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THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE

By Georg Ebers

Volume 4.

CHAPTER XX.

The burgomaster's wife had been anxious about Henrica, but the latter greeted her with special cheerfulness and met her gentle reproaches with the assurance that this morning had done her good. Fate, she said, was just, and if it were true that confidence of recovery helped the physician, Doctor Bontius would have an easy task with her. The dead Castilian must be the wretch, who had plunged her sister Anna into misery. Maria, surprised, but entirely relieved, left her and sought her husband to tell him how she had found the invalid, and in what relation the Spanish officer, slain by Allertssohn, seemed to have stood to Henrica and her sister. Peter only half listened to her, and when Barbara brought him a freshly-ironed ruff, interrupted his wife in the middle of her story, gave her the dead man's letter-case, and said:

"There, let her satisfy herself, and bring it to me again in the evening, I shall hardly be able to come to dinner; I suppose you'll see poor Allertssohn's widow in the course of the day."

"Certainly," she answered eagerly. "Whom will you appoint in his place?"

"That is for the Prince to decide."

"Have you thought of any means of keeping the communication with Delft free from the enemy?"

"On your mother's account?"

"Not solely. Rotterdam also lies to the south. We can expect nothing from Haarlem and Amsterdam, that is, from the north, for everything there is in the hands of the Spaniards."

"I'll get you a place in the council of war. Where do you learn your wisdom?"

"We have our thoughts, and isn't it natural that I should rather follow you into the future with my eyes open, than blindly? Has the English troop been used to secure the fortifications on the old canal? Kaak too is an important point."

Peter gazed at his wife in amazement, and the sense of discomfort experienced by an unskilful writer, when some one looks over his shoulder, stole over him. She had pointed out a bad, momentous error, which, it is true, did not burden him alone, and as he certainly did not wish to defend it to her, and moreover might have found justification difficult, he made no reply, saying nothing but: "Men's affairs! Good-bye until evening." With these words he walked past Barbara, towards the door.

Maria did not know how it happened, but before he laid his hand on the latch she gained sufficient self-command to call after him:

"Are you going so, Peter! Is that right? What did you promise me on your return from the journey to the Prince?"

"I know, I know," he answered impatiently. "We cannot serve two masters, and in these times I beg you not to trouble me with questions and matters that don't concern you. To direct the business of the city is my affair; you have your invalid, the children, the poor; let that suffice."

Without waiting for her reply he left the room, while she stood motionless, gazing after him.

Barbara watched her anxiously for several minutes, then busied herself with the papers on her brother's writing-table, saying as if to herself, though turning slightly towards her sister-in-law:

"Evil times! Let every one, who is not oppressed with such burdens as Peter, thank the Lord. He has to bear the responsibility of everything, and people can't dance lightly with hundred-pound weights on their legs. Nobody has a better heart, and nobody means more honestly. How the traders at the fair praised his caution! In the storm people know the pilot, and Peter was always greatest, when things were going worst. He knows what he is undertaking, but the last few weeks have aged him years."

Maria nodded. Barbara left the room, but returning after a few minutes, said beseechingly:

"You look ill, child, come and lie down. An hour's sleep is better than three meals. At your age, such a night as this last one doesn't pass without leaving traces. The sun is shining so brightly, that I've drawn your window-curtains. I've made your bed, too. Be sensible and come."

While uttering the last words, she took Maria's hand and drew her away. The young wife made no resistance, and though her eyes did not remain dry when she was alone, sleep soon overpowered her.

Towards noon, refreshed by slumber, and newly dressed, she went to the captain's house. Her own heart was heavy, and compassion for herself and her own fate again had the mastery. Eva Peterstochter, the fencing-master's widow, a quiet, modest woman, whom she scarcely knew by sight,

did not appear. She was sitting alone in her room, weeping, but Maria found in her house the musician, Wilhelm, who had spoken comforting words to his old friend's son, and promised to take charge of him and make him a good performer.

The burgomaster's wife sent a message to the widow, begging to see her the next day, and then went out into the street with Wilhelm. Everywhere groups of citizens, women, and journeymen were standing together, talking about what had happened and the coming trouble. While Maria was telling the musician who the dead Castilian was, and that Henrica desired to speak with him, Wilhelm, as soon as possible, she was interrupted more than once; for sometimes a company of volunteers or city guards, relieved from duty in the towers and on the walls, sometimes a cannon barred their way. Was it the anticipation of coming events, or the beat of drums and blare of trumpets, which so excited her companion, that he often pressed his hand to his forehead and she was obliged to request him to slacken his pace. There was a strange, constrained tone in his voice as, in accordance with her request, he told her that the Spaniards had come by ship up the Amstel, the Drecht, and the Brasem See to the Rhine and landed at Leyderdorp.

A mounted messenger wearing the Prince's colors, and followed not only by children, but by grown persons, who ran after him eager to reach the town-hall at the same time, interrupted Wilhelm, and as soon as the crowd had passed, the burgomaster's wife asked her companion one question after another. The noise of war, the firing audible in the distance, the gay military costumes everywhere to be seen in place of the darker citizens' dress, also aroused her eager interest, and what she learned from Wilhelm was little calculated to diminish it. The main body of the Spanish troops was on the way to the Hague. The environment of the city had commenced, but the enemy could hardly succeed in his purpose; for the English auxiliaries, who were to defend the new fortifications of Valkenburg, the village of Alfen, and the Gouda sluice might be trusted. Wilhelm had seen the British soldiers, their commander, Colonel Chester, and Captain Gensfort, and praised their superb equipments and stately bearing.

On reaching her own house, Maria attempted to take leave of her companion, but the latter earnestly entreated permission to have an interview with Henrica at once, and could scarcely be convinced that he must have patience until the doctor had given his consent.

At dinner Adrian, who when his father was not present, talked freely enough, related all sorts of things he had seen himself, as well as news and rumors heard at school and in the street, his eloquence being no little encouraged by his step-mother's eager questions.

Intense anxiety had taken possession of the burgomaster's wife. Her enthusiasm for the cause of liberty, to which her most beloved relatives had fallen victims, blazed brightly, and wrath against the oppressors of her native land seethed passionately in her breast. The delicate, maidenly, reserved woman, who was utterly incapable of any loud or rude expression of feeling in ordinary life, would now have rushed to the

walls, like Kanau Hasselaer of Haarlem, to fight the foe among the men.

Offended pride, and everything that an hour ago had oppressed her heart, yielded to sympathy for her country's cause. Animated with fresh courage, she went to Henrica and, as evening had closed in, sat down by the lamp to write to her mother; for she had neglected to do so since the invalid's arrival, and communication with Delft might soon be interrupted.

When she read over the completed letter, she was satisfied with it and herself, for it breathed firm confidence in the victory of the good cause, and also distinctly and unconstrainedly expressed her cheerful willingness to bear the worst.

Barbara had retired when Peter at last appeared, so weary that he could scarcely touch the meal that had been kept ready for him. While raising the food to his lips, he confirmed the news Maria had already heard from the musician, and was gentle and kind, but his appearance saddened her, for it recalled Barbara's allusion to the heavy burden he had assumed. To-day, for the first time, she noticed two deep lines that anxiety had furrowed between his eyes and lips, and full of tender compassion, went behind him, laid her hands on his cheeks and kissed him on the forehead. He trembled slightly, seized her slender right hand so impetuously that she shrank back, raised it first to his lips, then to his eyes, and held it there for several minutes.

At last he rose, passed before her into his sleeping-room, bade her an affectionate good-night, and lay down to rest. When she too sought her bed, he was breathing heavily. Extreme fatigue had quickly overpowered him. The slumber of both was destined to be frequently interrupted during this night, and whenever Maria woke, she heard her husband sigh and moan. She did not stir, that she might not disturb the sleep he sought and needed, and twice held her breath, for he was talking to himself. First he murmured softly: "Heavy, too heavy," and then: "If I can only bear it."

When she awoke next morning, he had already left the room and gone to the town-hall. At noon he returned home, saying that the Spaniards had taken the Hague and been hailed with delight by the pitiful adherents of the king. Fortunately, the well-disposed citizens and Beggars had had time to escape to Delft, for brave Nicolas Ruichhaver had held the foe in check for a time at Geestburg. The west was still open, and the newly-fortified fort of Valkenburg, garrisoned by the English soldiers, would not be so easy to storm. On the east, other British auxiliaries were posted at Alfen in the Spaniards' rear.

The burgomaster told all this unasked, but did not speak as freely and naturally as when conversing with men. While talking, he often looked into his plate and hesitated. It seemed as if he were obliged to impose a certain restraint upon himself, in order to speak before women, servants, and children, of matters he was in the habit of discussing only with men of his own position. Maria listened attentively, but maintained a modest reserve, urging him only by loving looks and sympathizing

exclamations, while Barbara boldly asked one question after another.

The meal was approaching an end, when Junker von Warmond entered unannounced, and requested the burgomaster to accompany him at once, for Colonel Chester was standing before the White Gate with a portion of his troops, asking admittance to the city.

At these tidings, Peter dashed his mug of beer angrily on the table, sprang from his seat, and left the room before the nobleman.

During the late hours of the afternoon, the Van der Werff house was crowded with people. The gossips came to talk over with Barbara the events occurring at the White Gate. Burgomaster Van Swieten's wife had heard from her own husband, that the Englishmen, without making any resistance, had surrendered the beautiful new fort of Valkenburg and taken to their heels, at the mere sight of the Spaniards. The enemy had marched out from Haarlem through the downs above Nordwyk, and it would have been an easy matter for the Britons to hold the strong position.

"Fine aid such helpers give!" cried Barbara indignantly. "Let Queen Elizabeth keep the men on her island for herself, and send us the women."

"Yet they are real sons of Anak, and bear themselves like trim soldiers," said the wife of the magistrate Heemskerk. "High boots, doublets of fine leather, gay plumes in their morions and hats, large coats of mail, halberds that would kill half a dozen--and all like new."

"They probably didn't want to spoil them, and so found a place of safety as soon as possible, the windy cowards," cried the wife of Church-warden de Haes, whose sharp tongue was well known. "You seem to have looked at them very closely, Frau Margret."

"From the wind-mill at the gate," replied the other. "The envoy stopped on the bridge directly under us. A handsome man on a stately horse. His trumpeter too was mounted, and the velvet cloth on his trumpet bristled with beautiful embroidery in gold thread and jewels. They earnestly entreated admittance, but the gate remained closed."

"Right, right!" cried Frau Heemskerk. "I don't like the Prince's commissioner, Van Bronkhorst. What does he care for us, if only the Queen doesn't get angry and withdraw the subsidies? I've heard he wants to accommodate Chester and grant him admission."

"He would like to do so," added Frau Van Hout. "But your husband, Frau Maria, and mine--I was talking with him on the way here--will make every effort to prevent it. The two Seigneurs of Nordwyk are of their opinion, so perhaps the commissioner will be out-voted."

"May God grant it!" cried the resolute voice of Wilhelm's mother. "By to-morrow or the day after, not even a cat will be allowed to leave the gates, and my husband says we must begin to save provisions at once."

"Five hundred more consumers in the city, to lessen our children's

morsels; that would be fine business!" cried Frau de Haes, throwing herself back in her chair so violently, that it creaked, and beating her knees with her hands.

"And they are Englishmen, Frau Margret, Englishmen," said the Receiver-General's wife. "They don't eat, they don't consume, they devour. We supply our troops; but Herr von Nordwyk--I mean the younger one, who has been at the Queen's court as the Prince's ambassador, told my Wilhelm what a British glutton can gobble. They'll clear off your beef like cheese, and our beer is dish-water compared with their black malt brew."

"All that might be borne," replied Barbara, "if they were stout soldiers. We needn't mind a hundred head of cattle more or less, and the glutton becomes temperate, when a niggard rules the house. But I wouldn't take one of our Adrian's grey rabbits for these runaways."

"It would be a pity," said Frau de Haes. "I shall go home now, and if I find my husband, he'll learn what sensible people think of the Englishmen."

"Gently, my friend, gently," said Burgomaster Van Swieten's wife, who had hitherto been playing quietly with the cat. "Believe me, it will be just the same on the whole, whether we admit the auxiliaries or not, for before the gooseberries in our gardens are ripe, all resistance will be over."

Maria, who was passing cakes and hippocras, set her waiter on the table and asked:

"Do you wish that, Frau Magtelt?"

"I do," replied the latter positively, "and many sensible people wish it too. No resistance is possible against such superior force, and the sooner we appeal to the King's mercy, the more surely it will be granted."

The other women listened to the bold speaker in silence, but Maria approached and answered indignantly:

"Whoever says that, can go to the Spaniards at once; whoever says that, desires the disgrace of the city and country; whoever says that--"

Frau Magtelt interrupted Maria with a forced laugh, saying:

"Do you want to school experienced women, Madam Early-Wise? Is it customary to attack a visitor?"

"Customary or not," replied the other, "I will never permit such words in our house, and if they crossed the lips of my own sister I would say to her Go, you are my friend no longer!"

Maria's voice trembled, and she pointed with outstretched arm towards the door.

Frau Magtelt struggled for composure, but as she left the room found nothing to say, except: "Don't be troubled, don't be troubled--you won't see me again."

Barbara followed the offended woman, and while those who remained fixed their eyes in embarrassment upon their laps, Wilhelm's mother exclaimed:

"Well said, little woman, well said!"

Herr Van Hout's kind wife threw her arm around Maria, kissed her forehead, and whispered:

"Turn away from the other women and dry your eyes."

CHAPTER XXI.

A story is told of a condemned man, whom his cruel executioner cast into a prison of ingenious structure. Each day the walls of this cage grew narrower and narrower, each day they pressed nearer and nearer to the unfortunate prisoner, until in despair he died and the dungeon became his coffin. Even so, league by league, the iron barriers of the Spanish regiments drew nearer and nearer Leyden, and, if they succeeded in destroying the resistance of their victim, the latter was threatened with a still more cruel and pitiless end than that of the unhappy prisoner. The girdle Valdez, King Philip's commander, and his skilful lieutenant, Don Ayala, had drawn around the city in less than two days, was already nearly closed, the fort of Valkenburg, strengthened with the utmost care, belonged to the enemy, and the danger had advanced more rapidly and with far more irresistible strength, than even the most timid citizens had feared. If Leyden fell, its houses would be delivered to fire and pillage, its men to death, its women to disgrace--this was guaranteed by the fate of other conquered cities and the Spanish nature.

Who could imagine the guardian angel of the busy city, except under a sullen sky, with clouded brow and anxious eyes, and yet it looked as gay and bright at the White Gate as if a spring festival was drawing to a close with a brilliant exhibition. Wherever the walls, as far as Catherine's Tower, afforded a foothold, they were crowded with men, women, and children. The old masonry looked like the spectators' seats in an arena, and the buzzing of the many-headed, curious crowd was heard for a long distance in the city.

It is a kind dispensation of Providence, that enables men to enjoy a brief glimpse of sunshine amid terrible storms, and thus the journeymen and apprentices, women and children, forgot the impending danger and feasted their eyes on the beautifully-dressed English soldiers, who were looking up at them, nodding and laughing saucily to the young girls, though part of them, it is true, were awaiting with thoughtful faces the results of the negotiations going on within the walls.

The doors of the White Gate now opened; Commissioner Van Bronkhorst, Van der Werff, Van Hout and other leaders of the community accompanied the British colonel and his trumpeter to the bridge. The former seemed to be filled with passionate indignation and several times struck his hand on the hilt of his sword, the Leyden magistrates were talking to him, and at last took leave with low bows, which he answered only with a haughty wave of the hand. The citizens returned, the portals of the gate closed, the old lock creaked, the iron-shod beams fell back into their places, the chains of the drawbridge rattled audibly, and the assembled throng now knew that the Englishmen had been refused admittance to the city.

Loud cheers, mingled with many an expression of displeasure, were heard. "Long live Orange!" shouted the boys, among whom were Adrian and the son of the dead fencing-master Allertssohn; the women waved their handkerchiefs, and all eyes were fixed on the Britons. A loud flourish of trumpets was heard, the English mounted officers dashed towards the colonel and held a short council of war with him, interrupted by hasty words from several individuals, and soon after a signal was sounded. The soldiers hurriedly, formed in marching array, many of them shaking their fists at the city. Halberds and muskets, which had been stacked, were seized by their owners and, amid the beating of drums and blare of trumpets, order arose out of the confusion. Individuals fell into ranks, ranks into companies, gay flags were unfurled and flung to the evening breeze, and with loud hurrahs the troops marched along the Rhine towards the south-west, where the Spanish outposts were stationed.

The Leyden boys joined loudly in the Englishmen's cheer.

Even Andreas, the fencing-master's son, had begun to shout with them; but when he saw a tall captain marching proudly before his company, his voice failed and, covering his eyes with his hands, he ran home to his mother.

The other lads did not notice him, for the setting sun flashed so brightly on the coats of mail and helmets of the soldiers, the trumpets sounded so merrily, the officers' steeds caracoled so proudly under their riders, the gay plumes and banners and the smoke of the glimmering matches gained such beautiful hues in the roseate light of sunset, that eyes and ears seemed spellbound by the spectacle. But a fresh incident now attracted the attention of great and small.

Thirty-six Englishmen, among them several officers, lingered behind the others and approached the gate. Again the lock creaked and the chains rattled. The little band was admitted to the city and welcomed at the first houses of the northern end by Herr Van Bronkhorst and the burgomaster.

Every one on the walls had expected, that a skirmish between the retreating Englishmen and Castilians would now take place before their eyes. But they were greatly mistaken. Before the first ranks reached the enemy, the matches for lighting the cannon flew through the air, the banners were lowered, and when darkness came and the curious spectators dispersed, they knew that the Englishmen had deserted the good cause and

gone over to the Spaniards.

The thirty-six men, who had been admitted through the gates, were the only ones who refused to be accessory to this treason.

The task of providing quarters for Captain Cromwell and the other Englishmen and Netherlanders, who had remained faithful, was assigned to Van Hout. Burgomaster Van der Werff went home with Commissioner Van Bronkhorst. Many a low-voiced but violent word had been exchanged between them. The commissioner protested that the Prince would be highly incensed at the refusal to admit the Englishmen, for with good reason he set great value on Queen Elizabeth's favorable disposition to the cause of freedom, to which the burgomaster and his friends had rendered bad service that day. Van der Werff denied this, for everything depended upon holding Leyden. After the fall of this city, Delft, Rotterdam and Gouda would also be lost, and all farther efforts to battle for the liberty of Holland useless. Five hundred consumers would prematurely exhaust the already insufficient stock of provisions. Everything had been done to soften their refusal to admit the Englishmen, nay they had had free choice to encamp beneath the protection of the walls under the cannon of the city.

When the two men parted, neither had convinced the other, but each felt sure of his comrade's loyalty. As Peter took leave, he said:

"Van Hout shall explain the reasons for our conduct to the Prince, in a letter as clear and convincing as only he can make it, and his excellency will finally approve of it. Rely upon that."

"We will wait," replied the commissioner, "but don't forget that we shall soon be shut within these walls behind bolts and bars, like prisoners, and perhaps day after to-morrow no messenger will be able to get to him."

"Van Hout is swift with his pen."

"And let a proclamation be read aloud, early tomorrow morning, advising the women, old men and children, in short, all who will diminish the stock of provisions and add no strength to the defence, to leave the city. They can reach Delft without danger, for the roads leading to it are still open."

"Very well," replied Peter. "It's said that many girls and women have gone to-day in advance of the others."

"That's right," cried the commissioner. "We are driving in a fragile vessel on the high seas. If I had a daughter in the house, I know what I should do. Farewell till we meet again, Meister. How are matters at Alfen? The firing is no longer heard."

"Darkness has probably interrupted the battle."

"We'll hope for the best news to-morrow, and even if all the men outside succumb, we within the walls will not flinch or yield."

"We will hold out firmly to the end," replied Peter resolutely.

"To the end, and, if God so wills it, a successful end."

"Amen," cried Peter, pressed the commissioner's hand and pursued his way home.

Barbara met him on the steps and wanted to call Maria, who was with Henrica; but he forbade it and paced thoughtfully to and fro, his lips often quivering as if he were suffering great pain. When, after some time, he heard his wife's voice in the dining-room, he controlled himself by a violent effort, went to the door, and slowly opened it.

"You are at home already, and I sitting quietly here spinning!" she exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, child. Please come in here, I have something to say to you."

"For Heaven's sake! Peter, tell me what has happened. How your voice sounds, and how pale you look!"

"I'm not ill, but matters are serious, terribly serious, Maria."

"Then it is true that the enemy--"

They gained great advantage to-day and yesterday, but I beg you, if you love me, don't interrupt me now; what I have to say is no easy thing, it is hard to force the lips to utter it. Where shall I begin? How shall I speak, that you may not misunderstand me? You know, child, I took you into my house from a warm nest. What we could offer was very little, and you had doubtless expected to find more. I know you have not been happy."

"But it would be so easy for you to make me so."

"You are mistaken, Maria. In these troublous times but one thing claims my thoughts, and whatever diverts them from it is evil. But just now one thing paralyzes my courage and will-anxiety about your fate; for who knows what is impending over us, and therefore it must be said, I must take my heart to the shambles and express a wish.--A wish? Oh, merciful Heaven, is there no other word for what I mean!"

"Speak, Peter, speak, and do not torture me!" cried Maria, gazing anxiously into her husband's face. It could be no small matter, that induced the clear-headed, resolute man to utter such confused language.

The burgomaster summoned up his courage and began again:

"You are right, it is useless to keep back what must be said. We have determined at the town-hall to-day, to request the women and girls to leave the city. The road to Delft is still open; day after to-morrow it may no longer be so, afterwards--who can predict what will happen

afterwards? If no relief comes and the provisions are consumed, we shall be forced to open the gates to the enemy, and then, Maria, imagine what will happen! The Rhine and the canals will grow crimson, for much blood will flow into them and they will mirror an unequalled conflagration. Woe betide the men, tenfold woe betide the women, against whom the conqueror's fury will then be directed. And you, you--the wife of the man who has induced thousands to desert King Philip, the wife of the exile, who directs the resistance within these walls."

At the last words Maria had opened her large eyes wider and wider, and now interrupted her husband with the question: "Do you wish to try how high my courage will rise?"

"No, Maria. I know you will hold out loyally and would look death in the face as fearlessly as your sister did in Haarlem; but I, I cannot endure the thought of seeing you fall into the hands of our butchers. Fear for you, terrible fear, will destroy my vigorous strength in the decisive hours, so the words must be uttered--"

Maria had hitherto listened to her husband quietly; she knew what he desired. Now she advanced nearer and interrupted him by exclaiming firmly, nay imperiously:

"No more, no more, do you hear! I will not endure another word!"

"Maria!"

"Silence it is my turn now. To escape fear, you will thrust your wife from the house; fear, you say, would undermine your strength. But will longing strengthen it? If you love me, it will not fail to come--"

"If I love you, Maria!"

"Well, well! But you have forgotten to consider how I shall feel in exile, if I also love you. I am your wife. We vowed at the altar, that nothing save death should part us. Have you forgotten it? Have your children become mine? Have I taught them, rejoiced to call myself their mother? Yes, or no?"

"Yes, Maria, yes, yes, a hundred times yes!"

"And you have the heart to throw me into the arms of this wasting longing! You wish to prevent me from keeping the most sacred of vows? You can bring yourself to tear me from the children? You think me too shallow and feeble, to endure suffering and death for the sacred cause, which is mine as well as yours! You are fond of calling me your child, but I can be strong, and whatever may come, will not weep. You are the husband and have the right to command, I am only the wife and shall obey. Shall I go? Shall I stay? I await your answer."

She had uttered the last words in a trembling voice, but the burgomaster exclaimed with deep emotion:

"Stay, stay, Maria! Come, come, and forgive me!" Peter seized her hand, exclaiming again:

"Come, come!"

But the young wife released herself, retreated a step and said beseechingly:

"Let me go, Peter, I cannot; I need time to overcome this."

He let his arms fall and gazed mournfully into her face, but she turned away and silently left the room. Peter Van der Werff did not follow her, but went quietly into his study and strove to reflect upon many things, that concerned his office, but his thoughts constantly reverted to Maria. His love oppressed him as if it were a crime, and he seemed to himself like a courier, who gathers flowers by the way-side and in this idling squanders time and forgets the object of his mission. His heart felt unspeakably heavy and sad, and it seemed almost like a deliverance when, just before midnight, the bell in the Tower of Pancratius raised its evilboding voice. In danger, he knew, he would feel and think of nothing except what duty required of him, so with renewed strength he took his hat from the hook and left the house with a steady step.

In the street he met Junker Van Duivenvoorde, who summoned him to the Hohenort Gate, before which a body of Englishmen had again appeared; a few brave soldiers who, in a fierce, bloody combat, had held Alfen and the Gouda sluice against the Spaniards until their powder was exhausted and necessity compelled them to yield or seek safety in flight. The burgomaster followed the officer and ordered the gates to be opened to the brave soldiers. They were twenty in number, among them the Netherland Captain Van der laen, and a Young German officer. Peter commanded, that they should have shelter for the night in the town-hall and the guard-house at the gate. The next morning suitable quarters would be found for them in the houses of the citizens. Janus Dousa invited the captain to lodge with him, the German went to Aquanus's tavern. All were ordered to report to the burgomaster at noon the next day, to be assigned to quarters and enrolled among the volunteer troops.

The ringing of the alarm-bell in the tower also disturbed the night's rest of the ladies in the Van der Werff household. Barbara sought Maria, and neither returned to their rooms until they had learned the cause of the ringing and soothed Henrica.

Maria could not sleep. Her husband's purpose of separating from her during the impending danger, had stirred her whole soul, wounded her to the inmost depths of her heart. She felt humiliated, and, if not misunderstood, at least unappreciated by the man for whose sake she rejoiced, whenever she perceived a lofty aspiration or noble emotion in her own soul. What avail is personal loveliness to the beautiful wife of a blind man; of what avail to Maria was the rich treasure buried in her bosom, if her husband would not see and bring it to the surface! "Show him, tell him how lofty are your feelings," urged love; but womanly pride exclaimed: "Do not force upon him what he disdains to seek."

So the hours passed, bringing her neither sleep, peace, nor the desire to forget the humiliation inflicted upon her.

At last Peter entered the room, stepping lightly and cautiously, in order not to wake her. She pretended to be asleep, but with half-closed eyes could see him distinctly. The lamp-light fell upon his face, and the lines she had formerly perceived looked like deep shadows between his eyes and mouth. They impressed upon his features the stamp of heavy, sorrowful anxiety, and reminded Maria of the "too hard" and "if I can only bear it," he had murmured in his sleep the night before. Then he approached her bed and stood there a long time; she no longer saw him, for she kept her eyes tightly closed, but the first loving glance, with which he gazed down upon her, had not escaped her notice. It continued to beam before her mental vision, and she thought she felt that he was watching and praying for her as if she were a child.

Sleep had long since overpowered her husband, while Maria lay gazing at the glimmering dawn, as wakeful as if it were broad day. For the sake of his love she would forgive much, but she could not forget the humiliation she had experienced. "A toy," she said to herself, "a work of art which we enjoy, is placed in security when danger threatens the house; the axe and the bread, the sword and the talisman that protects us, in short whatever we cannot dispense with while we live, we do not release from our hands till death comes. She was not necessary, indispensable to him. If she had obeyed his wish and left him, then--yes, then--"

Here the current of her thoughts was checked, for the first time she asked herself the question: "Would he have really missed your helping hand, your cheering word?"

She turned restlessly, and her heart throbbed anxiously, as she told herself that she had done little to smooth his rugged pathway. The vague feeling, that he had not been entirely to blame, if she had not found perfect happiness by his side, alarmed her. Did not her former conduct justify him in expecting hindrance rather than support and help in impending days of severest peril?

Filled with deep longing to obtain a clear view of her own heart, she raised herself on her pillows and reviewed her whole former life.

Her mother had been a Catholic in her youth, and had often told her how free and light-hearted she had felt, when she confided everything that can trouble a woman's heart to a silent third person, and received from the lips of God's servant the assurance that she might now begin a new life, secure of forgiveness. "It is harder for us now," her mother said before her first communion, "for we of the Reformed religion are referred to ourselves and our God, and must be wholly at peace with ourselves before we approach the Lord's table. True, that is enough, for if we frankly and honestly confess to the judge within our own breasts all that troubles our consciences, whether in thought or deed, and sincerely repent, we shall be sure of forgiveness for the sake of the Saviour's wounds."

Maria now prepared for this silent confession, and sternly and pitilessly examined her conduct. Yes, she had fixed her gaze far too steadily upon herself, asked such and given little. The fault was recognized, and now the amendment should begin.

After this self-inspection, her heart grew lighter, and when she at last turned away from the morning-light to seek sleep, she looked forward with pleasure to the affectionate greeting she meant to offer Peter in the morning; but she soon fell asleep and when she woke, her husband had long since left the house.

As usual, she set Peter's study in order before proceeding to any other task, and while doing so, cast a friendly glance at the dead Eva's picture. On the writing-table lay the bible, the only book not connected with his business affairs, that her husband ever read. Barbara sometimes drew comfort and support from the volume, but also used it as an oracle, for when undecided how to act she opened it and pointed with her finger to certain passage. This usually had a definite meaning and she generally, though not always, acted as it directed. To-day she had been disobedient, for in response to her question whether she might venture to send a bag of all sorts of dainties to her son, a Beggar of the Sea, in spite of the Spaniards encircling the city, he had received the words of Jeremiah: "Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains and all their vessels and their camels," and yet the bag had been entrusted early that morning to a widow, who intended to make her escape to Delft with her young daughter, according to the request of the magistrates. The gift might perhaps reach Rotterdam; a mother always hopes for a miracle in behalf of her child.

Before Maria restored the bible to its old place, she opened it at the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, which speaks of love, and was specially dear to her. There were the words: "Charity suffereth long and is kind, charity is not easily provoked;" and "Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

To be kind and patient, to hope and endure all things, was the duty love imposed upon her.

When she had closed the bible and was preparing to go to Henrica, Barbara ushered Janus Dousa into the room. The young nobleman to-day wore armor and gorget, and looked far more like a soldier than a scientist or poet. He had sought Peter in vain at the town-hall, and hoped to find him at home. One of the messengers sent to the Prince had returned from Dortrecht with a letter, which conferred on Dousa the office made vacant by Allertssohn's death. He was to command not only the city-guard, but all the armed force. He had accepted the appointment with cheerful alacrity, and requested Maria to inform her husband.

"Accept my congratulations," said the burgomaster's wife. "But what will now become of your motto: 'Ante omnia Musae?'"

"I shall change the words a little and say: 'Omnia ante Musas.'"

"Do you understand that jargon, child?" asked Barbara.

"A passport will be given the Muses," replied Maria gaily.

Janus was pleased with the ready repartee and exclaimed: "How bright and happy you look! Faces free from care are rare birds in these days."

Maria blushed, for she did not know how to interpret the words of the nobleman, who understood how to reprove with subtle mockery, and answered naively: "Don't think me frivolous, Junker. I know the seriousness of the times, but I have just finished a silent confession and discovered many bad traits in my character, but also the desire to replace them with more praiseworthy ones."

"There, there," replied Janus. "I knew long ago that you had formed a friendship in the Delft school with my old sage. 'Know thyself,' was the Greek's principal lesson, and you wisely obey it. Every silent confession, every desire for inward purification, must begin with the purpose of knowing ourselves and, if in so doing we unexpectedly encounter things which tend to make our beloved selves uncomely, and have the courage to find them just as hideous in ourselves as in others--"

"Abhorrence will come, and we shall have taken the first step towards improvement."

"No, dear lady, we shall then stand on one of the higher steps. After hours of long, deep thought, Socrates perceived--do you know what?"

"That he knew nothing at all. I shall arrive at this perception more speedily."

"And the Christian learns it at school," said Barbara, to join in the conversation. "All knowledge is botchwork."

"And we are all sinners," added Janus. "That's easily said, dear madam, and easily understood, when others are concerned. 'He is a sinner' is quickly uttered, but 'I am a sinner' escapes the lips with more difficulty, and whoever does exclaim it with sorrow, in the stillness of his own quiet room, mingles the white feathers of angels' wings with the black pinions of the devil. Pardon me! In these times everything thought and said is transformed into solemn earnest. Mars is here, and the cheerful Muses are silent. Remember me to your husband, and tell him, that Captain Allertsohn's body has been brought in and to-morrow is appointed for the funeral."

The nobleman took his leave, and Maria, after visiting her patient and finding her well and bright, sent Adrian and Bessie into the garden outside the city-wall to gather flowers and foliage, which she intended to help them weave into wreaths for the coffin of the brave soldier. She herself went to the captain's widow.

CHAPTER XXII.

The burgomaster's wife returned home just before dinner, and found a motley throng of bearded warriors assembled in front of the house, they were trying to make themselves intelligible in the English language to some of the constables, and when the latter respectfully saluted Maria, raised their hands to their morions also.

She pleasantly returned the greeting and passed into the entry, where the full light of noon streamed in through the open door.

Peter had assigned quarters to the English soldiers outside, and after a consultation with the new commandant, Jan Van der Does, gave them officers. They were probably waiting for their comrades, for when the young wife had ascended the first steps of the staircase and looked upward, she found the top of the narrow flight barred by the tall figure of a soldier. The latter had his back towards her and was showing Bessie his dark velvet cap, surrounded by rectangular teeth, above which floated a beautiful light-blue ostrich-plume. The child seemed to have formed a close friendship with the soldier, for, although the latter was refusing her something, the little girl laughed gaily.

Maria paused irresolutely a moment; but when the child snatched the gay cap and put it on her own curls, she thought she must check her and exclaimed warningly: "Why, Bessie, that is no plaything for children."

The soldier turned, stood still a moment in astonishment, raised his hand to his forehead, and then, with a few hurried bounds, sprang down the stairs and rushed up to the burgomaster's wife. Maria had started back in surprise; but he gave her no time to think, for stretching out both hands he exclaimed in an eager, joyous tone, with sparkling eyes: "Maria! Jungfrau Maria! You here! This is what I call a lucky day!" The young wife had instantly recognized the soldier and willingly laid her right hand in his, though not without a shade of embarrassment.

The officer's clear, blue eyes sought hers, but she fixed her gaze on the floor, saying: "I am no longer what I was, the young girl has become a housewife."

"A housewife!" he exclaimed. "How dignified that sounds! And yet! Yet! You are still Jungfrau Maria! You haven't changed a hair. That's just the way you bent your head at the wedding in Delft, the way you raised your hands, lowered your eyes--you blushed too, just as prettily."

There was a rare melody in the voice which uttered these words with joyous, almost childlike freedom, which pleased Maria no less than the officer's familiar manner annoyed her. With a hasty movement she raised her head, looked steadily into the young man's handsome face and said with dignity:

"You see only the exterior, Junker von Dornburg; three years have made many changes within."

"Junker von Dornburg," he repeated, shaking his waving locks. "I was Junker Georg in Delft. Very different things have happened to us, dear lady, very different things. You see I have grown a tolerable, though not huge moustache, am stouter, and the sun has bronzed my pink and white boyish face--in short: my outer man has changed for the worse, but within I am just the same as I was three years ago."

Maria felt the blood again mounting into her cheeks, but she did not wish to blush and answered hastily: "Standing still is retrograding, so you have lost three beautiful years, Herr von Dornburg."

The officer looked at Maria in perplexity, and then said more gravely than before:

"Your jest is more opportune, than you probably suppose; I had hoped to find you again in Delft, but powder was short in Alfen, so the Spaniard will probably reach your native city sooner than we. Now a kind fate brings me to you here; but let me be honest--What I hope and desire stands clearly before my eyes, echoes in my soul, and when I thought of our meeting, I dreamed you would lay both hands in mine and, instead of greeting me with witty words, ask the old companion of happy hours, your brother Leonhard's best friend: 'Do you still remember our dead?' And when I had told you: 'Yes, yes, yes, I have never forgotten him,' then I thought the mild lustre of your eyes--Oh, oh, how I thank you! The dear orbs are floating in a mist of tears. You are not so wholly changed as you supposed, Frau Maria, and if I loyally remember the past, will you blame me for it?"

"Certainly not," she answered cordially. "And now that you speak to me so, I will with pleasure again call you Junker Georg, and as Leonhard's friend and mine, invite you to our house."

"That will be delightful," he cried cordially. "I have so much to ask you and, as for myself--alas, I wish I had less to tell."

"Have you seen my husband?" asked Maria.

"I know nobody in Leyden," he replied, "except my learned, hospitable host, and the doge of this miniature Venice, so rich in water and bridges."

Georg pointed up the stair-case. Maria blushed again as she said:

"Burgomaster Van der Werff is my husband."

The nobleman was silent for a short time, then he said quickly:

"He received me kindly. And the pretty elf up yonder?"

"His child by his first marriage, but now mine also. How do you happen

to call her the elf?"

"Because she looks as if she had been born among white flowers in the moonlight, and because the afterglow of the sunrise, from which the elves flee, crimsoned her cheeks when I caught her."

"She has already received the name once," said Maria. "May I take you to my husband?"

"Not now, Frau Van der Werff, for I must attend to my men outside, but to-morrow, if you will allow me."

Maria found the dishes smoking on the dining-table. Her family had waited for her, and, heated by the rapid walk at noon, excited by her unexpected meeting with the young German, she opened the door of the study and called to her husband:

"Excuse me! I was detained. It is very late."

"We were very willing to wait," he answered kindly, approaching her. Then all she had resolved to do returned to her memory and, for the first time since her marriage, she raised her husband's hand to her lips. He smilingly withdrew it, kissed her on the forehead, and said:

"It is delightful to have you here."

"Isn't it?" she asked, gently shaking her finger at him.

"But we are all here now, and dinner is waiting."

"Come then," she answered gaily. "Do you know whom I met on the stairs?"

"English soldiers."

"Of course, but among them Junker von Dornburg."

"He called on me. A handsome fellow, whose gayety is very attractive, a German from the evangelical countries."

"Leonhard's best friend. Don't you know? Surely I've told you about him. Our guest at Jacoba's wedding."

"Oh! yes. Junker Georg. He tamed the chestnut horse for the Prince's equerry."

"That was a daring act," said Maria, drawing a long breath.

"The chestnut is still an excellent horse," replied Peter. "Leonhard thought the Junker, with his gifts and talents, would lift the world out of its grooves; I remember it well, and now the poor fellow must remain quietly here and be fed by us. How did he happen to join the Englishmen and take part in the war?"

"I don't know; he only told me that he had had many experiences."

"I can easily believe it. He is living at the tavern; but perhaps we can find a room for him in the side wing, looking out upon the court-yard."

"No, Peter," cried the young wife eagerly. "There is no room in order there."

"That can be arranged later. At any rate we'll invite him to dinner to-morrow, he may have something to tell us. There is good marrow in the young man. He begged me not to let him remain idle, but make him of use in the service. Jan Van der Does has already put him in the right place, the new commandant looks into people's hearts."

Barbara mingled in the conversation, Peter, though it was a week-day, ordered a jug of wine to be brought instead of the beer, and an event that had not occurred for weeks happened: the master of the house sat at least fifteen minutes with his family after the food had been removed, and told them of the rapid advance of the Spaniards, the sad fate of the fugitive Englishmen, who had been disarmed and led away in sections, the brave defence the Britons, to whose corps Georg belonged, had made at Alfen, and of another hot combat in which Don Gaytan, the right-hand and best officer of Valdez, was said to have fallen. Messengers still went and came on the roads leading to Delft, but to-morrow these also would probably be blocked by the enemy.

He always addressed everything he said to Maria, unless Barbara expressly questioned him, and when he at last rose from the table, ordered a good roast to be prepared the next day for the guest he intended to invite. Scarcely had the door of his room closed behind him, when little Bessie ran up to Maria, threw her arms around her and asked:

"Mother, isn't Junker Georg the tall captain with the blue feather, who ran down-stairs so fast to meet you?"

"Yes, child."

"And he's coming to dinner to-morrow! He's coming, Adrian."

The child clapped her hands in delight and then ran to Barbara to exclaim once more:

"Aunt Barbel, did you hear? He's coming!"

"With the blue feather," replied the widow.

"And he has curls, curls as long as Assendelft's little Clara. May I go with you to see Cousin Henrica?"

"Afterwards, perhaps," replied Maria. "Go now, children, get the flowers and separate them carefully from the leaves. Trautchen will bring some hoops and strings, and then we'll bind the wreaths."

Junker Georg's remark, that this was a lucky day, seemed to be verified; for the young wife found Henrica bright and free from pain. With the doctor's permission, she had walked up and down her room several times, sat a longer time at the open window, relished her chicken, and when Maria entered, was seated in the softly-cushioned arm-chair, rejoicing in the consciousness of increasing strength.

Maria was delighted at her improved appearance, and told her how well she looked that day.

"I can return the compliment," replied Henrica. "You look very happy. What has happened to you?"

"To me? Oh! my husband was more cheerful than usual, and there was a great deal to tell at dinner. I've only come to enquire for your health. I will see you later. Now I must go with the children to a sorrowful task."

"With the children? What have the little elf and Signor Salvatore to do with sorrow?"

"Captain Allertssohn will be buried to-morrow, and we are going to make some wreaths for the coffin."

"Make wreaths!" cried Henrica, "I can teach you that! There, Trautchen, take the plate and call the little ones."

The servant went away, but Maria said anxiously: "You will exert yourself too much again, Henrica."

"I? I shall be singing again to-morrow. My preserver's potion does wonders, I assure you. Have you flowers and oak-leaves enough?"

"I should think so."

At the last words the door opened and Bessie cautiously entered the room, walking on tiptoe as she had been told, went up to Henrica, received a kiss from her, and then asked eagerly:

"Cousin Henrica, do you know? Junker Georg, with the blue feather, is coming again to-morrow and will dine with us."

"Junker Georg?" asked the young lady.

Maria interrupted the child's reply, and answered in an embarrassed tone:

"Herr von Domburg, an officer who came to the city with the Englishmen, of whom I spoke to you--a German--an old acquaintance. Go and arrange the flowers with Adrian, Bessie, then I'll come and help you."

"Here, with Cousin Henrica," pleaded the child.

"Yes, little elf, here; and we'll both make the loveliest wreath you ever

saw."

The child ran out, and this time, in her delight, forgot to shut the door gently.

The young wife gazed out of the window. Henrica watched her silently for a time and then exclaimed:

"One word, Frau Maria. What is going on in the court-yard? Nothing? And what has become of the happy light in your eyes? Your house isn't swarming with guests; why did you wait for Bessie to tell me about Junker Georg, the German, the old acquaintance?"

"Let that subject drop, Henrica."

"No, no! Do you know what I think? The storm of war has blown to your house the young madcap, with whom you spent such happy hours at your sister's wedding. Am I right or wrong? You needn't blush so deeply."

"It is he," replied Maria gravely. "But if you love me, forget what I told you about him, or deny yourself the idle amusement of alluding to it, for if you should still do so, it would offend me."

"Why should I! You are the wife of another."

"Of another whom I honor and love, who trusts me and himself invited the Junker to his house. I have liked the young man, admired his talents, been anxious when he trifled with his life as if it were a paltry leaf, which is flung into the river."

"And now that you have seen him again, Maria?"

"Now I know, what my duty is. Do you see, that my peace here is not disturbed by idle gossip."

"Certainly not, Maria; yet I am still curious about this Chevalier Georg and his singing. Unfortunately we shan't be long together. I want to go home."

"The doctor will not allow you to travel yet."

"No matter. I shall go as soon as I feel well enough. My father is refused admittance, but your husband can do much, and I must speak with him."

"Will you receive him to-morrow?"

"The sooner the better, for he is your husband and, I repeat, the ground is burning under my feet."

"Oh!" exclaimed Maria.

"That sounds very sad," cried Henrica. "Do you want to hear, that I

shall find it hard to leave you? I shouldn't go yet; but my sister Anna, she is now a widow--Thank God, I should like to say, but she is suffering want and utterly deserted. I must speak to my father about her, and go forth from the quiet haven into the storm once more."

"My husband will come to you," said Maria.

"That's right, that's right! Come in, children! Put the flowers on the table yonder. You, little elf, sit down on the stool and you, Salvatore, shall give me the flowers. What does this mean? I really believe the scamp has been putting perfumed oil on his curly head. In honor of me, Salvatore? Thank you!--We shall need the hoops later. First we'll make bouquets, and then bind them with the leaves to the wood. Sing me a song while we are working, Maria. The first one! I can bear it to-day."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Half Leyden had followed the brave captain's coffin, and among the other soldiers, who rendered the last honors to the departed, was Georg von Dornburg. After the funeral, the musician Wilhelm led the son of the kind comrade, whom so many mourned, to his house. Van der Werff found many things to be done after the burial, but reserved the noon hour; for he expected the German to dine.

The burgomaster, as usual, sat at the head of the table; the Junker had taken his place between him and Maria, opposite to Barbara and the children.

The widow never wearied of gazing at the young man's fresh, bright face, for although her son could not compare with him in beauty, there was an honest expression in the Junker's eyes, which reminded her of her Wilhelm.

Many a question and answer had already been exchanged between those assembled round the board, many a pleasant memory recalled, when Peter, after the dishes had been removed and a new jug with better wine placed on the table, filled the young nobleman's glass again, and raised his own.

"Let us drink this bumper," he cried, gazing at Georg with sincere pleasure in his eyes, "let us drink to the victory of the good cause, for which you too voluntarily draw your sword. Thanks for the vigorous pledge. Drinking is also an art, and the Germans are masters of it."

"We learn it in various places, and not worst at the University of Jena."

"All honor to the doctors and professors, who bring their pupils up to the standard of my dead brother-in-law, and judging from this sample drink, you also."

"Leonhard was my teacher in the 'ars bibendi.' How long ago it is!"

"Youth is not usually content," replied Peter, "but when the point in question concerns years, readily calls 'much,' what seems to older people 'little.' True, many experiences may have been crowded into the last few years of your life. I can still spare an hour, and as we are all sitting so cosily together here, you can tell us, unless you wish to keep silence on the subject, how you chanced to leave your distant home for Holland, and your German and Latin books to enlist under the English standard."

"Yes," added Maria, without any trace of embarrassment. "You still owe me the story. Give thanks, children, and then go."

Adrian gazed beseechingly first at his mother and then at his father, and as neither forbade him to stay, moved his chair close to his sister, and both leaned their heads together and listened with wide open eyes, while the Junker first quietly, then with increasing vivacity, related the following story:

"You know that I am a native of Thuringia, a mountainous country in the heart of Germany. Our castle is situated in a pleasant valley, through which a clear river flows in countless windings. Wooded mountains, not so high as the giants in Switzerland, yet by no means contemptible, border the narrow boundaries of the valley. At their feet the fields and meadows, at a greater height rise pine forests, which, like the huntsman, wear green robes at all seasons of the year. In winter, it is true, the snow cover them with a glimmering white sheet. When spring comes, the pines put forth new shoots, as fresh and full of sap as the budding foliage of your oaks and beeches, and in the meadows by the river it begins to snow in the warm breezes, for then one fruit-tree blooms beside another, and when the wind rises, the delicate white petals flutter through the air and fall among the bright blossoms in the grass, and on the clear surface of the river. There are also numerous barren cliffs on the higher portions of the mountains, and where they towered in the most rugged, inaccessible ridges, our ancestors built their fastnesses, to secure themselves from the attacks of their enemies. Our castle stands on a mountain-ridge in the midst of the valley of the Saale. There I was born, there I sported through the years of my boyhood, learned to read and guide the pen. There was plenty of hunting in the forests, we had spirited horses in the stable, and, wild lad that I was, I rarely went voluntarily into the school-room, the grey-haired teacher, Lorenz, had to catch me, if he wanted to get possession of me. My sisters and Hans, our youngest child, the boy was only three years younger than I, kept quiet-- I had an older brother too, yet did not have him. When his beard was first beginning to grow, he was given by our gracious Duke to Chevalier von Brand as his esquire, and sent to Spain, to buy Andalusian horses. John Frederick's father had learned their value in Madrid after the battle of Muhlburg. Louis was a merry fellow when he went away, and knew how to tame the wildest stallion. It was hard for our parents to believe him dead, but years elapsed, and as neither he nor Chevalier von Brand appeared, we were obliged to give him up for lost. My mother alone could not do this, and constantly expected his return. My father called me the future heir and lord of the castle. When I had passed beyond boyhood and

understood Cicero tolerably well, I was sent to the University of Jena to study law, as my uncle, the chancellor, wished me to become a counsellor of state.

"Oh Jena, beloved Jena! There are blissful days in May and June, when only light clouds float in the sky, and all the leaves and flowers are so fresh and green, that one would think--they probably think so themselves --that they could never fade and wither; such days in human existence are the period of joyous German student life. You can believe it. Leonhard has told you enough of Jena. He understood how to unite work and pleasure; I, on the contrary, learned little on the wooden benches, for I rarely occupied them, and the dust of books certainly didn't spoil my lungs. But I read Ariosto again and again, devoted myself to singing, and when a storm of feeling seethed within my breast, composed many songs for my own pleasure. We learned to wield the sword too in Jena, and I would gladly have crossed blades with the sturdy fencing-master Allertssohn, of whom you have just told me. Leonhard was older than I, and when he graduated with honor, I was still very weak in the pandects. But we were always one in heart and soul, so I went to Holland with him to attend his wedding. Ah, those were days! The theologians in Jena have actively disputed about the part of the earth, in which the little garden of Paradise should be sought. I considered them all fools, and thought: 'There is only one Eden, and that lies in Holland, and the fairest roses the dew waked on the first sunny morning, bloom in Delft!'"

At these words Georg shook back his waving locks and hesitated in great embarrassment, but as no one interrupted him and he saw Barbara's eager face and the children's glowing cheeks, quietly continued:

"So I came home, and was to learn for the first time, that in life also beautiful sunny days often end with storms. I found my father ill, and a few days after my return he closed his eyes in death. I had never seen any human being die, and the first, the very first, was he, my father."

Georg paused, and deeply moved, passed his hand over his eyes.

"Your father!" cried Barbara, in a tone of cordial sympathy, breaking the silence. "If we can judge the tree by the apple, he was surely a splendid man."

The Junker again raised his head, exclaiming with sparkling eyes:

"Unite every good and noble quality, and embody them in the form of a tall, handsome man, then you will have the image of my father;--and I might tell you of my mother--"

"Is she still alive?" asked Peter.

"God grant it!" exclaimed the young man. "I have heard nothing from my family for two months. That is hard. Pleasures smile along every path, and I like my profession of soldier, but it often grieves me sorely to hear so little from home. Oh! if one were only a bird, a sunbeam, or a shooting-star, one might, if only for the twinkling of an eye, learn how

matters go at home and fill the soul with fresh gratitude, or, if it must be--but I will not think of that. In the valley of the Saale, the trees are blossoming and a thousand flowers deck all the meadows, just as they do here, and did there two years ago, when I left home for the second time.

"After my father's death I was the heir, but neither hunting nor riding to court, neither singing nor the clinking of beakers could please me. I went about like a sleep-walker, and it seemed as if I had no right to live without my father. Then--it is now just two years ago--a messenger brought from Weimar a letter which had come from Italy with several others, addressed to our most gracious sovereign; it contained the news that our lost brother was still alive, lying sick and wretched in the hospital at Bergamo. A kind nun had written for him, and we now learned that on the journey from Valencia to Livorno Louis had been captured by corsairs and dragged to Tunis. How much suffering he endured there, with what danger he at last succeeded in obtaining his liberty, you shall learn later. He escaped to Italy on a Genoese galley. His feet carried him as far as Bergamo, but he could go no farther, and now lay ill, perhaps dying, among sympathizing strangers. I set out at once and did not spare horseflesh on the way to Bergamo, but though there were many strange and beautiful things to be seen on my way, they afforded me little pleasure, the thought of Louis, so dangerously ill, saddened my joyous spirits. Every running brook urged me to hasten, and the lofty mountains seemed like jealous barriers. When once beyond St. Gotthard I felt less anxious, and as I rode down from Bellinzona to Lake Lugano, and the sparkling surface of the water beyond the city smiled at me like a blue eye, forgot my grief for a time, waved my hat, and sung a song. In Bergamo I found my brother, alive, but enfeebled in mind and body, weak, and without any desire to take up the burden of life again. He had been in good hands, and after a few weeks we were able to travel homeward--this time I went through beautiful Tyrol. Louis's strength daily increased, but the wings of his soul had been paralyzed by suffering. Alas, for long years he had dug and carried heavy loads, with chains on his feet, beneath a broiling sun. Chevalier von Brand could not long endure this hard fate, but Louis, while in Tunis, forgot both how to laugh and weep, and which of the two can be most easily spared?

"Even when he saw my mother again, he could not shed a tear, yet his whole body--and surely his heart also--trembled with emotion. Now he lives quietly at the castle. In the prime of manhood he is an old man, but he is beginning to accommodate himself to life, only he can't bear the sight of a strange face. I had a hard battle with him, for as the eldest son, the castle and estate, according to the law, belong to him, but he wanted to resign his rights and put me in his place. Even when he had brought my mother over to his side, and my uncle and brothers and sisters tried to persuade me to yield to his wish, I remained resolute. I would not touch what did not belong to me, and our youngest boy, Wolfgang, has grown up, and can fill my place wherever it is necessary. When the entreaties and persuasions became too strong for me, I saddled my horse and went away again. It was hard for my mother to let me go, but I had tasted the delight of travelling, and rode off as if to a wedding. If I must be perfectly frank, I'll confess that I resigned

castle and estates like a troublesome restraint. Free as the wind and clouds, I followed the same road over which I had ridden with Leonhard, for in your country a war after my own heart was going on, and my future fortune was to be based upon my sword. In Cologne I enlisted under the banner of Louis of Nassau, and fought with him at Mook Heath till every one retreated. My horse had fallen, my doublet was torn, there was little left save good spirits and the hope of better days. These were soon found, for Captain Gensfort asked me to join the English troops. I became his ensign, and at Alfen held out beside him till the last grain of powder was exhausted. What happened there, you know."

"And Captain Van der Laen told us," said Peter, "that he owes his life to you. You fought like a lion."

"It was wild work enough at the fortifications, yet neither I nor my horse had a hair ruffled, and this time I even saved my knapsack and a full purse. Fate, like mothers, loves troublesome children best, and therefore led me to you and your family, Herr Burgomaster."

"And I beg you to consider yourself one of them," replied Peter. "We have two pleasant rooms looking out upon the court-yard; they shall be put in order for you, if you would like to occupy them."

"With pleasure," replied the Junker, and Peter, offering him his hand, said:

"The duties of my office call me away, but you can tell the ladies what you need, and when you mean to move in. The sooner, the better we shall be pleased. Shall we not, Maria?"

"You will be welcome, Junker Georg. Now I must look after the invalid we are nursing here. Barbara will ascertain your wishes."

The young wife took her husband's hand and left the room with him.

The widow was left alone with the young nobleman and tried to learn everything he desired. Then she followed her sister-in-law, and finding her in Henrica's room, clapped her hands, exclaiming:

"That is a man! Fraulein, I assure you that, though I'm an old woman, I never met so fine a young fellow in all my life. So much heart, and so handsome too! 'To whom fortune gives once, it gives by bushels, and unto him that hath, shall be given!' Those are precious words!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Peter had promised Henrica, to request the council to give her permission to leave the city.

It was hard for her to part from the burgomaster's household. Maria's

frank nature exerted a beneficial influence; it seemed as if her respect for her own sex increased in her society. The day before she had heard her sing. The young wife's voice was like her character. Every note flawless and clear as a bell, and Henrica grieved that she should be forbidden to mingle her own voice with her hostess's. She was very sorry to leave the children too. Yet she was obliged to go, on Anna's account, for her father could not be persuaded by letters to do anything. Had she appealed to him in writing to forgive his rejected child, he would hardly have read the epistle to the end. Something might more easily be won from him through words, by taking advantage of a favorable moment. She must have speech with him, yet she dreaded the life in his castle, especially as she was forced to acknowledge, that she too was by no means necessary to her father. To secure the inheritance, he had sent her to a terrible existence with her aunt; while she lay dangerously ill, he had gone to a tournament, and the letter received from him the day before, contained nothing but the information that he was refused admittance to the city, and a summons for her to go to Junker de Heuter's house at the Hague. Enclosed was a pass from Valdez, enjoining all King Philip's soldiers to provide for her safety.

The burgomaster had intended to have her conveyed in a litter, accompanied by a flag of truce, as far as the Spanish lines, and the doctor no longer opposed her wish to travel. She hoped to leave that day.

Lost in thought, she stationed herself in the baywindow and gazed out into the court-yard. Several windows in the building on the eastern side stood open. Trautchen must have risen early, for she came out of the rooms arranged for Georg's occupation, followed by a young assistant carrying various scrubbing utensils. Next Jan appeared with a large arm-chair on his head. Bessie ran after the Frieselander, calling:

"Aunt Barbel's grandfather's chair; where will she take her afternoon nap?"

Henrica had heard the words, and thought first of good old "Babetta," who could also feel tenderly, then of Maria and the man who was to lodge in the rooms opposite. Were there not some loose threads still remaining of the old tie, that had united the burgomaster's wife to the handsome nobleman? A feeling of dread overpowered her. Poor Meister Peter, poor Maria!

Was it right to abandon the young wife, who had held out a saving hand in her distress? Yet how much nearer was her own sister than this stranger! Each day that she allowed herself to linger in this peaceful asylum, seemed like a theft from Anna--since she had read in a letter from her to her husband, the only one the dead man's pouch contained, that she was ill and sunk in poverty with her child.

Help was needed here, and no one save herself could offer it.

With aid from Barbara and Maria, she packed her clothes. At noon everything was ready for her departure, and she would not be withheld

from eating in the dining-room with the family. Peter was prevented from coming to dinner, Henrica took his seat and, under the mask of loud, forced mirth, concealed the grief and anxieties that filled her heart. At twilight Maria and the children followed her into her room, and she now had the harp brought and sang. At first her voice failed to reach many a note, but as the snow falling from the mountain peaks to the plains at first slides slowly, then rapidly increases in bulk and power, her tones gradually gained fulness and irresistible might and, when at last she rested the harp against the wall and walked to the chair exhausted, Maria clasped her hand and said with deep emotion:

"Stay with us, Henrica."

"I ought not," replied the girl.

"You are enough for each other. Shall I take you with me, children?" Adrian lowered his eyes in embarrassment, but Bessie jumped into her lap, exclaiming.

"Where are you going? Stay with us."

Just at that moment some one knocked at the door, and Peter entered. It was evident that he brought no good tidings. His request had been refused. The council had almost unanimously voted an assent to Van Bronkhorst's proposition, that the young lady, as a relation of prominent friends of Spain among the Netherland nobility, should be kept in the city. Peter's representations were unheeded; he now frankly told Henrica what a conflict he had had, and entreated her to have patience and be content to remain in his house as a welcome guest.

The young girl interrupted him with many a passionate exclamation of indignation, and when she grew calmer, cried:

"Oh, you men, you men! I would gladly stay with you, but you know from what this base deed of violence detains me. And then: to be a prisoner, to live weeks, months, without mass and without confession. Yet first and last-merciful Heavens, what will become of my unfortunate sister?"

Maria gazed beseechingly at Peter, and the latter said:

"If you desire the consolations of your religion, I will send Father Damianus to you, and you can hear mass with the Grey Sisters, who live beside us, as often as you desire. We are not fighting against your religion, but for the free exercise of every faith, and the whole city stands open to you. My wife will help you bear your anxiety about your sister far better than I could do, but let me say this: wherever and however I can help you, it shall be done, and not merely in words."

So saying, he held out his hand to Henrica. She gave him hers, exclaiming:

"I have cause to thank you, I know, but please leave me now and give me time to think until tomorrow."

"Is there no way of changing the decision of the council?" Maria asked her husband.

"No, certainly not."

"Well, then," said the young wife earnestly, "you must remain our guest. Anxiety for your sister does not cloud your pleasure alone, but saddens me too. Let us first of all provide for her. How are the roads to Delft?"

"They are cut, and no one will be able to pass after to-morrow or the day after."

"Then calm yourself, Henrica, and let us consider what is to be done."

The questions and counter-questions began, and Henrica gazed in astonishment at the delicate young wife, for with unerring resolution and keenness, she held the first voice in the consultation. The surest means of gaining information was to seek that very day a reliable messenger, by whom to send Anna d'Avila money, and if possible bring her to Holland. The burgomaster declared himself ready to advance from his own property, a portion of the legacy bequeathed Henrica's sister by Fraulein Van Hoogstraten, and accepted his guest's thanks without constraint.

"But whom could they send?"

Henrica thought of Wilhelm; he was her sister's friend.

"But he is in the military service," replied the burgomaster. "I know him. He will not desert the city in these times of trouble, not even for his mother."

"But I know the right messenger," said Maria. "We'll send Junker Georg."

"That's a good suggestion," said Peter. "We shall find him in his lodgings. I must go to Van Hout, who lives close by, and will send the German to you. But my time is limited, and with such gentlemen, fair women can accomplish more than bearded men. Farewell, dear Fraulein, once more--we rejoice to have you for our guest."

When the burgomaster had left the room, Henrica said:

"How quickly, and how differently from what I expected, all this has happened. I love you. I am under obligations to you, but to be imprisoned, imprisoned. The walls will press upon me, the ceiling will seem like a weight. I don't know whether I ought to rejoice or despair. You have great influence with the Junker. Tell him about Anna, touch his heart, and if he would go, it would really be best for us both."

"You mean for you and your sister," replied Maria with a repellent gesture of the hand. "There is the lamp. When the Junker comes, we shall see each other again."

Maria went to her room and threw herself on the couch, but soon rose and paced restlessly to and fro. Then stretching out her clasped hands, she exclaimed:

"Oh, if he would only go, if he would only go! Merciful God! Kind, gracious Father in Heaven, grant him every happiness, every blessing, but save my peace of mind; let him go, and lead him far, far away from here."

CHAPTER XXV.

The tavern where Georg von Dornburg lodged stood on the "broad street," and was a fine building with a large court-yard, in which were numerous vehicles. On the left of the entrance was a large open room entered through a lofty archway. Here the drivers and other folk sat over their beer and wine, suffering the innkeeper's hens to fly on the benches and even sometimes on the table, here vegetables were cleaned, boiled and fried, here the stout landlady was frequently obliged to call her sturdy maid and men servants to her aid, when her guests came to actual fighting, or some one drank more than was good for him. Here the new custom of tobacco-smoking was practised, though only by a few sailors who had served on Spanish ships--but Frau Van Aken could not endure the acrid smoke and opened the windows, which were filled with blooming pinks, slender stalks of balsam, and cages containing bright-plumaged goldfinches. On the side opposite to the entrance were two closed rooms. Above the door of one, neatly carved in wood, were the lines from Horace:

"Ille terrarum mihi praeter omnes.
Angulus ridet."

[Of all the corners of the world,
There is none that so charms me.]

Only a few chosen guests found admittance into this long, narrow apartment. It was completely wainscoted with wood, and from the centre of the richly-carved ceiling a strange picture gleamed in brilliant hues. This represented the landlord. The worthy man with the smooth face, firmly-closed lips, and long nose, which offered an excellent straight line to its owner's burin, sat on a throne in the costume of a Roman general, while Vulcan and Bacchus, Minerva and Poinona, offered him gifts. Klaus Van Aken, or as he preferred to be called, Nicolaus Aquanus, was a singular man, who had received good gifts from more than one of the Olympians; for besides his business he zealously devoted himself to science and several of the arts. He was an excellent silver-smith, a die-cutter and engraver of great skill, had a remarkable knowledge of coins, was an industrious student and collector of antiquities. His little tap-room was also a museum; for on the shelves, that surrounded it, stood rare objects of every description, in rich abundance and regular order; old jugs and tankards, large and small coins, gems in carefully-sealed glass-cases, antique lamps of clay and

bronze, stones with ancient Roman inscriptions, Roman and Greek terracotta, polished fragments of marble which he had found in Italy among the ruins, the head of a faun, an arm, a foot and other bits of Pagan works of art, a beautifully-enamelled casket of Byzantine work, and another with enamelled ornamentation from Limoges. Even half a Roman coat of mail and a bit of mosaic from a Roman bath were to be seen here. Amid these antiquities, stood beautiful Venetian glasses, pine-cones and ostrich-eggs. Such another tap-room could scarcely be found in Holland, and even the liquor, which a neatly-dressed maid poured for the guests from oddly-shaped tankards into exquisitely-wrought goblets, was exceptionally fine. In this room Herr Aquanus himself was in the habit of appearing among his guests; in the other, opposite to the entrance, his wife held sway.

On this day, the "Angulus," as the beautiful taproom was called, was but thinly occupied, for the sun had just set, though the lamps were already lighted. These rested in three-branched iron chandeliers, every portion of which, from the slender central shaft to the intricately-carved and twisted ornaments, had been carefully wrought by Aquanus with his own hand.

Several elderly gentlemen were at one table enjoying their wine, while at another were Captain Van der Laen, a brave Hollander, who was receiving English pay and had come to the city with the other defenders of Alfen, the Musician Wilhelm, Junker Georg, and the landlord.

"It's a pleasure to meet people like you, Junker," said Aquanus. "You've travelled with your eyes open, and what you tell me about Brescia excites my curiosity. I should have liked to see the inscription."

"I'll get it for you," replied the young man; "for if the Spaniards don't send me into another world, I shall certainly cross the Alps again. Did you find any of these Roman antiquities in your own country?"

"Yes. At the Roomburg Canal, perhaps the site of the old Praetorium, and at Katwyk. The forum Hadriani was probably located near Voorburg. The coat of mail, I showed you, came from there."

"An old, green, half-corroded thing," cried Georg. And yet! What memories the sight of it awakens! Did not some Roman armorer forge it for the wandering emperor? When I look at this coat of mail, Rome and her legions appear before my eyes. Who would not, like you, Herr Wilhelm, go to the Tiber to increase the short span of the present by the long centuries of the past!"

"I should be glad to go to Italy once more with you," replied Wilhelm.

"And I with you."

"Let us first secure our liberty," said the musician. "When that is accomplished, each individual will belong to himself, and then: why should I conceal it, nothing will keep me in Leyden."

"And the organ? Your father?" asked Aquanus.

"My brothers will remain here, snug in their own nest," answered Wilhelm.

"But something urges, impels me--"

"There are still waters and rivers on earth," interrupted Georg, "and in the sky the fixed stars remain quiet and the planets cannot cease from wandering. So among human beings, there are contented persons, who like their own places, and birds of passage like us. To be sure, you needn't go to Italy to hear fine singing. I just heard a voice, a voice--"

"Where? You make me eager."

"In the court-yard of Herr Van der Werff's house."

"That was his wife."

"Oh, no! Her voice sounds differently."

During this conversation, Captain Van der Laen had risen and examined the landlord's singular treasures. He was now standing before a board, on which the head of an ox was sketched in charcoal, freely, boldly and with perfect fidelity to nature.

"What magnificent piece of beef is this?" he asked the landlord.

"No less a personage than Frank Floris sketched it," replied Aquanus.

"He once came here from Brussels and called on Meister Artjen. The old man had gone out, so Floris took a bit of charcoal and drew these lines with it. When Artjen came home and found the ox's head, he stood before it a long time and finally exclaimed: 'Frank Floris, or the devil!' This story--But there comes the burgomaster. Welcome, Meister Peter. A rare honor."

All the guests rose and respectfully greeted Van der Werff; Georg started up to offer him his chair. Peter sat down for a short time and drank a glass of wine, but soon beckoned to the Junker and went out with him into the street.

There he briefly requested him to go to his house, for they had an important communication to make, and then went to Van Hout's residence, which was close beside the inn.

Georg walked thoughtfully towards the burgomaster's.

The "they" could scarcely have referred to any one except Maria. What could she want of him at so late an hour? Had his friend regretted having offered him lodgings in her own house? He was to move into his new quarters early next morning; perhaps she wished to inform him of this change of mind, before it was too late. Maria treated him differently from before, there was no doubt of that, but surely this was natural! He had dreamed of a different, far different meeting! He had come to Holland to support the good cause of Orange, yet he would certainly have

turned his steed towards his beloved Italy, where a good sword was always in demand, instead of to the north, had he not hoped to find in Holland her, whom he had never forgotten, for whom he had never ceased to long-- Now she was the wife of another, a man who had shown him kindness, given him his confidence. To tear his love from his heart was impossible; but he owed it to her husband and his own honor to be strong, to resolutely repress every thought of possessing her, and only rejoice in seeing her; and this he must try to accomplish.

He had told himself all these things more than once, but realized that he was walking with unsteady steps, upon a narrow pathway, when she met him outside the dining-room and he felt how cold and tremulous was the hand she laid in his.

Maria led the way, and he silently followed her into Henrica's room. The latter greeted him with a friendly gesture, but both ladies hesitated to utter the first word. The young man turned hastily, noticed that he was in the room overlooking the court-yard, and said, eagerly: I was down below just before twilight, to look at my new quarters, and heard singing from this room, and such singing! At first I didn't know what was coming, for the tones were husky, weak, and broken, but afterwards-- afterwards the melody burst forth like a stream of lava through the ashes. We ought to wish many sorrows to one, who can lament thus."

"You shall make the singer's acquaintance," said Maria, motioning towards the young girl. "Fraulein Henrica Van Hoogstraten, a beloved guest in our house."

"Were you the songstress?" asked Georg.

"Does that surprise you?" replied Henrica. "My voice has certainly retained its strength better than my body, wasted by long continued suffering. I feel how deeply my eyes are sunken and how pale I must be. Singing certainly lightens pain, and I have been deprived of the comforter long enough. Not a note has passed my lips for weeks, and now my heart aches so, that I would far rather weep than sing. 'What troubles me?' you will ask, and yet Maria gives me courage to request a chivalrous service, almost without parallel, at your hands."

"Speak, speak," Georg eagerly exclaimed. "If Frau Maria summons me and I can serve you, dear lady: here I am, dispose of me."

Henrica did not avoid his frank glance, as she replied:

"First hear what a great service we ask of you. You must prepare yourself to hear a short story. I am still weak and have put my strength to a severe test to-day, Maria must speak for me."

The young wife fulfilled this task quietly and clearly, closing with the words:

"The messenger we need, I have found myself. You must be he, Junker Georg."

Henrica had not interrupted the burgomaster's wife; but now said warmly

"I have only made your acquaintance to-day, but I trust you entirely. A few hours ago, black would have been my color, but if you will be my knight, I'll choose cheerful green, for I now begin to hope again. Will you venture to take the ride for me?"

Hitherto Georg had gazed silently at the floor. Now he raised his head, saying:

"If I can obtain leave of absence, I will place myself at your disposal; --but my lady's color is blue, and I am permitted to wear no other."

Henrica's lips quivered slightly, but the young nobleman continued:

"Captain Van der Laen is my superior officer. I'll speak to him at once."

"And if he says no?" asked Maria.

Henrica interrupted her and answered haughtily: "Then I beg you to send me Herr Wilhelm, the musician."

Georg bowed and went to the tavern.

As soon as the ladies were alone, the young girl asked:

"Do you know Herr von Dornburg's lady?"

"How should I?" replied Maria. "Give yourself a little rest, Fraulein. As soon as the Junker comes back, I'll bring him to you."

The young wife left the room and seated herself at the spinning-wheel with Barbara. Georg kept them waiting a long time, but at midnight again appeared, accompanied by two companions. It was not within the limits of the captain's authority to grant him a leave of absence for several weeks--the journey to Italy would have required that length of time--but the Junker had consulted the musician, and the latter had found the right man, with whom Wilhelm speedily made the necessary arrangements, and brought him without delay: it was the old steward, Belotti.

CHAPTER XXVI.

On the morning of the following day the spacious shooting-grounds, situated not far from the White Gate, between the Rapenburg and the city-wall, presented a busy scene, for by a decree of the council the citizens and inhabitants, without exception, no matter whether they were poor or rich, of noble or plebeian birth, were to take a solemn oath to be loyal to the Prince and the good cause.

Commissioner Van Bronkhorst, Burgomaster Van der Werff, and two other magistrates, clad in festal attire, stood under a group of beautiful linden-trees to receive the oaths of the men and youths, who flocked to the spot. The solemn ceremonial had not yet commenced. Janus Dousa, in full uniform, a coat of mail over his doublet and a helmet on his head, arm-in-arm with Van Hout, approached Meister Peter and the commissioner, saying: "Here it is again! Not one of the humbler citizens and workmen is absent, but the gentlemen in velvet and fur are but thinly represented."

"They shall come yet!" cried the city clerk menacingly.

"What will formal vows avail?" replied the burgomaster. "Whoever desires liberty, must grant it. Besides, this hour will teach us on whom we can depend."

"Not a single man of the militia is absent," said the commissioner.

"There is comfort in that. What is stirring yonder in the linden?"

The men looked up and perceived Adrian, who was swaying in the top of the tree, as a concealed listener. "The boy must be everywhere," exclaimed Peter. "Come down, saucy lad. You appear at a convenient time."

The boy clung to a limb with his hands, let himself drop to the ground and stood before his father with a penitent face, which he knew how to assume when occasion required. The burgomaster uttered no further words of reproof, but bade him go home and tell his mother, that he saw no possibility of getting Belotti through the Spanish lines in safety, and also that Father Damianus had promised to call on the young lady in the course of the day.

"Hurry, Adrian, and you, constables, keep all unbidden persons away from these trees, for any place where an oath is taken becomes sacred ground-- The clergymen have seated themselves yonder near the target. They have the precedence. Have the kindness to summon them, Herr Van Hout. Dominie Verstrout wishes to make an address, and then I would like to utter a few words of admonition to the citizens myself."

Van Hout withdrew, but before he had reached the preachers Junker von Warmond appeared, and reported that a messenger, a handsome young lad, had come as an envoy. He was standing before the White Gate and had a letter.

"From Valdez?"

"I don't know; but the young fellow is a Hollander and his face is familiar to me."

"Conduct him here; but don't interrupt us until the ceremony of taking the oath is over. The messenger can tell Valdez what he has seen and heard here. It will do the Castilian good, to know in advance what we

intend."

The Junker withdrew, and when he returned with Nicolas Van Wibisma, who was the messenger, Dominie Verstroot had finished his stirring speech. Van der Werff was still speaking. The sacred fire of enthusiasm sparkled in his eyes, and though the few words he addressed to his fellow-combatants in the deepest chest tones of his powerful voice were plain and unadorned, they found their way to the souls of his auditors.

Nicolas also followed the speech with a throbbing heart; it seemed as if the tall, earnest man under the linden were speaking directly to him and to him alone, when at the close he raised his voice once more and exclaimed enthusiastically:

"And now let what will, come! A brave man from your midst has said to-day: 'We will not yield, so long as an arm is left on our bodies, to raise food to our lips and wield a sword!' If we all think thus, twenty Spanish armies will find their graves before these walls. On Leyden depends the liberty of Holland. If we waver and fall, to escape the misery that only threatens us to-day, but will pitilessly oppress and torture us later, our children will say: 'The men of Leyden were blind cowards; it is their fault, that the name of Hollander is held in no higher esteem, than that of a useless slave.' But if we faithfully hold out and resist the gloomy foreigner to the last man and the last mouthful of bread, they will remember us with tears and joyfully exclaim: 'We owe it to them, that our noble, industrious, happy people is permitted to place itself proudly beside the other nations, and need no longer tolerate the miserable cuckoo in its own nest. Let whoever loves honor, whoever is no degenerate wretch, that betrays his parents' house, whoever would rather be a free man than a slave, ere raising his hand before God to take the oath, exclaim with me: 'Long live our shield, Orange, and a free Holland!'"

"They shall live!" shouted hundreds of powerful voices, five, ten, twenty times. The gunner discharged the cannon planted near the target, drums beat, one flourish of trumpets after another filled the air, the ringing of bells from all the towers of the city echoed over the heads of the enthusiastic crowd, and the cheering continued until the commissioner waved his hand and the swearing fealty began.

The guilds and the armed defenders of the city pressed forward in bands under the linden. Now impetuously, now with dignified calmness, now with devout exaltation, hands were raised to take the oath, and whoever clasped hands did so with fervent warmth. Two hours elapsed before all had sworn loyalty, and many a group that had passed under the linden together, warmly grasped each other's hands on the grounds in pledge of a second silent vow.

Nicolas Van Wibisma sat silently, with his letter in his lap, beside a target opposite the spot where the oath was taken, but sorrowful, bitter emotions were seething in his breast. How gladly he would have wept aloud and torn his father's letter! How gladly, when he saw the venerable Herr Van Montfort come hand in hand with the grey-haired Van

der Does to be sworn, he would have rushed to their side to take the oath, and call to the earnest man beneath the linden:

"I am no degenerate wretch, who betrays his parents' house; I desire to be no slave, no Spaniard; I am a Netherlander, like yourself."

But he did not go, did not speak, he remained sitting motionless till the ceremony was over and Junker von Warmond conducted him under the linden. Van Hout and both the Van der Does had joined the magistrates who had administered the oath. Bowing silently, Nicolas delivered his father's letter to the burgomaster.

Van der Werff broke the seal, and after reading it, handed it to the other gentlemen, then turning to Nicolas, said:

"Wait here, Junker. Your father counsels us to yield the city to the Spaniards, and promises a pardon from the King. You cannot doubt the answer, after what you have heard in this place."

"There is but one," cried Van Hout, in the midst of reading the letter. "Tear the thing up and make no reply."

"Ride home, in God's name," added Janus Dousa. "But wait, I'll give you something more for Valdez."

"Then you will vouchsafe no reply to my father's letter?" asked Nicolas.

"No, Junker. We wish to hold no intercourse with Baron Matanesse," replied the commissioner. "As for you, you can return home or wait here; just as you choose."

"Go to your cousin, Junker," said Janus Dousa kindly; "it will probably be an hour before I can find paper, pen and sealing wax. Fraulein Van Hoogstraten will be glad to hear, through you, from her father."

"If agreeable to you, young sir," added the burgomaster; "my house stands open to you."

Nicolas hesitated a moment, then said quickly: "Yes, take me to her."

When the youth had reached the north end of the city with Herr von Warmond, who had undertaken to accompany him, he asked the latter:

"Are you Junker Van Duivenvoorde, Herr von Warmond?"

"I am."

"And you captured Brill, with the Beggars, from the Spaniards?"

"I had that good fortune."

"And yet, you are of a good old family. And were there not other noblemen with the Beggars also?"

"Certainly. Do you suppose it ill-beseems us, to have a heart for our ancestors' home? My forefathers, as well as yours, were noble before a Spaniard ever entered the land."

But King Philip rules us as the lawful sovereign."

"Unhappily. And therefore we obey his Stadtholder, the Prince, who reigns in his name. The perjured hangman needs a guardian. Ask on; I'll answer willingly."

Nicolas did not heed the request, but walked silently beside his companion until they reached the Achtergracht. There he stood still, seized the captain's arm in great excitement, and said hastily in low, broken sentences:

"It weighs on my heart. I must tell some one. I want to be Dutch. I hate the Castilians. I have learned to know them in Leyderdorp and at the Hague. They don't heed me, because I am young, and they are not aware that I understand their language. So my eyes were opened. When they speak of us, it is with contempt and scorn. I know all that has been done by Alva and Vargas. I have heard from the Spaniards' own lips, that they would like to root us out, exterminate us. If I could only do as I pleased, and were it not for my father, I know what I would do. My head is so confused. The burgomaster's speech is driving me out of my wits. Tell him, junket, I beseech you, tell him I hate the Spaniards and it would be my pride to be a Netherlander."

Both had continued their walk, and as they approached the burgomaster's house, the captain, who had listened to the youth with joyful surprise, said:

"You're cut from good timber, Junker, and on the way to the right goal. Only keep Herr Peter's speech in your mind, and remember what you have learned in history. To whom belong the shining purple pages in the great book of national history? To the tyrants, their slaves and eye-servants, or the men who lived and died for liberty? Hold up your head. This conflict will perhaps outlast both our lives, and you still have a long time to put yourself on the right side. The nobleman must serve his Prince, but he need be no slave of a ruler, least of all a foreigner, an enemy of his nation. Here we are; I'll come for you again in an hour. Give me your hand. I should like to call you by your Christian name in future, my brave Nico."

"Call me so," exclaimed the youth, "and--you'll send no one else? I should like to talk with you again."

The Junker was received in the burgomaster's house by Barbara. Henrica could not see him immediately, Father Damianus was with her, so he was obliged to wait in the dining-room until the priest appeared. Nicolas knew him well, and had even confessed to him once the year before. After greeting the estimable man and answering his inquiry how he had come there, he said frankly and hastily:

"Forgive me, Father, but something weighs upon my heart. You are a holy man, and must know. Is it a crime, if a Hollander fights against the Spaniards, is it a sin, if a Hollander wishes to be and remain what God made him? I can't believe it."

"Nor do I," replied Damianus in his simple manner. "Whoever clings firmly to our holy church, whoever loves his neighbor and strives to do right, may confidently favor the Dutch, and pray and fight for the freedom of his native land."

"Ah!" exclaimed Nicolas, with sparkling eyes.

"For," continued Damianus more eagerly, "for you see, before the Spaniards came into the country, they were good Catholics here and led devout lives, pleasing in the sight of God. Why should it not be so again? The most High has separated men into nations, because He wills, that they should lead their own lives and shape them for their salvation and His honor; but not to give the stronger nation the right to torture and oppress another. Suppose your father went out to walk and a Spanish grandee should jump on his shoulders and make him taste whip and spur, as if he were a horse. It would be bad for the Castilian. Now substitute Holland for Herr Matanesse, and Spain for the grandee, and you will know what I mean. There is nothing left for us to do, except cast off the oppressor. Our holy church will sustain no loss. God appointed it, and it will stand whether King Philip or another rules. Now you know my opinion. Do I err or not, in thinking that the name of Glipper no longer pleases you, dear Junker?"

"No, Father Damianus!--You are right, a thousand times right. It is no sin, to desire a free Holland."

"Who told you it was one?"

"Canon Bermont and our chaplain."

"Then we are of a different opinion concerning this temporal matter. Give to God the things that are God's, and remain where the Lord placed you. When your beard grows, if you wish to fight for the liberty of Holland, do so confidently. That is a sin for which I will gladly grant you absolution."

Henrica was greatly delighted to see the fresh, happy-looking youth again. Nicolas was obliged to tell her about her father and his, and inform her how he had come to Leyden. When she heard that he intended to return in an hour, a bright idea entered her mind, which was wholly engrossed by Belotti's mission. She told Nicolas what she meant to do, and begged him to take the steward through the Spanish army to the Hague. The Junker was not only ready to fulfil her request, but promised that, if the old man wanted to return, he would apprise her of it in some way.

At the end of an hour she bade the boy farewell, and when again walking towards the Achtergracht with Herr von Warmond, he asked joyously:

"How shall I get to the Beggars?"

"You?" asked the captain in astonishment.

"Yes, I!" replied the Junker eagerly. "I shall soon be seventeen, and when I am--Wait, just wait--you'll hear of me yet."

"Right, Nicolas, right," replied the other. "Let us be Holland nobles and noble Hollanders."

Three hours later, Junker Matanesse Van Wibisma rode into the Hague with Belotti, whom he had loved from childhood. He brought his father nothing but a carefully-folded and sealed letter, which Janus Dousa, with a mischievous smile, had given him on behalf of the citizens of Leyden for General Valdez, and which contained, daintily inscribed on a large sheet, the following lines from Dionysius Cato:

"Fistula dulce canit volucrem dum decipit auceps."

["Sweet are the notes of the flute, when the fowler lures the bird to his nest."]

CHAPTER XXVII.

The first week in June and half the second had passed, the beautiful sunny days had drawn to a close, and numerous guests sought the "Angulus" in Aquarius's tavern during the evening hours. It was so cosy there when the sea-breeze whistled, the rain poured, and the water fell plashing on the pavements. The Spanish besieging army encompassed the city like an iron wall. Each individual felt that he was a fellow-prisoner of his neighbor, and drew closer to companions of his own rank and opinions. Business was stagnant, idleness and anxiety weighed like lead on the minds of all, and whoever wished to make time pass rapidly and relieve his oppressed soul, went to the tavern to give utterance to his own hopes and fears, and hear what others were thinking and feeling in the common distress.

All the tables in the Angulus were occupied, and whoever wanted to be understood by a distant neighbor was forced to raise his voice very loud, for special conversations were being carried on at every table. Here, there, and everywhere, people were shouting to the busy bar-maid, glasses clinked together, and pewter lids fell on the tops of hard stone-ware jugs.

The talk at a round table in the end of the long room was louder than anywhere else. Six officers had seated themselves at it, among them Georg von Dornburg. Captain Van der Laen, his superior officer, whose past career had been a truly heroic one, was loudly relating in his deep voice, strange and amusing tales of his travels by sea and land, Colonel

Mulder often interrupted him, and at every somewhat incredible story, smilingly told a similar, but perfectly impossible adventure of his own. Captain Van Duivenvoorde soothingly interposed, when Van der Laen, who was conscious of never deviating far from the truth, angrily repelled the old man's jesting insinuations. Captain Cromwell, a grave man with a round head and smooth long hair, who had come to Holland to fight for the faith, rarely mingled in the conversation, and then only with a few words of scarcely intelligible Dutch. Georg, leaning far back in his chair, stretched his feet out before him and stared silently into vacancy.

Herr Aquanus, the host, walked from one table to another, and when he at last reached the one where the officers sat, paused opposite to the Thuringian, saying:

"Where are your thoughts, Junker? One would scarcely know you during the last few days. What has come over you?"

Georg hastily sat erect, stretched himself like a person roused from sleep, and answered pleasantly:

"Dreams come in idleness."

"The cage is getting too narrow for him," said Captain Van der Laen.

"If this state of things lasts long, we shall all get dizzy like the sheep."

"And as stiff as the brazen Pagan god on the shelf yonder," added Colonel Mulder.

"There was the same complaint during the first siege," replied the host, "but Herr von Noyelles drowned his discontent and emptied many a cask of my best liquor."

"Tell the gentlemen how he paid you," cried Colonel Mulder.

"There hangs the paper framed," laughed Aquarius. "Instead of sending money, he wrote this:

'Full many a favor, dear friend, hast thou done me,
For which good hard coin glad wouldst thou be to see
There's none in my pockets; so for the debt
In place of dirty coin,
This written sheet so fine;
Paper money in Leyden is easy to get.'

"Excellent!" cried Junker von Warmond, "and besides you made the die for the pasteboard coins yourself."

"Of course! Herr von Noyelles' sitting still, cost me dear. You have already made two expeditions."

"Hush, hush, for God's sake say nothing about the first sally!" cried the captain. "A well-planned enterprise, which was shamefully frustrated,

because the leader lay down like a mole to sleep! Where has such a thing happened a second time?"

"But the other ended more fortunately," said the host. "Three hundred hams, one hundred casks of beer, butter, ammunition, and the most worthless of all spies into the bargain; always an excellent prize."

"And yet a failure!" cried Captain Van der Laen, "We ought to have captured and brought in all the provision ships on the Leyden Lake! And the Kaag! To think that this fort on the island should be in the hands of the enemy."

"But the people have held out bravely," said von Warmond.

"There are real devils among them," replied Van der Laen, laughing. "One struck a Spaniard down and, in the midst of the battle, took off his red breeches and pulled them on his own legs."

"I know the man," added the landlord, "his name is Van Keulen; there he sits yonder over his beer, telling the people all sorts of queer stories. A fellow with a face like a satyr. We have no lack of comfort yet! Remember Chevaux' defeat, and the Beggars' victory at Vlissingen on the Scheldt."

"To brave Admiral Boisot and the gallant Beggar troops!" cried Captain Van der Laen, touching glasses with Colonel Mulder. The latter turned with upraised beaker towards the Thuringian and, as the Junker who had relapsed into his reverie, did not notice the movement, irritably exclaimed:

"Well, Herr Dornburg, you require a long time to pledge a man."

Georg started and answered hastily:

"Pledge? Oh! yes. Pledge. I pledge you, Colonel!" With these words he raised the goblet, drained it at a single draught, made the nail test and replaced it on the table.

"Well done!" cried the old man; and Herr Aquanus said:

"He learned that at the University; studying makes people thirsty."

As he uttered the words, he cast a friendly glance of anxiety at the young German, and then looked towards the door, through which Wilhelm had just entered the Angulus. The landlord went to meet him and whispered:

"I don't like the German nobleman's appearance. The singing lark has become a mousing night-bird. What ails him?"

"Home-sickness, no news from his family, and the snare into which the war has drawn him in his pursuit of glory and honor. He'll soon be his old self again."

"I hope so," replied the host. "Such a succulent little tree will quickly rebound, when it is pressed to the earth; help the fine young fellow."

A guest summoned the landlord, but the musician joined the officers and began a low conversation with Georg, which was drowned by the confused mingling of loud voices.

Wilhelm came from the Van der Werff house, where he had learned that the next day but one, June fourteenth, would be the burgomaster's birthday. Adrian had told Henrica, and the latter informed him. The master of the house was to be surprised with a song on the morning of his birthday festival.

"Excellent," said Georg, interrupting his friend, "she will manage the matter admirably."

"Not she alone; we can depend upon Fran Van der Werff too. At first she wanted to decline, but when I proposed a pretty madrigal, yielded and took the soprano."

"The soprano?" asked the Junker excitedly. "Of course I'm at your service. Let us go; have you the notes at home?"

"No, Herr von Dornburg, I have just taken them to the ladies; but early to-morrow morning--"

"There will be a rehearsal early to-morrow morning! The jug is for me, Jungfer Dortchen! Your health, Colonel Mulder! Captain Huivenvoorde, I drain this goblet to your new standard and hope to have many a jolly ride by your side."

The German's eyes again sparkled with an eager light, and when Captain Van der Laen, continuing his conversation, cried enthusiastically: "The Beggars of the Sea will yet sink the Spanish power. The sea, gentlemen. the sea! To base one's cause on nothing, is the best way! To exult, leap and grapple in the storm! To fight and struggle man to man and breast to breast on the deck of the enemy's ship! To fight and conquer, or perish with the foe!"

"To your health, Junker!" exclaimed the colonel. "Zounds, we need such youths!"

"Now you are your old self again," said Wilhelm, turning to his friend. "Touch glasses to your dear ones at home."

"Two glasses for one," cried Georg. "To the dear ones at home--to the joys and sorrows of the heart, to the fair woman we love! War is rapture, love is life! Let the wounds bleed, let the heart break into a thousand pieces. Laurels grow green on the battle-field, love twines garlands of roses-roses with thorns, yet beautiful roses! Go, beaker! No other lips shall drink from you."

Georg's cheeks glowed as he flung the glass goblet into a corner of the room, where it shattered into fragments. His comrades at the table cheered loudly, but Captain Cromwell rose quietly to leave the room, and the landlord shook his wise head doubtfully.

It seemed as if fire had poured into Georg's soul and his spirit had gained wings. The thick waving locks curled in dishevelled masses around his handsome head, as leaning far back in his chair with unfastened collar, he mingled clever sallies and brilliant similes with the quiet conversation of the others. Wilhelm listened to his words sometimes with admiration, sometimes with anxiety. It was long past midnight, when the musician left the tavern with his friend. Colonel Mulder looked after him and exclaimed to those left behind:

"The fellow is possessed with a devil."

The next morning the madrigal was practised at the burgomaster's house, while its master was presiding over a meeting at the town-hall. Georg stood between Henrica and Maria. So long as the musician found it necessary to correct errors and order repetitions, a cheerful mood pervaded the little choir, and Barbara, in the adjoining room, often heard the sound of innocent laughter; but when each had mastered his or her part and the madrigal was faultlessly executed, the ladies grew more and more grave. Maria gazed fixedly at the sheet of music, and rarely had her voice sounded so faultlessly pure, so full of feeling. Georg adapted his singing to hers and his eyes, whenever they were raised from the notes, rested on her face. Henrica sought to meet the Junker's glance, but always in vain, yet she wished to divert his attention from the young wife, and it tortured her to remain unnoticed. Some impulse urged her to surpass Maria, and the whole passionate wealth of her nature rang out in her singing. Her fervor swept the others along. Maria's treble rose exultantly above the German's musical voice, and Henrica's tones blended angrily yet triumphantly in the strain. The delighted and inspired musician beat the time and, borne away by the liquid melody of Henrica's voice, revelled in sweet recollections of her sister.

When the serenade was finished, he eagerly cried:

"Again!" The rivalry between the singers commenced with fresh vigor, and this time the Junker's beaming gaze met the young wife's eyes. She hastily lowered the notes, stepped out of the semicircle, and said:

"We know the madrigal. Early to-morrow morning, Meister Wilhelm; my time is limited."

"Oh, oh!" cried the musician regretfully. "It was going on so splendidly, and there were only a few bars more." But Maria was already standing at the door and made no reply, except:

"To-morrow."

The musician enthusiastically thanked Henrica for her singing; Georg courteously expressed his gratitude. When both had taken leave, Henrica

paced rapidly to and fro, passionately striking her clenched fist in the palm of her other hand.

The singers were ready early on the birthday morning, but Peter had risen before sunrise, for there was a proposition to be arranged with the city clerk, which must be completed before the meeting of the council. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than his birthday, and when the singers in the dining-room commenced their madrigal, he rapped on the door, exclaiming:

"We are busy; find another place for your singing." The melody was interrupted for a moment, and Barbara said:

"People picking apples don't think of fishing-nets. He has no idea it is his birthday. Let the children go in first."

Maria now entered the study with Adrian and Bessie. They carried bouquets in their hands, and the young wife had dressed the little girl so prettily that, in her white frock, she really looked like a dainty fairy.

Peter now knew the meaning of the singing, warmly embraced the three well-wishers, and when the madrigal began again, stood opposite to the performers to listen. True, the execution was not nearly so good as at the rehearsal, for Maria sang in a low and somewhat muffled voice, while, spite of Wilhelm's vehement beating of time, the warmth and verve of the day before would not return.

"Admirable, admirable," cried Peter, when the singers ceased. "Well planned and executed, a beautiful birthday surprise." Then he shook hands with each, saying a few cordial words and, as he grasped the Junker's right hand, remarked warmly: "You have dropped down on us from the skies during these bad days, just at the right time. It is always something to have a home in a foreign land, and you have found one with us."

Georg had bent his eyes on the floor, but at the last words raised them and met the burgomaster's. How honestly, how kindly and frankly they looked at him! Deep emotion overpowered him, and without knowing what he was doing, he laid his hands on Peter's arms and hid his face on his shoulder.

Van der Werff suffered him to do so, stroked the youth's hair, and said smiling:

"Like Leonhard, wife, just like our Leonhard. We will dine together to-day. You, too, Van Hout; and don't forget your wife."

Maria assigned the seats at the table, so that she was not obliged to look at Georg. His place was beside Frau Van Hout and opposite Henrica and the musician. At first he was silent and embarrassed, but Henrica gave him no rest, and when he had once begun to answer her questions he was soon carried away by her glowing vivacity, and gave free, joyous play

to his wit. Henrica did not remain in his debt, her eyes sparkled, and in the increasing pleasure of trying the power of her intellect against his, she sought to surpass every jest and repartee made by the Junker. She drank no wine, but was intoxicated by her own flow of language and so completely engrossed Georg's attention, that he found no time to address a word to the other guests. If he attempted to do so, she quickly interrupted him and compelled him to turn to her again. This constraint annoyed the young man; while struggling against it his spirit of wantonness awoke, and he began to irritate Henrica into making unprecedented assertions, which he opposed with equally unwarrantable ones of his own.

Maria sometimes listened to the young lady in surprise, and there was something in Georg's manner that vexed her. Peter took little notice of Henrica; he was talking with Van Hout about the letters from the Glippers asking a surrender, three of which had already been brought into the city, of the uncertain disposition of some members of the council and the execution of the captured spy.

Wilhelm, who had scarcely vouchsafed his neighbor an answer, was now following the conversation of the older men and remarked, that he had known the traitor. He was a tavern-keeper, in whose inn he had once met Herr Matanesse Van Wibisma.

"There we have it," said Van Hout. "A note was found in Quatgelat's pouch, and the writing bore a mysterious resemblance to the baron's hand. Quatgelat was to enquire about the quantity of provisions in Leyden." "All alike!" exclaimed the burgomaster. "Unhappily he could have brought tidings only too welcome to Valdez. Little that is cheering has resulted from the investigation; though the exact amount has not yet been ascertained."

"We must place it during the next few days in charge of the ladies."

"Give it to the women?" asked Peter in astonishment.

"Yes, to us!" cried Van Hout's wife. "Why should we sit idle, when we might be of use."

"Give us the work!" exclaimed Maria. "We are as eager as you, to render the great cause some service."

"And believe me," added Frau Van Hout, "we shall find admittance to store-rooms and cellars much more quickly than constables and guards, whom the housewives fear."

"Women in the service of the city," said Peter thoughtfully. "To be honest--but your proposal shall be considered.--The young lady is in good spirits today."

Maria glanced indignantly at Henrica, who had leaned far across the table. She was showing Georg a ring, and laughingly exclaimed:

"Don't you wish to know what the device means? Look, a serpent biting its own tail."

"Aha!" replied the Junker, "the symbol of self-torment."

"Good, good! But it has another meaning, which you would do well to notice, Sir Knight. Do you know the signification of eternity and eternal faith?"

"No, Fraulein, I wasn't taught to think so deeply at Jena."

"Of course. Your teachers were men. Men and faith, eternal faith!"

"Was Delilah, who betrayed Samson to the Philistines, a man or a woman?" asked Van Hout.

"She was a woman. The exception, that proves the rule. Isn't that so, Maria?"

The burgomaster's wife made no reply except a silent nod; then indignantly pushed back her chair, and the meal was over.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Drinking is also an art, and the Germans are masters of it
Here the new custom of tobacco-smoking was practised
Standing still is retrograding
To whom fortune gives once, it gives by bushels
Youth calls 'much,' what seems to older people 'little'

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