

THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE - VOLUME 1.

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Leipsic, Oct. 30th, 1881.

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CHAPTER I.

In the year 1574 A. D. spring made its joyous entry into the Netherlands at an unusually early date.

The sky was blue, gnats sported in the sunshine, white butterflies alighted on the newly-opened yellow flowers, and beside one of the numerous ditches intersecting the wide plain stood a stork, snapping at a fine frog; the poor fellow soon writhed in its enemy's red beak. One gulp—the merry jumper vanished, and its murderer, flapping its wings, soared high into the air. On flew the bird over gardens filled with blossoming fruit-trees, trimly laid-out flower-beds, and gaily-painted arbors, across the frowning circlet of walls and towers that girdled the city, over narrow houses with high, pointed gables, and neat streets bordered with elm, poplar, linden and willow-trees, decked with the first green leaves of spring. At last it alighted on a lofty gable-roof, on whose ridge was its firmly-fastened nest. After generously giving up its prey to the little wife brooding over the eggs, it stood on one leg and gazed thoughtfully down upon the city, whose shining red tiles gleamed spick and span from the green velvet carpet of the meadows. The bird had known beautiful Leyden, the gem of Holland, for many a year, and was familiar with all the branches of the Rhine that divided the stately city into numerous islands, and over which arched as many stone bridges as there are days in five months of the year; but surely many changes had occurred here since the stork's last departure for the south.

Where were the citizens' gay summer-houses and orchards, where the wooden frames on which the weavers used to stretch their dark and colored cloths?

Whatever plant or work of human hands had risen, outside the city walls and towers to the height of a man's breast, thus interrupting the

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uniformity of the plain, had vanished from the earth, and beyond, on the bird's best hunting-grounds, brownish spots sown with black circles appeared among the green of the meadows.

Late in October of the preceding year, just after the storks left the country, a Spanish army had encamped here, and a few hours before the return of the winged wanderers in the first opening days of spring, the besiegers retired without having accomplished their purpose.

Barren spots amid the luxuriant growth of vegetation marked the places where they had pitched their tents, the black cinders of the burnt coals their camp-fires.

The sorely-threatened inhabitants of the rescued city, with thankful hearts, uttered sighs of relief. The industrious, volatile populace had speedily forgotten the sufferings endured, for early spring is so beautiful, and never does a rescued life seem so delicious as when we are surrounded by the joys of spring.

A new and happier time appeared to have dawned, not only for Nature but for human beings. The troops quartered in the besieged city, which had the day before committed many an annoyance, had been dismissed with song and music. The carpenter's axe flashed in the spring sunlight before the red walls, towers and gates, and cut sharply into the beams from which new scaffolds and frames were to be erected; noble cattle grazed peacefully undisturbed around the city, whose desolated gardens were being dug, sowed and planted afresh. In the streets and houses a thousand hands, which but a short time before had guided spears and arquebuses on the walls and towers, were busy at useful work, and old people sat quietly before their doors to let the warm spring sun shine on their backs.

Few discontented faces were to be seen in Leyden on this eighteenth of April. True, there was no lack of impatient ones, and whoever wanted to seek them need only go to the principal school, where noon was approaching and many boys gazed far more eagerly through the open windows of the school-room, than at the teacher's lips.

But in that part of the spacious hall where the older lads received instruction, no restlessness prevailed. True, the spring sun shone on their books and exercises too, the spring called them into the open air, but even more powerful than its alluring voice seemed the influence exerted on their young minds by what they were now hearing.

Forty sparkling eyes were turned towards the bearded man, who addressed them in his deep voice. Even wild Jan Mulder had dropped the knife with which he had begun to cut on his desk a well-executed figure of a ham, and was listening attentively.

The noon bell now rang from the neighboring church, and soon after was

heard from the tower of the town-hall, the little boys noisily left the room, but—strange—the patience of the older ones still held out; they were surely hearing things that did not exactly belong to their lessons.

The man who stood before them was no teacher in the school, but the city clerk, Van Hout, who, to-day filled the place of his sick friend, Verstrout, master of arts and preacher. During the ringing of the bells he had closed the book, and now said:

”’Suspendo lectionem.’ Jan Mulder, how would you translate my ’suspendere’?”

”Hang,” replied the boy.

”Hang!” laughed Van Hout. ”You might be hung from a hook perhaps, but where should we hang a lesson? Adrian Van der Werff.”

The lad called rose quickly, saying:

”’Suspendere lectionem’ means to break off the lesson.”

”Very well; and if we wanted to hang up Jan Mulder, what should we say?”

”Patibulare—ad patibulum!” cried the scholars. Van Hout, who had just been smiling, grew very grave. Drawing a long breath, he said:

”Patibulo is a bad Latin word, and your fathers, who formerly sat here, understood its meaning far less thoroughly than you. Now, every child in the Netherlands knows it, Alva has impressed it on our minds. More than eighteen thousand worthy citizens have come to the gallows through his ’ad patibulum.’”

With these words he pulled his short black doublet through his girdle, advanced nearer the first desk, and bending his muscular body forward, said with constantly increasing emotion:

”’This shall be enough for to-day, boys. It will do no great harm, if you afterwards forget the names earned here. But always remember one thing: your country first of all. Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans did not die in vain, so long as there are men ready to follow their example. Your turn will come too. It is not my business to boast, but truth is truth. We Hollanders have furnished fifty times three hundred men for the freedom of our native soil. In such stormy times there are steadfast men; even boys have shown themselves great. Ulrich yonder, at your head, can bear his nickname of Lowing with honor. ’Hither Persians—hither Greeks!’ was said in ancient times, but we cry: ’Hither Netherlands, hither Spain!’ And indeed, the proud Darius never ravaged Greece as King Philip has devastated Holland. Ay, my lads, many flowers bloom in the breasts of men. Among them is hatred of the poisonous hemlock. Spain has sowed it in our gardens. I feel it growing

within me, and you too feel and ought to feel it. But don't misunderstand me! 'Hither Spain—hither Netherlands!' is the cry, and not: 'Hither Catholics and hither Protestants.' Every faith may be right in the Lord's eyes, if only the man strives earnestly to walk in Christ's ways. At the throne of Heaven, it will not be asked: Are you Papist, Calvinist, or Lutheran? but: What were your intentions and acts? Respect every man's belief; but despise him who makes common cause with the tyrant against the liberty of our native land. Now pray silently, then you may go home."

The scholars rose; Van Hout wiped the perspiration from his high forehead, and while the boys were collecting books, pencils, and pens, said slowly, as if apologizing to himself for the words already uttered:

"What I have told you perhaps does not belong to the school-room; but, my lads, this battle is still far from being ended, and though you must occupy the school-benches for a while, you are the future soldiers. Lowing, remain behind, I have something to say to you."

He slowly turned his back to the boys, who rushed out of doors. In a corner of the yard of St. Peter's church, which was behind the building and entered by few of the passers-by, they stood still, and from amid the wild confusion of exclamations arose a sort of consultation, to which the organ-notes echoing from the church formed a strange accompaniment.

They were trying to decide upon the game to be played in the afternoon.

It was a matter of course, after what Van Hout had said, that there should be a battle; it had not even been proposed by anybody, but the discussion that now arose proceeded from the supposition.

It was soon decided that patriots and Spaniards, not Greeks and Persians, were to appear in the lists against each other; but when the burgomaster's son, Adrian Van der Werff, a lad of fourteen, proposed to form the two parties, and in the imperious way peculiar to him attempted to make Paul Van Swieten and Claus Dirkson Spaniards, he encountered violent opposition, and the troublesome circumstance was discovered that no one was willing to represent a foreign soldier.

Each boy wanted to make somebody else a Castilian, and fight himself under the banner of the Netherlands. But friends and foes are necessary for a war, and Holland's heroic courage required Spaniards to prove it. The youngsters grew excited, the cheeks of the disputants began to flush, here and there clenched fists were raised, and everything indicated that a horrible civil war would precede the battle to be given the foes of the country.

In truth, these lively boys were ill-suited to play the part of King Philip's gloomy, stiff-necked soldiers. Amid the many fair heads, few lads were seen with brown locks, and only one with black hair and dark

eyes. This was Adam Baersdorp, whose father, like Van der Werff's, was one of the leaders of the citizens. When he too refused to act a Spaniard, one of the boys exclaimed:

"You won't? Yet my father says your father is half a Glipper,—[The name given in Holland to those who sympathized with Spain]—and a whole Papist to boot."

At these words young Baersdorp threw his books on the ground, and was rushing with upraised fist upon his enemy—but Adrian Van der Werff hastily interposed, crying:

"For shame, Cornelius.—I'll stop the mouth of anybody who utters such an insult again. Catholics are Christians, as well as we. You heard it from Van Hout, and my father says so too. Will you be a Spaniard, Adam, yes or no?"

"No!" cried the latter firmly. "And if anybody else—"

"You can quarrel afterward," said Adrian Van der Werff, interrupting his excited companions, then good-naturedly picking up the books Baersdorp had flung down, and handing them to him, continued resolutely, "I'll be a Spaniard to-day. Who else?"

"I, I, I too, for aught I care," shouted several of the scholars, and the forming of the two parties would have been carried on in the best order to the end, if the boys' attention had not been diverted by a fresh incident.

A young gentleman, followed by a black servant, came up the street directly towards them. He too was a Netherlander, but had little in common with the school-boys except his age, a red and white complexion, fair hair, and clear blue eyes, eyes that looked arrogantly out upon the world. Every step showed that he considered himself an important personage, and the gaily-costumed negro, who carried a few recently purchased articles behind him, imitated this bearing in a most comical way. The negro's head was held still farther back than the young noble's, whose stiff Spanish ruff prevented him from moving his handsome head as freely as other mortals.

"That ape, Wibisma," said one of the school-boys, pointing to the approaching nobleman.

All eyes turned towards him, scornfully scanning his little velvet hat decked with a long plume, the quilted red satin garment padded in the breast and sleeves, the huge puffs of his short brown breeches, and the brilliant scarlet silk stockings that closely fitted his well-formed limbs.

"The ape," repeated Paul Van Swieten. "He wants to be a cardinal, that's

why he wears so much red.”

”And looks as Spanish as if he came straight from Madrid,” cried another lad, while a third added:

”The Wibismas certainly were not to be found here, so long as bread was short with us.”

The Wibismas are all Glippers.

”And he struts about on week-days, dressed in velvet and silk,” said Adrian. ”Just look at the black boy the red-legged stork has brought with him to Leyden.”

The scholars burst into a loud laugh, and as soon as the youth had reached them, Paul Van Swieten snarled in a nasal tone:

”How did deserting suit you? How are affairs in Spain, master Glipper?”

The young noble raised his head still higher, the negro did the same, and both walked quietly on, even when Adrian shouted in his ear:

”Little Glipper, tell me, for how many pieces of silver did Judas sell the Saviour?”

Young Matanesse Van Wibisma made an indignant gesture, but controlled himself until Jan Mulder stepped in front of him, holding his little cloth cap, into which he had thrust a hen’s feather, under his chin like a beggar, and saying humbly:

”Give me a little shrove-money for our tom-cat, Sir Grandee; he stole a leg of veal from the butcher yesterday.”

”Out of my way!” said the youth in a haughty, resolute tone, trying to push Mulder aside with the back of his hand.

”Hands off, Glipper!” cried the school-boys, raising their clenched hands threateningly.

”Then let me alone,” replied Wibisma, ”I want no quarrel, least of all with you.”

”Why not with us?” asked Adrian Van der Werff, irritated by the supercilious, arrogant tone of the last words.

The youth shrugged his shoulders, but Adrian cried: ”Because you like your Spanish costume better than our doublets of Leyden cloth.”

Here he paused, for Jan Mulder stole behind Wibisma, struck his hat down on his head with a book, and while Nicolas Van Wibisma was trying to free

his eyes from the covering that shaded them, exclaimed:

"There, Sir Grandee, now the little hat sits firm! You can keep it on, even before the king."

The negro could not go to his master's assistance, for his arms were filled with parcels, but the young noble did not call him, knowing how cowardly his black servant was, and feeling strong enough to help himself.

A costly clasp, which he had just received as a gift on his seventeenth birthday, confined the plume in his hat; but without a thought he flung it aside, stretched out his arms as if for a wrestling-match, and with florid cheeks, asked in a loud, resolute tone: "Who did that?"

Jan Mulder had hastily retreated among his companions, and instead of coming forward and giving his name, called:

"Look for the hat-fuller, Glipper! We'll play blindman's buff."

The youth, frantic with rage, repeated his question. When, instead of any other answer, the boys entered into Jan Mulder's jest, shouting gaily: "Yes, play blind-man's buff! Look for the hat-fuller. Come, little Glipper, begin." Nicolas could contain himself no longer, but shouted furiously to the laughing throng:

"Cowardly rabble!"

Scarcely had the words been uttered, when Paul Van Swieten raised his grammar, bound in hog-skin, and hurled it at Wibisma's breast.

Other books followed, amid loud outcries, striking him on the legs and shoulders. Bewildered, he shielded his face with his hands and retreated to the church-yard wall, where he stood still and prepared to rush upon his foes.

The stiff, fashionable high Spanish ruff no longer confined his handsome head with its floating golden locks. Freely and boldly he looked his enemies in the face, stretched the young limbs hardened by many a knightly exercise, and with a true Netherland oath sprang upon Adrian Van der Werff, who stood nearest.

After a short struggle, the burgomaster's son, inferior in strength and age to his opponent, lay extended on the ground; but the other lads, who had not ceased shouting, "Glipper, Glipper," seized the young noble, who was kneeling on his vanquished foe.

Nicolas struggled bravely, but his enemies' superior power was too great.

Frantic with fury, wild with rage and shame, he snatched the dagger from his belt.

The boys now raised a frightful yell, and two of them rushed upon Nicolas to wrest the weapon from him. This was quickly accomplished; the dagger flew on the pavement, but Van Swieten sprang back with a low cry, for the sharp blade had struck his arm, and the bright blood streamed on the ground.

For several minutes the shouts of the lads and the piteous cries of the black page drowned the beautiful melody of the organ, pouring from the windows of the church. Suddenly the music ceased; instead of the intricate harmony the slowly-dying note of a single pipe was heard, and a young man rushed out of the door of the sacristy of the House of God. He quickly perceived the cause of the wild uproar that had interrupted his practising, and a smile flitted over the handsome face which, framed by a closely-cut beard, had just looked startled enough, though the reproving words and pushes with which he separated the enraged lads were earnest enough, and by no means failed to produce their effect.

The boys knew the musician, Wilhelm Corneliussohn, and offered no resistance, for they liked him, and his dozen years of seniority gave him an undisputed authority among them. Not a hand was again raised against Wibisma, but the boys, all shouting and talking together, crowded around the organist to accuse Nicolas and defend themselves.

Paul Van Swieten's wound was slight. He stood outside the circle of his companions, supporting the injured left arm with his right hand. He frequently blew upon the burning spot in his flesh, over which a bit of cloth was wrapped, but curiosity concerning the result of this entertaining brawl was stronger than the wish to have it bandaged and healed.

As the peace-maker's work was already drawing to a close, the wounded lad, pointing with his sound hand in the direction of the school, suddenly called warningly:

"There comes Herr von Nordwyk. Let the Glipper go, or there will be trouble."

Paul Van Swieten again clasped his wounded arm with his right hand and ran swiftly around the church. Several other boys followed, but the new-comer of whom they were afraid, a man scarcely thirty years old, had legs of considerable length, and knew how to use them bravely.

"Stop, boys!" he shouted in an echoing voice of command. "Stop! What has Happened here?"

Every one in Leyden respected the learned and brave young nobleman, so all the lads who had not instantly obeyed Van Swieten's warning shout,

stood still until Herr von Nordwyk reached them.

A strange, eager light sparkled in this man's clever eyes, and a subtle smile hovered around his moustached lip, as he called to the musician:

"What has happened here, Meister Wilhelm? Didn't the clamor of Minerva's apprentices harmonize with your organ-playing, or did—but by all the colors of Iris, that's surely Nico Matanesse, young Wibisma! And how he looks! Brawling in the shadow of the church—and you here too, Adrian, and you, Meister Wilhelm?"

"I separated them," replied the other quietly, smoothing his rumpled cuffs.

"With perfect calmness, but impressively—like your organ-music," said the commander, laughing.

"Who began the fight? You, young sir? or the others?"

Nicolas, in his excitement, shame, and indignation, could find no coherent words, but Adrian came forward saying: "We wrestled together. Don't be too much vexed with us, Herr Janus."

Nicolas cast a friendly glance at his foe.

Herr von Nordwyk, Jan Van der Does, or as a learned man he preferred to call himself, Janus Dousa, was by no means satisfied with this information, but exclaimed:

"Patience, patience! You look suspicious enough, Meister Adrian; come here and tell me, 'atrekeos,' according to the truth, what has been going on."

The boy obeyed the command and told his story honestly, without concealing or palliating anything that had occurred.

"Hm," said Dousa, after the lad had finished his report. "A difficult case. No one is to be acquitted. Your cause would be the better one, had it not been for the knife, my fine young nobleman, but you, Adrian, and you, you chubby-cheeked rascals, who—There comes the rector—If he catches you, you'll certainly see nothing but four walls the rest of this beautiful day. I should be sorry for that."

The chubby-cheeked rascals, and Adrian also, understood this hint, and without stopping to take leave scampered around the corner of the church like a flock of doves pursued by a hawk.

As soon as they had vanished, the commander approached young Nicolas, saying:

"Vexatious business! What was right to them is just to you. Go to your home. Are you visiting your aunt?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the young noble. "Is your father in the city too?" Nicolas was silent.

"He doesn't wish to be seen?"

Nicolas nodded assent, and Dousa continued:

"Leyden stands open to every Netherlander, even to you. To be sure, if you go about like King Philip's page, and show contempt to your equals, you must endure the consequences yourself. There lies the dagger, my young friend, and there is your hat. Pick them up, and remember that such a weapon is no toy. Many a man has spoiled his whole life, by thoughtlessly using one a single moment. The superior numbers that pressed upon you may excuse you. But how will you get to your aunt's house in that tattered doublet?"

"My cloak is in the church," said the musician, "I'll give it to the young gentleman."

"Bravo, Meister Wilhelm !" replied Dousa. "Wait here, my little master, and then go home. I wish the time, when your father would value my greeting, might come again. Do you know why it is no longer pleasant to him?"

"No, my lord."

"Then I'll tell you. Because he is fond of Spain, and I cling to the Netherlands."

"We are Netherlanders as well as you," replied Nicolas with glowing cheeks.

"Scarcely," answered Dousa calmly, putting his hand up to his thin chin, and intending to add a kinder word to the sharp one, when the youth vehemently exclaimed:

"Take back that 'scarcely,' Herr von Nordwyk." Dousa gazed at the bold lad in surprise, and again an expression of amusement hovered about his lips. Then he said kindly:

"I like you, Herr Nicolas; and shall rejoice if you wish to become a true Hollander. There comes Meister Wilhelm with his cloak. Give me your hand. No, not this one, the other."

Nicolas hesitated, but Janus grasped the boy's right hand in both of his, bent his tall figure to the latter's ear, and said in so low a tone that

the musician could not understand:

”Ere we part, take with you this word of counsel from one who means kindly. Chains, even golden ones, drag us down, but liberty gives wings. You shine in the glittering splendor, but we strike the Spanish chains with the sword, and I devote myself to our work. Remember these words, and if you choose repeat them to your father.”

Janus Dousa turned his back on the boy, waved a farewell to the musician, and went away.

CHAPTER II.

Young Adrian hurried down the Werffsteg, which had given his family its name. He heeded neither the lindens on both sides, amid whose tops the first tiny green leaves were forcing their way out of the pointed buds, nor the birds that flew hither and thither among the hospitable boughs of the stately trees, building their nests and twittering to each other, for he had no thought in his mind except to reach home as quickly as possible.

Beyond the bridge spanning the Achtergracht, he paused irresolutely before a large building.

The knocker hung on the central door, but he did not venture to lift it and let it fall on the shining plate beneath, for he could expect no pleasant reception from his family.

His doublet had fared ill during his struggle with his stronger enemy. The torn neck-ruffles had been removed from their proper place and thrust into his pocket, and the new violet stocking on his right leg, luckless thing, had been so frayed by rubbing on the pavement, that a large yawning rent showed far more of Adrian’s white knee than was agreeable to him.

The peacock feather in his little velvet cap could easily be replaced, but the doublet was torn, not ripped, and the stocking scarcely capable of being mended. The boy was sincerely sorry, for his father had bade him take good care of the stuff to save money; during these times there were hard shifts in the big house, which with its three doors, triple gables adorned with beautifully-arched volutes, and six windows in the upper and lower stories, fronted the Werffsteg in a very proud, stately guise.

The burgomaster’s office did not bring in a large income, and Adrian’s grandfather’s trade of preparing chamois leather, as well as the business

in skins, was falling off; his father had other matters in his head, matters that claimed not only his intellect, strength and time, but also every superfluous farthing.

Adrian had nothing pleasant to expect at home—certainly not from his father, far less from his aunt Barbara. Yet the boy dreaded the anger of these two far less, than a single disapproving glance from the eyes of the young wife, whom he had called "mother" scarcely a twelve month, and who was only six years his senior.

She never said an unkind word to him, but his defiance and wildness melted before her beauty, her quiet, aristocratic manner. He scarcely knew himself whether he loved her or not, but she appeared like the good fairy of whom the fairy tales spoke, and it often seemed as if she were far too delicate, dainty and charming for her simple, unpretending home. To see her smile rendered the boy happy, and when she looked sad—a thing that often happened—it made his heart ache. Merciful Heavens! She certainly could not receive him kindly when she saw his doublet, the ruffles thrust into his pocket, and his unlucky stockings.

And then!

There were the bells ringing again!

The dinner hour had long since passed, and his father waited for no one. Whoever came too late must go without, unless Aunt Barbara took compassion on him in the kitchen.

But what was the use of pondering and hesitating? Adrian summoned up all his courage, clenched his teeth, clasped his right hand still closer around the torn ruffles in his pocket, and struck the knocker loudly on the steel plate beneath.

Trautchen, the old maid-servant, opened the door, and in the spacious, dusky entrance-hall, where the bales of leather were packed closely together, did not notice the dilapidation of his outer man.

He hurried swiftly up the stairs.

The dining-room door was open, and—marvellous—the table was still untouched, his father must have remained at the town-hall longer than usual.

Adrian rushed with long leaps to his little attic room, dressed himself neatly, and entered the presence of his family before the master of the house had asked the blessing.

The doublet and stocking could be confided to the hands of Aunt Barbara or Trautchen, at some opportune hour.

Adrian sturdily attacked the smoking dishes; but his heart soon grew heavy, for his father did not utter a word, and gazed into vacancy as gravely and anxiously as at the time when misery entered the beleaguered city.

The boy's young step-mother sat opposite her husband, and often glanced at Peter Van der Werff's grave face to win a loving glance from him.

Whenever she did so in vain, she pushed her soft, golden hair back from her forehead, raised her beautiful head higher, or bit her lips and gazed silently into her plate.

In reply to Aunt Barbara's questions: "What happened at the council? Has the money for the new bell been collected? Will Jacob Van Sloten rent you the meadow?" he made curt, evasive replies.

The steadfast man, who sat so silently with frowning brow among his family, sometimes attacking the viands on his plate, then leaving them untouched, did not look like one who yields to idle whims.

All present, even the men and maid-servants, were still devoting themselves to the food, when the master of the house rose, and pressing both hands over the back of his head, which was very prominently developed, exclaimed groaning:

"I can hold out no longer. Do you give thanks, Maria. Go to the town-hall, Janche, and ask if no messenger has yet arrived."

The man-servant wiped his mouth and instantly obeyed. He was a tall, broad-shouldered Frieselander, but only reached to his master's forehead.

Peter Van der Werff, without any form of salutation, turned his back on his family, opened the door leading into his study, and after crossing the threshold, closed it with a bang, approached the big oak writing-desk, on which papers and letters lay piled in heaps, secured by rough leaden weights, and began to rummage among the newly-arrived documents. For fifteen minutes he vainly strove to fix the necessary attention upon his task, then grasped his study-chair to rest his folded arms on the high, perforated back, adorned with simple carving, and gazed thoughtfully at the wooden wainscoting of the ceiling. After a few minutes he pushed the chair aside with his foot, raised his hand to his mouth, separated his moustache from his thick brown beard, and went to the window. The small, round, leaden-cased panes, however brightly they might be polished, permitted only a narrow portion of the street to be seen, but the burgomaster seemed to have found the object for which he had been looking. Hastily opening the window, he called to his servant, who was hurriedly approaching the house:

"Is he in, Janche?"

The Frieselander shook his head, the window again closed, and a few minutes after the burgomaster seized his hat, which hung, between some cavalry pistols and a plain, substantial sword, on the only wall of his room not perfectly bare.

The torturing anxiety that filled his mind, would no longer allow him to remain in the house.

He would have his horse saddled, and ride to meet the expected messenger.

Ere leaving the room, he paused a moment lost in thought, then approached the writing-table to sign some papers intended for the town-hall; for his return might be delayed till night.

Still standing, he looked over the two sheets he had spread out before him, and seized the pen. Just at that moment the door of the room gently opened, and the fresh sand strewn over the white boards creaked under a light foot. He doubtless heard it, but did not allow himself to be interrupted.

His wife was now standing close behind him. Four and twenty years his junior, she seemed like a timid girl, as she raised her arm, yet did not venture to divert her husband's attention from his business.

She waited quietly till he had signed the first paper, then turned her pretty head aside, and blushing faintly, exclaimed with downcast eyes:

"It is I, Peter!"

"Very well, my child," he answered curtly, raising the second paper nearer his eyes.

"Peter!" she exclaimed a second time, still more eagerly, but with timidity. "I have something to tell you."

Van der Werff turned his head, cast a hasty, affectionate glance at her, and said:

"Now, child? You see I am busy, and there is my hat."

"But Peter!" she replied, a flash of something like indignation sparkling in her eyes, as she continued in a voice pervaded with a slightly perceptible tone of complaint: "We haven't said anything to each other to-day. My heart is so full, and what I would fain say to you is, must surely--"

"When I come home Maria, not now," he interrupted, his deep voice sounding half impatient, half beseeching. "First the city and the

country—then love-making.”

At these words, Maria raised her head proudly, and answered with quivering lips:

”That is what you have said ever since the first day of our marriage.”

”And unhappily—unhappily—I must continue to say so until we reach the goal,” he answered firmly. The blood mounted into the young wife’s delicate cheeks, and with quickened breathing, she answered in a hasty, resolute tone:

”Yes, indeed, I have known these words ever since your courtship, and as I am my father’s daughter never opposed them, but now they are no longer suited to us, and should be: ’Everything for the country, and nothing at all for the wife.’”

Van der Werff laid down his pen and turned full towards her.

Maria’s slender figure seemed to have grown taller, and the blue eyes, swimming in tears, flashed proudly. This life-companion seemed to have been created by God especially for him. His heart opened to her, and frankly stretching out both hands, he said tenderly:

”You know how matters are! This heart is changeless, and other days will come.”

”When?” asked Maria, in a tone as mournful as if she believed in no happier future.

”Soon,” replied her husband firmly. ”Soon, if only each one gives willingly what our native land demands.”

At these words the young wife loosed her hands from her husband’s, for the door had opened and Barbara called to her brother from the threshold.

”Herr Matanesse Van Wibisma, the Glipper, is in the entry and wants to speak to you.”

”Show him up,” said the burgomaster reluctantly. When again alone with his wife, he asked hastily ”Will you be indulgent and help me?”

She nodded assent, trying to smile.

He saw that she was sad and, as this grieved him, held out his hand to her again, saying:

”Better days will come, when I shall be permitted to be more to you than to-day. What were you going to say just now?”

"Whether you know it or not—is of no importance to the state."

"But to you. Then lift up your head again, and look at me. Quick, love, for they are already on the stairs."

"It isn't worth mentioning—a year ago to-day—we might celebrate the anniversary of our wedding to-day."

"The anniversary of our wedding-day!" he cried, striking his hands loudly together. "Yes, this is the seventeenth of April, and I have forgotten it."

He drew her tenderly towards him, but just at that moment the door opened, and Adrian ushered the baron into the room.

Van der Werff bowed courteously to the infrequent guest, then called to his blushing wife, who was retiring: "My congratulations! I'll come later. Adrian, we are to celebrate a beautiful festival to-day, the anniversary of our marriage."

The boy glided swiftly out of the door, which he still held in his hand, for he suspected the aristocratic visitor boded him no good.

In the entry he paused to think, then hurried up the stairs, seized his plumeless cap, and rushed out of doors. He saw his school-mates, armed with sticks and poles, ranging themselves in battle array, and would have liked to join the game of war, but for that very reason preferred not to listen to the shouts of the combatants at that moment, and ran towards the Zylhof until beyond the sound of their voices.

He now checked his steps, and in a stooping posture, often on his knees, followed the windings of a narrow canal that emptied into the Rhine.

As soon as his cap was overflowing with the white, blue, and yellow spring flowers he had gathered, he sat down on a boundary stone, and with sparkling eyes bound them into a beautiful bouquet, with which he ran home.

On the bench beside the gate sat the old maidservant with his little sister, a child six years old. Handing the flowers, which he had kept hidden behind his back, to her, he said:

"Take them and carry them to mother, Bessie; this is the anniversary of her wedding-day. Give her warm congratulations too, from us both."

The child rose, and the old servant said, "You are a good boy, Adrian."

"Do you think so?" he asked, all the sins of the forenoon returning to his mind.

But unluckily they caused him no repentance; on the contrary, his eyes began to sparkle mischievously, and a smile hovered around his lips, as he patted the old woman's shoulder, whispering softly in her ear:

"The hair flew to-day, Trautchen. My doublet and new stockings are lying up in my room under the bed. Nobody can mend as well as you."

Trautchen shook her finger at him, but he turned hastily back and ran towards the Zyl-gate, this time to lead the Spaniards against the Netherlanders.

CHAPTER III.

The burgomaster had pressed the nobleman to sit down in the study-chair, while he himself leaned in a half-sitting attitude on the writing-table, listening somewhat impatiently to his distinguished guest.

"Before speaking of more important things," Herr Matanesse Van Wibisma had begun, "I should like to appeal to you, as a just man, for some punishment for the injury my son has sustained in this city."

"Speak," said the burgomaster, and the nobleman now briefly, and with unconcealed indignation, related the story of the attack upon his son at the church.

"I'll inform the rector of the annoying incident," replied Van der Werff, "and the culprits will receive their just dues; but pardon me, noble sir, if I ask whether any inquiry has been made concerning the cause of the quarrel?"

Herr Matanesse Van Wibisma looked at the burgomaster in surprise and answered proudly:

"You know my son's report."

"Both sides must be fairly heard," replied Van der Werff calmly. "That has been the custom of the Netherlands from ancient times."

"My son bears my name and speaks the truth."

"Our boys are called simply Leendert or Adrian or Gerrit, but they do the same, so I must beg you to send the young gentleman to the examination at the school."

"By no means," answered the knight resolutely. "If I had thought the matter belonged to the rector's department, I should have sought him and

not you, Herr Peter. My son has his own tutor, and was not attacked in your school, which in any case he has outgrown, for he is seventeen, but in the public street, whose security it is the burgomaster's duty to guard."

"Very well then, make your complaint, take the youth before the judges, summon witnesses and let the law follow its course. But, sir," continued Van der Werff, softening the impatience in his voice, "were you not young yourself once? Have you entirely forgotten the fights under the citadel? What pleasure will it afford you, if we lock up a few thoughtless lads for two days this sunny weather? The scamps will find something amusing to do indoors, as well as out, and only the parents will be punished."

The last words were uttered so cordially and pleasantly, that they could not fail to have their effect upon the baron. He was a handsome man, whose refined, agreeable features, of the true Netherland type, expressed anything rather than severity.

"If you speak to me in this tone, we shall come to an agreement more easily," he answered, smiling. "I will only say this. Had the brawl arisen in sport, or from some boyish quarrel, I wouldn't have wasted a word on the matter—but that children already venture to assail with jeers and violence those who hold different opinions, ought not to be permitted to pass without reproof. The boys shouted after my son the absurd word—"

"It is certainly an insult," interrupted Van der Werff, "a very disagreeable name, that our people bestow on the enemies of their liberty."

The baron rose, angrily confronting the other.

"Who tells you," he cried, striking his broad breast, padded with silken puffs, "who tells you that we grudge Holland her liberty? We desire, just as earnestly as you, to win it back to the States, but by other, straighter paths than Orange—"

"I cannot test here whether your paths are crooked or straight," retorted Van der Werff; "but I do know this—they are labyrinths."

"They will lead to the heart of Philip, our king and yours."

"Yes, if he only had what we in Holland call a heart," replied the other, smiling bitterly; but Wibisma threw his head back vehemently, exclaiming reproachfully:

"Sir Burgomaster, you are speaking of the anointed Prince to whom I have sworn fealty."

"Baron Matanesse," replied Van der Werff, in a tone of deep earnestness,

as he drew himself up to his full height, folded his arms, and looked the nobleman sharply in the eye, "I speak rather of the tyrant, whose bloody council declared all who bore the Netherland name, and you among us, criminals worthy of death; who, through his destroying devil, Alva, burned, beheaded, and hung thousands of honest men, robbed and exiled from the country thousands of others, I speak of the profligate—"

"Enough!" cried the knight, clenching the hilt of his sword. "Who gives you the right—"

"Who gives me the right to speak so bitterly, you would ask?" interrupted Peter Van der Werff, meeting the nobleman's eyes with a gloomy glance. "Who gives me this right? I need not conceal it. It was bestowed by the silent lips of my valiant father, beheaded for the sake of his faith, by the arbitrary decree, that without form of law, banished my brother and myself from the country—by the Spaniards' broken vows, the torn charters of this land, the suffering of the poor, ill-treated, worthy people that will perish if we do not save them."

"You will not save them," replied Wibisma in a calmer tone. "You will push those tottering on the verge of the abyss completely over the precipice, and go to destruction with them."

"We are pilots. Perhaps we shall bring deliverance, perhaps we shall go to ruin with those for whom we are ready to die."

"You say that, and yet a young, blooming wife binds you to life."

"Baron, you have crossed this threshold as complainant to the burgomaster, not as guest or friend."

"Quite true, but I came with kind intentions, as monitor to the guiding head of this beautiful, hapless city. You have escaped the storm once, but new and far heavier ones are gathering above your heads."

"We do not fear them."

"Not even now?"

"Now, with good reason, far less than ever."

"Then you don't know the Prince's brother—"

"Louis of Nassau was close upon the Spaniards on the 14th, and our cause is doing well—"

"It certainly did not fare ill at first."

"The messenger, who yesterday evening—"

"Ours came this morning."

"This morning, you say? And what more—"

"The Prince's army was defeated and utterly destroyed on Mook Heath. Louis of Nassau himself was slain."

Van der Werff pressed his fingers firmly on the wood of the writing-table. The fresh color of his cheeks and lips had yielded to a livid pallor, and his mouth quivered painfully as he asked in a low, hollow tone, "Louis dead, really dead?"

"Dead," replied the baron firmly, though sorrowfully. "We were enemies, but Louis was a noble youth. I mourn him with you."

"Dead, William's favorite dead!" murmured the burgomaster as if in a dream. Then, controlling himself by a violent effort, he said, firmly:

"Pardon me, noble sir. Time is flying. I must go to the town-hall."

"And spite of my message, you will continue to uphold rebellion?"

"Yes, my lord, as surely as I am a Hollander."

"Do you remember the fate of Haarlem?"

"I remember her citizens' resistance, and the rescued Alkmaar."

"Man, man!" cried the baron. "By all that sacred, I implore you to be circumspect."

"Enough, baron, I must go to the town-hall."

"No, only this one more word, this one word. I know you upbraid us as 'Glippers,' deserters, but as truly as I hope for God's mercy, you misjudge us. No, Herr Peter, no, I am no traitor! I love this country and this brave, industrious people with the same love as yourself, for its blood flows in my veins also. I signed the compromise. Here I stand, sir. Look at me. Do I look like a Judas? Do I look like a Spaniard? Can you blame me for faithfully keeping the oath I gave the king? When did we of the Netherlands ever trifle with vows? You, the friend of Orange, have just declared that you did not grudge any man the faith to which he clung, and I will not doubt it. Well, I hold firmly to the old church, I am a Catholic and shall remain one. But in this hour I frankly confess, that I hate the inquisition and Alva's bloody deeds as much as you do. They have as little connection with our religion as iconoclasm had with yours. Like you, I love the freedom of our home. To win it back is my endeavor, as well as yours. But how can a little handful like us ever succeed in finally resisting the most powerful kingdom in the world? Though we conquer once, twice, thrice, two

stronger armies will follow each defeated one. We shall accomplish nothing by force, but may do much by wise concession and prudent deeds. Philip's coffers are empty; he needs his armies too in other countries. Well then, let us profit by his difficulties, and force him to ratify some lost liberty for every revolted city that returns to him. Let us buy from his hands, with what remains of our old wealth, the rights he has wrested from us while fighting against the rebels. You will find open hands with me and those who share my opinions. Your voice weighs heavily in the council of this city. You are the friend of Orange, and if you could induce him—"

"To do what, noble sir?"

"To enter into an alliance with us. We know that those in Madrid understand how to estimate his importance and fear him. Let us stipulate, as the first condition, a full pardon for him and his faithful followers. King Philip, I know, will receive him into favor again—"

"In his arms to strangle him," replied the burgomaster resolutely. "Have you forgotten the false promises of pardon made in former times, the fate of Egmont and Horn, the noble Montigney and other lords? They ventured it and entered the tiger's den. What we buy to-day will surely be taken from us tomorrow, for what oath would be sacred to Philip? I am no statesman, but I know this—if he would restore all our liberties, he will never grant the one thing, without which life is valueless."

"What is that, Herr Peter?"

"The privilege of believing according to the dictates of our hearts. You mean fairly, noble sir;—but you trust the Spaniard, we do not; if we did, we should be deceived children. You have nothing to fear for your religion, we everything; you believe that the number of troops and power of gold will turn the scales in our conflict, we comfort ourselves with the hope, that God will give victory to the good cause of a brave people, ready to suffer a thousand deaths for liberty. This is my opinion, and I shall defend it in the town-hall."

"No, Meister Peter, no! You cannot, ought not."

"What I can do is little, what I ought to do is written within, and I shall act accordingly."

"And thus obey the sorrowing heart rather than the prudent head, and be able to give naught save evil counsel. Consider, man, Orange's last army was destroyed on Mock Heath."

"True, my lord, and for that very reason we will not use the moments for words, but deeds."

"I'll take the hint myself, Herr Van der Werf, for many friends of the

king still dwell in Leyden, who must be taught not to follow you blindly to the shambles.”

At these words Van der Werff retreated from the nobleman, clenched his moustache firmly in his right hand, and raising his deep voice to a louder tone, said coldly and imperiously:

”Then, as guardian of the safety of this city, I command you to quit Leyden instantly. If you are found within these walls after noon tomorrow, I will have you taken across the frontiers by the city-guard.”

The baron withdrew without any form of leave-taking.

As soon as the door had closed behind him, Van der Werff, threw himself into his arm-chair and covered his face with his hands. When he again sat erect, two large tear-drops sparkled on the paper which had lain under his fingers. Smiling bitterly, he wiped them from the page with the back of his hand.

”Dead, dead,” he murmured, and the image of the gallant youth, the clever mediator, the favorite of William of Orange, rose before his mind—he asked himself how this fresh stroke of fate would affect the Prince, whom he revered as the providence of the country, admired and loved as the wisest, most unselfish of men.

William’s affliction grieved him as sorely as if it had fallen upon himself, and the blow that had struck the cause of freedom was a heavy one, perhaps never to be overcome.

Yet he only granted himself a short time to indulge in grief, for the point in question now was to summon all the nation’s strength to repair what was lost, avert by vigorous acts the serious consequences which threatened to follow Louis’s defeat, and devise fresh means to carry on the war.

He paced up and down the room with frowning brow, inventing measures and pondering over plans. His wife had opened the door, and now remained standing on the threshold, but he did not notice her until she called his name and advanced towards him.

In her hand she held part of the flowers the boy had brought, another portion adorned her bosom.

”Take it,” she said, offering him the bouquet. ”Adrian, dear boy, gathered them, and you surely know what they mean.”

He willingly took the messengers of spring, raised them to his face, drew Maria to his breast, pressed a long kiss upon her brow, and then said

gloomily:

"So this is the celebration of the first anniversary of our wedding-day. Poor wife! The Glipper was not so far wrong; perhaps it would have been wiser and better for me not to bind your fate to mine."

"How can such thoughts enter your mind, Peter!" she exclaimed reproachfully.

"Louis of Nassau has fallen," he murmured in a hollow tone, "his army is scattered."

"Oh-oh!" cried Maria, clasping her hands in horror, but he continued:

"It was our last body of troops. The coffers are empty, and where we are to obtain new means, and what will happen now—this, this—Leave me, Maria, I beg you. If we don't profit by the time now, if we don't find the right paths now, we shall not, cannot prosper."

With these words he threw the bouquet on the table, hastily seized a paper, looked into it, and, without glancing at her, waved his right hand.

The young wife's heart had been full, wide open, when she entered the room. She had expected so much that was beautiful from this hour, and now stood alone in the apartment he still shared with her. Her arms had fallen by her side; helpless, mortified, wounded, she gazed at him in silence.

Maria had grown up amid the battle for freedom, and knew how to estimate the grave importance of the tidings her husband had received. During his wooing he had told her that, by his side, she must expect a life full of anxiety and peril, yet she had joyously gone to the altar with the brave champion of the good cause, which had been her father's, for she had hoped to become the sharer of his cares and struggles. And now? What was she permitted to be to him? What did he receive from her? What had he consented to share with her, who could not feel herself a feeble woman, on this, the anniversary of their wedding-day.

There she stood, her open heart slowly closing and struggling against her longing to cry out to him, and say that she would as gladly bear his cares with him and share every danger, as happiness and honor.

The burgomaster, having now found what he sought, seized his hat and again looked at his wife.

How pale and disappointed she was!

His heart ached; he would so gladly have given expression in words to the great, warm love he felt for her, offered her joyous congratulations; but

in this hour, amid his grief, with such anxieties burdening his breast, he could not do it, so he only held out both hands, saying tenderly:

"You surely know what you are to me, Maria, if you do not, I will tell you this evening. I must meet the members of the council at the town-hall, or a whole day will be lost, and at this time we must be avaricious even of the moments. Well, Maria?"

The young wife was gazing at the floor. She would gladly have flown to his breast, but offended pride would not suffer her to do so, and some mysterious power bound her hands and did not permit her to lay them in his.

"Farewell," she said in a hollow tone.

"Maria!" he exclaimed reproachfully. "To-day is no well-chosen time for pouting. Come and be my sensible wife."

She did not move instantly; but he heard the bell ring for the fourth hour, the time when the session of the council ended, and left the room without looking back at her.

The little bouquet still lay on the writing-table; the young wife saw it, and with difficulty restrained her tears.

CHAPTER IV.

Countless citizens had flocked to the stately townhall. News of Louis of Nassau's defeat had spread quickly through all the eighteen wards of the city, and each wanted to learn farther particulars, express his grief and fears to those who held the same views, and hear what measures the council intended to adopt for the immediate future.

Two messengers had only too thoroughly confirmed Baron Matanesse Van Wibisma's communication. Louis was dead, his brother Henry missing, and his army completely destroyed.

Jan Van Hout, who had taught the boys that morning, now came to a window, informed the citizens what a severe blow the liberty of the country had received, and in vigorous words exhorted them to support the good cause with body and soul.

Loud cheers followed this speech. Gay caps and plumed hats were tossed in the air, canes and swords were waved, and the women and children, who had crowded among the men, fluttered their handkerchiefs, and with their

shriller voices drowned the shouts of the citizens.

The members of the valiant city-guard assembled, to charge their captain to give the council the assurance, that the "Schutterij" was ready to support William of Orange to the last penny and drop of their blood, and would rather die for the cause of Holland, than live under Spanish tyranny. Among them was seen many a grave, deeply-troubled face; for these men, who filled its ranks by their own choice, all loved William of Orange: his sorrow hurt them—and their country's distress pierced their hearts. As soon as the four burgomasters, the eight magistrates of the city, and the members of the common council appeared at the windows, hundreds of voices joined in the Geusenlied,—[Beggars' Song or Hymn. Beggar was the name given to the patriots by those who sympathized with Spain.]—which had long before been struck up by individuals, and when at sunset the volatile populace scattered and, still singing, turned, either singly or by twos or threes, towards the taverns, to strengthen their confidence in better days and dispel many a well-justified anxiety by drink, the market-place of Leyden and its adjoining streets presented no different aspect, than if a message of victory had been read from the town-hall.

The cheers and Beggars' Song had sounded very powerful—but so many hundreds of Dutch throats would doubtless have been capable of shaking the air with far mightier tones.

This very remark had been made by the three well-dressed citizens, who were walking through the wide street, past the blue stone, and the eldest said to his companions:

"They boast and shout and seem large to themselves now, but we shall see that things will soon be very different."

"May God avert the worst!" replied the other, "but the Spaniards will surely advance again, and I know many in my ward who won't vote for resistance this time."

"They are right, a thousand times right. Requesens is not Alva, and if we voluntarily seek the king's pardon—"

"There would be no blood shed and everything would take the best course."

"I have more love for Holland than for Spain," said the third. "But, after Mook-Heath, resistance is a thing of the past. Orange may be an excellent prince, but the shirt is closer than the coat."

"And in fact we risk our lives and fortunes merely for him."

"My wife said so yesterday."

"He'll be the last man to help trade. Believe me, many think as we do,

if it were not so, the Beggars' Song would have sounded louder."

"There will always be five fools to three wise men," said the older citizen. "I took good care not to split my mouth."

"And after all, what great thing is there behind this outcry for freedom? Alva burnt the Bible-readers, De la Marck hangs the priests. My wife likes to go to Mass, but always does so secretly, as if she were committing a crime."

"We, too, cling to the good old faith."

"Never mind faith," said the third. We are Calvinists, but I take no pleasure in throwing my pennies into Orange's maw, nor can it gratify me to again tear up the poles before the Cow-gate, ere the wind dries the yarn."

"Only let us hold together," advised the older man. "People don't express their real opinions, and any poor ragged devil might play the hero. But I tell you there will be sensible men enough in every ward, every guild, nay, even in the council, and among the burgomasters."

"Hush," whispered the second citizen, "there comes Van der Werff with the city clerk and young Van der Does; they are the worst of all."

The three persons named came down the broad street, talking eagerly together, but in low tones.

"My uncle is right, Meister Peter," said Jan Van der Does, the same tall young noble, who, on the morning of that day, had sent Nicolas Van Wibisma home with a kindly warning. "It's no use, you must seek the Prince and consult with him."

"I suppose I must," replied the burgomaster. "I'll go to-morrow morning."

"Not to-morrow," replied Van Hout. "The Prince rides fast, and if you don't find him in Delft—"

"Do you go first," urged the burgomaster, "you have the record of our session."

"I cannot; but to-day you, the Prince's friend, for the first time lack good-will."

"You are right, Jan," exclaimed the burgomaster, "and you shall know what holds me back."

"If it is anything a friend can do for you, here he stands," said von Nordwyk.

Van der Werff grasped the hand the young nobleman extended, and answered, smiling: "No, my lord, no. You know my young wife. To-day we should have celebrated the first anniversary of our marriage, and amid all these anxieties I disgracefully forgot it."

"Hard, hard," said Van Hout, softly. Then he drew himself up to his full height, and added resolutely: "And yet, were I in your place, I would go, in spite of her."

"Would you go to-day?"

"To-day, for to-morrow it may be too late. Who knows how soon egress from the city may be stopped and, before again venturing the utmost, we must know the Prince's opinion. You possess more of his confidence than any of us."

"And God knows how gladly I would bring him a cheering word in these sorrowful hours; but it must not be to-day. The messenger has ridden off on my bay."

"Then take my chestnut, he is faster too," said Janus Dousa and Van der Werff answered hastily.

"Thanks, my lord. I'll send for him early tomorrow morning."

The blood mounted to Van Hout's head and, thrusting his hand angrily between his girdle and doublet, he exclaimed: "Send me the chestnut, if the burgomaster will give me leave of absence."

"No, send him to me," replied Peter calmly. "What must be, must be; I'll go to-day."

Van Hout's manly features quickly smoothed and, clasping the burgomaster's right hand in both his, he said joyously:

"Thanks, Herr Peter. And no offence; you know my hot temper. If the time seems long to your young wife, send her to mine."

"And mine," added Dousa. "It's a strange thing about those two little words 'wish' and 'ought.' The freer and better a man becomes, the more surely the first becomes the slave of the second."

"And yet, Herr Peter, I'll wager that your wife will confound the two words to-day, and think you have sorely transgressed against the 'ought.' These are bad times for the 'wish.'"

Van der Werff nodded assent, then briefly and firmly explained to his friends what he intended to disclose to the Prince.

The three men separated before the burgomaster's house.

"Tell the Prince," said Van Hout, on parting, "that we are prepared for the worst, will endure and dare it."

At these words Janus Dousa measured both his companions with his eyes, his lips quivered as they always did when any strong emotion filled his heart, and while his shrewd face beamed with joy and confidence, he exclaimed: "We three will hold out, we three will stand firm, the tyrant may break our necks, but he shall not bend them. Life, fortune, all that is dear and precious and useful to man, we will resign for the highest of blessings."

"Ay," said Van der Werff, loudly and earnestly, while Van Hout impetuously repeated: "Yes, yes, thrice yes."

The three men, so united in feeling, grasped each other's hands firmly for a moment. A silent vow bound them in this hour, and when Herr von Nordwyk and Van Hout turned in opposite directions, the citizens who met them thought their tall figures had grown taller still within the last few hours.

The burgomaster went to his wife's room without delay, but did not find her there.

She had gone out of the gate with his sister.

The maid-servant carried a light into his chamber; he followed her, examined the huge locks of his pistols, buckled on his old sword, put what he needed into his saddle-bags, then, with his tall figure drawn up to its full height, paced up and down the room, entirely absorbed in his task.

Herr von Nordwyk's chestnut horse was stamping on the pavement before the door, and Hesperus was rising above the roofs.

The door of the house now opened.

He went into the entry and found, not his wife, but Adrian, who had just returned home, told the boy to give his most loving remembrances to his mother, and say that he was obliged to seek the Prince on important business.

Old Trautchen had already washed and undressed little Elizabeth, and now brought him the child wrapped in a coverlet. He kissed the dear little face, which smiled at him out of its queer disguise, pressed his lips to Adrian's forehead, again told him to give his love to his mother, and

then rode down Marendorpstrasse.

Two women, coming from the Rheinsburger gate, met him just as he reached St. Stephen's cloister. He did not notice them, but the younger one pushed the kerchief back from her head, hastily grasped her companion's wrist, and exclaimed in a low tone:

"That was Peter!"

Barbara raised her head higher.

"It's lucky I'm not timid. Let go of my arm. Do you mean the horseman trotting past St. Ursula alley?"

"Yes, it is Peter."

"Nonsense, child! The bay has shorter legs than that tall camel; and Peter never rides out at this hour."

"But it was he."

"God forbid! At night a linden looks like a beechtree. It would be a pretty piece of business, if he didn't come home to-day."

The last words had escaped Barbara's lips against her will; for until then she had prudently feigned not to suspect that everything between Maria and her husband was not exactly as it ought to be, though she plainly perceived what was passing in the mind of her young sister-in-law.

She was a shrewd woman, with much experience of the world, who certainly did not undervalue her brother and his importance to the cause of their native land; nay, she went so far as to believe that, with the exception of the Prince of Orange, no man on earth would be more skilful than Peter in guiding the cause of freedom to a successful end; but she felt that her brother was not treating Maria justly, and being a fair-minded woman, silently took sides against the husband who neglected his wife.

Both walked side by side for a time in silence. At last the widow paused, saying:

"Perhaps the Prince has sent a messenger for Peter. In such times, after such blows, everything is possible. You might have seen correctly."

"It was surely he," replied Maria positively.

"Poor fellow!" said the other. "It must be a sad ride for him! Much honor, much hardship! You've no reason to despond, for your husband will return tomorrow or the day after; while I—look at me, Maria! I go through life stiff and straight, do my duty cheerfully; my cheeks are

rosy, my food has a relish, yet I've been obliged to resign what was dearest to me. I have endured my widowhood ten years; my daughter Gretchen has married, and I sent Cornelius myself to the Beggars of the Sea. Any hour may rob me of him, for his life is one of constant peril. What has a widow except her only son? And I gave him up for our country's cause! That is harder than to see a husband ride away for a few hours on the anniversary of his wedding-day. He certainly doesn't do it for his own pleasure!"

"Here we are at home," said Maria, raising the knocker.

Trautchen opened the door and, even before crossing the threshold, Barbara exclaimed:

"Is your master at home?"

The reply was in the negative, as she too now expected.

Adrian gave his message; Trautchen brought up the supper, but the conversation would not extend beyond "yes" and "no."

After Maria had hastily asked the blessing, she rose, and turning to Barbara, said:

"My head aches, I should like to go to bed."

"Then go to rest," replied the widow. "I'll sleep in the next room and leave the door open. In darkness and silence—whims come."

Maria kissed her sister-in-law with sincere affection, and lay down in bed; but she found no sleep, and tossed restlessly to and fro until near midnight.

Hearing Barbara cough in the next room, she sat up and asked:

"Sister-in-law, are you asleep?"

"No, child. Do you feel ill?"

"Not exactly; but I'm so anxious—horrible thoughts torment me."

Barbara instantly lighted a candle at the night-lamp, entered the chamber with it, and sat down on the edge of the bed.

Her heart ached as she gazed at the pretty young creature lying alone, full of sorrow, in the wide bed, unable to sleep from bitter grief.

Maria had never seemed to her so beautiful; resting in her white night-ropes on the snowy pillow, she looked like a sorrowing angel.

Barbara could not refrain from smoothing the hair back from the narrow forehead and kissing the flushed cheeks.

Maria gazed gratefully into her small, light-blue eyes and said beseechingly:

"I should like to ask you something."

"Well?"

"But you must honestly tell me the truth."

"That is asking a great deal!"

"I know you are sincere, but it is—"

"Speak freely."

"Was Peter happy with his first wife?"

"Yes, child, yes."

"And do you know this not only from him, but also from his dead wife, Eva?"

"Yes, sister-in-law, yes."

"And you can't be mistaken?"

"Not in this case certainly! But what puts such thoughts into your head? The Bible says: 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Now turn over and try to sleep."

Barbara went back to her room, but hours elapsed ere Maria found the slumber she sought.

CHAPTER V.

The next morning two horsemen, dressed in neat livery, were waiting before the door of a handsome House in Nobelstrasse, near the market-place. A third was leading two sturdy roan steeds up and down, and a stable-boy held by the bridle a gaily-bedizened, long maned pony. This was intended for the young negro lad, who stood in the door-way of the house and kept off the street-boys, who ventured to approach, by rolling his eyes and gnashing his white teeth at them.

"Where can they be?" said one of the mounted men: "The rain won't keep off long to-day."

"Certainly not," replied the other. "The sky is as grey as my old felt-hat, and, by the time we reach the forest, it will be pouring."

It's misting already."

"Such cold, damp weather is particularly disagreeable to me."

"It was pleasant yesterday."

"Button the flaps tighter over the pistol-holsters! The portmanteau behind the young master's saddle isn't exactly even. There! Did the cook fill the flask for you?"

"With brown Spanish wine. There it is."

"Then let it pour. When a fellow is wet inside, he can bear a great deal of moisture without."

"Lead the horses up to the door; I hear the gentlemen."

The man was not mistaken; for before his companion had succeeded in stopping the larger roan, the voices of his master, Herr Matanesse Van Wibisma, and his son, Nicolas, were heard in the wide entry.

Both were exchanging affectionate farewells with a young girl, whose voice sounded deeper than the halfgrown boy's.

As the older gentleman thrust his hand through the roan's mane and was already lifting his foot to put it in the stirrup, the young girl, who had remained in the entry, came out into the street, laid her hand on Wibisma's arm, and said:

"One word more, uncle, but to you alone."

The baron still held his horse's mane in his hand, exclaiming with a cordial smile:

"If only it isn't too heavy for the roan. A secret from beautiful lips has its weight."

While speaking, he bent his ear towards his niece, but she did not seem to have intended to whisper, for she approached no nearer and merely lowered her tone, saying in the Italian language:

"Please tell my father, that I won't stay here."

"Why, Henrica!"

"Tell him I won't do so under any circumstances."

"Your aunt won't let you go."

"In short, I won't stay."

"I'll deliver the message, but in somewhat milder terms, if agreeable to you."

"As you choose. Tell him, too, that I beg him to send for me. If he doesn't wish to enter this heretic's nest himself, for which I don't blame him in the least, he need only send horses or the carriage for me."

"And your reasons?"

"I won't weight your baggage still more heavily. Go, or the saddle will be wet before you ride off"

"Then I'm to tell Hoogstraten to expect a letter."

"No. Such things can't be written. Besides, it won't be necessary. Tell my father I won't stay with aunt, and want to go home. Good-bye, Nico. Your riding-boots and green cloth doublet are much more becoming than those silk fal-lals."

The young lady kissed her hand to the youth, who had already swung himself into the saddle, and hurried back to the house. Her uncle shrugged his shoulders, mounted the roan, wrapped the dark cloak closer around him, beckoned Nicolas to his side, and rode on with him in advance of the servants.

No word was exchanged between them, so long as their way led through the city, but outside the gate, Wibisma said:

"Henrica finds the time long in Leyden; she would like to go back to her father."

"It can't be very pleasant to stay with aunt," replied the youth.

"She is old and sick, and her life has been a joyless one."

"Yet she was beautiful. Few traces of it are visible, but her eyes are still like those in the portrait, and besides she is so rich."

"That doesn't give happiness."

"But why has she remained unmarried?" The baron shrugged his shoulders, and replied: "It certainly didn't suit the men."

"Then why didn't she go into a convent?"

"Who knows? Women's hearts are harder to understand than your Greek books. You'll learn that later. What were you saying to your aunt as I came up?"

"Why, just see," replied the boy, putting the bridle in his mouth, and drawing the glove from his left hand, "she slipped this ring on my finger."

"A splendid emerald! She doesn't usually like to part with such things."

"She first offered me another, saying she would give it to me to make amends for the thumps I received yesterday as a faithful follower of the king. Isn't it comical?"

"More than that, I should think."

"It was contrary to my nature to accept gifts for my bruises, and I hastily drew my hand back, saying the burgher lads had taken some home from me, and I wouldn't have the ring as a reward for that."

"Right, Nico, right."

"So she said too, put the little ring back in the box, found this one, and here it is."

"A valuable gem!" murmured the baron, thinking: "This gift is a good omen. The Hoogstratens and he are her nearest heirs, and if the silly girl doesn't stay with her, it might happen—"

But he found no time to finish these reflections, Nicolas interrupted them by saying:

"It's beginning to rain already. Don't the fogs on the meadows look like clouds fallen from the skies? I am cold."

"Draw your cloak closer."

"How it rains and hails! One would think it was winter. The water in the canals looks black, and yonder—see—what is that?"

A tavern stood beside the road, and just in front of it a single lofty elm towered towards the sky. Its trunk, bare as a mast, had grown straight up without separating into branches until it attained the height of a house. Spring had as yet lured no leaves from the boughs, but there were many objects to be seen in the bare top of the tree. A small flag, bearing the colors of the House of Orange, was fastened to one branch, from another hung a large doll, which at a distance strongly resembled a

man dressed in black, an old hat dangled from a third, and a fourth supported a piece of white pasteboard, on which might be read in large black letters, which the rain was already beginning to efface:

"Good luck to Orange, to the Spaniard death.
So Peter Quatgelat welcomes his guests."

This tree, with its motley adornments, offered a by no means pleasant spectacle, seen in the grey, cold, misty atmosphere of the rainy April morning.

Ravens had alighted beside the doll swaying to and fro in the wind, probably mistaking it for a man. They must have been by no means teachable birds, for during the years the Spaniards had ruled in Holland, the places of execution were never empty. They were screeching as if in anger, but still remained perched on the tree, which they probably mistook for a gibbet. The rest of the comical ornaments and the thought of the nimble adventurer, who must have climbed up to fasten them, formed a glaring and offensive contrast to the caricature of the gallows.

Yet Nicolas laughed loudly, as he perceived the queer objects in the top of the elm, and pointing upward, said:

"What kind of fruits are hanging there?"

But the next instant a chill ran down his back, for a raven perched on the black doll and pecked so fiercely at it with its hard beak, that bird and image swayed to and fro like a pendulum.

"What does this nonsense mean?" asked the baron, turning to the servant, a bold-looking fellow, who rode behind him.

"It's something like a tavern-sign," replied the latter. "Yesterday, when the sun was shining, it looked funny enough—but to-day—b-r-r-r—it's horrible."

The nobleman's eyes were not keen enough to read the inscription on the placard. When Nicolas read it aloud to him, he muttered an oath, then turned again to the servant, saying:

"And does this nonsense bring guests to the rascally host's tavern?"

"Yes, my lord, and 'pon my soul, it looked very comical yesterday, when the ravens were not to be seen; a fellow couldn't look at it without laughing. Half Leyden was there, and we went with the crowd. There was such an uproar on the grass-plot yonder. Dudeldum—Hubutt, Hubutt—Dudeldum—fiddles squeaking and bag-pipes droning as if they never would stop. The crazy throng shouted amidst the din; the noise still rings in my ears. There was no end to the games and dancing. The lads tossed their brown, blue and red-stockinged legs in the air, just as the fiddle

played—the coat-tails flew and, holding a girl clasped in the right arm and a mug of beer high over their heads till the foam spattered, the throng of men whirled round and round. There was as much screaming and rejoicing as if every butter-cup in the grass had been changed into a gold florin. But to-day—holy Florian—this is a rain!”

”It will do the things up there good,” exclaimed the baron. ”The tinder grows damp in such a torrent, or I’d take out my pistols and shoot the shabby liberty hat and motley tatters off the tree.”

”That was the dancing ground,” said the man, pointing to a patch of trampled grass.

”The people are possessed, perfectly possessed,” cried the baron, ”dancing and rejoicing to-day, and tomorrow the wind will blow the felt-hat and flag from the tree, and instead of the black puppet they themselves will come to the gallows. Steady roan, steady! The hail frightens the beasts. Unbuckle the portmanteau, Gerrit, and give your young master a blanket.”

”Yes, my lord. But wouldn’t it be better for you to go in here until the shower is over? Holy Florian!

”Just see that piece of ice in your horse’s mane! It’s as large as a pigeon’s egg. Two horses are already standing under the shed, and Quatgelat’s beer isn’t bad.” The baron glanced inquiringly at his son.

”Let us go in,” replied Nicolas; ”we shall get to the Hague early enough. See how poor Balthasar is shivering! Henrica says he’s a white boy painted; but if she could see how well he keeps his color in this weather, she would take it back.”

Herr Van Wibisma turned his dripping, smoking steed, frightened by the hail-stones, towards the house, and in a few minutes crossed the threshold of the inn with his son.

CHAPTER VI.

A current of warm air, redolent of beer and food, met the travellers as they entered the large, low room, dimly lighted by the tiny windows, scarcely more than loop-holes, pierced in two sides. The tap-room itself looked like the cabin of a ship. Ceiling and floor, chairs and tables, were made of the same dark-brown wood that covered the walls, along which beds were ranged like berths.

The host, with many bows, came forward to receive the aristocratic

guests, and led them to the fire-place, where huge pieces of peat were glimmering. The heat they sent forth answered several purposes at the same time. It warmed the air, lighted a portion of the room, which was very dark in rainy weather, and served to cook three fowl that, suspended from a thin iron bar over the fire, were already beginning to brown.

As the new guests approached the hearth, an old woman, who had been turning the spit, pushed a white cat from her lap and rose.

The landlord tossed on a bench several garments spread over the backs of two chairs to dry, and hung in their place the dripping cloaks of the baron and his son.

While the elder Wibisma was ordering something hot to drink for himself and servants, Nicolas led the black page to the fire.

The shivering boy crouched on the floor beside the ashes, and stretched now his soaked feet, shod in red morocco, and now his stiffened fingers to the blaze.

The father and son took their seats at a table, over which the maid-servant had spread a cloth. The baron was inclined to enter into conversation about the decorated tree with the landlord, an over-civil, pock-marked dwarf, whose clothes were precisely the same shade of brown as the wood in his tap-room; but refrained from doing so because two citizens of Leyden, one of whom was well known to him, sat at a short distance from his table, and he did not wish to be drawn into a quarrel in a place like this.

After Nicolas had also glanced around the tap-room, he touched his father, saying in a low tone:

"Did you notice the men yonder? The younger one—he's lifting the cover of the tankard now—is the organist who released me from the boys and gave me his cloak yesterday."

"The one yonder?" asked the nobleman. "A handsome young fellow. He might be taken for an artist or something of that kind. Here, landlord, who is the gentleman with brown hair and large eyes, talking to Allertssohn, the fencing-master?"

"It's Herr Wilhelm, younger son of old Herr Cornelius, Receiver General, a player or musician, as they call them."

"Eh, eh," cried the baron. "His father is one of my old Leyden acquaintances. He was a worthy, excellent man before the craze for liberty turned people's heads. The youth, too, has a face pleasant to look at.

"There is something pure about it—something—it's hard to say, something

–what do you think, Nico? Doesn't he look like our Saint Sebastian? Shall I speak to him and thank him for his kindness?"

The baron, without waiting for his son, whom he treated as an equal, to reply, rose to give expression to his friendly feelings towards the musician, but this laudable intention met with an unexpected obstacle.

The man, whom the baron had called the fencing-master Allertssohn, had just perceived that the "Glippers" cloaks were hanging by the fire, while his friend's and his own were flung on a bench. This fact seemed to greatly irritate the Leyden burgher; for as the baron rose, he pushed his own chair violently back, bent his muscular body forward, rested both arms on the edge of the table opposite to him and, with a jerking motion, turned his soldierly face sometimes towards the baron, and sometimes towards the landlord. At last he shouted loudly:

"Peter Quatgelat—you villain, you! What ails you, you, miserable hunchback!—Who gives you a right to toss our cloaks into a corner?"

"Yours, Captain," stammered the host, "were already—"

"Hold your tongue, you fawning knave!" thundered the other in so loud a tone and such excitement, that the long grey moustache on his upper lip shook, and the thick beard on his chin trembled. "Hold your tongue! We know better. Jove's thunder! Nobleman's cloaks are favored here. They're of Spanish cut. That exactly suits the Glippers' faces. Good Dutch cloth is thrown into the corner. Ho, ho, Brother Crooklegs, we'll put you on parade."

"Pray, most noble Captain—"

"I'll blow away your most noble, you worthless scamp, you arrant rascal! First come, first served, is the rule in Holland, and has been ever since the days of Adam and Eve. Prick up your ears, Crooklegs! If my 'most noble' cloak, and Herr Wilhelm's too, are not hanging in their old places before I count twenty, something will happen here that won't suit you. One-two-three—"

The landlord cast a timid, questioning glance at the nobleman, and as the latter shrugged his shoulders and said audibly: "There is probably room for more than two cloaks at the fire," Quatgelat took the Leyden guests' wraps from the bench and hung them on two chairs, which he pushed up to the mantel-piece.

While this was being done, the fencing-master slowly continued to count. By the time he reached twenty the landlord had finished his task, yet the irate captain still gave him no peace, but said:

"Now our reckoning, man. Wind and storm are far from pleasant, but I know even worse company. There's room enough at the fire for four

cloaks, and in Holland for all the animals in Noah's ark, except Spaniards and the allies of Spain. Deuce take it, all the bile in my liver is stirred. Come to the horses with me, Herr Wilhelm, or there'll be mischief."

The fencing-master, while uttering the last words, stared angrily at the nobleman with his prominent eyes, which even under ordinary circumstances, always looked as keen as if they had something marvellous to examine.

Wibisma pretended not to hear the provoking words, and, as the fencing-master left the room, walked calmly, with head erect, towards the musician, bowed courteously, and thanked him for the kindness he had shown his son the day before.

"You are not in the least indebted to me," replied Wilhelm Corneliussohn. "I helped the young nobleman, because it always has an ill look when numbers attack one."

"Then allow me to praise this opinion," replied the baron.

"Opinion," repeated the musician with a subtle smile, drawing a few notes on the table.

The baron watched his fingers silently a short time, then advanced nearer the young man, asking:

"Must everything now relate to political dissensions?"

"Yes," replied Wilhelm firmly, turning his face with a rapid movement towards the older man. "In these times 'yes,' twenty times 'yes.' You wouldn't do well to discuss opinions with me, Herr Matanesse."

"Every man," replied the nobleman, shrugging his shoulders, "every man of course believes his own opinion the right one, yet he ought to respect the views of those who think differently."

"No, my lord," cried the musician. "In these times there is but one opinion for us. I wish to share nothing, not even a drink at the table, with any man who has Holland blood, and feels differently. Excuse me, my lord; my travelling companion, as you have unfortunately learned, has an impatient temper and doesn't like to wait."

Wilhelm bowed distantly, waved his hand to Nicolas, approached the chimney-piece, took the half-dried cloaks on his arm, tossed a coin on the table and, holding in his hands a covered cage in which several birds were fluttering, left the room.

The baron gazed after him in silence. The simple words and the young man's departure aroused painful emotions. He believed he desired what

was right, yet at this moment a feeling stole over him that a stain rested on the cause he supported.

It is more endurable to be courted than avoided, and thus an expression of deep annoyance rested on the nobleman's pleasant features as he returned to his son.

Nicolas had not lost a single word uttered by the organist, and the blood left his ruddy cheeks as he was forced to see this man, whose appearance had especially won his young heart, turn his back upon his father as if he were a dishonorable man to be avoided.

The words, with which Janus Dousa had left him the day before, returned to his mind with great force, and when the baron again seated himself opposite him, the boy raised his eyes and said hesitatingly, but with touching earnestness and sincere anxiety:

"Father, what does that mean? Father—are they so wholly wrong, if they would rather be Hollanders than Spaniards?"

Wibisma looked at his son with surprise and displeasure, and because he felt his own firmness wavering, and a blustering word often does good service where there is lack of possibility or inclination to contend against reasons, he exclaimed more angrily than he had spoken to his son for years:

"Are you, too, beginning to relish the bait with which Orange lures simpletons? Another word of that kind, and I'll show you how malapert lads are treated. Here, landlord, what's the meaning of that nonsense on yonder tree?"

"The people, my lord, the Leyden fools are to blame for the mischief, not I. They decked the tree out in that ridiculous way, when the troops stationed in the city during the siege retired. I keep this house as a tenant of old Herr Van der Does, and dare not have any opinions of my own, for people must live, but, as truly as I hope for salvation, I'm loyal to King Philip."

"Until the Leyden burghers come out here again," replied Wibisma bitterly. "Did you keep this inn during the siege?"

"Yes, my lord, the Spaniards had no cause to complain of me, and if a poor man's services are not too insignificant for you, they are at your disposal."

"Ah! ha!" muttered the baron, gazing attentively at the landlord's disagreeable face, whose little eyes glittered very craftily, then turning to Nicolas, said:

"Go and watch the blackbirds in the window yonder a little while, my son,

I have something to say to the host."

The youth instantly obeyed and as, instead of looking at the birds, he gazed after the two enthusiastic supporters of Holland's liberty, who were riding along the road leading to Delft, remembered the simile of fetters that drag men down, and saw rising before his mental vision the glitter of the gold chain King Philip had sent his father, Nicolas involuntarily glanced towards him as he stood whispering eagerly with the landlord. Now he even laid his hand on his shoulder. Was it right for him to hold intercourse with a man whom he must despise at heart? Or was he—he shuddered, for the word "traitor;" which one of the school-boys had shouted in his ears during the quarrel before the church, returned to his memory.

When the rain grew less violent, the travellers left the inn. The baron allowed the hideous landlord to kiss his hand at parting, but Nicolas would not suffer him to touch his.

Few words were exchanged between father and son during the remainder of their ride to the Hague, but the musician and the fencing-master were less silent on the way to Delft.

Wilhelm had modestly, as beseemed the younger man, suggested that his companion had expressed his hostile feelings towards the nobleman too openly.

"True, perfectly true," replied Allertssohn, whom his friends called "Allerts." "Very true! Temper oh! temper! You don't suspect, Herr Wilhelm—But we'll let it pass."

"No, speak, Meister."

"You'll think no better of me, if I do."

"Then let us talk of something else."

"No, Wilhelm. I needn't be ashamed, no one will take me for a coward."

The musician laughed, exclaiming: "You a coward! How many Spaniards has your Brescian sword killed?"

"Wounded, wounded, sir, far oftener than killed," replied the other. "If the devil challenges me I shall ask: Foils, sir, or Spanish swords? But there's one person I do fear, and that's my best and at the same time my worst friend, a Netherlander, like yourself, the man who rides here beside you. Yes, when rage seizes upon me, when my beard begins to tremble, my small share of sense flies away as fast as your doves when you let them go. You don't know me, Wilhelm."

"Don't I? How often must one see you in command and visit you in the fencing-room?"

"Pooh, pooh—there I'm as quiet as the water in yonder ditch—but when anything goes against the grain, when—how shall I explain it to you, without similes?"

"Go on."

"For instance, when I am obliged to see a sycophant treated as if he were Sir Upright—"

"So that vexes you greatly?"

"Vexes? No! Then I grow as savage as a tiger, and I ought not to be so, I ought not. Roland, my foreman, probably likes—"

"Meister, Meister, your beard is beginning to tremble already!"

"What did the Glippers think, when their aristocratic cloaks—"

The landlord took yours and mine from the fire entirely on his own responsibility."

"I don't care! The crook-legged ape did it to honor the Spanish sycophant. It enraged me, it was intolerable."

"You didn't keep your wrath to yourself, and I was surprised to see how patiently the baron bore your insults."

"That's just it, that's it!" cried the fencing-master, while his beard began to twitch violently. "That's what drove me out of the tavern, that's why I took to my heels. That—that—Roland, my fore man."

"I don't understand you."

"Don't you, don't you? How should you; but I'll explain. When you're as old as I am, young man, you'll experience it too. There are few perfectly sound trees in the forest, few horses without a blemish, few swords without a stain, and scarcely a man who has passed his fortieth year that has not a worm in his breast. Some gnaw slightly, others torture with sharp fangs, and mine—mine.—Do you want to cast a glance in here?"

The fencing-master struck his broad chest as he uttered these words and, without waiting for his companion's reply, continued:

"You know me and my life, Herr Wilhelm. What do I do, what do I practise? Only chivalrous work."

"My life is based upon the sword. Do you know a better blade or surer hand than mine? Do my soldiers obey me? Have I spared my blood in fighting before the red walls and towers yonder? No, by my fore man Roland, no, no, a thousand times no."

"Who denies it, Meister Allerts? But tell me, what do you mean by your cry: Roland, my fore man?"

"Another time, Wilhelm; you mustn't interrupt me now. Hear my story about where the worm hides in me. So once more: What I do, the calling I follow, is knightly work, yet when a Wibisma, who learned how to use his sword from my father, treats me ill and stirs up my bile, if I should presume to challenge him, as would be my just right, what would he do? Laugh and ask: 'What will the passado cost, Fencing-master Allerts? Have you polished rapiers?' Perhaps he wouldn't even answer at all, and we saw just now how he acts. His glance slipped past me like an eel, and he had wax in his ears. Whether I reproach, or a cur yelps at him, is all the same to his lordship. If only a Renneberg or Brederode had been in my place just now, how quickly Wibisma's sword would have flown from its sheath, for he understands how to fight and is no coward. But I-I? Nobody would willingly allow himself to be struck in the face, yet so surely as my father was a brave man, even the worst insult could be more easily borne, than the feeling of being held in too slight esteem to be able to offer an affront. You see, Wilhelm, when the Glipper looked past me—"

"Your beard lost its calmness."

"It's all very well for you to jest, you don't know—"

"Yes, yes, Herr Allerts; I understand you perfectly."

"And do you also understand, why I took myself and my sword out of doors so quickly?"

"Perfectly; but please stop a moment with me now. The doves are fluttering so violently; they want air." The fencing-master stopped his steed, and while Wilhelm was removing the dripping cloth from the little cage that rested between him and his horse's neck, said:

"How can a man trouble himself about such gentle little creatures? If you want to diminish, in behalf of feathered folk, the time given to music, tame falcons, that's a knightly craft, and I can teach you."

"Let my doves alone," replied Wilhelm. "They are not so harmless as people suppose, and have done good service in many a war, which is certainly chivalrous pastime. Remember Haarlem. There, it's beginning to pour again. If my cloak were only not so short; I would like to cover the doves with it."

"You certainly look like Goliath in David's garments."

"It's my scholar's cloak; I put my other on young Wibisma's shoulders yesterday."

"The Spanish green-finch?"

"I told you about the boys' brawl."

"Yes, yes. And the monkey kept your cloak?"

"You came for me and wouldn't wait. They probably sent it back soon after our departure."

"And their lordships expect thanks because the young nobleman accepted it!"

"No, no; the baron expressed his gratitude."

"But that doesn't make your cape any longer. Take my cloak, Wilhelm. I've no doves to shelter, and my skin is thicker than yours."