as alternately he thundered against the shedders of blood, and moved the crowd to charity and pity, his tremors left

him, and he felt all strung up like a lute, and 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. Was I ?—Did I ?—Oh, correct me, and aid me with your experience, Brother Jerome.”

“ Humph ! ” said Jerome doubtfully. He added, rather sullenly after long reflection, “ Give the glory to God. Brother Clement ; my opinion is thou art an orator born.”

He repeated the same at headquarters.

“ Worthy Brother Anselm,” said Jerome, “ Clement will do nothing *great*, either for the Church or for our holy order. Yet he is an orator, and hath drunken of the spirit of St. Dominic. Fly him, then, with a string.”

That same day it was announced to Clement that he was to go to England immediately with Brother Jerome.

Clement folded his hands on his breast, and bowed his head in calm submission.

CHAPTER XVIII

LITTLE GERARD.

The months rolled on, and dead sickness of heart overtook Margaret. "Gerard must be dead. She should never see her boy's father again."

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, returning after an absence of some hours, Margaret found him conversing with Catherine in a way he had never done since his paralytic stroke.

Margaret stood silent, looking joyfully from one to the other. Peter smiled on her, and said, "Come, let me bless thee."

She kneeled at his feet, and he blessed her most eloquently. He told her she had been all her life the lovingest, truest, and most obedient daughter Heaven ever sent to a poor old widowed man. "May thy son be to thee what thou hast been to me!"

After this he dozed. Then Catherine said—"All our talk e'en now was of Gerard. Margaret, he is a very understanding man; he thought of many things: 'He may be in prison,' says he, 'or forced to go fighting for some king, or sent to Constantinople to copy books there, or gone into the Church after all.' He had a bent that way."

"Ah, mother," whispered Margaret, in reply, "he doth but deceive himself as we do."

Ere she could finish the sentence, a strange interruption occurred.

A loud voice cried out, "I SEE HIM. I SEE HIM."

And the old man with dilating eyes seemed to be looking right through the wall of the house.

"IN A BOAT; ON A GREAT RIVER; COMING THIS WAY. Sore disfigured; but I knew him. Gone! gone! all dark."

And he sank back, and asked feebly where was Margaret.

"Dear father, I am by thy side. Oh, mother! mother, what is this?"

"I cannot see thee, and but a moment ago I saw all round the world. Ay, ay. Well, I am ready. Is this thy hand? Bless thee, my child bless thee! Weep not! The tree is ripe."

The old physician read the signs aright. These calm words were his last. The next moment he drooped his head, and gently, placidly, drifted away from earth, like an infant sinking to rest. The torch had flashed up before going out.

Margaret could not bear this blow so stoically as the death of the old is apt to be borne. In vain Catherine tried to console her with commonplaces; in vain told her it was a happy release for him; and that, as he himself had said, the tree was ripe. But her worst failure was, when she urged that there were now but two mouths to feed; and one care the less.

"Such cares are all the joys I have," said Margaret. "They fill my desolate heart, which now seems void as well as waste. Oh, empty chair, my bosom it aches to see thee. Poor old man, how could I love him by halves, I that did use to sit and look at him and think, 'But for me thou wouldst die of hunger.' He, so wise, so learned erst, was got to be helpless as my own sweet babe, and I loved him as if he had been my child instead of my father. Oh, empty chair! Oh, empty heart! Well-a-day! well-a-day!"

And the pious tears would not be denied.

Then Catherine held her peace ; and hung her head. And one day she made this confession, " I speak to thee out o' my head, and not out o' my bosom ; thou dost well to be deaf to me. Were I in thy place I should mourn the old man all one as thou dost."

Then Margaret embraced her, and this bit of true sympathy did her a little good. The commonplaces did none.

Margaret then wrote her letter to Gerard, and that letter was one of those simple, touching appeals only her sex can write to those who have used them cruelly, and they love them. She began by telling him of the birth of the little boy, and the comfort he had been to her in all the distress of mind his long and strange silence had caused her. She described the little Gerard minutely. " If you only saw him you could not choose but be proud of him ; all the mothers in the street do envy me ; but I the wives : for thou comest not to us. My own Gerard, some say thou art dead. But if thou wert dead, how could I be alive ? Others say that thou, whom I love so truly, art false. But this will I believe from no lips but thine. My father loved thee well ; and as he lay a-dying he thought he saw thee on a great river, with thy face turned towards thy Margaret, but sore disfigured. It's so, perchance ? Have cruel men scarred thy sweet face ? or hast thou lost one of thy precious limbs ? Why, then thou hast the more need of me, and I shall love thee not worse, alas ! thinkest thou a woman's love is light as a man's ? but better, than I did when I shed those few drops from my arm, not worth the tears thou didst shed for them ; mindest thou ? 'tis not so very long ago, dear Gerard."

The letter continued in this strain, and concluded without a word of reproach or doubt as to his faith and affection. Not that she was free from most distressing doubts ; but they were not certainties ; and to show them might turn the scale, and frighten him away from her with fear of being scolded.

Writing an earnest letter seldom leaves the mind in *statu quo*. Margaret, in hers, vented her energy and her faith in her dying father's vision, or illusion ; and when this was done she wondered at her credulity, and paid the price of false hopes, and elevation of spirits, by falling into deeper despondency. She was found in this state by a staunch friend she had lately made, Joan Ketel. This good woman came in radiant with an idea.

"Margaret, I know the cure for thine ill : the hermit of Gouda, a wondrous holy man. Why, he can tell what is coming, when he is in the mood."

"Ay, I have heard of him," said Margaret hopelessly. Joan with some difficulty persuaded her to walk out as far as Gouda, and consult the hermit. They took some butter and eggs in a basket, and went to his cave.

When they reached the hermit's cave, they placed their present on the little platform. Margaret then applied her mouth to the aperture, made for that purpose, and said : "Holy hermit, I, a poor deserted wife, and mother of the sweetest babe, come to pray thee tell me whether he is quick or dead, true to his vows or false."

A faint voice issued from the cave : "Trouble me not with the things of earth, but send me a holy friar. I am dying"

"Alas !" cried Margaret. "Is it e'en so, poor soul ? Then let us in to help thee."

"Saints forbid ! Thine is a woman's voice. Send me a holy friar."

They went back as they came. Joan could not help saying, "Are women imps o' darkness then, that they must not come anigh a dying bed ?"

But Margaret was too deeply dejected to say anything.

A Catherine is not an unmixed good in a strange house. The governing power is strong in her. She has scarce crossed the threshold ere the utensils seem to brighten ; the hearth to sweep itself ; the windows to let in more light ; and the soul of an enormous cricket to animate the dwelling-place. But this cricket is a Busy Body. And that is a tremendous character. It has no discrimination. It sets everything to rights, and everybody. Now many things are the better for being set to rights. But everything is not. Everything is the one thing that won't stand being set to rights ; except in that calm and cool retreat, the grave.

Catherine altered the position of every chair and table in Margaret's house ; and perhaps for the better.

But she must go farther, and upset the live furniture.

When Margaret's time was close at hand, Catherine treacherously invited the aid of Denys and Martin ; and on the poor, simple-minded fellows asking her earnestly what service they could be, she told them they might make themselves comparatively useful by going for a little walk. So far so good. But she intimated further that should the promenade extend into the middle of next week all the better. This was not ingratiating.

The subsequent conduct of the strong under the yoke of the weak might have propitiated a she-bear with three cubs, one sickly. They generally slipped out of the house at daybreak ; and stole in like thieves at night ; and if by any chance they were at home, they went about like cats on a wall tipped with broken glass, and wearing awe-struck visages, and a general air of subjugation and depression.

But all would not do. Their very presence was ill-timed ; and jarred upon Catherine's nerves.

Did instinct whisper, a pair of depopulators had no business in a house with multipliers twain ?

The breastplate is no armour against a female tongue ; and Catherine ran infinite pins and needles of speech into them. In a word, when Margaret came down-stairs, she found the kitchen swept of heroes.

Martin, old and stiff, had retreated no farther than the street, and with the honours of war : for he had carried off his baggage, a stool ; and sat on it in the air.

Margaret saw he was out in the sun ; but was not aware he was a fixture in that luminary. She asked for Denys. " Good, kind Denys ; he will be right pleased to see me about again."

Catherine, wiping a bowl with now superfluous vigour, told her Denys was gone to his friends in Burgundy. " And high time. Hasn't been anigh them this three years, by all accounts."

" What, gone without bidding me farewell ?" said Margaret, opening two tender eyes like full-blown violets.

Catherine reddened. For this new view of the matter set her conscience pricking her.

But she gave a little toss and said, " Oh, you were asleep at the time : and I would not have you wakened."

" Poor Denys," said Margaret, and the dew gathered visibly on the open violets.

Catherine saw out of the corner of her eye, and without taking a bit of open notice, slipped off and lavished hospitality and tenderness on the surviving depopulator.

It was sudden ; and Martin old and stiff in more ways than one.

" No, thank you, dame. I have got used to out o' doors. And I love not changing and changing. I meddle wi' nobody here ; and nobody meddles wi' me."

"Oh, you nasty, cross old wretch!" screamed Catherine, passing in a moment from treacle to sharpest vinegar. And she flounced back into the house.

On calm reflection she had a little cry. Then she half reconciled herself to her conduct by vowing to be so kind, Margaret should never miss her plagues of soldiers. But feeling still a little uneasy, she dispersed all regrets by a process at once simple and sovereign.

She took and washed the child.

From head to foot she washed him in tepid water; and heroes, and their wrongs, became as dust in an ocean—of soap and water.

While this celestial ceremony proceeded, Margaret could not keep quiet. She hovered round the fortunate performer. She must have an apparent hand in it, if not a real. She put her finger into the water—to pave the way for her boy, I suppose; for she could not have deceived herself so far as to think Catherine would allow her to settle the temperature. During the ablution she kneeled down opposite the little Gerard, and prattled to him with amazing fluency; taking care, however, not to articulate like grown-up people; for, how could a cherub understand *their* ridiculous pronunciation?

"I wish you could wash out *THAT*," said she, fixing her eyes on the little boy's hand.

"What?"

"What, have you not noticed? on his little finger."

Granny looked, and there was a little brown mole.

"Eh, but this is wonderful!" she cried. "Nature, my lass, y'are strong; and meddlesome to boot. Hast noticed such a mark on some one else? Tell the truth, girl!"

"What, on *him*? Nay, mother, not I."

“ Well then he has ; and on the very spot. And you never noticed that much. But, dear heart, I forgot ; you han’t known him from child to man as I have. I have had him hundreds o’ times on my knees, the same as this, and washed him from top to toe in lu-warm water.” And she swelled with conscious superiority ; and Margaret looked meekly up to her as a woman beyond competition.

Catherine looked down from her dizzy height and moralized. She differed from other busy-bodies in this, that she now and then reflected : not deeply ; or of course I should take care not to print it.

“ It is strange,” said she, “ how things come round and about. Life is but a whirligig. Leastways, we poor women, *our* lives are all cut upon one pattern. Wasn’t I for washing out my Gerard’s mole in his young days ? ‘ Oh, fie ! here’s a foul blot,’ quo’ I ; and scrubbed away at it I did till I made the poor wight cry ; so then I thought ’twas time to give over. And now says you to me, ‘ Mother,’ says you, ‘ do try and wash you out o’ my Gerard’s finger,’ says you. Think on’t ! ”

“ Wash it out ? ” cried Margaret ; “ I wouldn’t for all the world. Why, it is the sweetest bit in his little darling body. I’ll kiss it morn and night till he that owned it first comes back to us three. Oh, bless you, my jewel of gold and silver, for being marked like your own daddy, to comfort me.”

And she kissed little Gerard’s little mole ; but she could not stop there : she presently had him sprawling on her lap, and kissed his back all over again and again, and seemed to worry him as wolf a lamb ; Catherine looking on and smiling. She had seen a good many of these savage onslaughts in her day.

And this little sketch indicates the tenor of Margaret’s life for several months. One or two small things occurred to her during that time which must be told ; but I reserve them,

since one string will serve for many glass beads. But while her boy's father was passing through those fearful tempests of the soul, ending in the dead monastic calm, her life might fairly be summed in one great blissful word—Maternity.

You, who know what lies in that word, enlarge my little sketch, and see mother nursing and washing, and dressing and undressing, and crowing and gambolling with her first-born ; then swifter than lightning dart your eye into Italy, and see the cold cloister ; and the monks passing like ghosts, eyes down, hands meekly crossed over bosoms dead to earthly feelings.

One of these cowed ghosts is he, whose return, full of love, and youth, and joy, that radiant young mother awaits.

Some blackguard or other, I think it was Sybrandt, said, " A lie is not like a blow with a curtal axe."

True : for we can predict in some degree the consequences of a stroke with any material weapon. But a lie has no bounds at all. The nature of the thing is to ramify beyond human calculation.

Often in the everyday world a lie has cost a life, or laid waste two or three.

And so, in this story, what tremendous consequences of that one heartless falsehood !

Yet the tellers reaped little from it.

The brothers, who invented it merely to have one claimant the less for their father's property, saw little Gerard take their brother's place in their mother's heart. Nay, more, one day Eli openly proclaimed that, Gerard being lost, and probably dead, he had provided by will for little Gerard, and also for Margaret, his poor son's widow.

At this the look that passed between the black sheep was a caution to traitors. Cornelis had it on his lips to say Gerard

was most likely alive. But he saw his mother looking at him and checked himself in time.

Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, the other partner in that lie, was now a failing man. He saw the period fast approaching when all his wealth would drop from his body, and his misdeeds cling to his soul.

Too intelligent to deceive himself entirely, he had never been free from gusts of remorse. In taking Gerard's letter to Margaret he had compounded. "I cannot give up land and money," said his giant Avarice. "I will cause her no unnecessary pain," said his dwarf Conscience.

So, after first tampering with the seal, and finding there was not a syllable about the deed, he took it to her with his own hand ; and made a merit of it to himself : a set-off ; and on a scale not uncommon where the self-accuser is the judge.

The birth of Margaret's child surprised and shocked him, and put his treacherous act in a new light. Should his letter take effect he should cause the dishonour of her who was the daughter of one friend, grand-daughter of another, and whose land he was keeping from her too.

These thoughts preying on him at that period of life when the strength of body decays, and the memory of old friends revives, filled him with gloomy horrors. Yet he was afraid to confess. For the curé was an honest man, and would have made him disgorge. And with him Avarice was an ingrained habit, Penitence only a sentiment.

Matters were thus when, one day, returning from the town hall to his own house, he found a woman waiting for him in the vestibule, with a child in her arms. She was veiled, and so concluding she had something to be ashamed of, he addressed her magisterially. On this she let down her veil and looked him full in the face.

It was Margaret Brandt.

Her sudden appearance and manner startled him, and he could not conceal his confusion.

"Where is my Gerard?" cried she, her bosom heaving. "Is he alive?"

"For aught I know," stammered Ghysbrecht. "I hope so, for your sake. Prithee come into this room. The servants!"

"Not a step," said Margaret, and she took him by the shoulder, and held him with all the energy of an excited woman. "You know the secret of that which is breaking my heart. Why does not my Gerard come, nor send a line this many months? Answer me or all the town is like to hear me, let alone thy servants. My misery is too great to be sported with."

"Woman, you torture me," sighed Ghysbrecht, and sank upon a bench. But she saw her advantage, and kneeled before him, and put the boy on his knees. "This fatherless babe is poor Margaret Brandt's, that never did you ill, and comes of a race that loved you. Nay, look at his face. 'Twill melt thee more than any word of mine. Saints of heaven, what can a poor desolate girl and her babe have done to wipe out all memory of thine own young days, when thou wert guiltless as he is, that now looks up in thy face and implores thee to give him back his father?"

And with her arms under the child she held him up higher and higher, smiling under the old man's eyes.

He cast a wild look of anguish on the child, and another on the kneeling mother, and started up shrieking, "Avaunt, ye pair of adders."

The stung soul gave the old limbs a momentary vigour, and he walked rapidly, wringing his hands and clutching at his white hair. "Forget those days? I forget all else. Oh,

woman, woman, sleeping or waking I see but the faces of the dead, I hear but the voices of the dead, and I shall soon be among the dead. There, there, what is done is done. I am in hell. I am in hell."

And unnatural force ended in prostration.

He staggered, and but for Margaret would have fallen. With her own disengaged arm she supported him as well as she could, and cried for help.

A couple of servants came running, and carried him away in a state bordering on syncope. The last Margaret saw of him was his old furrowed face, white and helpless as his hair that hung down over the servant's elbow.

"Heaven forgive me," she said. "I doubt I have killed the poor old man."

"Eli," said Catherine. "answer me one question like a man, and I'll ask no more to-day. What is wormwood?"

Eli looked a little helpless at this sudden demand upon his faculties; but soon recovered enough to say it was something that tasted main bitter.

"That is a fair answer, my man, but not the one I look for."

"Then answer it yourself."

"And shall. Wormwood is—to have two in the house a-doing nought, but waiting for thy shoes and mine." Eli groaned. The shaft struck home.

"Methinks waiting for their best friend's coffin, that and nothing to do, are enow to make them worse than Nature meant. 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. “Dost take me for a simpleton? Of course I mean to watch them at starting, and drive them wi’ a loose rein, as the saying is.”

“Where did you think of? Not here; to divide our own custom.”

“Not likely. I say Rotterdam against the world. Then I could start them.”

Oh, self-deception! The true motive of all this was to get near little Gerard.

After many discussions and eager promises of amendment on these terms from Cornelis and Sybrandt, Catherine went to Rotterdam shop-hunting, and took Kate with her; for a change. They soon found one, and, in a good street; but it was sadly out of order. However, they got it cheaper for that, and instantly set about brushing it up, fitting proper shelves for the business, and making the dwelling-house habitable.

CHAPTER XIX

GERARD'S RETURN TO SEVENBERGEN

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. 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.

He passed out of the northern gate with his eyes lowered, and the whole man wrapped in pious contemplation.

Having preached on Sunday morning in a small Italian town, and being mightily carried onward, he was greatly encouraged ; and that day a balmy sense of God's forgiveness and love descended on him. And he prayed for the welfare of Margaret's soul. And from that hour this became his daily habit, and the one purified tie, that by memory connected his heart with earth.

For his family were to him as if they had never been.

The Church would not share with earth. Nor could even the Church cure the great love without annihilating the smaller ones.

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.

One day Clement found two tired wayfarers lying in the deep shade of a great chestnut-tree, one of a thick grove the road skirted. Near the men was a little cart, and in it a

printing press, rude and clumsy as a vine press. A jaded mule was harnessed to the cart.

And so Clement stood face to face with his old enemy.

And as he eyed it, and the honest, blue-eyed faces of the wearied craftsmen, he looked back as on a dream at the bitterness he had once felt towards this machine. He looked kindly down on them, and said softly—

“Sweynheim !”

The men started to their feet.

“Pannartz !”

They scuttled into the wood, and were seen no more.

Clement was amazed, and stood puzzling himself.

Presently a face peeped from behind a tree.

Clement addressed it. “What fear ye ?”

A quavering voice replied—

“Say, rather, by what magic you, a stranger, can call us by our names ! I never clapt eyes on you till now.”

“O, superstition ! I know ye, as all good workmen are known—by your works. Come hither and I will tell ye”

They advanced gingerly from different sides ; each regulating his advance by the other’s.

“My children,” said Clement, “I saw a Lactantius in Rome, printed by Sweynheim and Pannartz, disciples of Fust.”

“D’ye hear that. Pannartz ? our work has gotten to Rome already.”

“By your blue eyes and flaxen hair I wist ye were Germans ; and the printing-press spoke for itself. Who then should ye be but Fust’s disciples, Pannartz and Sweynheim ?”

The honest Germans were now astonished that they had suspected magic in so simple a matter.

"The good father hath his wits about him, that is all," said Pannartz.

"Ay," said Sweynheim, "and with those wits would he could tell us how to get this tired best to the next town."

"Yea," said Sweynheim, "and where to find money to pay for his meat and ours when we get there."

"I will try," said Clement. "Free the mule of the cart, and of all harness but the bare halter."

This was done, and the animal immediately lay down and rolled on his back in the dust like a kitten. Whilst he was thus employed, Clement assured them he would rise up a new mule. "His Creator hath taught him this art to refresh himself, which the nobler knoweth not."

Clement was then for bidding them farewell, but the honest fellows implored him to wait a little; they had no silver nor gold, but they had something they could give their benefactor. They took the press out of the cart, and while Clement fed the mule, they bustled about, now on the white hot road, now in the deep cool shade, now half in and half out, and presently printed a quarto sheet of eight pages, which was already set up. They had not type enough to print two sheets at a time. When, after the slower preliminaries, the printed sheet was pulled all in a moment, Clement was amazed in turn.

"What, are all these words really fast upon the paper?" said he. "Is it verily certain they will not go as swiftly as they came? And *you took me* for a magician! 'Tis 'Augustine de civitate Dei.' My sons, you carry here the very wings of knowledge. Oh, never abuse this great craft! Print no ill books! They would fly abroad countless as locusts, and lay waste men's souls."

The workmen said they would sooner put their hands under the screw than so abuse their goodly craft.

And so they parted.

Clement, in due course, reached Basle, and entered on his duties, teaching in the University, and preaching in the town and neighbourhood. He led a life that can be comprised in two words ; deep study, and mortification. My reader has already a peep into his soul. At Basle he advanced in holy zeal and knowledge.

The brethren of his order began to see in him a descendant of the saints and martyrs.

Brother 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 meet again at some appointed spot. Both were able orators, but in different styles.

Jerome's was noble and impressive, but a trifle monotonous in delivery compared with Clement's.

As they went on, he found to his surprise that Clement's sermons sank into his hearers deeper than his own ; made them listen, think, cry, and sometimes even amend their ways. “ He hath the art of sinking to their peg,” thought Jerome. “ Yet he can soar high enough at times.”

Upon the whole it puzzled Jerome, who had a secret sense of superiority to his tenderer brother. And after about two hundred miles of it, it got to displease him as well as puzzle him. But he tried to check this sentiment as petty and unworthy. "Souls differ like locks," said he, "and preachers must differ like keys, or the fewer should the Church open for God to pass in. And certes, this novice hath the key to these northern souls, being himself a northern man."

And so they came slowly down the Rhine, sometimes drifting a few miles on the stream ; but in general walking by the banks preaching, and teaching, and confessing sinners in the towns and villages ; and they reached the town of Düsseldorf.

There was the little quay where Gerard and Denys had taken boat up the Rhine. The friars landed on it. There were the streets. Nothing had changed but he, who walked through it barefoot, with his heart calm and cold, his hands across his breast, and his eyes bent meekly on the ground, a true son of Dominic and Holy Church.

The two friars reached Holland from the south.

Jerome, unable to preach in low Dutch, now began to push on, anxious to get to England as soon as possible.

About twenty miles from the coast Clement landed to preach in a large village ; having agreed that Jerome should go forward, and secure their passage in the next ship for England. 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 tender. And remember, Solitude, Fasting, and Prayer are the sword, spear, and shield of the soul. Farewell."

Clement was deeply shocked and mortified at this contemptuous desertion, and this cold-blooded missive.

He promised the good monks to sleep at the convent, and to preach wherever the prior should appoint (for Jerome had raised him to the skies as a preacher), and then withdrew abruptly, for he was cut to the quick, and wanted to be alone. He asked himself, was there some incurable fault in him, repulsive to so true a son of Dominic? Or was Jerome himself devoid of that Christian Love which St. Paul had placed above Faith itself? For four hundred miles his fellow-traveller in Christ; and to be shaken off like dirt, the first opportunity, with harsh and cold disdain. "The only one that ever really loved me lies in a grave hard by. Fly me, fly to England, man born without a heart; 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, and went to the churchyard.

He sought among the tombstones for Margaret's. He could not find it. He could not believe they had grudged her a tombstone, so searched the churchyard all over again.

"Oh, poverty! stern poverty! Poor soul, thou wert like me; no one was left that loved thee, when Gerard was gone."

He went into the church, and prayed long and earnestly for the soul of her whose resting-place he could not find.

Coming out of the church he saw a very old man looking over the little churchyard gate. He went towards him, and asked him did he live in the place.

"Four score and twelve years, man and boy. And I come here every day of late, holy father, to take a peep. This is where I look to bide ere long."

"My son, can you tell me where Margaret lies?"

"Margaret? There's a many Margarets here."

"Margaret Brandt. She was daughter to a learned physician"

"As if I didn't know that," said the old man pettishly. "But she doesn't lie here. Bless you, they left this a longful while ago. Gone in a moment, and the house empty. What, is she dead? Margaret a Peter dead? Now only think on't. Like enow; like enow. They great towns do terribly disagree wi' country folk."

"What great towns, my son?"

"Well, 'twas Rotterdam they went to from here, so I heard tell; or was it Amsterdam? Nay, I trow 'twas Rotterdam? And gone there to die!"

Clement sighed.

“ ’Twas not in her face now, that I said. And I can mostly tell. Alack, there was a blooming young flower to be cut off so soon, and an old weed like me left standing still. Well, well, she was a May rose you ; dear heart, what a winsome smile she had, and——”

“ God bless thee, my son,” said Clement ; “ farewell ! ” and hurried away.

He reached the convent at sunset, and watched and prayed in the chapel for Jerome and Margaret till it was long past midnight, and his soul had recovered its cold calm.

CHAPTER XX

RECOGNITION

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; also their sign, a white lamb sucking a gilt sheep. Eli had come, and brought them some more goods from his store to give them a good start. The hearts of the parents glowed at what they were doing, and the pair themselves walked in the garden together, and agreed they were sick of their old life, and it was more pleasant to make money than waste it; they vowed to stick to business like wax. The family supper was to include Margaret and her boy, and be a kind of inaugural feast, at which good trade advice was to flow from the elders, and good wine to be drunk to the success of the converts. So Margaret had come over to help her mother-in-law, and also to shake off her own deep languor; and both their faces were as red as the fire. Presently in came Joan. "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."

"Indeed," said Margaret, "methinks I should not be such a damper at table if I could come to 't warm from a good sermon."

"Then you must be brisk," observed Joan. "See the folk are wending that way, and as I live, there goes the holy friar. Oh, bless us and save us, Margaret; the hermit! We forgot." And this active woman bounded out of the house, and ran across the road, and stopped the friar. She returned as quickly. "There, I was bent on seeing him nigh hand."

"What said he to thee?"

Says he, 'My daughter, I will go to him ere sunset. God willing.' The sweetest voice! But oh, my mistresses, what thin cheeks for a young man, and great eyes, not far from your colour, Margaret."

"I have a great mind to go hear him," said Margaret. "But my cap is not very clean, and they will all be there in their snow-white mutches."

"There, take my handkerchief out of the basket," said Catherine; "you cannot have the child, I want him for my poor Kate. It is one of her ill days."

Margaret replied by taking the boy upstairs. She found Kate in bed.

"How art thou, sweetheart? Nay, I need not ask. Thou art in sore pain; thou smilest so. See, I have brought thee one thou lovest."

"Two, by my way of counting," said Kate with an angelic smile

"What, in your lap?" said Margaret, answering a gesture of the suffering girl. "Nay, he is too heavy, and thou in such pain."

"I love him too dear to feel his weight," was the reply.

Margaret took this opportunity, and made her toilet. "I am for the kerk," said she, "to hear a beautiful preacher." Kate sighed. "And a minute ago, Kate, I was all agog to go; that is the way with me this month past; up and down,

like the waves of the Zuyder Zee. I'd as lieve stay aside thee ; say the word ! ”

“ Nay,” said Kate, “ prithee go ; and bring me back every word. Well-a-day that I cannot go myself.” And the tears stood in the patient’s eyes. This decided Margaret, and she kissed Kate, looked under her lashes at the boy, and heaved a little sigh.

“ I trow I must not,” said she. “ I never could kiss him a little ; and my father was dead against waking a child by day or night. When ’tis thy pleasure to wake, speak thy aunt Kate the two new words thou hast gotten.” And she went out, looking lovingly over her shoulder, and shut the door inaudibly.

The sermon had begun when Margaret entered the great church of St. Laurens. It was a huge edifice, far from completed. 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 ; the rest were at present great jagged openings in the outer walls.

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 pranks upon so many broken surfaces.

It streamed through the gaping walls, and clove the dark cool side aisles with rivers of glory, and dazzled and glowed on the white pillars beyond.

And nearly the whole central aisle was chequered with light and shade in broken outlines ; the shades seeming cooler and more soothing than ever shade was, and the lights like patches of amber diamond animated with heavenly fire. 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.

For the mid aisle, huge as it was, was crammed, yet quite still. The words and the mellow, gentle, earnest voice of the preacher held them mute.

Margaret stood spellbound at the beauty, the devotion, "the great calm." She got behind a pillar in the north aisle; and there, though she could hardly catch a word, a sweet devotional languor crept over her at the loveliness of the place and the preacher's musical voice; and balmy oil seemed to trickle over the waves in her heart and smooth them. So she leaned against the pillar with eyes half closed, and all seemed soft and dreamy. She felt it good to be there.

Presently she saw a lady leave an excellent place opposite to get out of the sun, which was indeed pouring on her head from the window. Margaret went round softly but swiftly; and was fortunate enough to get the place. She was 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. She sighed. That tonsure, being all she saw, contradicted the tone effectually.

Yet she now leaned a little forward with downcast eyes, hoping for that accent again. It did not come. But 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. She would not look to dispel the melancholy pleasure this voice gave her.

Presently, in the middle of an eloquent period, the preacher stopped.

She almost sighed ; a soothing music had ended. Could the sermon be ended already ? No ; she looked round ; the people did not move.

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 string corpse. The friar's eyes, naturally large, and made larger by the thinness of his cheeks, 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 went on again. She heard the sound of it ; but not the

sense. She tried to think, but her mind was in a whirl. Thought would fix itself in no shape but this : that on that prodigy-stricken face she had seen a look stamped. And the recollection of that look now made her quiver from head to foot.

For that look was " RECOGNITION."

The sermon, after wavering some time, ended in a strain of exalted, nay, feverish eloquence, that went far to make the crowd forget the preacher's strange pause and ghastly glare.

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. Poor as she was, she had given him a slab and a headstone. She sat down on the slab, and kissed it. Then threw her apron over her head that no one might distinguish her by her hair.

" Father," she said, " thou hast often heard me say I am wading in deep waters ; but now I begin to think God only knows the bottom of them. I'll follow that friar round the world, but I'll see him at arm's length. And he shall tell me why he looked towards me like a dead man wakened ; and not a soul behind me. Oh, father ; you often praised me here ; speak a word for me *there*. For I am wading in deep waters."

Her father's tomb commanded a side view of the church door.

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 ; and more, it carried his mind direct to the Creator of all good and pure delights. Then his eye fell

on the great aisle crammed with his country folk ; a thousand snowy caps, filigreed with gold. Many a hundred leagues he had travelled ; but seen nothing like them, except snow. In the morning he had thundered ; but this sweet afternoon seemed out of tune with threats. His bowels yearned over that multitude ; and he must tell them of God's love : poor souls, they heard almost as little of it from the pulpit then a days as the heathen used. He told them the glad tidings of salvation. The people hung upon his gentle, earnest tongue.

He was not one of those preachers who keep gyrating in the pulpit like the weathercock on the steeple. He moved the hearts of others more than his own body. But on the other hand he did not entirely neglect those who were in bad places. And presently, warm with this theme, that none of all that multitude might miss the joyful tidings of Christ's love, 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.

There, with her auburn hair bathed in sunbeams, and glittering like the gloriola of a saint, and her face glowing doubly, with its own beauty, and the sunshine it was set in—stood his dead love.

She was leaning very lightly against a white column. She was listening with tender, downcast lashes.

He had seen her listen so to him a hundred times.

There was no change in *her*. This was the blooming Margaret he had left : only a shade riper and more lovely.

He stared at her with monstrous eyes and bloodless cheeks.

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.

Her own violet eyes ! !

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, but not without one more glance, which, though rapid as lightning, encountered his, and left her couching and quivering with her mind in a whirl, and him panting and gripping the pulpit convulsively. For this glance of hers, though not recognition, was the startled inquiring, nameless, indescribable look that precedes recognition. He made a mighty effort, and muttered something nobody could understand : then feebly resumed his discourse : and stammered and babbled on a while, till by degrees forcing himself, now she was out of sight, to look on it as a vision from the other world, he rose into a state of unnatural excitement, and concluded in a style of eloquence that electrified the simple ; for it bordered on rhapsody.

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. He had sought her grave at Sevenbergen in vain. 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.

This idea once adopted soon settled on his mind with all the certainty of a fact. And he felt he had only to speak to the sexton to learn the spot where she was laid.

The Church was now quite empty. He came down from the pulpit and stepped through an aperture in the south wall on to the grass, and found the sexton.

"My son," said Friar Clement softly, "if you keep any memory of those whom you lay in the earth, prithee tell me where lieth Margaret Brandt."

"Margaret Brandt?" And the sexton, who was Jorian Ketel, Joan's husband, stared stupidly at the speaker.

"She died about three years ago, and was buried here"

"Oh, that is another matter," said Jorian; "that was before my time; the vicar could tell you, likely; if so be she was a gentlewoman, or at the least rich enough to pay him his fee."

"Alas, my son, she was poor (and paid a heavy penalty for it); but born of decent folk. Her father, Peter, was a learned physician; she came hither from Sevenbergen—to die."

When Clement had uttered these words his head sunk upon his breast. He was lost in the past.

Jorian put down his spade, 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, with a certain vigour that showed his somewhat irritable temper was ruffled.

Clement gazed at him with a puzzled but gently reproachful eye, for the tone was rude, and the words unintelligible.

Good-natured, though crusty, Jorian had not thrown up three spadefuls ere he became ashamed of it himself. "Why, what a base churl am I to speak thus to thee, holy father; and

thou a-standing there, looking at me like a lamb. Aha ! I have it ; 'tis Peter Brandt's grave you would fain see, not Margaret's. He does lie here ; hard by the west door. There ; I'll show you." And he laid down his spade, and put on his doublet and jerkin to go with the friar.

He did not know there was anybody sitting on Peter's tomb. Still less that she was watching for this holy friar.

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. And they do say he gave 'em a touch of his trade at parting ; told 'em he saw Margaret's lad a-coming down Rhine in brave clothes and store o' money, but his face scarred by foreign glaive, and not altogether so many arms and legs as a went away wi'. But, dear heart, nought came on't. Margaret is still wearying for her lad ; and Peter, he lies as quiet as his neighbours ; not but what she hath put a stone slab over him, to keep him where he is : as you shall see."

He put both hands on the edge of the grave, and was about to raise himself out of it, but the friar laid a trembling hand on his shoulder, and said in a strange whisper—

" How long since died Peter Brandt ? "

" About two months. Why ? "

" And his daughter buried him, say you ? "

" Nay, I buried him, but she paid the fee and reared the stone. Why ? "

" Then—but he had but one daughter ; Margaret ? "

" No more ; leastways, that he owned to."

" Then you think Margaret is—is alive ? "

"Think? Why, I know. Why, how now, father, you look wondrous pale, and now you are red, and now you are white? Why, what is the matter? 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, so well her death nigh killed him, body and soul. And yet thou sayest she lives. And I believe thee."

Jorian stared, and after a considerable silence said very gravely, "Father, you have asked me many questions, and I have answered them truly; now for our Lady's sake answer me but two. Did you in very sooth know one who loved this poor lass? Where?"

"I knew him in Italy," said he.

"If you knew him you can tell me his name," said Jorian cautiously.

"His name was Gerard Eliassoen."

"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. Ay, sit ye down; ye do look like a ghost; ye fast overmuch to be strong. My mind misgives 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 as I do this mould;" and he clenched his teeth and raised his long spade above his head, and brought it furiously down upon the

heap several times. "Foul 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. Mine is but a dull head, but whiles the slow hound puzzles out the scent—go to. And I do think you and I ha' got hold of two ends o' one stick, and a main foul one."

Jorian then, after some of those useless preliminaries men of his class always deal in, came to the point of the story. He had been employed by the burgomaster of Tergou to repair the floor of an upper room in his house, and when it was almost done, coming suddenly to fetch away his tools, curiosity had been excited by some loud words below, and he had lain down on his stomach, and heard the burgomaster talking about a letter which Cornelis and Sybrandt were minded to convey into the place of one that a Hans Memling was taking to Gerard; "and it seems their will was good, but their stomach was small: so to give them courage the old man showed them a drawer full of silver, and if they did the trick they should each put a hand in, and have all the silver they could hold in't. Well, father, I thought not much on't at the time, except for the bargain itself, *that* kept me awake mostly all night. Think on't! Next morning at peep of day who should I see but my masters Cornelis and Sybrandt come out of their house each with a black eye. 'Oho,' says I, 'what yon Hans hath put his mark on ye; well now I hope that is all you have got for your pains.' Didn't they make for the burgomaster's house? I to my hiding-place."

At this part of Jorian's revelation the monk's nostril dilated, and his restless eye showed the suspense he was in.

"Well, father," continued Jorian, "the burgomaster brought them into that same room. He had a letter in his hand; but I am no scholar; however, I have got as many eyes in my head as the Pope hath, and I saw the drawer opened, and those two knaves put in each a hand and draw it out full.

There, father, that is off my mind ; often longed to tell it some one, but I durst not to the women ; or Margaret would not have had a friend left in the world ; for those two black-hearted villains are the favourites. 'Tis always so. 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 : a brace of wolves sucking their dam would be nigher the mark. And there the whole family feast this day ; oh, 'tis a fine world. What, not a word, holy father ; you sit there like stone, and have not even a curse to bestow on them, the stony-hearted miscreants. What, was it not enough the poor lad was all alone in a strange land ; must his own flesh and blood go and lie away the one blessing his enemies had left him ? And then think of her pining and pining all these years and sitting at the window looking adown the street for Gerard ! and so constant, so tender, and true : my wife says she is sure no woman ever loved a man truer than she loves the lad those villains have parted from her ; and the day never passes but she weeps salt tears for him. And when I think that, but for those two greedy lying knaves, you winsome lad might be by her side this day the happiest he in Holland ; and the sweet lass might be sitting with her cheek upon her sweetheart's shoulder, the happiest she in Holland in place of the saddest ; oh, I thirst for their blood, the nasty, sneaking, lying, cogging, cowardly, heartless, bowelless—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. So terrible was this inarticulate burst of fury, that Jorian's puny ire died out at sight of it, and he stood looking dismayed after the human tempest he had launched.

While thus absorbed he felt his arm grasped by a small, tremulous hand.

It was Margaret Brandt.

He started ; her coming there just then seemed so strange.

She had waited long on Peter's tombstone, but the friar did not come. So she went into the church to see if he was there still. She could not find him.

Presently, going up the south aisle, the gigantic shadow of a friar came rapidly along the floor and part of a pillar, and seemed to pass through her. She was near screaming ; but in a moment tried to clamber out into the churchyard. She did so, but with some difficulty ; and by that time Clement was just disappearing down the street ; yet, so expressive at times is the body as well as the face, she could see he was greatly agitated. Jorian and she looked at one another, and at the wild figure of the distant friar.

" Well ? " said she to Jorian, trembling.

" Well," said he, " you startled me. How come you here of all people ? "

" Is this a time for idle chat ? What said he to you ? He has been speaking to you ; deny it not."

" Girl, as I stand here, he asked me whereabouts you were buried in this churchyard."

" Ah ! "

" I told him, nowhere, thank Heaven : you were alive."

" Well ? "

" 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 poor lad's heart. Let me see ; who was the letter written by ? Oh, by the demoiselle Van Eyck. That was *his* way of it. But I up and told him nay ; 'twas neither demoiselle nor dame that penned you lie, but Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, and those foul knaves, Cornelis and Sybrandt : these changed the true letter for one of their own ; I told him as how I saw

the whole villainy done through a chink ; and now, if I have not been and told you ! ”

“ Oh, cruel ! cruel ! But he lives. The fear of fears is gone. Thank God ! ”

“ Ah, lass ; and as for thine enemies, I have given them a dig. For yon friar is friendly to Gerard, and he is gone to Eli's house, methinks. For I told him where to find Gerard's enemies and thine, and vow but he will give them their lesson. If ever a man was mad with rage, it's yon. He turned black and white, and parted like a stone from a sling. Girl, there was thunder in his eye and silence on his lips. Made me cold a did.”

“ Oh, Jorian, what have you done ? ” cried Margaret.

“ Quick ! quick ! help me thither, for the power is gone all out of my body. You know him not as I do. Oh, if you had seen the blow he gave Ghysbrecht ; and heard the frightful crash ! Come, save him from worse mischief. The water is deep enow ; but not bloody yet ! come ! ”

Her accents were so full of agony that Jorian sprang out of the grave he was digging and came with her, huddling on his jerkin as he went.

But as they hurried along, he asked her what on earth she meant ? “ I talk of this friar, and you answer me of Gerard ”

“ Man, see you not, *this* is Gerard ! ”

“ This, Gerard ? what mean ye ? ”

“ I mean, yon friar is my boy's father. I have waited for him long, Jorian. Well, he is come to me at last. And thank God for it. Oh my poor child ! Quicker, Jorian, quicker ! ”

They hurried along in breathless silence, till they reached Hoog Straet.

Then Jorian tried to reassure her. "You are making your own trouble," said he ; "who says he has gone thither ? more likely to the convent to weep and pray, poor soul. Oh, cursed, cursed villains !"

"Did not you tell him where those villains bide ?"

"Ay, that I did."

"Then quicker, oh, Jorian, quicker. I see the house. Thank God and all the saints, I shall be in time to calm him. I know what I'll say to him ; Heaven forgive me ! Poor Catherine ; 'tis of her I think : she has been a mother to me."

Margaret and Jorian were now within twenty yards of the shop, when they heard a roar inside, like as of some wild animal, and the friar burst out, white and raging, and went tearing down the street.

Margaret screamed, and sank fainting on Jorian's arm.

Jorian shouted after him, "Stay, madman, know thy friends."

But he was deaf, and went headlong, shaking his clenched fists high, high in the air.

"Help me in, good Jorian," moaned Margaret, turning suddenly calm. "Let me know the worst ; and die."

He supported her trembling limbs into the house.

It seemed unnaturally still ; not a sound.

Jorian's own heart beat fast.

A door was before him unlatched. He pushed it softly with his left hand, and Margaret and he stood on the threshold.

What they saw there you shall soon know.

CHAPTER XXI

RETRIBUTION

It was supper-time. Eli's family were collected round the board ; Margaret only was missing. To Catherine's surprise, Eli said he would wait a bit for her.

"Why, I told her you would not wait for the duke "

"She is not the duke: she is a poor, good lass, that hath waited not minutes, but years, for a graceless son of mine. You can put the meat on the board all the same; then we can fall to, without farther loss o' time, when she does come "

The smoking dishes smelt so savoury that Eli gave way. "She will come if we begin," said he; "they always do. Come, sit ye down. Mistress Joan; y'are not here for a slave, I trow, but a guest. There, I hear a quick step—off covers, and fall to."

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, like eagles over a quarry, he cursed them by name, soul and body, in this world and the next. It was an age eloquent in curses; and this curse was so full, so minute, so blighting, blasting, withering, and tremendous, that I am afraid to put all the words on paper. "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, to part true love for ever : may they sicken and wither on earth joyless, loveless, hopeless ; and wither to dust before their time ; and burn in eternal fire." He cursed the meat at their mouths and every atom of their bodies, from their hair to the soles of their feet. Then turning from the cowering, shuddering pair, who had almost hid themselves beneath the table, 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, read, and see what monsters thou hast brought into the world The memory of my wrongs and hers dwell with you all for ever ! I will meet you again at the judgment day ; on earth ye will never see me more."

And in a moment, as he had come, so he was gone, leaving them stiff, and cold, and white as statues round the smoking board.

Upon the floor of the convent church, with his lips upon the lowest step of the altar, Clement lay in an indescribable state of terror, misery, penitence, and self-abasement : through all which struggled gleams of joy that Margaret was alive.

Night fell and found him lying there weeping and praying ; and morning would have found him there too ; but he suddenly remembered that, absorbed in his own wrongs and Margaret's, he had committed another sin besides intemperate rage. He had neglected a dying man.

He rose instantly, groaning at his accumulated wickedness, and set out to repair the omission. The weather had changed ; it was raining hard, and when he got clear of the town, he heard the wolves baying ; they were on the foot. But Clement was himself again, or nearly ; he thought little of danger

or discomfort, having a shameful omission of religious duty to repair : he went stoutly forward through rain and darkness.

And as he went, he often beat his breast, and cried, " MEA CULPA ! MEA CULPA ! "

After spending the night with the dying hermit in giving and receiving holy consolations, he set out not for Rotterdam, but for Tergou. He went there to confront his fatal enemy the burgomaster, and by means of that parchment, whose history, by the-by, was itself a romance, 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 shrieve her dying master. He returned the bread to his wallet, and followed her without a word.

She took him—to the Stadthouse.

He drew back with a little shudder when he saw her go in.

But he almost instantly recovered himself, and followed her into the house, and up the stairs. 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. Bethink thee, therefore, wherein thou hast most offended God and the Church, while I offer up a prayer for wisdom to direct thee."

Clement then kneeled and prayed; and when he rose from his knees, he said to Ghysbrecht, with apparent calmness, "My son, confess thy sins."

"Ah, father," said the sick man, "they are many and great."

"Great, then, be thy penitence, my son: so shalt thou find God's mercy great."

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. Hast thou forgotten Floris Brandt?"

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, "and by many ways that are dark to thee. Miserable impenitent, you called her to your side, hoping to deceive her. You said, 'I will not confess to the curé, 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"

"No ; I will leave it her by will. She will not have long to wait for it now : not above a month or two at farthest."

"For which month's possession thou wouldst damn thy soul for ever. Thou fool !"

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.

It was the day after that terrible scene ; the little house in the Hoog Straet was like a grave.

A shuffling of feet was heard at the door and a colourless, feeble old man was assisted into the room. It was Ghysbrecht Van Swieten. At sight of him Catherine shrieked, and threw her apron over her head, and Margaret shuddered violently, and turned her head swiftly away, not to see him.

A feeble voice issued from the strange visitor's lips, " Good people, a dying man hath come to ask your forgiveness."

" Come to look on your work, you mean," said Catherine, taking down her apron and bursting out sobbing. " There, there, she is fainting ; look to her, Eli, quick."

" Nay," said Margaret, in a feeble voice, " the sight of him gave me a turn, that is all. Prithee, let him say his say, and go ; for he is the murtherer of me and mine."

" Alas," said Ghysbrecht, " I am too feeble to say it standing, and no one biddeth me sit down "

Eli, who had followed him into the house, interfered here, and said, half suddenly, half apologetically, " Well, burgo-master, 'tis not our wont to leave a visitor standing whiles we sit. But man, man, you have wrought us too much ill." And the honest fellow's voice began to shake with anger he fought hard to contain, because it was his own house.

Then Ghysbrecht found an advocate in one who seldom spoke in vain in that family.

It was little Kate. " Father, mother," said she, " my duty to you, but this is not well. Death squares all accounts. And see you not death in his face ? I shall not live long, good friends ; and his time is shorter than mine."

Eli made haste and set a chair for their dying enemy with his own hands. Ghysbrecht's attendants put him into it. "Go fetch the boxes," said he. They brought in two boxes, and then retired, leaving their master alone in the family he had so cruelly injured.

Every eye was now bent on him, except Margaret's. He undid the boxes with unsteady fingers, and brought out of one the title-deeds of a property at Tergou. "This land and these houses belonged to Floris Brandt, and do belong to thee of right, his granddaughter. These I did usurp for a debt long since defrayed with interest. These I now restore their rightful owner with penitent tears. In this other box are three hundred and forty golden angels, being the rent and fines I have received from that land more than Floris Brandt's debt to me. I have kept compt, still meaning to be just one day; but Avarice withheld me. Pray, good people, against temptation! I was not born dishonest: yet you see."

"Well to be sure!" cried Catherine. "And you the burgomaster! Hast whipt good store of thieves in thy day. However," said she, on second thoughts, "'tis better late than never. What, Margaret, art deaf? The good man hath brought thee back thine own. Art a rich woman. Alack, what a mountain o' gold!"

"Bid him keep land and gold, and give me back my Gerard, that he stole from me with his treason," said Margaret, with her head still averted.

"Alas!" said Ghysbrecht, "would I could. What I can I have done. Is it nought? It cost me a sore struggle; and I rose from my last bed to do it myself, lest some mischance should come between her and her rights."

"Old man," said Margaret, "since thou, whose idol is pelf, hast done this, God and the saints will, as I hope, forgive thee. As for me, I am neither saint nor angel, but only a

poor woman, whose heart thou hast broken. Speak to him, Kate, for I am like the dead."

Kate meditated a little while ; and then her soft silvery voice fell like a soothing melody upon the air. " My poor sister hath a sorrow that riches cannot heal. Give her time. Ghysbrecht ; 'tis not in nature she should forgive thee all. Her boy is fatherless, and she is neither maid, wife, nor widow ; and the blow fell but two days syne, that laid her heart a bleeding."

A single heavy sob from Margaret was the comment to these words.

" Therefore, give her time ! And ere thou diest, she will forgive thee all. ay, even to pleasure me. that haply shall not be long behind thee, Ghysbrecht. Meantime, we, whose wounds be sore, but not so deep as hers, do pardon thee, a penitent and a dying man ; and I, for one, will pray for thee from this hour : go in peace ! "

Their little oracle had spoken ; it was enough. Eli even invited him to break a manchet and drink a stoup of wine to give him heart from his journey.

But Ghysbrecht declined, and said what he had done was a cordial to him. " Man seeth but a little way before him, neighbour. This land I clung so to it was a bed of nettles to me all the time. 'Tis gone ; and I feel happier and livelier like for the loss on't."

He called his men, and they lifted him into the litter.

When he was gone Catherine gloated over the money. She had never seen so much together, and was almost angry with Margaret, for "sitting out there like an image." And she dilated on the advantages of money.

And she teased Margaret till at last she prevailed on her to come and look at it.

"Better let her be, mother," said Kate. "How can she relish gold, with a heart in her bosom like lead?" But Catherine persisted.

The result was, Margaret looked down at all her wealth with wondering eyes. Then suddenly wrung her hands and cried with piercing anguish, "TOO LATE! TOO LATE!" And shook off her leaden despondency, only to go into strong hysterics over the wealth that came too late to be shared with him she loved.

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.

Too late! Too late!

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, to her dear daughter Margaret Brandt, requesting her to keep Reicht as long as unmarried.

Too late! Too late!

CHAPTER XXII

THE HERMIT OF GOUDA

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."

But when day after day went by, and he was not heard of, a freezing suspicion began to crawl and creep towards her mind. What if his absence was intentional ? What if he had gone to some cold-blooded monks his fellows, and they had told him never to see her more ? The convent had ere this shown itself as merciless to true lovers as the grave itself.

At this thought the very life seemed to die out of her.

And now for the first time deep indignation mingled at times with her grief and apprehension. "Can he have ever loved me ? To run from me and his boy without a word !"

While her mind was in this state, Giles came roaring. "I've hit the clout : our Gerard is Vicar of Gouda."

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 dicta, as is my wont, but dull as lead.

" ' Why, what aileth thee ? ' quo' she. ' Art sick ? '

And I said, ‘ Madam, one evening, a matter of five years ago, as ye sat with your mother, the Countess of Charolois, who is now in heaven, worse luck, you wi’ your lute, and she wi’ her tapestry, or the like, do ye mind there came into ye a fair youth—with a letter from a painter body, one Margaret Van Eyck ? ’ ”

“ She said she thought she did. ‘ Was it not a tall youth, exceeding comely ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Ay, madam,’ said I ; ‘ he was my brother.’ ”

“ ‘ Your brother ? ’ said she, and did eye me like all over. (What dost smile at ?) ”

‘ So I told her all that passed between her and Gerard, and how she was for giving him a bishopric ; but the good countess said, ‘ Gently, Marie ! he is too young ; ’ and with that they did both promise him a living : ‘ Yet,’ said I, ‘ he hath been a priest a long while, and no living. Hence my bile.’ ”

“ ‘ Alas ! ’ said she, ‘ ’tis not by my good will ; for all this thou hast said is sooth, and more. I do remember my dear mother said to me, “ See thou to it if I be not here.” ’ ” So then she cried out, ‘ Ay, dear mother, no word of thine shall ever fall to the ground.’ ”

“ I, seeing her so ripe, said quickly, ‘ Madam, the vicar of Gouda died last week.’ (For when ye seek favours of the great, behoves ye know the very thing ye aim at.) ”

“ ‘ Then thy brother is vicar of Gouda,’ quo’ she, ‘ so sure as I am heiress of Burgundy and the Netherlands. Nay, thank me not, good Giles,’ quo’ she, ‘ but my good mother. And I do thank thee for giving of me somewhat to do for her memory.’ And doesn’t she fall a weeping for her mother ? And doesn’t that set me off a snivelling for my good brother that I love so dear, and to think that a poor little elf like me could yet speak in the ear of princes, and make my beautiful brother

vicar of Gouda ; eh, lass, it is a bonny place, and a bonny manse, and hawthorn in every bush at spring-tide. and dog-roses and eglantine in every summer hedge. I know what the poor fool affects, leave that to me."

The dwarf began his narrative strutting to and fro before Margaret, but he ended it in her arms : for she could not contain herself, but caught him, and embraced him warmly. " Oh, Giles," she said, blushing, and kissing him. " I cannot keep my hands off thee, thy body it is so little, and thy heart so great. Thou art his true friend. Bless thee ! bless thee ! bless thee ! Now we shall see him again."

She was now animated with fresh hopes, and accused herself of ingratitude to Gerard. " I value my wealth now," said she.

She also made a resolution never to blame his conduct till she should hear from his own lips his reason.

Not long after a fresh disaster befell Catherine, I must premise, had secret interviews with the black sheep, whom Eli had expelled from the house ; and Cornelis followed her to Tergou, and lived there on secret contributions, but Sybrandt chose to remain in Rotterdam. Ere Catherine left, she asked Margaret to lend her two gold angels. " For," said she, " all mine are spent." Margaret was delighted to lend them or give them : but the words were scarce out of her mouth ere she caught a look of regret and distress on Kate's face, and she saw directly whither her money was going. She gave Catherine the money, and went and shut herself up with her boy. Now this money was to last Sybrandt till his mother could make some good excuse for visiting Rotterdam again, and then she would bring the idle dog some of her own industrious savings.

But Sybrandt, having gold in his pocket, thought it inexhaustible : and being now under no shadow of restraint, led the life of a complete sot : until one afternoon, in a drunken

frolic, he 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 ; but fell down giggling at each attempt.

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. For he had babbled his own shame all over the place.

As soon as he saw Margaret he hiccupped out that he bore her no malice, for he was paying her a visit sore against his will. " Wherefore, prithee send away these drunkards, and let you and me have t'other glass, to drown all unkindness."

All this time Margaret was pale and red by turns at sight of her enemy and at his insolence : but one of the men whispered what had happened, and a streaky something in Sybrandt's face arrested her attention.

" 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 news was sent to Tergou, and Catherine came over.

It was a terrible blow to her. Moreover, she accused herself as the cause. "Oh, false wife ; oh, weak mother," she cried. "I am rightly punished for my treason to my poor Eli."

She sat for hours at a time by his bedside rocking herself in silence, and was never quite herself again ; and the first grey hairs began to come in her poor head from that hour.

As for Sybrandt, all his cry was now for Gerard. He used to whine to Margaret like a suffering hound, "Oh, sweet Margaret, oh, bonny Margaret, for our Lady's sake find Gerard, and bid him take his curse off me. Thou art gentle, thou art good ; thou wilt entreat for me, and he will refuse thee nought." Catherine snared his belief that Gerard could cure him, and joined her entreaties to his.

The months rolled on, and Sybrandt improved in spirit, but not in body ; he was Margaret's pensioner for life ; and a long-expected sorrow fell upon poor Catherine, and left her still more bowed down ; and she lost her fine hearty bustling way, and never went about the house singing now ; and her nerves were shaken, and she lived in dread of some terrible misfortune falling in Cornelis. The curse was laid on him as well as Sybrandt.

She prayed Eli, if she had been a faithful partner all these years, to take Cornelis into his house again, and let her live awhile at Rotterdam.

"I have good daughters here," said she : "but Margaret is so tender, and thoughtful, and the little Gerard, he is my

joy ; he grows like his father every day, and his prattle cheers my heavy heart ; and I do love children ”

And Eli, sturdy but kindly, consented sorrowfully.

And the people of Gouda petitioned the duke for a vicar, a real vicar. “ Ours cometh never nigh us,” said they, “ this six months past ; our children they die unchristened, and our folk unburied, except by some chance comer.” Giles’ influence baffled this just complaint once ; but a second petition was prepared and he gave Margaret little hope that the present position could be maintained a single day.

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.

“ I think he would have been happy here,” she said, and turned heart-sick away.

On their return, Reicht Heynes proposed to her to go and consult the hermit.

“ What,” said Margaret, “ Joan has been at you. She is the one for hermits. I’ll go, if ’tis but to show thee they kuow no more than we do.” And they went to the cave

It was an excavation partly natural, partly artificial, in a bank of rock overgrown by brambles. There was a rough stone door on hinges, and a little window high up through 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. She gave a little scream, and pointed to the cave to show Margaret they had come thence. 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 and remained behind while looking at the little manse.

She was startled from it by Reicht's hand upon her shoulder, and a faint voice saying, "Let us go home."

"You got no answer at all, Reicht," said Margaret calmly.

"No, Margaret," said Reicht despondently. And they returned home.

Perhaps after all Margaret had nourished some faint secret hope in her heart, though her reason had rejected it, for she certainly went home more dejectedly.

Just as they entered Rotterdam, Reicht said, "Stay! Oh, Margaret, I am ill at deceit; but 'tis death to utter ill news to thee; I love thee so dear."

"Speak out, sweetheart," said Margaret. "I have gone through so much, I am almost past feeling any fresh trouble."

"Margaret, the hermit did speak to me."

"What, a hermit there? among all those birds."

"Ay; and doth not that show him a holy man?"

"I' God's name, what said he to thee, Reicht?"

"Alas! Margaret, I told him thy story, and I prayed him for our Lady's sake 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! bethink thee thou hast thy boy to live for yet."

"Said you whose son Gerard was?"

"Nay, not I."

"Think, girl! How could he call him Gerard, son of Eli, if you had not told him?"

Reicht persisted she had never mentioned him but as plain Gerard. But Margaret told her flatly she did not believe her.

The next day Margaret disappeared all day. So the next day, and so the next. She was determined to see the hermit, and question him face to face, not through a wall. 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. After tearing her clothes, and her hands and feet, so that she was soon covered with blood, the resolute, patient girl took out her scissors and steadily snipped and cut till she made a narrow path through the enemy. But so slow was the work that she had to leave it half done. The next day she had her scissors fresh ground, and brought a sharp knife as well, and gently, silently, 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.

At four o'clock the birds began to feed ; and a great many of the smaller kinds came fluttering round the cave, and one or two went in. But most of them, taking a preliminary seat on the bushes, suddenly discovered Margaret, and went off with an agitated flirt of their little wings. And although they sailed about in the air, they would not enter the cave. Presently, to encourage them, the hermit, all unconscious of the cause of their tremors, put out a thin white hand with a few crumbs in it. Margaret laid down her work softly, and gliding her body forward like a snake, looked down at it from

above ; it was but a few feet from her. It was a thin, white hand.

Presently the other hand came out with a piece of bread, and the two hands together broke it and scattered the crumbs.

But that other hand had hardly been out two seconds ere the violet eyes that were watching above dilated ; and the gentle bosom heaved, and the whole frame quivered like a leaf in the wind.

What her swift eye had seen I leave the reader to guess. She suppressed the scream that rose to her lips, but the effort cost her dear. Soon the left hand of the hermit began to swim indistinctly before her gloating eyes ; and with a deep sigh her head drooped, and she lay like a broken lily.

She was in a deep swoon, to which perhaps her long fast to-day and the agitation and sleeplessness of many preceding days contributed.

And there lay beauty, intelligence, and constancy, pale and silent. And little that hermit guessed who was so near him. The little birds hopped on her now, and one nearly entangled his little feet in her rich auburn hair.

She came back to her troubles. The sun was set. She was very cold. She cried a little, but I think it was partly from the remains of physical weakness. And then she went home, praying God and the saints to enlighten her and teach her what to do for the best.

When she got home she was pale and hysterical, and would say nothing in answer to all their questions but her favourite word, " We are wading in deep waters."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CAVE

Yes, the hermit of Gouda was the vicar of Gouda, and knew it not, so absolute was his seclusion.

As you may perhaps remember, he went at night to shrieve 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. It was the peaceful end of a stormy life. The hermit had been a soldier, and even now carried a steel corselet next his skin, saying he was now Christ's soldier as he had been Satan's. When Clement had shriven him and prayed by him, he, in turn, sought counsel of one who was dying in so pious a frame. The hermit advised him to be his successor in his 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."

Thus, though in those days he never thought to be a recluse, the road was paved, so to speak ; and when the dying hermit of Gouda blessed the citadel of Solitude, where he had fought the good fight and won it, and invited him to take up the breastplate of faith that now fell off his own shrunken body, Clement said within himself : " Heaven itself led my foot hither to this end."

As soon as he was reconciled to Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, he went eagerly to his abode, kneeled down and inaugurated his new life with prayer.

Clement had not only an earthly passion to quell, the power of which made him tremble for his eternal weal, but

he had a penance to do for having given way to ire, his besetting sin, and cursed his own brothers.

One morning,—awaking quietly, he heard a little cheep ; he opened his eyes, and lo ! upon his breviary, which was on a low stool near his feet, ruffling all his feathers with a single pull, and smoothing them as suddenly, and cocking his bill this way and that with a vast display of cunning purely imaginary, perched a robin redbreast.

Clement held his breath.

He half closed his eyes lest they should frighten the airy guest.

Down came robin on the floor.

When there he went through his pantomime of astuteness ; and then, pim, pim, pim, with three stiff little hops, like a ball of worsted on vertical wires, he was on the hermit's bare foot. On this eminence he swelled and contracted again, with ebb and flow of feathers ; but Clement lost this, for he quite closed his eyes and scarce drew his breath in fear of frightening and losing his visitor. He was content to feel the minute claw on his foot. He could but just feel it, and that by help of knowing it was there.

Presently a little flirt with two little wings, and the feathered bnsybody was on the breviary again.

Then Clement determined to try and feed this pretty little fidget without frightening it away. But it was very difficult. He had a piece of bread within reach, but how get at it ? I think he was five minutes creeping his hand up to that bread, and when there he must not move his arm.

He slily got a crumb between a finger and thumb and shot it as boys do marbles, keeping the hand quite still.

Cockrobin saw it fall near him, and did sagacity, but moved not.

When another followed, and then another, he popped down and caught up one of the crumbs, but not quite understanding this mystery fled with it, for more security, to an eminence ; to wit, the hermit's knee.

And so the game proceeded till a much larger fragment than usual rolled along.

Here was a prize. Cockrobin pounced on it, bore it aloft, and fled so swiftly into the world with it, the cave resounded with the buffeted air.

"Now, bless thee, sweet bird," sighed the stricken solitary ; "thy wings are music, and thou a feathered ray camest to light my darkened soul."

And so the days rolled on ; and the weather got colder, and Clement's heart got warmer.

Hosts of little birds followed their crimson leader, and flying from snow, and a parish full of Cains, made friends one after another with Abel ; fast friends.

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."

The birds got tamer and tamer. they perched upon his hand. Two of them let him gild their little claws. Eating but once in two days he had more to give them.

His tranquillity was not to last long.

A woman's voice came in from the outside, told him his own story in a very few words, and asked him to tell her where Gerard was to be found.

He was so astounded he could only say, with an instinct of self-defence, "Pray for the soul of Gerard the son of

Eli ! ” meaning that he was dead to the world. And he sat wondering.

When the woman was gone, he determined, after an inward battle, to risk being seen, and he peeped after her to see who it could be ; but he took so many precautions and she ran so quickly back to her friend, that the road was clear.

That night came a vision of earthly love and happiness so vividly, he could count every auburn hair in Margaret’s head, and see the pupils of her eyes.

Then he began to despair, and said, “ I must leave this country ; here I am bound fast in memory’s chain ; ” and began to dread his cell.

One night, a beautiful clear frosty night, he came back to his cell, after a short walk. The stars were wonderful. Heaven seemed a thousand times larger as well as brighter than earth, and to look with a thousand eyes instead of one.

“ Oh, wonderful,” he cried, “ that there should be men who do crimes by night ; and others scarce less mad, who live for this little world, and not for that great and glorious one, which nightly, to all eyes not blinded by custom, reveals its glowing glories. Thank God I am a hermit.”

And in this mood he came to his cell door.

He paused at it ; it was closed.

“ Why, methought I left it open,” said he. “ The wind. There is not a breath of wind. What means this ? ”

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.

“ How is it with me,” he sighed, “ when I start and tremble at nothing ? Either I did shut it, or the fiend hath shut it after me to disturb my happy soul. Retro Sathanas ! ”

And he entered his cave rapidly, and began with somewhat nervous expedition to light one of his largest tapers. While he was lighting it, there was a soft sigh in the cave.

He started and dropped the candle just as it was lighting, and it went out.

He stooped for it hurriedly and lighted it, listening intently. 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.

Another step with his knees knocking together.

IT WAS MARGARET BRANDT.

Her attitude was one to excite pity rather than terror. 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 ; and the marvellous mixed gaze of love, and pious awe, and pity, and tender memories, those purple eyes cast on the emaciated and glaring hermit, was an event in nature.

"What," he gasped, shaking over her, "and is it thou ? Alas ! " And they were both choked with emotion, and could not speak for a while.

Margaret looked round with a shudder. "Oh Gerard, take my hand, and let me lead thee from this foul place."

He gazed at her.

"What, desert my cell ; and go into the world again ? Is it for that thou hast come to me ? " said he sadly and reproachfully.

"Ay, 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. 'Tis well enow in winter I promise thee. But bide a bit till the hawthorn bloom, and anon thy walls put on their kirtle of brave roses, and sweet woodbine. Have we forgotten thee, and the foolish things thou lovest ? And, dear Gerard, thy mother is waiting ; 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. Alas ! what is to do ? What have I ignorantly said, to be regarded thus ? "

For he had drawn himself all up into a heap, and was looking at her with a strange gaze of fear.

"My beloved," said he, "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. No matter. A year of penance will, *Dei gratia*, restore me to my calm, 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. Thy very voice is a temptation with its music, memory's delight."

"But I say you shall hear me, Gerard, for forth this place I go not unheard."

"Then must we part by other means," said Clement sadly.

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. I thought to reward thee for yielding to me ; but unkind that thou art, I need his help I find ; turn then this way one moment.”

“Nay, nay.”

“But I say ay ! And then turn thy back on us and thou canst.” 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 his religious enthusiasm giving him for a moment his old strength, he burst wildly away from her, and after a few steps, finding he was not followed, stopped, and looked back.

She was lying on her face, with her hands spread out.

Yes, without meaning it, he had thrown her down and hurt her.

Whilst he stood there, Margaret uttered one long, piteous moan, and rose to her knees.

He saw her as plain almost as in midday. 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, shrieking :
“CRUEL !—CRUEL !—CRUEL !—CRUEL !”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BABE

What manifold anguish may burst from a human heart in a single syllable. There were wounded love, and wounded pride, and despair, and coming madness all in that piteous cry. Clement felt he had driven her from him for ever, and in the midst of his dismal triumph, the greatest he had won, there came an almost uncontrollable impulse to curse the Church, to curse religion itself, for exacting such savage cruelty from mortal man. At last he staggered to his den. "I am safe here," he groaned; "she will never come near me again; unmanly, ungrateful wretch that I am." And he flung his emaciated body down on the floor, not without a secret hope that it might never rise thence alive.

Then 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; each word seemed to come like a lump of lead from a leaden heart, and to fall leaden to the ground; and in this mechanical office every now and then he moaned with all his soul. 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. Heaven hath witnessed my bitter trial, and approves my cruelty; and this flower of the skies is sent to cheer me, fainting under my burden."

He fell on his knees, and gazed with ecstasy on its golden hair, and its tender skin, and cheeks like a peach.

“ Let me feast my sad eyes on thee ere thou leavest me for thine ever-blessed abode, and my cell darkens again at thy parting, as it did at hers.”

With all this, 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.

“ 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 ? ”

Now not only was this conversation from first to last, the relative ages, situations, and all circumstances of the parties considered, as strange a one as ever took place between two mortal creatures, but at or within a second or two of the hermit's question, to turn the strange into the marvellous, came an unseen witness, to whom every word that passed carried ten times the force it did to either of the speakers.

Since, therefore, it is with her eyes you must now see, and hear with her ears, I go back a step for her.

Margaret, when she ran past Gerard, was almost mad. She ran to Reicht Heynes pale and trembling, and clasped her round the neck. “ Oh, Reicht ! oh, Reicht ! see how he has served me ; ” and she showed her hands, that were bleeding with falling on the stony ground. “ He threw me down, he was so eager to fly from me. He said I came to tempt him. Am I the woman to tempt a man ? you know me, Reicht.”

“ Nay, in sooth, sweet Mistress Margaret, the last i' the world.”

“ And he would not look at my child. I'll fling myself and him into the Rotter this night.”

“ Oh, fie ! fie ! eh, my sweet woman, speak not so. Is any man that breathes worth your child's life ? ”

“ My child ! where is he ? Why, Reicht, I have left him. Come back for him without more ado.”

Reicht led the way, and Margaret followed readily enough in that direction ; but as they drew near the cell, she stopped again.

“ Reicht, go you and ask him, will he give me back my boy ; for I could not bear the sight of him.”

Reicht went forward ; Margaret sat by the roadside and covered her face with her apron, and rocked herself after the manner of her country, for her soul was full of bitterness and grief. So severe, indeed, was the internal conflict, that she did not hear Reicht running back to her, and started violently when the young woman laid a hand upon her shoulder.

“ Mistress Margaret ! ” said Reicht quietly, “ take a fool’s advice that loves ye. Go softly to yon cave, wi’ all the ears and eyes your mother ever gave you.”

“ Why ? — what — Reicht ? ” stammered Margaret.

“ I thought the cave was afire, ’twas so light inside ; and there were voices ? ”

“ Voices ? ”

“ Ay, not one, but twain, and all unlike — a man’s and a little child’s, talking as pleasant as you and me. I am no great hand at a keyhole for my part, ’tis paltry work ; but if so be voices were a talking in yon cave and them that owned those voices were so near to me as those are to thee, I’d go on all fours like a fox, and I’d crawl on my belly like a serpent, ere I’d lose one word that passes *atwixt those twain*.”

“ Whisht, Reicht ! Bless thee ! Bide thou here. Pray for me ! ”

And almost ere the agitated words had left her lips, Margaret was flying towards the hermitage as noiselessly as a

lapwing. Arrived near it, she crouched, and there was something truly serpentine in the gliding, flexible, noiseless movements by which she reached the very door, and there she found a chink, and listened. And often it cost her a struggle not to burst in upon them ; but warned by defeat, she was cautious, and resolute to let well alone. And after a while, slowly and noiselessly she reared her head, like a snake its crest, to where she saw the broadest chink of all, and looked with all her eyes and soul, as well as listened.

The little boy then being asked whether he had no daddy, at first shook his head, and would say nothing : but being pressed he suddenly seemed to remember something, and said he, " Dad-da ill man ; run away and left poor mum-ma."

She who heard this winced. It was as new to her as to Clement. Some interfering foolish woman had gone and said this to the boy, and now out it came in Gerard's very face. His answer surprised her : he burst out, " The villain ! the monster ! he must be born without bowels to desert thee, sweet one. Ah ! he little knows the joy he has turned his back on. Well, my little dove, I must be father and mother to thee, since the one runs away, and t'other abandons thee to my care. Now to-morrow I shall ask the good people that bring me my food to fetch some nice eggs and milk for thee as well, for bread is good enough for poor old good-for-nothing me, but not for thee. And now I sit me down ; so. And I take thee on my left knee, and put my arm under thy little head ; so. And then the psaltery, and play a little tune ; so, not too loud."

" I ikes dat."

" I am right glad on't. Now list the story."

He chanted a child's story in a sort of recitative, singing a little moral refrain now and then. The boy listened with rapture.

" I ikes oo," said he. " Ot is oo ? is oo man ? "

"Ay, little heart, and a great sinner to boot."

"I likes great tingers. Ting one other tory."

Story No. 2 was chanted.

"I ubbs oo," cried the child impetuously. "Ot caft is oo?"

"I am a hermit, love."

"I ubbs vermins. The other one."

But during this final performance, Nature suddenly held out her leaden sceptre over the youthful eyelids. "It is not eepy," whined he very faintly, and succumbed.

Clement laid down his psalterly softly and began to rock his new treasure in his arms, and to crone over him a little lullaby well known in Tergou, with which his own mother had often sent him off.

And the child sank into a profound sleep upon his arm. And he stopped croning and gazed on him with infinite tenderness, yet sadness; for at that moment he could not help thinking what might have been but for a piece of paper with a lie in it.

He sighed deeply.

The next moment the moonlight burst into his cell, and with it, and in it, and almost as swift as 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.

Margaret was surprised in her turn. It was an age of impressions not facts. "What" she cried, "doth not a father

know his own child ? and a man of God, too ? Fie, Gerard, to pretend ! nay, thou art too wise, too good, not to have —why, I watched thee ; and e'en now look at you twain ! '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, as his eyes seemed to absorb the little love.

Margaret's eyes followed his. " He is not a bit like me," said she proudly ; " but oh, at whiles he is thy very image in little ; and see this golden hair. Thine was the very colour at his age : ask mother else And see this mole on his little finger : now look at thine own ; there ! 'Twas thy mother let me weet thou wast marked so before him ; and oh, Gerard, 'twas this our child found thee for me ; for by that little mark on thy finger I knew thee for his father, when I watched above thy window and saw thee feed the birds." Here she seized the child's hand, and kissed it eagerly, and got half of it into her mouth, Heaven knows how. " Ah ! bless thee, thou didst find thy poor daddy for her, and now thou hast made us friends again after our little quarrel ; the first, the last. Wast very cruel to me but now, my poor Gerard, and I forgive thee ; for loving of thy child."

" Ah ! ah ! ah ! ah ! ah " sobbed Clement, choking.

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. " Be brave ! " She told him her tale, dwelling above all on the kindness to her of his parents ; and while she related her trouble, 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.

" Oh, piteous tale of a true heart battling alone against such bitter odds," said he.

" It all seems small, when I see thee here again, and nursing my boy. 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 he begged her to excuse him, and she consented ; but by questions quietly revoked her consent and elicited it all ; 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. " Again, again ! kiss thy fill if thou canst ; he is sound. 'Tis all I can do to comfort thee till thou art out of this foul den and in thy sweet manse yonder."

Clement shook his head.

" Well, let that pass. Let not you and I dispute," said she gently ; " speak we of other things. Ask me of thy folk."

" My father ? "

" Well, and warms to thee and me."

" My sister Kate ? "

" Alas ! "

" What, hath ill befallen e'en that sweet lily ? Out and alas ! "

" Be calm, sweetheart, no harm hath her befallen. Oh, nay, nay, far fro' that " 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. For 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. But by this time she was past speaking ; but she pointed to a drawer, and her mother knew what to look for : it was two gold angels thou hadst given her years ago. Poor soul ! she had kept them till thou shouldst come home. And she nodded towards the little boy, and looked anxious ; but we understood her, and put the pieces in his two hands, and when his little fingers closed on them, she smiled content. And so 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.”

Gerard sighed.

“ Thy mother too is waiting for thee. Is it well done to keep her on thorns so long ? She will not sleep this night. Bethink thee, Gerard, she is all to thee that I am to this sweet child. Ah, I think so much more of mothers since I had my little Gerard. She suffered for thee, and nursed thee,

and tended thee from boy to man. Priest, monk, hermit, call thyself what thou wilt, to her thou art but one thing ; her child."

"Where is she ?" murmured Gerard, in a quavering voice.

"At Gouda manse, wearing the night in prayer and care."

"Ah !"

"Since thy grey-haired mother watches for thee in dole and care, and turneth oft the hour-glass and sigheth sore that thou comest so slow to her at Gouda manse—since thy brother, withered by thy curse, awaits thy forgiveness and thy prayers for his soul, now lingering in his body, 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 ; thy sweetheart erst and wife, and now thy friend. the truest friend to thee this night that e'er man had, and come with me to Gouda manse !"

"IT IS THE VOICE OF AN ANGEL !" cried Clement loudly.

"Then hearken it, and come forth to Gouda manse !"

The battle was won.

And with this they took the road to Gouda parsonage. The moon and stars were so bright, it seemed almost as light as day.

When they had gone about a quarter of a mile, Gerard sighed. "Margaret," said he, "I must e'en rest : he is too heavy for me."

"Then give him me. Alas ! alas ! I mind when thou wouldst have run with the child on one shoulder, and the mother on t'other."

And Margaret carried the boy.

In a few minutes they came up to the manse.

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.

"What, in Heaven's name ?"

"That little candle, seen through the window at night. Look an it be not like some fair star of size prodigious : it delighteth the eyes, and warmeth the heart of those outside."

"Come, and I'll show thee something better," said Margaret, and led him on tiptoe to the window.

They looked in, and there was Catherine kneeling on the hassock, with her "hours" before her.

"Folk can pray out of a cave," whispered Margaret. "Ay and hit heaven with their payers ; for 'tis for a sight of thee she prayeth, and thou art here. Now, Gerard, be prepared ; she is not the woman you knew her ; her children's troubles have greatly broken the brisk, light-hearted soul. And I see she has been weeping e'en now."

"Let me get to her," said Clement hastily, trembling all over.

"That door ! I will bide here."

When Gerard was gone to the door. Margaret, fearing the sudden surprise, gave one sharp tap at the window and cried, "Mother !" in a loud, expressive voice that Catherine read at once. 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 a holy calm of affection settled by degrees on these sore troubled ones. And they sat all three together, hand in hand, murmuring sweet and loving converse ; and he who sat in the middle drank right and left their true affection and their humble but genuine wisdom, and 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 XXV

THE VICAR OF GOUDA

Margaret went back to Rotterdam long ere Gerard awoke, and actually left her boy behind her. She sent the faithful, sturdy Reicht off to Gouda directly with a vicar's grey frock and large felt hat, and with minute instructions how to govern her new master.

She left little Gerard there to complete the conquest her maternal heart ascribed to him, not to her own eloquence and sagacity, and to anchor his father for ever to humanity.

But this generous stroke of policy cost her heart dear. She had never yet been parted from her boy an hour, and she felt sadly strange as well as desolate without him. After the first day it became intolerable ; and what does the poor soul do, but creep at dark up to Gouda parsonage, and lurk about the premises like a thief till she saw Reicht Heynes in the kitchen alone. Then she tapped softly at the window and said, " Reicht, for pity's sake bring him out to me unbeknown."

Reicht soon found an excuse for taking little Gerard out, and there was a scene of mutual rapture, followed by mutual tears when mother and boy parted again.

And it was arranged that Reicht should take him half way to Rotterdam every day, at a set hour, and Margaret meet them. But when these stolen meetings had gone on about five days Margaret began to feel the injustice of it, and to be irritated as well as unhappy.

And she was crying about it when a cart came to her door, and in it, clean as a new penny, his beard close shaved, his bands white as snow, and a little colour in his pale face, sat

the vicar of Gouda in the grey frock and large felt hat she had sent him.

She ran upstairs directly, and washed away all trace of her tears, and put on a cap, which being just taken out of the drawer was cleaner, theoretically, than the one she had on, and came down to him.

He seized both her hands and kissed them, and a tear fell upon them. She turned her head away at that to hide her own which started.

"My sweet Margaret," he cried, "why is this? Why hold you aloof from your own good deed? we have been waiting for you every day, and Margaret. Think you I had ever kept the dear child so long, but that I made sure you would be back to him from day to day? Oh, he curls round my very heart-strings, but what is my title to him compared to thine? Confess now, thou hast had hard thoughts of me for this."

"Nay, not I. Ah! thou art thyself again: wast ever thoughtful of others. I have half a mind to go to Gouda manse, for your saying that."

"Come then, with half thy mind, 'tis worth the whole of other folk's."

"Well, I dare say I will; but there is no such mighty hurry," said she coolly (she was literally burning to go). "Tell me first how you agree with your folk."

"Why, already my poor have taken root in my heart."

"I thought as much."

"And there are such good creatures among them; simple and rough, and superstitious, but wonderfully good."

"Oh! leave you alone for seeing a grain of good among a bushel of ill."

“ Whisht ! whist ! And Margaret, two of them have been ill friends for four years, and came to the manse each to get on my blind side. But give the glory to God I got on their bright side, and made them friends, and laugh at themselves for their folly.”

“ But are you in very deed their vicar ? answer me that.”

“ Certes ; have I not been to the bishop and taken the oath, and rung the church bell, and touched the altar, the missal, and the holy cup before the churchwardens ? And they have handed me the parish seal ; see here it is. Nay, ’tis a real vicar inviting a true friend to Gouda manse.”

“ Then my mind is at ease. Tell me oceans more.”

“ Well, sweet one, nearest to me of all my parish is a poor cripple that my guardian angel and his (her name thou knowest even by this turning of thy head away) hath placed beneath my roof. Sybrandt and I are that we never were till now, brothers. ’T would gladden thee, yet sadden thee to hear how we kissed and forgave one another. He is full of thy praises, and wholly in a pious mind ; he says he is happier since his trouble than e’er he was in the days of his strength. Oh ! out of my house he ne’er shall go to any place but heaven.”

“ Tell me somewhat that happened thyself, poor soul ! All this is good, but yet no tidings to me. Do I not know thee of old ? ”

“ Well, let me see. At first I was much dazzled by the sunlight, and could not go abroad (owl !), but that is passed ; and good Reicht Heynes—humph ! ”

“ What of her ? ”

“ This to thine ear only, for she is a diamond. Her voice goes through me like a knife, and all voices seem loud but thine, which is so mellow sweet. Stay, now I’ll fit ye with

tidings ; I spake yesterday with an old man that conceits he is ill-tempered, and sweats to pass for such with others, but oh ! so threadbare, and the best good heart beneath."

" Why, 'tis a parish of angels," said Margaret ironically.

" Then why dost thou keep out on't ? " retorted Gerard.
 " Well, he was telling me there was no parish in Holland where the devil hath such power as at Gouda ; and among his instances, says he, ' We had a hermit, the holiest in Holland ; but being Gouda, the devil came for him this week, and took him, bag and baggage ; not a ha'porth of him left but a goodish piece of his skin, just for all the world like a hedgehog's, and a piece o' old iron furbished up.' "

Margaret smiled.

" Ay, but," continued Gerard, " the strange thing is, the cave has verily fallen in ; and had I been so perverse as to resist thee, it had assuredly buried me dead there where I had buried myself alive Therefore in this I see the finger of Providence, condemning my late, approving my present, way of life. What sayest thou ? "

" Nay, can I pierce the like mysteries ? I am but a woman."

" Somewhat more, methinks. This very tale proves thee my guardian angel, and all else avouches it, so come to Gouda manse."

" Well, go you on, I'll follow."

" Nay, in the cart with me."

" Not so."

" Why ? "

" Can I tell why and wherefore. being a woman ? All I know is I seem—to feel—to wish—to come alone."

" So be it then. I leave thee the cart, being, as thou sayest, a woman, and I'll go a-foot, being a man again, with the joyful tidings of thy coming."

When Margaret reached the manse the first thing she saw was the two Gerards together, the son performing his capriccios on the plot, and the father slouching on a chair, in his great hat, with pencil and paper, trying very patiently to sketch him.

After a warm welcome he showed her his attempts. "But in vain I strive to fix him," said he, "for he is incarnate quick-silver. Yet do but note his changes, infinite, but none ungracious; all is supple and easy; and how he melteth from one posture to another." He added presently, "Woe to illuminators! looking on thee, sir baby, I see what awkward, lopsided, ungainly toads I and my fellows painted missals with, and called them cherubs and seraphs." Finally he threw the paper away in despair, and Margaret conveyed it secretly into her bosom.

At night when they sat round the peat fire he bade them observe how beautiful the brass candlesticks and other glittering metals were in the glow from the hearth. Catherine's eyes sparkled at this observation. "And oh the sheets I lie in here," said he, "often my conscience pricketh me and saith, 'Who art thou to lie in lint like web of snow?' Dives was ne'er so flaxed as I. And to think that there are folk in the world that have all the beautiful things which I have here, yet not content. Let them pass six months in a hermit's cell, seeing no face of man, then will they find how lovely and pleasant this wicked world is, and eke that men and women are God's fairest creature. Margaret was always fair, but never to my eye so bright as now." Margaret shook her head incredulously. Gerard continued, "My mother was ever good and kind, but I noted not her exceeding comeliness till now."

"Nor I neither," said Catherine; "a score years ago I might pass in a crowd, but not now."

Gerard declared to her that each age had its beauty. "See this mild grey eye," said he, "that hath looked motherly love

upon so many of us, all that love hath left its shadow, and that shadow is a beauty which defieeth Time. See this delicate lip, these pure white teeth. See this well-shaped brow, where comeliness just passeth into reverence. Art beautiful in my eyes, mother dear."

"And that is enough for me, my darling. 'Tis time you were in bed, child. Ye have to preach the morn."

And Reicht Heynes and Catherine interchanged a look which said, "We two have an amiable maniac to superintend : calls everything beautiful."

The next day was Sunday, and they heard him preach in his own church. It was crammed with persons, who came curious, but remained devout. Never was his wonderful gift displayed more powerfully ; he was himself deeply moved by the first sight of all his people, and his bowels yearned over this flock he had so long neglected. In a single sermon, which lasted two hours and seemed to last but twenty minutes, he declared the whole scripture : he terrified the impenitent and thoughtless, confirmed the wavering, consoled the bereaved and the afflicted, uplifted the hearts of the poor, and when he ended, left the multitude standing rapt, and unwilling to believe the divine music of his voice and soul had ceased

Need I say that two poor women in a corner sat entranced, with streaming eyes,

"Wherever gat he it all ? " whispered Catherine, with her apron to her eyes. "By our Lady, not from me."

As soon as they were by themselves Margaret throw her arms round Catherine's neck and kissed her.

"Mother, mother, I am not quite a happy woman, but oh I am a proud one."

And she vowed on her knees never by word or deed to let her love come between this young saint and Heaven.

CHAPTER XXVI

DENYS AGAIN

In 1473 Sybrandt began to fail. His pitiable existence had been sweetened by his brother's inventive tenderness and his own contented spirit, which, his antecedents considered, was truly remarkable. As for Gerard, the day never passed that he did not devote two hours to him; reading or singing to him, praying with him, and drawing him about in a soft carriage Margaret and he had made between them. 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, blessing and blessed, in the arms of the two true lovers he had parted for life.

Though Margaret 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, both of them sagacious and spirited, but reduced by their fondness for him to the exact level of idiots.

Gerard saw this with pain, and interfered with mild but firm remonstrance; and after a considerable struggle prevailed, and 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, and the fidelity

of Reicht Heynes, now her partner in business, enabled her to spend weeks at a time hovering over her boy at Deventer.

And so the years glided.

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. To the company he appeared to be bragging and boasting, but in reality he was giving a true relation of Edward the Fourth's invasion of an armed kingdom with 2,000 men, and his march through the country with armies capable of swallowing him looking on, his battles at Tewkesbury and Barnet, and re-occupation of his capital and kingdom in three months after landing at the Humber with a mixed handful of Dutch, English, and Burgundians.

In this, the greatest feat of arms the century had seen, Denys had shone; and whilst sneering at the warlike pretensions of Charles the Bold, a duke with an itch but no talent for fighting, and proclaiming the English king the first captain of the age, did not forget to exalt himself.

Gerard listened with eyes glittering affection and fun. "And now," said Denys, "after all these feats, patted on the back by the gallant young Prince of Gloucester, and smiled on by the great captain himself, 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. But he wanted to do it all like a story book. Who has not had this fancy once in his life? Why, Joseph had it; all the better for us.

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 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 in his own house, 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.

When they made a fuss about this to Gerard, he just looked in their faces and said, “ What does it matter ? Break him of swearing, and you shall have my thanks.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

AND LAST.

Little Gerard rejoiced his parents' hearts by the extraordinary progress he made at Alexander Haughe's famous school 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, one Zinthius, 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; and there was his poor mother stood by and heard it. And he took our Gerard in his arms, and kissed him; and what think you he said?"

"Nay, I know not."

"'Holland will hear of thee one day; and not Holland only, but all the world.' Why what a sad brow!"

"Sweet one, I am as glad as thou, yet am I uneasy to hear the child is wise before his time. I love him dear; but he is thine idol, and Heaven doth often break our idols."

"Make thy mind easy," said Margaret. "Heaven will never rob me of my child. What I was to suffer in this world I have suffered. For if any ill happened my child or thee, I should not live a week. The Lord He knows this, and He will leave me my boy."

A month had elapsed after this; but Margaret's words were yet ringing in his ears, when, going on his daily round of visits to his poor, he was told quite incidentally, and as

mere gossip, that the plague was at Deventer, carried thither by two sailors from Hamburgh.

His heart turned cold within him. News did not gallop in those days. 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 she see a bed prepared, for he should be back next day. And so he hoped she would not hear a word of the danger till it was all happily over. He borrowed a good horse, and scarce drew rein till he reached Deventer, quite late in the afternoon. 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, had he no mother?"

"How you speak to me! I hoped you knew not."

"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. I am his mother."

"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 matters to do in the town. Go thou at once, and I will follow forthwith."

"Leave thee alone in a plague-stricken town? To whom speak you, dear Margaret?"

"Nay, then, we shall quarrel, Gerard."

"Methinks I see Margaret and Gerard quarrelling! Why, it takes two to quarrel, and we are but one."

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. He said nothing, for he felt sure she would explain her capricious conduct, or it would explain itself.

Presently she rose hastily, and tried to reach her bedroom, but on the way she staggered and put out her hand. He ran to her with a cry of alarm. She 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. His own was scarce less pale, for in a basin he had seen

water stained with blood ; it alarmed him, he knew not why. 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. She seemed at first as if she responded to it, but the next moment her eyes dilated, and she cried —

“ Ah, wretch, leave my hand ; how dare you touch me ? ”

“ Heaven help her ! ” said Gerard, “ She is not herself.”

“ 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. She ne’er spoke harsh to thee before, sweetheart, and she never will again.”

“ Alas ! what mean these dark words, these wild and troubled looks ? ” said Gerard, clasping his hands.

“ My poor Gerard,” said Margaret, “ forgive me that I spoke so to thee I am but a woman, and would have spared thee a sight will make thee weep.” She burst into tears. “ Ah, me ! ” she cried, weeping, “ that I cannot keep grief from thee ; there is a great sorrow before my darling, and this time I shall not be able to come and dry his eyes.”

“ Let it come, Margaret, so it touch not thee,” said Gerard, trembling.

“ Dearest,” said Margaret solemnly, “ call now religion to thine aid and mine. I must have died before thee one day, or else outlived thee and so died of grief.”

“ Died ? thou die ? I will never let thee die. 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 ; let none see me die but thee."

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. as drowning men cry to their fellow-creatures. She raised herself on her arm, and set herself to quiet him.

She told him she had known the torture of hopes and fears, and was resolved to spare him that agony. "I let my mind dwell too much on the danger," said, she, "and so opened my brain to it, through which door when this subtle venom enters it makes short work. I shall not be spotted or loathsome, my poor darling ; God is good, and spares thee that ; but in twelve hours I shall be a dead woman. 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."

Gerard, sick and cold at heart, kneeled down, and pray'd for help for heaven to do his duty.

When he rose from his knees his face was pale and old, but deadly calm and patient. He went softly and brought her bed into the room, and laid her gently down and supported her head with pillows. Then he prayed by her side the prayers for the dying, and she said Amen to each prayer. Then for some hours she wandered, but when the fell disease had quite made sure of its prey he put the crucifix in her hand, and bade her fix her mind neither on her merits nor her demerits, but on Him who died for her on the tree.

She obeyed him with a look of confiding love and submission.

From this moment a gentle complacency rested on her fading features. But she did not speak.

Then Gerard, who had loved her soul so many years, feared lest she should expire with a mind too fixed on earthly affection. "Oh my daughter," he cried, "my dear daughter, if indeed thou lovest me as I love thee, give me not the pain of seeing thee die with thy pious soul fixed on mortal things. 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 a look of gratitude and obedience on him. "What saint?" she murmured: meaning doubtless, "what saint should she invoke as an intercessor."

"He to whom the saints themselves 'do pray."

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.

A fortnight after this a pale bowed figure entered the Dominican convent in the suburbs of Gouda.

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.

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.

And just about the hour she died he spoke his last word in this world.

“Jesu !”

And even with that word—he fell asleep.

They laid him out for his last resting-place.

Under his linen they found a horse-hair shirt.

“Ah !” cried the young monks, “behold a saint !”

Under the hair cloth they found a long thick tress of auburn hair. When the coffin was to be closed, they laid the tress upon the dead man’s bosom.

The next day Gerard was buried in Gouda churchyard. The monks followed him in procession from the convent. 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.

Thus after life’s fitful fever these true lovers were at peace. The grave, kinder to them than the Church, united them for ever ; and now a man of another age and nation, touched with their fate, has laboured to build their tombstone and rescue them from long and unmerited oblivion.

He asks for them your sympathy, but not your pity.

In compliance with a custom I despise, but have not the spirit to resist, I linger on the stage to pick up the smaller fragments of humanity I have scattered about ; i.e. some of them, for the wayside characters have no claim on me ; they have served their turn if they have persuaded the reader that

Gerard travelled from Holland to Rome through human beings, and not through a population of dolls.

Eli and Catherine lived to a great age: lived so long, that both Gerard and Margaret grew to be dim memories. Giles also was longævous; 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 *in articulo mortis*, 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, and a bitter railer against women.

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 QUA MAGNUS ERASMUS."

NOTES

CHAPTER I

- Page 1. The fifteenth century – see Introduction.
Louis XI—a full sketch of this powerful monarch's character is given in Scott's *Quentin Durward*.
Edward IV--a prince of the Yorkist faction and a successful leader in the Wars of the Roses. We may study his character in Lytton's *The Last of the Barons* and follow his fortunes in Shakespeare's *King Henry VI*.
Amsterdam—an important seaport in Holland.
First young bird --an expressive Metaphor. Richard is compared to a young bird taking its first flight from the nest.
- .. 2. Gleaned – i.e., saved. The metaphor is drawn from harvesting.
Marble face—i.e., on account of its pallor.
Dead men's shoes—waiting to inherit upon the death of his parents.
St. Bavon—a national patron saint.
The Church--in the 15th century at the height of its power, and not yet shaken by the attacks of the reformers.
Trivialities –i.e., in the opinion of his parents, who were trades-people.
- .. 3. The brothers Van Eyck—celebrated artists of the Flemish School who improved the technique of painting.
Like a glove—i.e., elicited all his secrets; a good simile.
Vellum—used for important documents in these days.

- Page** **3.** Drawn from antiquity—an example of Reade's quiet humour. The jests were so old that they were quite new to this Dutch audience.
- Puissant**—in imitation of mediæval phraseology, such as is found in Froissart. It is the French word for 'powerful.'
- Any king going**—a descent into slightly colloquial languages which occasionally mars Reade's style; he means 'living and ruling.'
- The King of France**—Louis XI, already referred to.
- „** **4.** A mighty hunter—a reminiscence of the biblical phraseology which impregnates English. *Of., Genesis X, 9*, 'He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; wherefore it is said, even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.'
- Turks**—at that time a little-known race who were just beginning to menace Europe.
- The bellman**—the public crier. His functions have now been almost completely usurped by the daily newspaper.
- Rotterdam**—a large seaport of Holland at the mouth of the Rhine.
- Stadthouse**—the residence of the chief magistrate, in this case the Palace.
- Holiday suit**—i.e., his best clothes.

CHAPTER II

- Page** **5.** Fur tippet—a cape lined with fur, a sign of rank.
- Manchet**—a small loaf of white bread.
- Had put up**—i.e., packed; prepared.
- „** **6.** Plethoric—full to overflowing.
- Burgomaster**—the chief man in the 'borough,' the mayor.

- Page 6. **Bohemians**—i.e., gypsies, of whose character and habits a good description is given in *Quentin Durward*.
- „ 7. **A scorpion**—an expressive metaphor.
Would like her ill—a rather archaic expression, chosen by the author as suiting the period.
- „ 8. **Dashed**—reduced him to silence.
- „ 9. **Poort**—i.e., port, or gate.
Dived—a much more expressive word than ‘entered.’
 It suggests being ‘engulfed’ or ‘swallowed up’ in the busy town.
The Maas—a large river which flows into the North Sea near Rotterdam.
Tablet—a kind of pocket memorandum book.
- „ 11. **To make up to them**—i.e., to recognize and greet them.
To deave—the archaic and dialectal form of ‘deafen.’
The Vulgate—the Latin Bible used in the Roman Catholic Church.
Aureole—halo.
Our Lady—Mary, the mother of God.
- „ 12. **Margaret murmured**—the reader should note not only the skilful appeal to sentiment but the cleverness and naturalness of the dialogue in this scene.

CHAPTER III

- Page 14. **Seneschal**—a high domestic officer in the palace.
- „ 15. **My hand in the fire**—i.e., I have complete confidence in him.
- „ 16. **In holy orders**—he had been ordained and consecrated to the ministry of the Church.
Sub-deacon, etc.—different stages of priesthood.
Monsieur—French was the language of the court and of diplomacy.
Benefice—an ecclesiastical living.

- Page 17.** Golden angels--an angel was a valuable coin current in the Middle Ages and bearing on it the figure of the Archangel Michael.
- Like a covert - a simile borrowed from hunting. It implies a thorough and systematic search.
- Elastic youth - one of the chief secrets of successful writing is the careful choice of the most suitable and expressive adjective.
- „ **18.** Flushing with joy--note how the desired emphasis is skilfully achieved by the deliberate repetition of the word ' joy ' in this sentence.

CHAPTER IV

- Page 20.** Novice --a young aspirant to the priesthood.
- I trow - I am sure.
- These chanting monks - the slightly contemptuous phrase is indicative of the growing antagonism towards the monastic system evinced by men of the burgomaster's class. Denys of Burgundy shared their view.
- „ **21.** Anon--this word has slipped out of modern English prose ; the author uses it and others similar to preserve the mediæval flavour of the story.
- „ **22.** The clouds cleared - an expressive metaphor to signify the end of the period of doubt, distrust and sorrow.
- M. S.--i.e., manuscript. The art of printing had been but recently invented, *vide* Chapter XIX.
- „ **25.** Like a cow her calf another understandable simile. It conveys to us the meaning much more clearly and completely than would the adverb like ' exceedingly,' ' dearly ' ; it makes the idea concrete.
- Blackening -- used figuratively ; blackening his character.

- Page 27. Walk abroad—*i.e.*, out-of-doors. The modern meaning, of 'abroad' is slightly different.
- „ 29. Must not meddle—priests took a vow of celibacy.

CHAPTER V

- „ 30. Nilly-willy—a corruption of the Latin words *nolens volens* : unwillingly or willingly.
- „ 31. Freeze, flourish—again the idea made concrete by a metaphor.
Talisman -- charm.
- „ 32. Plump—the expression is rather colloquial : without hesitation.
Flung away—in anger and haste.
- „ 33. Cure—the village priest.
Sacred rite--because matrimony is a sacrament of the Church.
- „ 35. Florentine—*i.e.*, of Florentine in Italy.
Squire—a youthful attendant of rank.
Kiekshaws—trifles ; a corruption of the French 'quelque chose' meaning 'something.'

CHAPTER VI

- Page 36. Afeard—another dialectal form ; afraid.
- „ 37. Scuttled—again the skilful choice of the most expressive word.
What we must lose—*i.e.*, life.
- „ 38. Hissed Martin--*i.e.*, in a whisper.
The stout soldier—brave, valiant in ordinary circumstances.
- „ 39. Sprung—more grammatically 'sprang'
Was on fire—with eagerness to climb the rope.
Ill—*i.e.*, evil.
- „ 40. Parchment—Giles was always on the look-out for parchment to sell to his artist brother Gerard.

- Page 40.** Flocks--because they came down like birds.
Like a falling star--the two characteristics of which are brightness and extreme rapidity.
- „ 41. Comfortable words--in the sense of conveying comfort.
Demolselle--the title denotes an unmarried lady of position and property.
- „ 42. Boorish--it did not encourage the arts.
Rede--an Old-English word meaning advice.
A blind--a pretext.
Caitiff--another archaic word : villain.
- „ 43. The clouds lower--i.e., threaten a storm ; look sullen.

CHAPTER VII

- Page 44.** Kirtle and farthingale--articles of feminine attire in the middle ages , petticoats.
Win the wood--i.e., reach ; gain.
- „ 45. Avenger of blood--for this characteristic of Reade's style see the Introduction.
- „ 46. Hooping--whooping ; shouting.
To win clear--to get right away.
- „ 47. Bridle-road--a path which can be used by horsemen but not by carriages.
Hanging his head--because making an unwelcome announcement.
There away--in that direction.
- „ 48. Going and coming--a reminiscence of biblical language :--“ The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”--(*Psalm 121.*)

CHAPTER VIII

Page 49. **Vulgar**—commonplace. His thoughts were on sacred things.

Inky—again the careful choice of the concrete adjective. It adds vividness to the style and makes the meaning clearer. Contrast *black cave*. The idea is repeated a few lines later :—*sea of ink*.

Hailed it—*i.e.*, welcomed its appearance with feelings of great thankfulness and relief.

„ 50. **Grisly**—combines here the two ideas of horrible and foul.

Ganymede—In classical mythology Ganymede was the cup-bearer of the gods. Thus the inn waiter.

Such linen—the Dutch were, and are, a very cleanly people.

Burgundian—Burgundy lay on the eastern border of France, round the head waters of the Seine and Saone.

Arbalest—a powerful crossbow.

Le diable est mort--the devil is dead.

Curious oaths—he had naturally picked up, and used, the oaths of the countries in which he had fought.

„ 51. **Strasbourg**—a city of Germany on the upper Rhine.

The French and Dutch—*i.e.*, Denys and Gerard.

L'ami—friend.

Canny--with prudence and forethought. A Scottish word popularised through the writing of Sir Walter Scott.

Flushing—a Dutch port on Walcheren Island.

All roads take to Rome—a proverb. *Take*: more usually *lead*.

Ay—the form of 'Yes' found in the Northern dialect of English.

A step—a short distance ; a few marches.

- Page 51.** Methinks, sith, enow yourn --obsolete forms, which exist now only in dialect. Their use here indicates Denys' humble position in society.
Mon gars -- my boy (French *garcon*).
Consigne -- password.
Tout le monde -- everybody.
En avant! Forward!
- „ **53.** Well adapted -- French being the language of chivalry, courtliness and politeness.
Beelzebub -- the devil.
-

CHAPTER IX

- Page 54.** Dusseldorf -- a German town on the Rhine.
Glittering eye -- due to excitement. Cf. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."
 "He holds him with his glittering eye,
 The Wedding-Guest stood still."
Hold my hand -- restrain myself.
- „ **55.** A hot scent -- the trail of the cub's blood as they carried it along.
- „ **56.** Evil star -- i.e., misfortune. The belief in the influence of the stars upon human destiny was widespread in the middle ages. It has affected the vocabulary of English, e.g., disaster, ill-starred, star-crost, mercurial, saturnine, jovial, etc.
- „ **57.** To job -- to strike at. Used only colloquially.
Sting, crack -- again the choice of the most expressive words.
- „ **58.** Death below -- the breathless brevity of the author's style here is in sympathy with the peril of the hero's situation.
- „ **59.** Sickles -- because long and curved.
Tore him off -- snatched him away as rapidly as possible.

- Page 60. As long as his arm - i.e., solemn.
 C'est e'gal - its all one to me.
 Handled the matter—prayed more fittingly and eloquently.
 Evensong being sung - having said our evening prayer.
 Marchons let us march.
 Denys represented—a circumlocutory and periphrastic paraphrase of his 'consigne.'
 61. Cleared the wood - came out upon the other side.
-

CHAPTER X

- Page 62. Psaltery - a form of dulcimer.
 Old new friend - Reade is a conscious stylist.
 Shriven - had confessed his sins to a priest and obtained absolution (been *assoiled*).
 „ 63. Office - priestly duties and devotions.
 Refectory - the dining hall of the convent.
 Like a poker - stiffly, because he was under examination and so on duty.
 So to bed - a reminiscence of the phrase so frequently used by Pepys in his Diary.
 No enemy - a reminiscence of Amiens' song in *As You Like It* - ii, 5 : -
 Here shall he see,
 No enemy
 But winter and rough weather.
 The promised land - the phrase habitually employed to describe the land 'flowing with milk and honey' to which Moses led the children of Israel.
 Was for the inn - declared that he was in favour of staying at the inn.
 „ 64. Prior - the superior of the convent.
 As proud as Punch - a proverbial expression.

- Page 64. Penance**—an ecclesiastical punishment.
Trumpet tones—Denys' confident speech would sound even louder than usual among the gentle-speaking monks.
- „ **65. Feu Werter**—i.e., the late Werter.

CHAPTER XI

- Page 66. Messieurs**—(French), gentlemen.
- „ **68. St. Luke**—one of the disciples of Jesus Christ.
The forefinger—the most necessary finger for an archer.
Break another bottle—have another bottle opened.
- „ **69. Had cut thy comb**—i.e., taught you a lesson.
Drole—rogue ; rascal.
Remiremont—Denys' birthplace in Burgundy. It is in the Vosges district of France, and possessed a famous monastery, convent and abbey.
Toward—about to occur ; has a war on. Mercenary troops were employed in nearly every mediæval court ; e.g., the Scottish Archers in *Quentin Durward* and the Varrangian Guards in *Court Robert of Paris*.
The Pope's Guards were Swiss.
- „ **70. With velvet and feathers**—i.e., dressed in velvet and with a feather or two in their caps.
Tomtit—a small bird.
The captain for me—unconscious irony. He was soon to become in reality Denys' captain.
- „ **71. Bandy words**—argue.
Thunderbolt of tyranny—again the choice of the vivid word.
Liever—Old-English word for ' rather.'
- „ **72. Wots**—Old-English word for ' knows.'
A better world—i.e., Heaven.
Walking handed—hand in hand.
Faring—journeying.

CHAPTER XII

- Page 73. A certain discovery—*i.e.*, he would read the deed.
Stiffly—resolutely.
- „ 74. All over the town—everybody knows.
I rede you—I advise you.
Still—always.
All along of—a colloquial idiom; on account of.
Little pearl—‘Margarita’ is the Latin word for
‘pearl.’
- „ 80. Sleight of hand—dexterity in extracting the letter.
Lent—*i.e.*, struck.
- „ 81. Like a weathercock in March—a very expressive
simile. March is the month of blustering winds, and
consequently the vane on the steeple will twirl
madly round then.
Loons—rogues. The word has almost gone out of use.

CHAPTER XIII

- Page 82. Matins—early morning prayers in church.
- „ 83. A soldier of the Dalgetty tribe—*i.e.*, a mercenary
soldier. The most famous mercenary soldier in
popular fiction is Dugald Dalgetty, created by Sir
Walter Scott in his *Legend of Montrose*.
Guerdon—reward or recompense.
- „ 84. Her orisons—her prayers in private.
- „ 87. Made her go off—caused her to faint.

CHAPTER XIV

- Page 89. A slack tide—a time when affairs were not pressing;
a nautical metaphor.
Walken—a dialectal relic of the Old-English
inflections.
As I had been—as if I had been.
My best reverence—curtsied elegantly to him.

- Page 90.** Clept—the Old-English word for ‘called.’
 Did scout it merrily—laughed heartily at the idea,
 as though it was too ridiculous for serious thought.
- „ **91.** Broad pieces—*i.e.*, coins; his payment for fighting.
- „ **92.** From the press—from the cupboard.
 Stuffed, crammed—*i.e.*, fed him bounteously.
 Warm from Gerard—had but recently left Gerard.
- „ **93.** Bywords—proverbial expressions.
 Buss me—embrace me.
- „ **96.** Diurnal book—the book for daily housewifely accounts.
 A mystery—a skilled trade.
 A statue—again the vivid metaphorical way of expressing the idea.
- „ **97.** Followed suit—repeated and added to the taunts of their predecessor.
 Barbed speeches—*i.e.*, too-pointed; sharp and painful.
- „ **98.** Lower thy flag, etc.—a soldier’s metaphor. Do not admit defeat at the hands of enemies so weak.
 Skelp—chastise. A colloquial word.
 Meculpee—*i.e.*, Men culpa (Latin). I confess I am to blame.
- „ **99.** Ods bodikins—a mediæval oath, corrupted from ‘By God’s body.’
 Sword of Goliath—Goliath was a giant, the champion of the Philistines, whom David slew in single combat.
 Trollops—hussies.
- „ **100.** Quadrivious—in four directions.
 His formula—his consigne.

CHAPTER XV

- Page 103.** Whist—keep silence.
- „ **104.** Fain—gladly.
 David and Jonathan—their friendship is narrated in /
Samuel, Chap. 20. “Then said Jonathan unto David,
 Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.”

- Page 104. Rid—ridden. Dialectal form.
Civilly enough—*i.e.*, without assaulting him as well.
- „ 105. Lorraine—Charles of Burgundy's ambition was to create an empire between Germany and France, stretching from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. It was named Lorraine. Upper Lorraine is meant here.
- A creeple—a small footstool.
- An—dialectal for 'if.'
- Strasbourg—an ancient and famous city of the Rhine.
- Looked down Rhine—this also is a dialectal form.
The article is not omitted in standard English :—
'down the Rhine.'
- To clip Sevenbergen—to embrace. Old-English *clippian*.
- Augsburg—a city of Bavaria and south Germany. A centre of commerce.
- Win over—accomplish the reading of.
- „ 106. Like a wounded lily—again the expressive and picturesque figure, adding beauty to suitability.
- To boot—in addition.
- Armorial—books of heraldry ; coats-of-arms.
- „ 107. The Gulls—the mediæval trade-unions and benefit societies.
- To take on—to be affected so deeply.
- „ 108. A writeth—*i.e.*, he writes ; dialectal again.
- Out yonder—*i.e.*, abroad.
- Venice—the beautiful Italian city at the head of the Adriatic ; famous and independent in the middle ages.
- Handed—hand in hand.

Page 108. St. Mark—the Patron Saint of Venice : *Cf.* Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV :—

“ A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Looked to the winged Lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her
hundred isles ! ”

The lion—the lion of St. Mark.

Amaranth—*i.e.*, everlasting flowers. As they do not
fade they signify here immortality of love.

„ 109. Hoy--a sailing-vessel.

Muckle—large

Sink me—an oath of the times.

Eyne—dialectal plural of eye. *Cf.* *dwarven wolver*
below.

„ 110. Comfortable—*i.e.*, comfortably.

„ 112. Hop o'my thumb—dwarf.

CHAPTER XVI

Page 114. Tiber—the famous river upon whose banks Rome
stands.

After weeks of varied success and privation—
Gerard's adventures in Rome have been omitted for
the reasons adverted to in the preface.

He fell to dancing—he commenced to dance.

„ 115. St. Anthony—of Padua, the disciple of St. Francis of
Assisi. He is the 'wonder-working' Saint, the
'finder of lost treasures.'

Bill—the older word for *letter*. The word comes from
the Latin *billa* or *bull*a a seal, as still used in papal
bull.

Aye—always.

- Page 115. That I mind - i.e., so far as I can remember ; another colloquial form.
 Liever - rather.
 Sennight last - i.e., seven nights ago last Thursday.
- „ 116. Labour's satellite (*Cf. Macbeth*. Act II, scene 2, 'sore labour's bath.'
 The dark vulture Remorse - a vivid metaphor.
 Another gulf - he could no longer bring to Margaret the innocence and purity of life which corresponded to her own.
- „ 118. Bravo - Italian for an assassin ; lit. a brave man.

CHAPTER XVII.

- Page 121. Collects - prayers for particular days or occasions.
 God's gift - i.e., life.
 Pax vobiscum - peace be with you.
- „ 122. Mortification - subduing his passions by abstinence and penance.
 St. Dominic - the founder of the famous order of the Dominicans, born 1170, died 1221, spent his life as a mendicant preacher combating the heresies of southern France. The order was founded in 1220. The Black Friars, as they were popularly called from their garb, were preachers and teachers. Thomas Aquinas is one of the most famous of the order.
- „ 123. Franciscans - another monastic order founded about the same time as the Dominicans by St. Francis of Assisi (1182 - 1226). "Of all saints," says Milman, "St. Francis was the most blameless and gentle. He was emphatically the saint of the people."
 Temper him - Jerome, like all successful orators and preachers, makes effective use of metaphorical language, e.g., 'the milk of the world,' 'leaning on a reed,' 'strike on this iron while 'tis hot' (p. 124), 'fly him with a string' (p. 125), etc.

CHAPTER XVIII

- Page 126.** Till he wandered - *i.e.*, mentally.
 „ 129. In statu quo—in its former state.
 „ 130. Like cats on a wall—a humorously expressive simile.
 Depopulators—as soldiers their trade was killing.
 „ 133. Wight—creature.
 „ 135. Confess—*i.e.*, to the curé, or priest.
-

CHAPTER XIX

- Page 139.** Basle—in Switzerland.
 „ 140. A Lactantius - *i.e.*, an edition of the work of Lactantius, a Christian writer of the early 4th century, who wrote in such an exquisite Latin style as to be called 'the Christian Cicero.' He was tutor to the son of Constantine the Great.
 Fust—whose name is coupled with Gutenberg as the inventor of printing. He was probably the financier or patron of the concern. He died in 1466
 „ 141. Augustine—one of the greatest Fathers of the early Church. Born 354, died 430 A.D. His "De Civitate Dei" (the City of God), a treatise vindicating Christianity, is the highest expression of his thought and theology. His other famous work, the "Confession," is descriptive of his personal piety and his Christian experience.
 „ 142. Wend—from Old-English *wendan* to go; 'went' is from this root.
 To their peg—to their level.
 Raised him to the skies - *i.e.*, extolled him.
 „ 144. St. Paul - born at Tarsus; died 62 A. D. The great Christian apostle to the 'Gentiles.'
-

CHAPTER XX

- Page 147.** Languor — listlessness.
 Kerk — Dutch for ' Church.'
 Dew from heaven — spiritual comfort.
- „ 148. Mutch — a cap.
- „ 149. Zuyder Zee — the semi-inland sea on the north of Holland.
- „ 150. Tonsure — the round bare place on the heads of priests and monks of the Roman Catholic Church.
- „ 153. He had thundered — his morning sermon had been one of denunciation and warning.
 Gloriola — the circle of rays surrounding the heads of saints in old paintings.
- „ 155. Crusty — surly.
- „ 156. Glaive — a sword.
 Dear heart — the colloquial equivalent of 'alack' or 'woe is me.'
- „ 159. Cogging — cheating.
- „ 161. The water is deep — much more vivid than saying, 'the position of affairs is now very critical.'

CHAPTER XXI

- Page 166.** Lent — the Christian fast of forty days ending at Easter.
- „ 170. Two days syne — two days ago.
 A bed of nettles — i.e., it never ceased to trouble his conscience.

CHAPTER XXII

- Page 172.** Hit the clout — a metaphor from archery ; I've hit the target, i.e., been successful.
 Diets — sayings.
- „ 173. My bile — my being out of temper.
 So ripe — i.e., ready ; amenable.
- „ 179. The solitary — the hermit.

CHAPTER XXIII

- Page 182.** Cheep—an onomatapoetic word.
 Did sagacity—looked at it wisely.
- „ 183. Cain—see *Genesis*, chapter iv. “And Cain talked with Abel his brother : and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”
 A laud—a psalm of praise.
- „ 184. Retro Sathanas—get thee behind me, Satan !
- „ 186. Dei gratia—by the grace of God.
-

CHAPTER XXIV

- Page 188.** Office—religious duty.
 Seraph—an angel.
- „ 189. Ever-blessed abode—heaven.
- „ 191. I must be father—an example of dramatic irony, by which Reade sustains the interest. Gerard was, we know, the child's father.
- „ 192. Craft—i.e., craft, trade.
 Crone—more usual ‘croon.’
- „ 193. Weet—know.
- „ 194. He is sound—i.e. asleep.
- „ 197. “Hours”—prayers for certain hours of the day.
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CHAPTER XXV

- Page 199.** Bands—the broad white linen neck-ribbons worn by clergymen.
- „ 200. Leave you alone for—i.e., trust you to see.
- „ 201. Blind side—i.e., to secure his indiscriminating sympathy first.

Page 203. *Capriccios*—an Italian word ; sudden movements.

Dives—the rich man in the parable ; *St. Luke* xvi, 19.

“ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.”

Might pass in a crowd—a colloquialism ; having passable good looks.

CHAPTER XXVI

Page 206. *Deventer*—a town in Holland, on the right bank of the *Yssel*.

Edward the Fourth's invasion—may be read in Shakespeare's *King Henry VI*. *Warwick*, the ‘ *King Maker*,’ was killed at *Barnet*, and *Edward*, Prince of Wales, at *Tewkesbury*. The Prince of Gloucester referred to is the future *Richard III*, the ‘ *Crookback*.’

„ 207. *Joseph*—the story is told in *Genesis*, Chapters 42 to 45.

CHAPTER XXVII

Page 209. *Zinthius*—*John Syntheim*, who was headmaster for a time.

Horace or *Terence*—Roman poets.

„ 210. *Hamburgh*—a port on the River *Elbe*.

„ 215. *Life's fitful fever*—a quotation from *Macbeth*, Act III, scene 2.

„ 216. *Articulo mortis*—at the point of death (Latin).

Haec est—This is the little house in which was born the great *Erasmus*.

Erasmus was a celebrated writer and teacher of the Reformation period. He had studied at the Universities of *Oxford*, *Cambridge*, *Louvain* and *Basle*, and was a friend of *Sir Thomas More*.

