



THE HAPPINESS  
OF E07390  
BEING RICH.

BY HENDRIK CONSCIENCE.

*With a ~~Life~~ <sup>Two Vols</sup> of the Author.*

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# LIFE OF CONSCIENCE.

## CHAPTER I.

ONE rainy Sunday afternoon, in the summer three years ago, in one of those curious inns of the Great Market of Brussels, whose interior reflects the imperishable Flemish characteristics of the exterior, a number of artists were assembled, if I remember rightly, to inaugurate a monument to the memory of the dramatic poet, Willem de Mol.

\*Here a passage is omitted as quite irrelevant.

The Flemish artists from all the country round Brussels had assembled, and while the procession formed in the market on this wet afternoon ; there was plenty of conversation between the drinking and smoking in the spacious saloon. I found myself quite by chance in this company, but I shall always remember with pleasure the moment when a friend of mine, a dramatic poet from Antwerp, walked up to me, and said, " Come, I will introduce you to Conscience." My friend led me to a slightly bent old man, who seemed still very vigorous. He is of medium height, with broad shoulders, and a remarkable mobility is visible in his open forehead and resolute face, as well as in all his features,

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\*Conscience has died since this was written—translator's note.



although this face is already wrinkled and hollowed at the temples by mental work. He has a fresh appearance, his greyish blue eyes, lively and deep, are in direct contradiction to the wrinkles by which his forehead is ennobled. Long silver hair, brushed back, and a grey well-trimmed beard complete this highly-respectable individual.

This soberly-dressed old man of sixty, seated on one chair, resting his elbow on the back of another which stood in front of him, sipped with relish from time to time the national brown beer. At first sight his appearance reminded me of our Flemish peasants, when deep in thought, or reckoning the profits of their harvest.

A child of about eight years old, with an arch merry look, stood close to the old man and caressed him. As I drew nearer, I caught certain tender words in the child's prattle, amongst them was "Grandfather," and the grandfather answered with even greater tenderness.

It was Conscience with his little grandson.

I was quickly at my ease and soon commenced a conversation. We chatted about literature, but chiefly occupied ourselves with reminiscences of poor Willem, a youth for whom the popular author had a great respect; and whose biography makes one of Conscience's works.

As we took leave of one another we agreed to meet again.

Some days later I remembered the friendly conversation I had had with the Flemish master, and felt it would be becoming in a young colleague to call upon the reformer of Flemish literature, before the people everywhere in our art-loving Flanders, feted the great man in a demonstration in which patriotic love and wise tact were blended.

I learned that he was in the country. For some

weeks I had been longing to breathe the fresh air of the country, the town oppressed me, I felt an ardent desire to contemplate that harmony of blue and green which is only monotonous to thy desecrators, O Nature! I craved only a few hours' respite.

I departed as a pilgrim, but of a different kind to Hal, a characteristic Flemish town which, although situated on Walloon borders, yet preserves the Flemish language, manners and traditions.

A warm thunder shower was falling when I started, and the heavy drops pattered hastily on the leaves, such showers as that which Goethe in his *Werther* calls "The lordly rain."

When I got out of the train at Hal, the sky was still overcast, but the landscape, as far as the lowering horizon, displayed that gentle melancholy which is one of the greatest charms of our Flemish scenery.

I drew in deep draughts of air as I exclaimed, "Air, more air."

Three bridges connect the banks of the Charleroi Canal with that of Zenne. I walked across. The river, on the Zenne side, is bordered by smiling banks. I then struck into a winding street with angular pavements, and the crowded, pointed gables of the fantastic past, free in form and attractive in colour, and which, even if they shock modern architects, still delight us, the faithful followers of Albert Durer.

The crier rang his bell, as I entered the great market, to announce a sale of potatoes. Peasants summoned before the magistrate awaited the opening of the session in front of the brick town-hall; a number of gossiping housewives for whom the "so it is said" is a superfluous recommendation loitered at the half-open doors.

I entered a little lane behind the statue of Servais,

and went a few paces to the left, not without catching a glimpse of the suffering Christ, whose bleeding body stands out sharply in the background against the chalky white of the famous church of our dear Lady. A few steps further the street widened, and led, by a steep declivity, to the fields. I was soon clear of the town. On the edge of the town, where the buildings are less pretentious, and are scattered like a troop of school children, lies the churchyard. A wrought chain fence, surmounted by a cross, surrounds it. Four roads unite. I left behind me, on the right, the road to St. Quinten's, Lennick; on the left, a footpath which runs between a cornfield and the churchyard wall; and took the paved road, which is bordered by poplars, oaks, and beeches. On either side of the road there is undulating country, displaying a harvest fully ripe. Five minutes later I reached a rose-coloured, straggling inn, with green shutters. Immediately in front there is an enclosure, in which noble lindens interweave their stout branches.

Old-fashioned tables and benches, planks nailed to stakes, driven into the ground, are placed there.

On the face of the building, on a line with the pavement, just above the pigeon-house I read:—

“For the refreshment of sportsmen. Geerts, dog-trainer.”

Lamme Geerts, as the natives called the master from his curious trade, lived here. The trainer was on a ladder, busily engaged in lifting sacks of grain from his loft into his barn. I went into the inn where everything showed signs of the spotless Flemish cleanliness. A boarder, one of Lamme's pupils, a splendid setter, a descendant of the Santone breed of bloodhounds with broad hanging lips and ears, came and rubbed itself against my legs, begging to be caressed. An old peasant woman with a

thoughtful rugged face, and a yellowish white bandkerchief round her head, set half a pint of delicious brown beer before me.

Another peasant entered, a dark handsome girl, as charming as she was estimable. She had a beautiful figure, and wore an amber-starred rose-coloured dress. She approached me while I was telling the old woman the object of my journey, and told me that Conscience had gone to Brussels, but would return in the evening. This was an unexpected annoyance, but it could not be helped. I would return another day, the walk alone was worth the trouble.

The narrator of simple love stories, the painter of Flemish country life had chosen his retreat well. Nothing could surpass its simplicity. A primitively furnished bedroom was shown me, in which there was an iron bed without curtains, a rough table, a couple of necessary chairs, nails driven here and there into the walls to serve as clothes pegs; there was no trace of a wash-hand stand, the young girl told me the master went out to the pump, a remnant of his soldier life. Not a single picture on the walls, nor a book on the table. Perhaps the latter were hidden. There was no trace of any of those things which are usually found in the dwellings of literary men. One could imagine Conscience seated at his table, gazing calmly at the landscape which spread itself out before his eyes with the animated scenes that inspire his stories. I grasped these details, like an American reporter, as I looked through the half-opened door whilst the young girl deposited a letter from me to the master on his table.

My guide, whom Conscience should depict, if he has not already done so, as one of those sympathetic heroines of his village idylls, led me to a summer-house outside, covered with thatch, which looked out on to the path leading to the town,

Conscience had chosen this as his favourite spot. He passed many hours gazing at the landscape spread out before him, with its undulating path bordered by a double row of ancient trees, and reaching to the town. The town itself is visible, only as an indistinguishable mass of buildings, from which rises the strange tower of the church of our dear Lady, drawing the attention of the artist to the town which the church protects, while he remembers the legends and mysteries connected with it. In the background there is a range of hills covered with the yellow green of the Flemish fields, and which are crowned at the summit, just at the point where they melt into the horizon, by sombre woods, standing out darkly against the pale blue of those skies, which the mists of the North never leave perfectly clear.

On either side are the harvest-covered fields. From time to time a waggon jolts over the stony road, the man cracks his whip or whistles one of those popular airs which are as monotonous and melancholy as a dirge; dogs bark, the cattle low in their stalls, the black peasant cap or the bright-coloured kerchief of a peasant woman, the collar of a blue blouse or of a jacket are seen here and there above the sea of golden ears, which the wind sways like the waves of the sea, whilst the proud tops of the poplars bend, and that musical rustling sweeps through their twigs, which the idler loves so much because it lulls him so softly to sleep.

If the master retires from the contemplation of these scenes of nature it is only that he may occupy himself with his note-book. Quires of blotting paper were spread out on the table of the summer-house. They contained the plants which the naturalist novelist (I shall not write the novelist naturalist) has dried, and which in order to protect from

the caprices of the wind, before leaving his treasures, he had been careful enough to cover with some red bricks as paper weights.

Nothing could be more peaceful, more rustic, than this retreat ; a swallow nestled fearlessly in a corner of the summer-house ; sometimes flying away, and fluttering about with lively chirps over the head of the lonely thinker, without disturbing itself whether a drama like that of Jacob Van Artevelde germinated in the thinker's brain. The swallows have chosen Lamme Geert's inn as their residence. In the entrance to the house, above the outer door, there was a second nest in which two of these pretty fortune-bringers lived, and the old peasant woman told me that for three successive springs the feathered family had been faithful to their birth-place.

I stayed long in the lonely country retreat of the master, and, sitting in the place which he loves, I thought of this remarkable man's career, the details of which had been related to me by his friends who were contemporary with him.

Some days later Conscience was kind enough to return my visit at Brussels, and when he discovered my intention of writing a biographical sketch of him, he related to me himself his long and interesting career. I give what I heard from him.

## CHAPTER II.

CONSCIENCE was born at Antwerp on the 3rd of December, 1812, in the Pomp Straat, near St. Andrew's Church. Pierre Conscience, his father, was a Frenchman, a native of Besançon, and had served in the Imperial Navy, where he had attained the rank of first mate on board the gunboat "Ville de Bordeaux."

During his sea life he was thrice captured by the English, and underwent a long and close imprisonment in the hulks. His freedom was eventually obtained by the exchange of prisoners of war. He then settled in Antwerp, where he was employed as assistant harbour master, or assistant inspector of recruits. Shortly afterwards he married a Flemish woman, and Hendrik Conscience was the issue of this marriage. The introductory verses in the "*Feuilles d'Automne*" might apply to the future author of the *Conscript* (De Loteling). Like the famous French poet, his father's countryman.

A helpless infant, speechless, pallid, frail ;  
Brought like a phantom from beyond the veil ;  
Deprived of all, except his mother's care.  
Like windswept reeds, his slender head was bowed  
Low in the cradle, as if in his shroud.

The family doctor, Mons. Tartare, a Frenchman, told his father it was questionable whether the child would live to reach his seventh year, but, should he pass that critical period, he would probably be spared to grow up. Hendrik was a delicate child till that time, scarcely able to use his limbs. He could not walk, even with the aid of crutches, and had to be carried from one place to another in a chair, propped up with pillows to support his puny frame.

He passed the long weary hours of the day at the

window, like a melancholy prisoner; watching the children at play in the streets, where boys of his own age were amusing themselves with all manner of pranks.

Two years after Hendrik's birth his mother presented Pierre Conscience with another son, who was as strong and healthy as his brother was delicate and weakly.

Mevrouw\* Conscience, faithful to that sublime law which all true mothers obey, made a favourite of the son, for whom her care was most needed. She was a large-hearted pious woman, and she told her darling wonderful tales of fairies and angels; describing an enchanted land to the boy, where God Himself dispensed cake and all sorts of dainties to His Elect little ones; a Paradise, where in the phraseology of Antwerp mothers, "people ate rice pudding with silver spoons." The little invalid, enraptured with this glowing picture, dreamed every night of a better and pleasanter world for helpless children; and, longing to fly away to it, looked each morning to see whether his beautiful angel wings of feathers and gauze had not sprouted during the night.

In the meantime Napoleon's power was shattered, and the assistant inspector was deprived of his occupation. His wife set up a grocer's shop, and he bought up old ships of which he sold the *debris*. He afterwards added a trade in books to this means of support. Little Hendrik soon found his greatest happiness in the forgotten or incomprehensible authors which were stowed away in a garret like dogs in a kennel, till Conscience should require the loose leaves to wrap up his wife's sugar and cloves.

At first Hendrick amused himself by looking at the pictures, of which he found large numbers in an old folio, printed at Amsterdam, in 1582, which contained

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\* Equivalent to "Mrs."



"The wonderful voyages of Jan Niewhof." But when he had learned to read, which he did very quickly, his mind became strong in proportion as his body was weak. He devoured with avidity the rejected literature. This reading combined with his mother's system of education, aided materially to develop that power of imagination which even more than their literary form renders his works so attractive.

Meanwhile Mons. Tartare's predictions, possibly contrary to his own expectations, were verified. After his seventh year, Hendrick, though still delicate, could use his limbs, and attend the Elementary School with his brothers; where his rapid progress soon placed him at the head of his companions.

Mevrouw Conscience died about this time.

Pierre Conscience to some extent shared the ideas of the author of "Emile." Like Rousseau he believed the bodily and mental development of children should be left to nature. He pursued this course with Hendrik and his brother; they were allowed full liberty in their games with the boys of the neighbourhood. In the evening the boys assembled before Conscience's house.

Sitting on the blue stone threshold of the door, with his companions gathered round this platform, this predestined child exerted his creative faculties in the invention of long local stories, and bewitched his audience. The adventures of "Long Wapper," the wicked spirit who slinks through the Antwerp streets, were the chief subjects of his narratives. Every time they were lengthened by fresh incidents added by the narrator.

Dramatic art also exerted its fascination on the mind of Conscience.

The "Sinjoors" of the old stamp, or Antwerp artists enamoured of the picturesque who see regret-

fully the demolition of ancient monuments, bizarre street corners, popular manners and traditions; describe with full and interesting details the "poesjenelle kelders," or the subterranean marionette theatres; where the people from St. Andrew's parish and the Spanish labyrinth of the harbour treated themselves for halfpenny to the excitement of a tragedy or the merriment of a comedy.

One of these cellars still exists, if I remember rightly, near the Fish Market, at the foot of one of those sloping streets bordered by rows of dilapidated gabled houses, and by the nine coloured pillared arcades of the stately "Butcher's Hall" one of the purest and best preserved types of the architecture of the Flemish renaissance.

Some years ago, four or five of us wandering carelessly through this quarter, the most curious in the town, had our attention attracted by a strange hum, accompanied by enthusiastic cries, which appeared to rise from the ground under our feet. We noticed a yawning cavity leading into a cellar, which opened level with the ground. We made our way in, and went down about ten steps. Darkness surrounded us. In the background a faint light, resembling a sepulchral lamp, flickered. What catacomb had we entered?

The noise and the stamping of feet explained the nature of the place more than the mysterious light. We found ourselves suddenly in a subterranean chamber, shaped like a half-moon and built as a tunnel. Small benches, placed in tiers at the back, were crowded with street urchins in three-cornered caps and short blouses, with seamen in woollen jackets, and with fishwives and mussel sellers.

The latter were bare-headed, woollen shawls in the form of an ace of spades covering their broad backs,

Some lamps, sputtering with the damp, and suspended from the roof, threw a faint light over the assembly. A rancid odour of street victuals, such as hard boiled eggs, sausages, herrings, and shrimps mingled sickly with the acrid smoke from the short pipes, and floated over the people in the grey mist caused by their breath.

In the foreground a rude stage was erected with tallow candles as footlights. On this stage, with its primitive scenes, there are most wonderful puppets. They are made of wood, but their colour has long been indistinguishable; dressed in the most miserable rags, they wander across the stage, play all kinds of pranks, quarrel, scold, give each other boxes on the ear, fall down, and spring up. Suspended to the perfectly visible wire which moves them, their antics resemble the struggles of a man who is being hanged.

These puppets are emperors, bishops, citizens, noblemen, heroes, victims, or traitors. The text of the drama is a strange medley of speeches altered from some melodramas, and incidents in everyday life; seaman's oaths alternate in the mouth of their heroes with long-winded speeches, delivered in a swaggering manner.

There are the most startling anachronisms both in dress and conversation, but the audience does not object. The *denouement* of a skilful intrigue is shortened or protracted in accordance with the public voice, and, above all, according to its favourable reception. And what applause greets the authors and the actors! What harmony between the stage and the audience! What tears, what love, what sympathy, and what rage! Sometimes the cries drown the voices of the actors. Rossi, interpreting Shakespeare, does not receive a tithe of such applause; but the spectator has reached the

height of his ambition when, by paying a few extra halfpence, as we did, he can obtain a position from which he gets a view behind the scenes.

There, behind the planks of the stage, are the spirits, the motive powers of the puppets.

These, for the most part, are good fellows enough. Harbour men, whose business it is to unlade ships, or old sailors, who have a smattering of historical and literary knowledge, combined with a Hoffmanish imagination and a Southern sense of the ludicrous.

They are solely responsible for the composition, scenic arrangements, words, and gestures. They are often obliged to represent several different persons.

The perspiration pours down them, and their voices grow hoarse as they change from the falsetto of childhood to the voice of the Emperor Chilperic; from the soprano of Geneviève de Brabant, to the stammering of a traitor; to the baritone of the avenger, to the representation of a clown or the groans of a ghost. They are required to represent all periods of life.

The spectacle of the public itself, seen from the primitive stage, is a hundred times more interesting than the puppets or the witty speeches of the dramatic company.

Etchings from Goya's *Capriciero* alone can convey any true conception of this rough characteristic crowd of heads standing out in rude relief against the darkness, whilst here and there immovable faces, with staring eyes and open mouths, may be seen by the ruddy glare of the lamps across the thick mist, awaiting the climax in breathless anxiety.

The repertorium of this strange stage consists of improvisations more or less witty, or of old melodramas, which the impresario learns by heart and

transmits to his successor; pieces to which the imaginations of the interpreters behind the screen constantly add the most incongruous digressions.

Local incidents, with which the piece must be interlarded, have to be remodelled every year. It is easy to insert lampoons on current events in the plot of an historical drama. Charles V. soliloquises on the action and administration of the local municipal council, or sings his serenade to some air in vogue amongst the harbour folk. The greatest latitude is allowed to the puppets' wire-pullers.

They hasten the *denouement*, or even cut suddenly short the plot with some frightful rubbish, a method resembling Alexandr's treatment of the Gordian knot; such barefaced audacity is displayed that the audience is convulsed with laughter, and thus disarmed disperses without a murmur. The drama on the evening of our visit had concluded in a similar manner, but it was protracted in our honour. The instant we rose to go, the manager, the prompter, and the machinist, began packing up preparatory to taking their departure, as if they had only been awaiting this signal, and the Grand Duke of Austria who was on the stage, and had hitherto listened respectfully to the solemn exhortations of his father, the Emperor of Tartary; rudely interrupted this powerful potentate by remarking in the most uncere- monious manner.

"Look here old fellow, let's go and have a drink together."

The monarch, so far from chastising his irreverent son, accepted the proposal. The candles were blown out, and the greasy curtain fell, whilst the cellar at length disgorged its suffocating mist, with its picturesque visitors in crowds into the streets, where they thronged and pushed on all sides, emitting noises, such as Noah might have heard in his ark.

These "poesjenellen kelders" were frequented by the burger class in Conscience's youth.

Undoubtedly, the future author of the "Lion of Flanders" (*De Leeuw van Vlaanderen*) attended these theatres regularly for two years.

In the vivid pages of his memoirs he has preserved imperishably his reminiscences.

If the comrades of Conscience acknowledged, as a rule, the supremacy which a lofty intellect exerts over commonplace beings, at times they made him feel the crushing weight of bodily strength. In fights he received blows without returning them, in spite of his father's advice, who, being a sea-wolf, did not understand this Christian resignation. Conscience never became angry when struck. This was not due to cowardice in the boy, but to a feeling of reverence for man, the strong man, for the strength of his muscles. Although the timid boy, with blackened eyes and bloody nose, would not have challenged his opponent to a renewed fight, yet he was not afraid to swim the Scheldt, in the heaviest snow-storm, in the most dangerous currents and whirlwinds; to venture on the ice, when no other skater dared follow him; to climb the highest trees, where he clung to the top branches, too weak to bear him, with the audacity of a squirrel.

Conscience has himself described these whimsical peculiarities of his character in the following passage of his unpublished memoirs. "Although I have partially freed myself from the fear of man in later years, I feel it return instinctively at times, and it is then necessary to exercise a certain amount of determination to conquer it. It is a law of nature that we never lose our childish identity; the "I," if this word is used to express individual character, is only a collective product of impressions received in our earliest years, and, although education may modify

the outward man, the child lives for ever in him."

Conscience was ten years old when his father decided to live in the country; in a lonely spot, about a mile from the old wall of Antwerp. Pierre Conscience built a sort of hermitage known as the "Green Corner," a cross between a house and a ship, made of pieces of wreckage and old wood of ship, and resembling Peggotty's house described by Dickens in "David Copperfield."

The "Green Corner" is no longer standing, its ruins have vanished as completely as the fields which inclosed it. The tilled land, the sombre lanes with their thick foliage have given place to the all-absorbing town; dense blocks of houses, four stories high, looking upon thronged and busy streets occupy the place, from which every trace of the luxuriant pastures and shady groups of trees have disappeared; and the shrill whistle of the trains, the rattle of wheels over the road, and sometimes the roaring of the lions from the neighbouring Zoological Gardens replace the quiet, the rest of that refuge where some of the novelist's happiest years were passed.

The warm childish love of nature, so strongly marked in all his looks, was first aroused there. More than ever left to himself, the country's austere beauty, made a deep impression on him. The melancholy charm of Flemish landscapes was indelibly imprinted on his dreamy nature. He passed his days in naïve, rapture and delight. Each morning he found fresh food for wonderment; the clear air, impregnated with balmy odours, the awakening of the choir of birds, the budding flowers, the expansion of the blossoms, the appearance of the leaves; the buzzing of the insects and all the varied sounds of the wind, sweeping the boughs like harp strings. All these impressions made Conscience the gentle poet,

the peace-loving dreamer, and the sincere believer, so attractive, so sympathetic, even if he does not always convince. This overpowering sensibility to nature, felt with rapture by a delicate, virginal soul, open to all noble outward influences, was developed at a future time in moving idylls. Conscience created later the "Conscript," "Mother Job," "Master Gansendock," "The Plague of the Village," and many other most exquisite stories from the material of these pure tender country idylls.

### CHAPTER III.

THREE years passed in this apparent idleness, destined to bear so much fruit hereafter.

One day, Pierre Conscience, who, unlike his son, was insensible to the mysterious and invisible spirit of the country, and had conceived a dislike to solitude, married again.

The Green Corner was sold. The family went to live at Borgerhout. The children of the second marriage came so fast that in spite of his wife's economy the exertions of the quondam sailor were inadequate to fill their little hungry mouths.

It was necessary for the elder children to choose a trade. It was decided that Hendrik the learned one, the great reader, should be a schoolmaster, and his stronger brother should be a joiner.

There was in Borgerhout, at that time, an institution, at the head of which there was a clever master named Verkammen.

After Hendrik had obtained the necessary quali-



cations, he was appointed as assistant master to an elementary class.

The learned master soon noticed his assistant's great application, and gave him lessons in English, the study of which, Conscience continued later.

From Mons. Verkammen's school he went to that of Mons. Schramm, where he mastered French, then as assistant master, to Mons. Delin's college, a famous school at Antwerp, intended only for the sons of the upper classes. Hendrik was then 16. The memorable events of 1830, with their dramatic catastrophe and their restless vicissitudes, in which Hendrik took an active part, were approaching.

Conscience has sketched the share he took in all these fluctuations in a very important work, published under the title of "The Revolution of 1830," from his unpublished memoirs. He abandoned his mastership at Delin College at the first rumour of war.

The incongruity between his sweet timid character, his peaceful instincts, to which I have alluded, and the warlike career of a soldier, which the young master had adopted in a moment of enthusiasm is related in each page of this narrative with much candour and good humour. On the 30th of November, 1830, at Turnhout, Conscience was appointed "fourier"\* to the 3rd Company of the 3rd Battalion of Niellon Jagers. He fell ill, and whilst his company continued their marches and counter-marches, he lingered, furnished with a billet in the village of Baelen.

It was a cold winter's night, and all the doors in the village were closed to the poor Belgian. A faint light glimmering in the distance led him to the hut of a poor man, who, moved to pity by the youth, and

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\* A term nearly equivalent to our commissariat sergeant

sickly appearance of the volunteer, gave him shelter and nursed him with the greatest care.

The hut was inhabited by the peasant and his wife and daughter; the latter was about 17. Her heart was filled with pity for the poor Belgian, and, in the words of the hero of this incident: "She regarded me with such tender sympathy that her soft glance sufficed to comfort my heart and to encourage me."

Conscience remained about ten days with these kind people. Once freed from the fever which had attacked him before his arrival at Baelen, he passed the time of his convalescence generally sitting by the hearth, Betteken, his nurse, sitting by his side; and the simple soldier, under the influence of her fresh cheeks and large blue eyes, often secretly wished "God had made him her brother."

In the evenings the "little fourier," as his comrades in the regiment called him, remembered his old talent for story-telling, and, as in past years, on his father's threshold, he had held entranced his audience of street boys, now he roused the curiosity and interest of the humble peasants.

How Betteken enjoyed it! "Her whole soul seemed to look out of her large eyes as she listened," said Conscience. "I felt my powers redouble under the influence of her heavenly glance, and I became a poet by the expanding of a feeling hitherto unknown to me."

Betteken was very happy with "our Belgian," as she called him, in accordance with the Flemish custom, in which the pronoun is used to denote ties of family or affection, when this rustic picture was destroyed by the advent of a corporal, who came to tell the "fourier" that the regiment was leaving. Betteken's friend must rejoin his company at Gheel or at Moll.

No more tales were told that evening: Betteken

cried. Then came the sad parting. The kind-hearted girl packed ham sandwiches and some hard-boiled eggs in "our Belgian's" knapsack. They said good-bye, and whilst the regiment marched past "the little fourier" looked up and saw poor Betteken leaning against the hut, crying and sobbing, her head buried in her apron.

"That day," relates Conscience, "I ate the hard-boiled eggs and one of the sandwiches she had given me, with a beating heart; the other sandwich I put away as a keepsake in my knapsack. I kept it for months till it was reduced to crumbs." The image of the gentle peasant girl remained longer in his memory, but at last it disappeared as effectually as the crumbled sandwich. Sixteen years later, Conscience returned to the village of Baelen. The cottage where the sick Belgian had been so kindly entertained had disappeared. There was no trace of the young girl or her parents. The villagers scarcely even remembered that a peasant's hut had stood there. So ended his first romance.

Conscience's wanderings in the country lasted till 1831. They exercised a decisive influence on the mind of the novelist. It was his sojourn in the country during his volunteer service, and not the later excursions, which gave him an insight into the strange beauties of nature.

The young soldier gathered, in these solitudes, impressions which were interpreted later by the pen of a poet. In the country, those thoughts which had been sown in the "Green Corner," sprang up to maturity.

Conscience learned to know the manners and customs of the Flemish peasantry. He identified himself with their habits, and discovered the elevation of their character under the stern, mysterious melancholy manner which repels a superficial

observer. He studied them in their own homes, sitting with them at their rude table, crossing himself like his pious, believing hosts, before dipping his iron fork into the baked clay dish, filled with steaming potatoes, when his turn came. He went to the fields with them and helped the young men in their occupations; at church he kneeled beside them, and in the evenings, he sat by the hearth and told them the tales which had so often delighted his friend Betteken at Baelen. And when he was transferred to other quarters, the children cried bitterly.

The second period of Conscience's military life was more painful. The little "fourier," petted by his comrades and protected by his officers, particularly by the captain of his company, and adored by the people of the villages to which the chances of war led him; was about to undergo a rude experience. After the battle of Louvain the Niellon regiment was reorganised.

There was some talk of promoting Conscience to the rank of serjeant-major. But here again his physical weakness was an obstacle. The candidate was only nineteen, thin, and delicate, and there was, as he himself acknowledges, "a sort of childishness" in his appearance which made him look much younger than he really was.

In spite of his other merits, and of his undoubted ability, contrary to the general expectation, the poor boy was not promoted, he looked too much like a child. As if to disgust him utterly with military life, he was transferred to another company where no one knew him. The captain was a brave man, but surly, and was rather brutal than ill-intentioned.

Conscience with his sensitive nature, suffered keenly under his new superior, to whom the volunteer, timid as a girl, was a complete enigma. The

officer spared him no humiliations or trials until that day, when Conscience, weary of the persecutions of his comrades, who were glad to ingratiate themselves with their superior by annoying one of their own number, showed at last that he was not the soft cowardly being his weakness suggested.

Amongst those who persecuted him most relentlessly was a gigantic serjeant, who was endowed with unusual strength. A quarrel arose between Conscience and this bully one day over some insignificant detail connected with the service. Hendrik received a blow. The captain troubled himself no further with the matter than to send him to the guard-house. What was the youth's terror when on entering the prison he found himself face to face with his enemy who shared his captivity.

The serjeant began to beat him soundly, shook him repeatedly like a bundle of rags, and after some hours' respite granted to his victim, the torture recommenced.

"Receiving an usually hard blow, I cried out," says the author of the 'Conscript.' "The conviction that my last hour had come, threw me into such a state of despair, that it bordered on frenzy and worked a complete change in me. Transported with rage, I began to defend myself; I hit out with my fist, I bit, I tore, I scratched, like some weak animal driven to bay by the fear of impending death."

This conduct struck the serjeant so much that he paused, bloody, and, perhaps, somewhat exhausted, astonished at this revelation of the lion in sheep's clothing, and proposed a truce.

He offered to settle the matter with Conscience on the following day, and that a duel should decide who must surrender. Conscience declared it was a matter of indifference to him, but he advised his

enemy not to touch him again, even with the tip of his finger.

"For once I had held my ground with a man, who was as strong as a giant, and I had conquered him. Courage then was a quality which could supply the place of bodily strength. These considerations filled me with joy and courage. From henceforth I would never again allow myself to be insulted."

The duel did not take place, although Conscience persisted to the last in his warlike bearing. Even on the ground, when his enemy proposed to allow the matter to drop, he refused to conclude the quarrel without recourse to pistols. Finally, the aggressor apologized, and owned he had been mistaken in his estimation of the "fourier;" and, on this Conscience professed himself satisfied.

Conscience always suspected the captain of having contrived the quarrel. As a matter of fact, from that time the officer treated him with more civility, and even showed him marks of friendship and esteem.

In 1834, when Conscience had returned on leave to see his parents, he made the acquaintance of a Mons. Jan Delaet, who was engaged in literature. At that time the Flemish language was not used in the literary world. The rising generation of the Belgic school tried their strength in more or less happy imitations of the productions of the great French romantic movement, which made its influence felt in all branches of art.

A crowd of enthusiastic painters, even more arbitrary than the first set of poets, transferred the stories of knights and heroes, borrowed from chronicles of the middle ages, to their canvas.

A paper called "*L'Artiste*" appeared at Antwerp about this time. One number fell into the hands of the "fourier" on leave, and, after reading a sonnet

in it, he formed the resolution of writing some French verses. His first attempt was a monstrosity, from a literary point of view. Mons. Jan Delact did not conceal its faults from Conscience, but he recognized the stamp of genius in the formless verses, that subtle indefinable essence, without which there may be rhymers, but not poets, that genius which constitutes the difference between Corneille and Boileau.

At Venlo, where his regiment was stationed, Conscience threw himself heart and soul into literature. He always wrote in French. He composed an operetta, which was performed at Dendermonde before the soldiers, and which won the applause of the field officers and the old soldiers, but it was reconnoitring on unknown ground.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE 26th of May, 1836, Conscience returned once more to his citizen life. His volunteer service having expired he returned to the bosom of his family, at Antwerp, where he frequented the society of the artists and authors whom he had known previously. He made friends with Theodore van Ryswyck, the popular poet of Antwerp, one of the most original and genial students of Dutch literature. Van Ryswyck induced Conscience to offer himself to the "Olive Branch."

The "Olive Branch" was a literary circle, formed on the model of the old society of rhetoricians, but composed of the most ardent supporters of the new culture. It represented the Flemish School in its best and noblest aspects. It was like the refuge of

Hugo ; an assembly of the brave apostles of liberty in art ; all were fired with the desire for battle, and if all did not possess the sacred fire in equal measure, yet each was ready to attack the high priest of romantic art and to free themselves from the ancient formulas.

Conscience asked nothing better than to form part of this ardent, hot-headed fraternity. But prior to admission, the candidate must, if an artist, submit a picture, if an author, a specimen in prose or poetry ; to the judgment of the youthful tribunal, and the admission or rejection of the candidate depended entirely on the merit of his work. Conscience's literary productions at this time were meagre, and he did not conceal the fact.

The Flemish language, the mother tongue which, disowned with a certain affectation by the middle classes, rendered odious both by the bombastic and tedious authors of this period, and by the triviality and coarseness of old writers was abandoned to the uneducated as a vile patois. At this memorable epoch of 1830 amongst these long-haired knights, these Don Quixotes of twenty always ready to break a lance for the disinherited and oppressed children of nature ; Flemish found a sympathy somewhat vague but only waiting a favourable opportunity to be declared as the language of the people by its champions. An event occurred which provided the opportunity. The miserable, disinherited Flemish language was to undergo a complete reformation. I give the account of it in Conscience's own words.

“One day I sat alone in my father's garden, reading a book of Guicciardini's called ‘A description of the Netherlands.’ As the subject of my admission to the Olive Branch occupied all my thoughts, I hoped in this historical work to find materials for a subject. I happened to come across the account of



Horse and the Olive Branch, it was not the less struck by the originality of his creation.

This work was published in 1837. I possess a copy of the first edition. It is illustrated by inartistic romantic pictures, drawn by his friends, the artists.

Such a copy of the *Wonderjaar* at the present day would fetch from twenty to thirty francs. These first editions are the more eagerly sought after by bookworms, on account of the modifications and erasures made by Conscience in the later ones.

The author is severely censured for these alterations. He is accused of extirpating the noble sentiments of his youth to make his books sell; that he, the admirer of the Gueux of the XVI Century, had betrayed his old heroes and had become a tool of the Jesuits.

I hesitated to touch on this much vexed question in my intercourse with the gifted novelist. He, himself, explained, unasked, the reason.

It is evident it is not my place here to decide whether he was right or wrong. My task is limited to his biography and a literary review. It is chiefly as an author I studied Conscience, because it is in this character he is so widely known.

I give, in Conscience's own words, the account of the change in his literary career, which has occasioned so much dispute since the appearance of his first volume. "The popularity which the *Wonderjaar* enjoyed incited me to begin a new historical novel. My father, as a Frenchman, had seen with annoyance my entrance into the Flemish literary movement. That I, the son of a Frenchman, almost a Frenchman myself, should write in any other language than that of Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo! My father forgot, however, that my mother was a Fleming, that I had been reared in a Flemish country, and had grown up with Flemings.

He recurred so often to this subject, and reproached me so persistently and bitterly for my sympathies, that I left my home at last to go and live in the 'King of Spain,' in the St. Willebroed's quarter. I made my decision on the 10th of February, 1837.

"Destitute of means, I do not know what would have become of me if Wappers, the artist, who took an interest in my affairs, and was always my friend and most affectionate benefactor, had not procured me a post in the provincial government.

"During the day I added up column after column of figures, studied accounts and law reports, but at night I returned to my beloved occupation. The success of the *Wonderjaar* had encouraged me, and I often borrowed from my time of rest till the small hours, the necessary leisure for writing a fresh book. I had collected a bundle of prose and verse impregnated with a distinctly romantic tendency the same year as the *Wonderjaar* appeared. I wrote them in one year. In spite of all the praises and good wishes which had fallen to my share on the appearance of this work, I could not support myself at all by literature. Without my post as clerk I should have perished of want. In fact, I was nineteen francs in debt to my printer after the publication of of the 'Lion of Flanders.'

"My friend Wappers took much trouble with my affairs, and exerted his influence with Leopold I. to procure me something additional.

"In the meantime there were political troubles in the country. The treaty of 24 Articles was submitted for approbation to the Council Hall of the States. The Belgians, who had joined the new state administration, directed their anxious eyes to Brussels. Would the land lend itself to the division which the Great Powers imposed on it as a condition

of existence. In the same way physicians predict death to cancer patients unless they will consent to the removal of the portion of the body in which it exists. But there was this difference with Belgium, that it was in good health, and the two portions of which it was to be deprived were the most healthy and firmly attached to the body.

“I will confine myself to saying that the Orange party at Antwerp numbered many adherents, specially amongst the artizans. What was more, the members of the Common Council were themselves ill-concealed friends to Holland.

“With regard to the young men, the groups of artists and authors to which I belonged, and the lower classes in Antwerp, they were all ardent patriots.

“A glowing speech against the 24 Articles which I delivered in the Saal der Variete's, had unexpectedly very serious consequences, for my hasty words so excited the audience that a number of young people after the meeting broke the windows of Mons. Legrelle, Burgomaster of Antwerp, whilst they sang the Brabançonne. Then they danced a patriotic sarabande round the tree of Liberty.

“The treaty was confirmed in spite of this demonstration; it was inevitable.

“My Belgian sympathies, and more especially the reckless manner in which I had shown them, made me many enemies. From that time every means were used to discourage me and disgust me with life. I was exposed to secret persecutions, to indirect plots. My post with the provincial government was untenable, so that at last I resigned the 500 francs salary, which was then my only means of subsistence. I dared no longer hope for success in literature. I doubted my own talent, and had no prospect of reward in my career as an author; I

foresaw only a problematic success after my death, and all that awaited me was a miserable bed in the hospital.

"An occurrence diverted me entirely from my profession. One evening I sat miserably in an inn at Borgerhout, drinking my glass of barley beer. My thoughts were confused and sunk in a brown study. I took no notice of the drinkers and card-players sitting round me.

"Yet, suddenly, my attention was drawn to a man seated immediately in front of me, whose eyes were persistently fixed on me, wearing an expression that puzzled me. I paid for my glass and went out, the unknown following me. When I had got into the street, and had gone some steps, I noticed this. I turned a corner and struck into another street. This mysterious person did the same. At last, puzzled, and with some mental disturbance, I stood still a second time. The unknown looked round to see if he was unobserved, and then coming close to me, whispered,

"Do not be afraid, I am your friend. There are designs against you. Walk straight on—let me give you a piece of good advice. Do not go out in the evening, you are followed, and your life is sought."

He hastened away without giving me time to thank him. My kind friend was a police agent.

## CHAPTER V.

"I was greatly agitated by this communication, which, owing to my excessive nervous sensibility, created in me an aversion to fame and popularity.

"I resolved to devote myself to manual labour, to

earn my bread like a workman, and to retire completely from the movement.

"With this end in view, I went to one of my friends, a nursery gardener, named Van Geert, and asked him to give me the first vacant place in his establishment.

"At first he thought I had taken leave of my senses, since, impelled by love of literature, I had given up my post under the provincial government; and now came begging for a situation as gardener!

"Nothing, however, was more seriously meant, and at last Van Geert saw I was in earnest.

"It shall be as you wish," he said. From that time I worked in the garden like a common labourer, dressed in a blue blouse and *sabots*, or making use of my elegant penmanship, the remnants of my post as master, I wrote tasteful labels so as to show off the beauties of my master's plants.

"The latter treated me with much consideration and tried to lighten my work, but I had taken it up seriously, and made it a point of honour to earn my stipend. I got up before daybreak with the other under-gardeners, and worked as steadily as my comrades with the spade and watering-pot.

"But I had miscalculated my strength when I broke with literature, my troublesome and capricious mistress. A sort of reconciliation took place between us. I rehearsed long impromptu speeches as I wandered through my master's greenhouses, or composed soliloquies suitable to all conditions of society whilst at my work.

"An event occurred which induced me to return to my profession.

"Van Bree died in the winter of 1839. The young students of the Antwerp Academy who had discovered me in my solitude, sent some of their

number to request me in their name to make a funeral oration in Flemish at the grave of their director. They told me the burgomaster Legrelle wished to suppress all signs of mourning. Only officials were to speak at the cemetery. At first I refused to re-enter the regions of strife, and to rouse again all the old enmity, but my refusal was only half-hearted. My friends gained their point, and Mons. Van Geert gave me permission to go. On the day of the funeral, when all the ceremonies of interment were completed, and the officials standing round the grave were preparing to go home, all at once a number of young men issued from the crowd and formed a circle round the grave. I, in the centre of this circle of friends, who were determined to defend me against all attacks, began an almost impromptu oration which nevertheless was filled with emotion. The words welled up out of my heart.

“ I began my discourse with a gesture full of authority and respect for the lamented professor. I flung my hat on the ground, and, in spite of the bitterly cold weather, those who had been about to depart with one accord followed my example, and stood uncovered. Then I spoke, emotion made my cheeks pale, and my hands trembled with an excitement which was soon communicated to the audience, my comrades sobbed, and the eyes of the bystanders were filled with tears. Only my voice was audible, sobs rounding the periods of my harangue.

“ It is impossible to describe to you the sensation my speech created. A reaction took place in my favour. M. Legrelle and his colleagues, overcome by the persuasive tone of my voice, forgot their enmity to the enthusiastic speaker of the ‘ meeting.’ The *Procureur*, a commercial paper, which had always shown itself inimical to my literary efforts, was disarmed by the same blow and — an un-

heard-of thing, my speech was reproduced in the afternoon of the same day, amongst the leading articles. My friends from the Academy were not behindhand, they invited me that evening to a splendid supper at a tavern in the Beurzen Straat.

Even if I had wished now to persevere in my misanthropic course and the pursuit of an active life, I should not have been permitted. The same influence which had formerly worked against me, now exerted itself in my interests. Government commissioned Mons. van Geert's gardener to write a history of Belgium. An annual sum of 1,000 francs was granted me for this important undertaking, and during my researches.

“A short time afterwards Heer Wappers, my benefactor, who was director of the Royal Academy at Antwerp, offered me the post of clerk to the establishment. The Reubens festival of 1840 also brought me in some advantages. I was put on the staff of the *Album* to write an account of the ceremonies during this commemoration.”

From this time Hendrik Conscience's work was mapped out for him. He remained at Antwerp till Baron Wappers resigned the directorship of the Academy, in consequence of political complications of which Conscience gave me an account, but which belongs to too recent a period for calm, impartial judgment.

In 1854, the famous novelist gave up his post as clerk. In 1857 he was appointed arrondissements-commissaris at Courtray. Mons. Pieter De Decker, who was Minister of the Interior at that time, had been guided in his nomination by excellent considerations, which were explained to me by Conscience.

“About this time a pernicious influence was felt in the southern portion of our country. Secret emissaries from Napoleon III. excited the populace

on the boundaries, and set up a propaganda in favour of annexation to France ; it was necessary to keep alive a patriotic spirit at Courtray, and how could a greater means of fostering the Belgian national love of country be found, than the presence of that persuasive Fleming, that reformer who had presented his countrymen with a new literature, and whose narratives must attach the inhabitants of Flanders more firmly than ever to their native birthplace.

Conscience remained at Courtray to January, 1868, when he was invested with the functions, more honourable than remunerative, of guardian of the Royal National Museums of paintings and sculpture. He was offered the professorship of Flemish literature, that literature which he may be said to have created at the University of Ghent ; but he said honestly that the professorial duties would too often trench on the rights of the novelist, and for this reason he begged the Minister, Van den Peerlboom, to appoint Mons. Herremans in his place.

## CHAPTER VI.

BEFORE long the name of the Flemish novelist had become cosmopolitan. Henceforth Conscience shone in the ranks of those authors who have attained world-wide celebrity.

Germany was the first to honour him. Conscience's popularity began in the land of Schiller, and the author of the *Wonderjaar* related its commencement to me.

“In 1844 I had published my three novels—  
‘How men become painters,’ ‘What a mother can,



suffer,' and 'Siska van Rossmaal,' in one volume through E Buschmann. The same autumn the Countess of Dornabey, governess to the young princes of Tours and Taxis, accompanied her illustrious pupils to Antwerp. The morning she arrived, whilst the children, tired with the long journey, slept the sweet sleep of childhood, the countess left the hotel and wandered through the various streets, noting their peculiarities and directing her attention to the passers-by, and the objects of interest in the town. In her wanderings she stopped before the window of Froment, the bookseller, in the 'Shoen Market,' where my book was displayed. The Flemish title caught her eye. Being a Westphalian, the Countess spoke a German patois, which is intimately connected with the language of our northern province. She understood the title, and filled with curiosity, the noble lady entered the shop and bought my book, after making enquiries of my bookseller with interest about the author. Returning to the hotel, she shut up the book in her travelling bag. The care of the young princes and all the incidents of the journey soon put all thoughts of her morning's discovery out of her head. The princes and their governess started from Antwerp for Paris. The humble Flemish book remained in an obscure corner in the Great City. It was shut up in the countess's trunk in company with all those odds and ends which tourists have collected from time immemorial, only to be discarded at the first opportunity. At last the royal party returned to Regensburg, the residence of the princes of Tours and Taxis. Here at last the governess had some leisure. On unpacking her trunk she came upon my book, she remembered what she had been told of me, and delighted with the title, she read on uninterruptedly my three 'witty stories,' charmed at being able to

understand the language, and amazed at her own cleverness. The result was an order to Froment. A list of all I had published was sent to Regensburg.

"The Countess von Dornabey communicated her discovery to the inmates of the palace. At one of the grand dinners, at which the Duke of Regensburg, Melchior Diepenbrock, a famous German poet and author, was present, my enthusiastic reader, the Countess of Dornabey, spoke of my works with so much enthusiasm that the duke became interested in my novels. He ordered them, read them, enjoyed them, and sent me his warmest congratulations with the request to be allowed to translate the books. Flattered by the appreciation of such a distinguished man, I at once gave him the desired permission. In 1845, my three novels, translated into German by Diepenbrock, first saw the light, under the title of "Flemish Still Life." (*Flaemisches Stilleben.*)

"In the meantime, my translator having been appointed Prince Bishop of Breslau since the perusal of my works, had some scruples about his name appearing in the German edition. But his literary enthusiasm as an author and the desire to render me a service overcame his scruples as a priest; and he placed the simple work of the Antwerp *debutant* under the distinguished patronage of his name. This was more than sufficient to make me known in Germany. From that time the translated editions of my works increased and multiplied to an extent that was more flattering than remunerative. But my thirst was for fame, not money."

I asked Conscience whether he could not indemnify himself in France, whilst piles of gold dazzled my imagination. I thought of Victor Hugo, fabulously rich, and of Charpentier's contract with Zola.

My listener smiled. "Oh, no," he said my con-

with Levy's house does not bring me in as much as you might suppose, remembering the unusual circulation of my works in France. But I have no wish to complain."

He then entered into some confidential details, which gave me food for thought

This subject carried us on to the origin of his reputation in Paris.

"I have to thank Alexander Dumas a little, in spite of himself as you will see," said Conscience.

"The author of *Monte Cristo* came to Brussels in 1852. This 'provider for the reading public' enjoying such immense popularity, came to seek fresh subjects, local incidents which should give him fresh impressions, and which, after he had studied them in their native element, he would reproduce in a wholly different form for his readers. To facilitate, or to shorten his task, he made use of known authors. My name was mentioned, what he heard of me roused his interest. One day I received a letter asking to be allowed to translate for his own use the story, 'What a mother can suffer.' Much pleased with the notice of the great man, I granted his request without hesitation.

"Some months after this exchange of letters a romance appeared in Brussels, entitled "God and Devil," *Dieu et Diable*, by Alex. Dumas. The author stated in the preface, which was in the form of a letter to Mons. Meline, that he had founded his romance on some of the most remarkable chapters in the "Conscript," by the Flemish novelist, Mons. Conscience, and pursued Mons. Dumas. "To honour this author, I have given the name of Conscience to my hero."

"My astonishment was still greater when, some days later, after this French remodelling of my rustic narrative, the romance of the talented French author

was displayed in the shops as a new book under another title, and without preface. *Dieu et Diable* had become *Conscience l'innocent*. I must own I was not flattered by the title Mons. Dumas had chosen, was it with the design of honouring the author, whom he had deprived of profit, with so much grace and benevolence? I never received my explanation of this piece of French politeness. In short, *Dieu et Diable*, as well as 'Conscience the Innocent,' were taken from the plot of the 'Conscript,' diluted to suit the taste of Dumas' public. unravelling, as he only knows the art of doing in his fictions, by all sorts of unexpected circumstances, and enriched with dramatic descriptions of the Battle of Waterloo. My brave peasant youth had become a French soldier, sickness was not the cause of blindness in this new hero, but the explosion of a powder cart, which is much more dramatic. I must confess I scarcely recognized my simple country tale under all these embellishments and adornments. I did not disturb myself at my treatment by Mons. Dumas, and there was no need, as this borrowing of my materials eventually became a source of profit, as you will see.

"The enemies of the great novelist at Paris made a great outcry at this affair. The French author was called a literary thief in some very violent attacks. People did not content themselves with saying it, they published it also. Alex. Dumas made a master-stroke. Experienced dramatist that he was, he knew his public. He published a daily paper *Le Mousquetaire*, "The Musketeer," of which he boasted he was the sole author, and to prove that he was falsely accused of having robbed me, he published in this paper the text of my 'Conscript,' translated by the advocate Van den Plasche. This justification not only calmed the storm which the

behaviour of the prolific novelist had raised, but also turned to his profit, and to mine by a side wind, People read the 'Conscript' with so much pleasure that the *Mousquetaire* presented his readers with those of my stories which had appeared in French in Brussels. One day my writings were remarked by Messrs. N. Levy. They made overtures to me for the publication of all my works in French. I accepted this offer and signed an agreement which still binds me to them.

"The first book published by Levy was scenes from Flemish life which had appeared in 1854."

It was without any trace of bitterness or annoyance with perfect frankness, but without malice, that our charming novelist told me these events in his literary career. No one could have been more indulgent, more liberal, or more philosophic. When I expressed my sentiments on the conduct of Mons. Dumas; he defended and excused him to the best of his ability. Then he turned the conversation, and told me how an account of his works had appeared in Paris and also in London, in 1846, entitled "Sketches of Flemish Life," and that the same stories were published in Italy the following year as *Vita domestica dei Flamminghi*. After the appearance of the Bishop of Breslau's translation, Alex. von Humboldt wrote a very flattering letter to Conscience from Berlin on the 27th September, 1847. In 1848 Mons. Saint René Tallandier recommended Conscience's works to the readers of the *Revue des deux Mondes*, in a very eulogistic article.

## CHAPTER VII.

"AND now a few words on the well-worn grievance, to which the publication of the second edition of the "Year of marvels" *Wonderjaar* gave rise." Conscience resumed, after having related to me these particulars of his life.

"It happened at that miserable perplexed time of my life, of which I have given you a slight sketch. I was in great want, but was too proud to complain, and with stoical courage I hoped for some improvement in my fortunes. One day, while sitting alone in the house with an empty stomach and aching head, a servant came from my friend Wappers, to tell me his master was very anxious to speak to me. I hurried to the artist's house, and when I entered the dining-room, I found him sitting at the table in company with another person, who looked like an official, and whom he introduced to me as Mons. de Sorlus, director at the Ministry of Justice.

" 'Look here, Hendrik,' said the painter of Charles I., with that northern geniality, which attracted me to him so strongly, 'it is unnecessary to conceal your circumstances amongst friends. You are in a fix, my boy, you live like a galley slave, you cannot deny it.'

" 'Well,' I replied with equal frankness, 'you are right, I scarcely know how to make both ends meet. But what then?'

" 'This, that I have spoken to Mons. de Sorlus about your *Wonderjaar* and your other books. The government is desirous of making a library for prisons and hospitals. The books, which are put into the hands of the unhappy convicts, are stupid and flavoured with a faint spice of immorality. It seems as if there were nothing else in Brussels. Now, I think your novels would be just suitable.

They are capital reading, and do not make one feel inclined to go to sleep. I have recommended your works to Mons. de Sorlus. He has eagerly availed himself of this opportunity, and you are here to talk it over with him.'

“ ‘The result of my interview with Mons. de Sorlus was, that I was commissioned to send a copy of all my works to the library at Brussels. This was a mere formality, there was no doubt as to the result. I could contract with my printer for an official edition of my works. The Government would bear all the expenses.

“ ‘Much astonished by this verbal communication, I went at once to make an engagement with the printer. He was to supply all necessaries, papers, type, and ink. Everything was ready. I only waited for a letter from Brussels to begin to set up the type as quickly as possible. I waited for a long time, but in vain. Wappers was as ignorant as I to what this silence might be ascribed. It was at last explained to me in a letter from my friend, the instructor Martens, at Vilvoorde, who taught the prisoners. He told me that the Commissioners had not been pleased with my *Wonderjaar*. The spirit and tendency of the work was not deemed suitable for the class of readers were already too turbulent and rebellious. This troubled me exceedingly, and I went to a priest, known for his liberal tendencies, the pastor of St. Jacob's parish in Antwerp. I had scarcely begun to tell him about my adventure, when he told me all might be put right. Only—I must make some important modifications, not only in the *Wonderjaar* but also in the ‘Lion of Flanders.’

“ ‘In the latter work the heroes swore, as a rule, especially the passionate Bruydel. My benevolent critic admitted that this bad language was in accord-

ance with the character of this prince of butchers, but that the constant reiterations of 'by God must have jarred on the Commission.' I knew the lavish use of oaths were not improving to the prisoners. The priest ended by putting me into personal communication with one of my judges, a certain Willem van Hemel, canon of Mechlin, himself a literary man a great lover of Flemish literature. He censured the style of the 'Year of Marvels' more than its tendency.

"The alterations which he induced me to make were wholly unimportant to me—they did not in any way beautify the chief characters of the book. As the heroes of these narratives were beggars, traitors, tyrannical Spaniards and Catholics, it was necessary, in order that the work might not appear to be directed against religion, that the noble sentiments and wise thoughts should be repressed by an orthodox person, preferably by a priest. In the 'Year of Marvels' the monopoly of virtues and heroic qualities were portrayed as belonging exclusively to conspirators, to the *Gueux*. I consented in this spirit to bring the character of Father Franciscus into greater prominence, and these alterations have been adhered to in all subsequent editions.

"Finally I replaced the word *kussen* to kiss by *groeten* to greet, in the following verse of the celebrated roundel of that period with which the book ended.

Kiss me thrice  
Ere you depart.

These words were the only alterations demanded from me, and to which I consented, as they appeared to me immaterial and in no way destructive of the spirit of my work. Thanks to these slight alterations which related infinitely more to the form than the



contents, 'My Year of Marvels' and 'The Lion of Flanders' will bear the scrutiny of the strictest reader, and may be placed without fear in the hands of the young."

Conscience proceeded, "I write my books to be read by the people. I have always made the intellectual development and education of the ignorant my aim. I have never written anything the people could not understand; I have always guarded against exciting passion or adorning vice, or presenting evil in a pleasant and alluring light.

"In the whole collection of a hundred books which complete my labours, you will not meet with one immoral plot, one case of adultery. For want of other merits I can make this assertion. It has not always been an easy task. It has been necessary to make changes in a narrative to create fresh incidents; voluntarily to deny myself important material suitable for modern romances. Never mind, I determined to do it, and my determination has conquered. You may have noticed that the religious feeling visible in my romances is not the enthusiasm of a fanatic, but belief on its broadest basis. In Holland my books have met with the equal approval both from Protestants and Catholics. I have been accused of flattering the peasants, of painting country life in too attractive colours, of missing naturalisms in order to employ modern words. To this I reply, that the spirit of observation must be individual. The attention of some is drawn to paltry and offensive details, which another will scarcely notice, or, at least, with which he will not concern himself. I have sketched the Flemish peasant as he appeared to me. I drew him calm, peaceable, religious and patriotic, attached to his traditions, and opposed somewhat vehemently to all innovations, in short, as he appeared to me at that

period of my life in 1830, when hungry and sick, I enjoyed hospitality and the tenderest care amongst them. I have never inspired my heroes with the poetic glamour for which I have been reproached, it is they who have inspired me.

“Another man may dwell by preference on the defective side and the coarseness of the labourer, may sketch him as the slave of drunkenness, and animal passion. I shall not deny the picturesqueness of this work. But between that and the admission of my delusion there is a wide margin. My neighbour’s heroes are not necessarily mine, nor do I see them in the same light. People are constantly discussing whether he who paints things in their darkest colours, or he who sees all in a materialistic light, or he who presents everything in its happiest form, whether he who takes a subjective or objective point of view, is right. All I know is, and it is my settled conviction that a conscientious writer is never wrong and I believe myself to be conscientious.”

Conscience stood up and said good-bye, after having for two hours related these particulars of his life to me. He expressed himself very well and fluently in French with only a very slight foreign accent, which was rather a charm than a blemish, since nothing is more absurd than a parade of a pure accent in a foreign language. His voice is exceedingly sweet and characterised by a touching tremor which recalls the sound of a gently moved clock, and by which he inspires love and enthusiasm. Those who were present lately at the sitting of the French Academy, where he read in French his treatise on Flemish literature, will have noticed this.

Since our first interview the sympathetic veteran of Flemish literature, the popular novelist of the whole of Europe has gained rather than lost, in bulk. He is very nervous and frequently changes his

attitude. Seated or conversing, he cannot remain quiet and gesticulates freely. He is no longer the thin, delicate, fragile "fourier" of 1830, but a burgher with a ruddy face. His eyes are lively, he is moderately stout, but not too corpulent.

From his appearance it is difficult to resist a conviction that his hundredth volume will not be his last. It is a new mapping out of this laborious and prolific life, and as yet there is no appearance of a definite end.

## CHAPTER VIII.

IN 1842 Conscience married Maria Peinin, of Antwerp, who bore him several children, only one of whom is living; his daughter, Mevrouw Antheunis, is the wife of Gentil Antheunis, canton judge at Halle. Conscience's son-in-law occupies an honourable place amongst Flemish poets. Whilst mixing in the choicest literary circles in Antwerp, I came across some very pretty French verses by Mons. Antheunis. The child by whom Conscience was accompanied when I first met him was Mons. Antheunis's little son.

This grandson, Hendrik, is his grandfather's pet, as well as the two other children, Bertha, a merry girl, and Julius, the Benjamin of the pleasing trio. No more genial circle than that of the master can be imagined.

A German biographer of the novelist, a great admirer of his talent, Madame Ida von Düringsfeld, in her witty sparkling work, "From the Schelde to

Maas,' dedicated by her to Belgium, has related some particulars of Conscience's home life. His wife loved him even more for himself than for his fame. When Madame von Duringsfeld in 1858 congratulated her on the extraordinary popularity which her husband enjoyed, and asked if she was not moved by it. *Mevrouw Conscience* replied, "I am so used to it." Proud yet simple speech, which displayed the calm trust which the life companion of the novelist placed in his great and sustained talent. Another day, when she was praising Conscience, she said "He is the best of men; we have never yet exchanged an unpleasant word.

There is, however, a heart-rending page in Conscience's family life. which he revealed to me himself, and I will here say a few words about it. This page belongs rightly to his biography, and I think it advisable to mention it here, since the unhappy father has never had the courage to place it in his memoirs.

Differing from Hugo, who wrote the "Contemplations" at the grave of his tenderly loved little daughter, Conscience could create no masterpiece out of his sorrow. Almost indignantly he combatted the idea of translating a sad and heavy reality into a work of art in all its charms.

"How is it possible" he said on this occasion, "to subdue, stifle, suppress the heart's cry, in order to turn it into literary phrases, to bend it to the exigencies of rhyme in accordance with laws of harmony and grammar. No the so-called, despairing works, are never sincere, were such the case, the authors would never have had the courage to write them."

It is scarcely possible to imagine more terrible circumstances than those under which almost simultaneously the deaths of the two sons of the novelist

took place. Hildevert, a youth of twenty-six, and Hendrik a boy of twelve.

In 1869, an infectious, nervous, fever which defied all medical precedents, disregarded all common laws and was a complete puzzle to the science of medicine, ravaged the Leopold's quarter; the richest, the most, extensive, the most airy, the most highly situated district of Brussels.

The lower town was spared. The streets where the poor swarmed, the wretched holes where people could scarcely keep body and soul together; all this part remained free from infection. Death mowed down the children of the rich, the aristocratic scions of noble houses, proud youths, and lovely girls, destined to adorn the saloons of high life. And the poverty-stricken ragged man of the people, stunted, dumb, and astonished at the victims which death chose by hundreds from the fortunate of the earth, just as a mower chooses the best ears for the harvest. The pestilence swept even into the palace, showing, for a time the equality of rich and poor.

This levelling of rank became so severe that even the pariahs of social life stopped to gaze with more pity and stupefaction than triumph at the spectacle of the splendid and impressive funerals which traversed the lonely streets in the rich quarters more lonely than ever now.

Every one knows the Wiertz Museum, a curious house, which the fiery painter of Patrocles built close to his studio.

Here, in a corner on the hill behind the former zoological gardens, hidden by tall poplars, Conscience lived and still lives.

In this fatal year, 1869, the pestilence swept into this peaceful dwelling, which was protected from it neither by the memories of the artist with the Rueben's brush, nor by the popularity of the

novelist of Flemish manners. The youngest son of Conscience was stricken down. The alarmed father induced his eldest son to leave the house and fly from Brussels, to go away as far as possible and to remain at a distance in some less infected place. The young man went, and the father, freed from fear on his account, devoted himself to combat, by every means in his power, the fever of the youngest son; but in vain. The disease made frightful progress. The poor little fellow pined away like many other fair-haired boys who had perished before him. The father could gather little comfort, except from the thought of that his eldest son at least was out of reach of danger.

But one evening he received a telegram from Diksmuide—from Diksmuide? He opened it, read it, and the whole meaning flashed upon him. "Your son is dying; send him a reliable attendant; come at once if you wish to see him alive." What was to be done? Conscience made up his mind at once. He installed the mother as nurse by the bed of the little one, and after some hurried preparations for the journey, hastened to the other sick bed—to that bed of pain on which his eldest son lay helpless, far from home.

He found Hildevert unattended in a room at the inn, since the inmates dared not approach him. The poor father in vain had sent his son to a healthier climate, the infection had already attacked its victim, and left him stranded in this wretched garret. The people of the inn were most uncomfortable at the sick lad's proximity. A horse fair was going on in the Flemish province, and the days were spent in drinking parties and dissipation. Farmers and horse-sellers were loth to stop and drink at a house where some one lay dying of a fearful disease.

Conscience remained with his son. He tore his handkerchief into shreds to make compresses. Hildevert suffered from inflammation of the brain, in which new form the horrible typhus by which he was being snatched away displayed itself.

There was nothing more to be done. The father had only just come in time to close his eldest son's eyes. On the 29th of January, 1869, he wept beside the dead body. Would the youngest one be spared, was the question which Conscience asked himself as he clasped the icy cold hands of him who had been the beacon, the motive power of his pursuit of fame. And in Diksmuide, even in the inn itself, there was drinking and revelling, for it was not fair time?

A message came from Brussels, Mevrouw Conscience recalled her husband to little Hendrik's bedside. There was urgent need for his return. The father guessed what the laconic message, "the child is very ill" meant; it meant that the boy lay at the point of death. Conscience was obliged to leave the corpse of his eldest son to the mercenary care of the undertakers. He returned to Brussels and arrived in the Leopold's quarter only to witness another death struggle. All was over. On the 2nd of February, 1869, Conscience had no longer any sons, the little one had gone to rejoin his brother.

It is easy to imagine the despair into which this double calamity threw the unfortunate father, for some time making him indifferent to fame, and to his renown as a novelist.

He cared for nothing. In a state of deep despair, deprived of heirs to his renowned and honoured name, Conscience made a pile of all his papers, remembrances, biographical documents, projected memoirs, correspondence with celebrated people, Goethe, Alex. Dumas, Von Humboldt, Dumas père.

Diepenbrock, and others, in his cellar. The reproaches of his friends, the prayers of his two daughters were powerless to overcome his terrible despondency.

When the enormous heap had reached the roof, he set fire to it with a sort of melancholy pleasure. The blind flames burnt up the remembrances, the proofs, the letters of encouragement and marks of homage of thirty years which the wretched father offered as a holocaust on the graves dug by the year 1869.

As if this sacrifice was not complete, the remaining writings unconsumed by the fire were used to light the stoves in the Wiertz Museum.

Happily Conscience has outlived this sacrifice of a portion of his identity. The day which brought him deliverance dawned at last. God did not permit one so honoured and of such fair fame to accomplish his suicide.

I have spoken of Mevrouw von Duringsfeld, I will quote an incident from her, which shows the great popularity Conscience has attained amongst the humblest classes. In 1857 a tailor of Mechlin, the town where it is said by a German author the least is read, on hearing of Conscience's appointment to the Arrondissements Commission at Courtray, exclaimed, "What will become of me, now he has got that, he will write no more books." The poor fellow went so far as to write to the master about his trouble. Conscience consoled the exacting reader, and promised not to curtail his literary labours. And he kept his word. The tailor, well content, never wrote again. Perhaps, at this moment he is busy devouring "*Gold and Honour*" (*Geld en Adel*).

I must add that the starving poet of earlier years, the thin soldier grew stout in pursuit of his literary profession.



Conscience had a strong prejudice against corpulence, such as most artists have, even Zola himself, who cannot shake it off, as may be seen in the indignation of Claude Lantier in the *Ventre de Paris*. Corpulence was a mark of *bourgeoisie*.

"How can a stout novelist be respected," he grumbles ill-humouredly. He distressed himself without cause. I think, as I remarked before, his stoutness never overstepped ordinary limits.

Conscience was knighted on the 1st of June, 1845, was created officer on the 19th, July, 1856, and on the 7th of May, 1881, he received the order of the Grand Cross of Leopold on the appearance of his hundredth work, entitled "Gold and Honour."

He was also decorated with various foreign orders, amongst others, with the Netherland Lion and the Prussian Red Eagle. He is teacher of Flemish to His Majesty Leopold II., and to His Royal Highness the Count of Flanders.

He has been a member of the Royal Academy of Belgium since 1869.

## CHAPTER IX.

I HAVE only incidentally spoken of Conscience's works themselves, merely stopping to notice those publications which specially marked different epochs in his life.

In default of an exhaustive criticism, which would be out of place here, I think some general observations on the genius of the author are necessitated at the close of this biographical study.

Like many other literary men, Conscience has

many styles. But what most markedly distinguishes him from his peers is, that in varying his methods and style, he has never abandoned one in the pursuit of another.

He wrote his first novel at the same time as he planned the "History of Belgium." The "Conscript" appeared simultaneously with "Jacob van Artevelde."

Gifted by nature with a rich imagination, he could begin a laborious historical romance for which he had collected materials from burgher life for a modern story, or was weaving the plot of one of those fresh pictures of country life, which he treats so delicately. It is in the latter accomplishment he excels. In Conscience's noble sympathetic character there is something which leads him by preference to the study of the poorer classes. The poor people under his poetic pen are the objects of a benevolence which a modern realist would pronounce exaggerated, but a benevolence which will charm many future generations when those who study turns and twists of style under the name of modernism, will be completely forgotten.

"How men become painters" *Hoe men Schilder wordt*.  
"What a mother can suffer;" *Wat eene Moeder lijden kan*;  
"The conscript," *De Loteling*;  
"Rikke Tikke Tak," will live for ever as pictures of witty observation. Posterity will preserve them from oblivion, because they interpret the humanity common to all, in which we find again our tears, and feel our hearts throbbing. The innocent love-making of his conscript, and his faithful Trien, the fidelity of Jan Daelmans, the simple peasant in "Rikke, Tikke, Tak," to the remembrance of Lena, his girl friend whom he ought now to forget because of her elevation from a lowly maiden to a wealthy heiress, while he remains poor. —Lena, who he so passionately loves, the pride of

the noble poor man; the oastfulness of Master Gansendock, are not these sentiments which now from a common law of nature? Conscience found that people can be sufficiently interesting without his seeking them in prisons, in dungeons, and on the stage. When he attacks vice, he does not include its physiological manifestations in his picture.

Our Flemish novelist depicted the fatal consequences of drink in the "Plague of the village," which holds the same place as *L'Assommoir*. But whilst Zola, urged by his talent for painting in strong colours has described all the particulars of delirium tremens which threatened his hero, Conscience has spared us this offensive picture, and it is by the lifeless drunkard which he shows us in the last page, that we gain an insight into the terrible consequences of gin.

It may also be remarked that Jan Stears has a daughter, the sweet, modest Clara, whose figure stands out in marked contrast with the type of a confirmed drunkard. Clara marries eventually an honest man and becomes a happy, model mother, after having cared for her infamous father with the devotion of an Antigone. Her husband does not drink—Father Torfs has brought up his son with a horror of drink and drunkenness, and even if Lucas was tempted to forget these good principles, the remembrance of the ignominious end of Clara's father would effectually keep him from the public-house.

On the other hand, in *L'Assommoir*, however fearful the punishment of Coupeau, the French author, does not suffer it to serve at a deterrent.

The wife follows in her husband's footsteps. There is no Clara here, no faithful consoling woman in the terrible pictures, but a lost girl, infamous from her cradle, who, under the name of Nana, fills

with her disreputable life, a large volume of Charpentier's collection. These pathological cases, these medical subjects, these pretences of dissections and post-mortems do not lie in the Flemish novelist's domain.

Obstinate fanatics, intolerant adherents to this sort of literature, complain loudly. For those who love the beautiful in all its manifestations, who, holding themselves aloof from all party spirit are ready to greet a new star without trying to extinguish the one which already shines in the firmament, for these, and they are countless, for they are legion, Conscience can bear comparison with the brilliant chief of the French school. I must add that the fame of the Flemish author appears to me purer and nobler. As a large-hearted poet, he reconciles us to that humanity of which the French novelist only exhibits the excrescences.

If the smiling idylls, the touching elegies, the charming pastoral songs are considered as day dreams of the Flemish authors, by positive writers, it is quite permissible to say that their so-called humandocumentsareequally false, equally fictitious. They contain more horror and less consolation. Conscience may be a dream but Zola is then a nightmare.

A fresh distinction between Conscience and newer authors may be observed in the form in which they are written.

The Flemish novelist never distorts his style. No strange words, no affected turns of thought offend us. There is nothing in him of the virtuoso, who is more artist than poet, and more mechanic than artist, from whose vocabulary the word "love" is banished because this word has existed from the beginning of the world, the "rose," because it is familiar to every one, and because it has become hackneyed in poetry ;

as well as the "soul" the "heart" "life" and many others, as if periphrases, tortured synonyms, barbaric adaptations of dissonant slang could ever dethrone those simple and everlastingly unchangeable words.

As for me, whilst acknowledging the merit of these word-shapers, and finding their respect for well turned phrases perfectly admissible—phrases turned with the pains which a goldsmith devotes to the gold in the furnace, I still deplore the exaggeration of their system. Unlike Pygmalion, who, after he had sculptured the marble statue, sought to put life into it, these modern writers try to turn that which is living into the icy coldness of a Galatea.

Whatever their conclusions, I hope personally, that I may long enjoy a beauty expressed in a frank natural manner. If I hear the sound of some musical instrument, I do not always seek to know the number of the strings, I only occupy myself with the effect produced by the musician. How the artist executes the musical trills, and how by his talent he contrives to make the strings sing or weep like a human soul—these are the questions I ask myself. I prefer the violin—that simple violin—whose mechanism has remained the same from the time of the Amatis and Stradivarius to the multicord piano or those organs, those still more ingenious machines which inundate us from Geneva and Germany.

The vocabulary of Conscience is like a violin played by Paganini; give it into the hands of a tyro, or a player without heart and without artistic feeling, and he will find it unmanageable, without pretension, and will fly to the pretentious piano, which can be played with mathematical correctness, and in which execution may take the place of soul.

The dry squeaking of 85 or 90 ivory keys will never be able to suppress the subtle infinite vibra-

tions which a single string of the cello can wake under a gifted hand.

In simplicity of form coupled with the intensity of the idea expressed lies the eloquence of the Flemish authors' tales. They explain the popularity of that delicate casket to the furthest ends of the earth, to the simplest as well as to the most cultivated circles. In Lamartines "Graziella" there is a very true sketch where a poet reads Bernardine de St. Pierre's masterpiece to some simple fishers of Procida.

Nothing is more natural than the pleasure the reading arouses. In the same way the "Conscript" is read even in the humblest artizan's dwelling, and in our land more than one Trientje wipes her blue eye on her apron in the evening, thinking that her Jan, her "sweetheart," will soon be nineteen, and who knows whether the lot may not fall on him, and he may have to go away like the hero of the tale before her. And, again, the son of an artizan reading what a mother can suffer, will perhaps speak with more tenderness to his mother when the period of childhood is outgrown, and the down begins to show itself on his chin.

The gift of imagination has been denied by some, to Conscience. The master's words which I quoted earlier, his own judgment on his own work will be the best answer to this criticism. He must be gifted with a very vivid power of imagination to find materials for a hundred books without having recourse to poisoned sources.

It is the same with his persons and his style, as well as the plot of his stories. They are always natural and never exceed the limits of possibility. Yet the novelist excels when he writes of the wonderful and imaginary; his Flemish legends, amongst others his "Burning Shepherd," *Brandende Schaapherder*, in the miscellanies his "Wicked Hand,"

*Kwade Hand* from the "Evening hours," *Avond stonden*, are models of *genre*, having largely that intensity which characterizes Conscience and which never completely leaves him, but which is wanting in Hoffman, Dumas and Edgar Allan Poe.

Historical romances also form an important part of Conscience's works. The master displays less originality in these productions than in his popular narratives. But yet they are very charming. Very interesting, these heroic volumes. What patriotism, what chivalrous feelings, what pure love scenes, what exquisite Flemish portraits, which are depicted with a master's hand, and which are painted in rather with the delicate charming touches of a Van Dyck, than with the powerful glowing brush of a Frans Hals. There are deeds which rouse heroic thrills in these assembled romances without the darker side of history offending our sensibilities.

I shall never forget the impression which the reading of them made on me in my younger days. My childish heart beat violently at the recital of the brave deeds of Jan Bruydel; I could not express my solicitude for, and devotion to, the wise man of Ghent, no detestation was too great for his murderer, the coward Geeraad Denys. Far from my native land, from my Flemish plains, in Switzerland, where I was being educated, these books, the first I had read, carried me to the foot of the Yarras to the plateau watered by the Aar, to the salt breeze and sharp damp wind, the rough caresses of the old Scheldt, something of the rough tenderness of the loyal country.

This first impression has never left me.

I have read more astonishing things than these beautiful honest books in later life. French literature has initiated me since then into many strange and troubled works, sounding like a savage fanfare, appeals to the senses.

These learned romances, produced by unmistakable talent captivated me without, however, making so deep an impression on me as the cheerful stories of "our" Conscience.

And if, I re-read typical volumes of the collection I feel afresh the strength, the sacred enthusiasm, and the consolation of literature revive in me. The giant Anteus regained his strength when his feet touched the ground, like those, who wrestling for art, renew again their spent strength by returning to nature's pure springs. They will run no risk of becoming mentally enervated.

The work of Conscience is like a sociable country house, a plain where men can regain again the simplicity which they had lost through cheating and deception.

Receive my thanks, master, benevolent narrator, so nobly human, for the generous emotions of yesterday, and to-day. We greet you, the true Flemish writer, the interpreter, the translator of our old mighty and honourable genius. We will preserve your work against the prejudices of all strangers, your books show that you understand us, and they define more eloquently than any geographical boundaries, the existence of our Belgian fatherland. They affirm our vitality by the fanatic love—yes, fanatic, which we bear to the customs, its language, and its fertile soil.

Honour to you Conscience and many thanks.

THE END.





# THE HAPPINESS OF BEING RICH.

## CHAPTER I.

"OH, Katie dear, what heavenly weather it is to-day! Oh, the beautiful May-month! It feels to me like butter and milk—so balmy and so sweet!"

"Yes, Annemie, I don't know what ails my feet! they are itching to set off dancing by themselves. This first blessed sunny day makes me tremble all over with gladness; it seems to shine quite through me, bones and marrow and all."

"Only look how they are all pouring out of their houses to get a little of it. Now life begins to be snug and happy again; we can sit out in the street, and sing and chat, and drink in the fresh air while we work."

"Yes, 'tis a blessing, isn't it, Trieny? after being shut up these four dreary endless months in the house, like a poor bird in a cage."

“And scarcely able to draw our breath in the close smoky air of our rooms.”

“And wear out our eyes in the gray murky winter days.”

“Yes, and catch colds, and cough so that you feared that March would blow you away with him to another world.”

“And forget that there is a sun in the sky; and count the days one after another, till the darling May brings light and warmth back again, for the poor man as well as for the rich lord—”

“Come, come, winter is gone by and forgotten; don't let us think of the old grumbler any more—

‘Shepherds and shepherdesses gay  
Sing and dance, for see—'tis May!’

Bring your frames a little nearer; we will sit here all four close together, else some kill-joy will come between us.”

The young girls who were thus chanting, as they prattled, a feeling hymn of praise to the exhilarating May month, were sitting with many others in along narrow street of the city of Antwerp.

The houses on either side of this little street were mean and small; they had each a little round-headed door at the entrance, and admitted the scanty daylight, yet further diminished in its transit through the green panes of their narrow windows.

One of the corner houses was distinguished from the others by its greater height and its new-fashioned window-frames. This was the grocer's corner; and although his customers were all of a very humble class, he had contrived to do very well, and at the end of a few years might be considered rich in comparison with his humble neighbours.

Over the way stood an old 'house, which also boasted a first floor; but, for all that, its exterior was rather mean and dirty. Above the door was a sign-board, on which were painted two large letters, A.B. These signified that the house was occupied by a chimney-sweeper, or, as he was called in the Antwerp patois, a *Schouwveger*. This citizen ranked second in the street after the grocer, because his house was his own property.\*

After him, in order of worldly consideration followed a shoemaker, or rather a cobbler, who could not indeed boast a house of his own, but yet contrived by industry to live without want and without care.

It was before the shoemaker's door that Katie and her friends sat working; farther on in

\* In Antwerp the chimney-sweepers are reckoned among the lesser crafts, and are noted for their continual humour and mirthful disposition. The badge of their guild consists of the two letters, A.B.

the street were many other damsels, who were also gathered into little groups, and continued their work amid reiterated exclamations and felicitations on the beauty of the weather.

Each of them had before her a square frame on which was stretched a piece of net or woven lace ; and on this they were embroidering, with needle and thread, flowers and foliage of every conceivable kind. In Antwerp phrase, they were working lace-stitch, in order that at the close of a long day they might have earned a few sous, and so lighten the burden of mother's housekeeping ; also, in good seasons, buy a neat little frock, or a pretty cap with gay-coloured ribbons, for themselves.

Although these embroiderers belonged to the lowest class of artisans, the cleanness and even elegance of their dress were very remarkable. It is an acknowledged fact that the Antwerp girls of the lower classes are distinguished by an especial cleanliness, and also by the becoming way in which they arrange their dress ; and, among them all, the lace-stitch workers are very conspicuous. How can they help being always clean, when from morning to night their hands are gliding over snow-white net or lace ? If the least stain or soil were to disfigure their work, they would be scolded for their untidiness by the lace factors, be mulcted of their pay, and refused further work.

You must not imagine, however, dear reader, that this tidiness had its origin in necessity alone. It may have been so at first, perhaps, but every one knows the force of habit. This remarkable cleanliness has now become quite a characteristic and instinct of the lace-stitch workers ; and if at any time they are obliged to earn their daily bread by labour of another kind, the same neatness and propriety may be remarked in all they do.

Moreover, look at them well from head to foot ; their clothes are indeed very humble, and of common cotton ; sometimes the colour has partly disappeared ; but how nicely washed—how neatly ironed out ! not a speck, not a stain ; it is as if they had seven Sundays in the week.

Are they pretty ? Yes, and no. They are young, and that is something. Most of them might have been pretty, too, for their features are fine and regular enough ; but their cheeks are altogether so pale, their limbs so thin ! Poor daughters of the people, luxury and wealth have hunted them out of all the open airy streets, built houses everywhere of which they could never pay the rent, and driven them back farther and farther into the dingy, dirty streets, in which neither burgher nor rich man cared to live. Drooping flowers, reared in dusky cellars and garrets, their blood is colourless, and consumption is the worm

which lies gnawing at the root of the life of so many of them ; and yet they are blithe, and they sing amid their everlasting toil !

Of the four girls who were sitting and working together before the shoemaker's door, there were two whose vital energies had not been impaired by lack of light and air and fitting nourishment. Their parents were in somewhat easier circumstances, and perhaps they had not, like their neighbours, lived generation after generation in the stifling, unwholesome cellars of this narrow street.

One of them was called Katie, and was the daughter of the shoemaker ; the other was called Annemie, and lived at the green-grocer's. The cheeks of both were ruddy with the fresh hue of youth, and their lips had not lost their exquisite coral-red. Katie had soft blue eyes and fair hair ; Annemie looked as if she had Spanish blood in her veins, for her face was shadowed with a light brown, and her eyes and hair were black as jet.

While they were working quietly with their two companions, they saw at the end of the street a dame already advanced in years. She was coming toward them, and they followed her with their eyes until she disappeared at the little door of the chimney-sweeper's house. One of the girls then remarked :

"Dame Smet doesn't let the grass grow under her feet; she has got a new gown again, and a double-plaited cap—"

"Oh, Annemie, there you are again, always sneering and quizzing. What matter is it of ours what clothes other people wear, if they are able to pay for them?"

"Yes, Katie, that's very true; but for all that, you see, pride may have a good deal to do with it."

"Pride? Oh, she is such a good, kind creature!"

"Yes, yes; Dame Smet holds up her head as if my Lady Van Hoogenberg were her sister; and as she goes along in her grand gowns, she looks down on us as if we were not good enough to tie her shoes."

"You think so, Annemie; but I assure you it is not so. Everybody has her own ways. Dame Smet is of a very good family. She has an aunt in Holland who is so rich! so rich! I don't know how many bags of gold she has—and, you see, when anybody comes of a good family, it is in the blood, and you can't get rid of it again."

"Always with her prating about her family! What good does that do her? Everybody, even her own husband, laughs at her. I should be ashamed to make so much fuss about it; it is so absurd in the wife of a schouwveger."



Katie was not pleased with these taunts ; she raised her voice, and said, in a sharper tone, as if she were a little out of humour—

“ I don’t know what concern it is of yours. Schouwveger or not, they live in their own house, and owe nobody anything ; they can pay their way, and needn’t trouble themselves about the envy of their neighbours.”

“ It would be odd if *you* didn’t like her,” said another of the girls, with a smile ; “ she is Pauw’s mother.”

“ Come, come, Katie, don’t be vexed—it is only my way of talking,” said Annemie. “ Everybody bakes his own loaf as he likes it ; and if he chooses to burn his fingers in the pan, that is his own look-out.”

After a short pause, one of the girls asked in a kindly tone—

“ Tell us, now, Katie : I heard say yesterday—but I can’t believe it—that you are going to be married.”

With a heightened colour on her cheeks, Katie stammered out—

“ Oh, these neighbours ! Give them an inch, they take an ell ! ”

“ So, it is true, then ? ”

“ Not quite : Master Smet has been joking about it with my father.”

“Ha, then the thing is half done. Well—good luck to you, Katie!”

One of the other girls curled her lip with a kind of disdain, and said—

“Ay, ay, Kate—to marry a chimney-sweep—a fellow who is, six days in the week, as black as old Nick himself. Why, if he were covered with gold from head to foot, I wouldn’t have him.”

“That’s because you can’t get him!” muttered Katie.

“I wouldn’t have him either, though he is the merriest lad in the whole quarter,” remarked another girl. “Sundays, when he is washed, he is all very well; but in the week! you can’t shake hands with him but you must run off to the pump; and when you talk to him, you have always that everlasting black phiz of his before your eyes. Bless me! ’tis enough to frighten one out of one’s senses. When he laughs and shows his white teeth, he cuts a face like a dog chewing cayenne pepper—”

“What a wicked tongue you have,” interposed the talkative Annemie. “Pauw is the best lad you will find anywhere about; he sings such merry songs, he dances and jumps—he is the life of the whole street. Everybody is glad when he comes by, for wherever he is there is laughter and merriment. And then look at him on Sundays,

when he walks up and down with his blue coat, and tosses his head with his pretty cap on it! I say he is a very good-looking lad, and Katie is quite right to like him—especially if her father and mother don't object."

At this moment they heard at a distance the cry—*Aep, aep, aep!*\*—echoing merrily through the narrow street.

"Ah, there is Pauw, with his father!" exclaimed they all together, with a joyous laugh. "Ah, *Jan-Grap* and *Pauwken-Plezier*†!"

At one end of the street, some considerable distance from the group of girls, a man was seen approaching. He was about fifty years old, but in the full vigour of life, and walked with a light elastic step, and with his head quite upright. His clothes, like those of all the *schouwvegers*, were made of coarse, unbleached linen, and fitted quite close to his body; he was covered—face and hands and all—with soot. He seemed of a very lively temperament; for as he went along he kept up a continual laugh with the neighbours, and had a joke for everybody.

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\*This is the customary cry of the Antwerp chimney-sweepers; they are bound to thrust their heads out at the top of the chimney, and shout this cry three times, to show that their work is thoroughly done.

† *Jan-Gladsome* and *Pauwken-Mirthful*,

Five or six steps behind him came his son, Pauw; a sprightly youth, just on the verge of manhood. His face and clothes were black with soot; the whiteness of his eyes and teeth, and the living red of his lips, contrasted strikingly with his dusky features.

A sack filled with soot hung over his shoulder; in his right hand was a little brush, and, besides, a branch of whitethorn in full flower—the May-flower of the Antwerp people.

As he entered the street, humming a lively ditty, and making all kinds of astonishing leaps, his grimaces and gesticulations awakened the merriment of all the neighbourhood.

“Vieze Breugel!”\* said one.

“They may well call him Pauwken-Plezier,” remarked another; “there is always laughing going on where he is.”

“As the old birds sing, so the young ones chirp. He and his father will die laughing.”

“’Tis the way with the Antwerp chimney-sweepers—’tis the badge of their craft. A solemn schouwveger is more scarce than a lively undertaker.”

“Well, that’s what I like,” said an old chair-

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\*The name of a famous Flemish painter. His subjects were usually comic, and he was hence called *vieze*, funny or facetious.

maker: "they're quite in the right of it; they don't neglect their work, and they pay everybody his own. Do well and live merry. You can't better that."

Annie sprang up suddenly, and exclaimed—

"Listen! he's got a new song. Oh, isn't it a beautiful one? Where does he get them all from?"

"He makes them all himself," said Katie, with gratified pride.

"Dear me! is he such a scholar as that? I didn't know that."

"Yes; there isn't a single notice on the church door that he can't read; he has it all at his fingers' ends."

The young chimney-sweep had meanwhile come so near that they could distinguish what he was singing so lustily. It was a right merry ditty and its light tripping melody was well adapted to the peculiar kind of dancing step which the Antwerp folk call a "flikker" and the French "un entrechat."

Pauwken-Plezier sang thus, with sundry odd grimaces by way of accompaniment:—

"Schouwvegers gay, who live in A. B.,  
 Companions so jolly,  
 All frolic and folly,—  
 Schouwvegers gay, who live in A. B.,  
 Come out, and sing us a glee.  
 Your Schouwveger gay is a right merry fellow;

Though sooty his skin,  
The wit's all within.  
The blacker his phiz  
The blither he is.  
He climbs and he creeps—  
He brushes and sweeps—  
He sings and he leaps—  
At each chimney he drinks till he's mellow.  
Aep, aep, aep,  
Light-hearted and free—  
Always welcome is he! "

And as while he was singing he manifested a strong inclination to come very close to Katie, her companions uttered a loud scream, and held their hands spread over their frames to protect them from stain.

"No, Pauw ; get along with you ; be quiet, do ; you will make our work dirty !" they shrieked.

But Pauw seemed to become suddenly more peaceful and quiet, under the inspiration of the sweet smile which Katie had bestowed on him at sight of the flowers. She well knew that the first gift of the fair May-month was destined for her ; her blue eyes beamed with gentle gratitude, and they so touched the young schouwveger, that the song died away on his lips and the laugh from his countenance.

After a while, as though he could not be serious long together, he conquered his emotion, and said, laughingly—

"Katie, I have been roaming about the fields—that is to say, from village to village —and I have

been singing *aep, aep, aep*, with all my might, in opposition to the nightingales, until my throat is as rough as a grater. But I met out there a damsel, so beautiful, such a darling; and she was so affectionate to me that I almost——Now, now, don't be sulky, Katie. The damsel asked me, then, whether I had a liking for anybody? I was going to say *no*, but I didn't like to tell a lie; and when I nodded my head to say *yes*, she asked what was the name of the girl I liked better than anybody else? 'Ah!' said I, 'don't you know?' Ha, ha, 'tis a little lass like a rose, and her name is Katie.' 'Ah, well,' says the young damsel, 'make my compliments to her, and give her these flowers from me.' "

All the girls were staring at the chimney-sweep with their mouths open, and a half-incredulous smile on their faces.

" 'And if you always love each other, in honour and in virtue,' said she, then, 'I will make you merry every year, and give you all kinds of flowers, as many as you like.' "

"Who could it have been?" asked the palest of the girls, in amazement.

"You know her well enough, all the time," said Pauw, laughing.

"What is her name, then?"

"Her name is **Mademoiselle de May.**"

“Mademoiselle de May? I know a Madame de May, who lives round the corner at the dry-salter’s ; but it can’t be her.”

“Oh! don’t you see the rogue takes us all for fools?” cried Annemie. “He means Mademoiselle de May-month!”

“Exactly so: I meant our old acquaintance!” said Pauw, still laughing, as he gave the fragrant branch of thorn to Katie, and said to another of the girls—

“Trieny, will you have some? Oh, they smell so nice!”

The girl reached out her hand, and Pauw struck her gently with the branch.

“Oh my! you ugly old schouwveger!” exclaimed Trieny.

“No rose without a thorn,” said Pauw, sportively.

But Trieny was so vexed that she stood up, put her arms akimbo, and assailed him thus:

“Oh, you black, sooty villain! what do you think of yourself? You go roaming about doing nothing, and think you may take any liberty. Go and wash yourself. you dirty nigger. Your father is at home already. Make haste, or you’ll catch the rod!”

“Look at the little dragoon, how well she rides her horse!” said the young sweep in a mocking



tone of voice. "You are not tongue-tied, auyhow, Trieny. Ill-temper doesn't become you—you ought to have a nice pair of moustaches."

And with these words, he made a gesture as though he were about to reach the face of the girl with his black fingers; but all the group set on him at once, and overwhelmed him with abuse:

"Hobgoblin! Ugly schouwveger! Soot-sack! Aep, aep, aep!" and sundry other curious appellations.

Pauw could not bear down the clamour, so he began to beat a retreat, shaking his head from side to side as if he would allow the shafts of their invectives to fly over his shoulders harmless. Then he shouted all at once—

"Holloa, my little darlings, I must just make an end of this, and then go and wash myself. Heads up! one, two, three!"

At these words he cut five or six capers in the air, and shook his soot-bag so vigorously that he diffused a dark cloud over the scene, singing the while—

"Sing and dance, Pauw, my boy—  
For nobody can harm you."

All the girls raised their frames and ran off with cries of dismay, lest their work should be stained by the soot. While some were running and screaming, and others laughing and shouting,

the schouwveger capered away toward the door of his house, shouting to them—

“Good-bye, my dear little turtle-doves ! *à tantôt*. I’ll just go and put on my Sunday face !”

## CHAPTER II.

THE little narrow street had been already for half an hour wrapped in the shades of evening. Mother Smet, the schouwveger’s wife, was sitting at a table, and was busy in darning the woollen stockings of her Pauw, by the glimmering of a small lamp. Her clothes were not simply clean—they were more costly than her condition in life would have indicated ; for, although she was in her own house, and would not probably go out again for the evening, she wore a rose-coloured jacket with little flowers, a cloth gown trimmed with velvet, and a cap white as snow, with stately wings.

Sad or irritating thoughts seemed to be passing through her mind ; for very often she would pause in her work, and then her countenance would be clouded with an expression of anger or vexation.

“That’s the way they always cheat poor people

who happen to have anything left them," she muttered, at length. "They know how to mystify it, and to draw it out, and put it off till the poor legatee is dead, and then the rascals quietly put the whole into their own pockets. It makes me mad to think of it. Old Kobe, the mason, in the Winkel Street—he happened to have a hundred thousand crowns left him; all was quite straightforward—but they dragged him about backward and forward, from Herod to Pilate, so long, that he died of starvation in his little attic. Six months afterward the inheritance was shared between three or four great men, who didn't want it at all and I suppose the best part of Kobe's share was left sticking to the fingers of those lawyers. But they shan't treat me so, I can tell them. If it cost me ~~my~~ <sup>my</sup> last farthing, I'll see what has become of the legacy of my ~~aunt~~ <sup>aunt</sup> in Holland—the precious thieves!"

At this moment her husband came down-stairs, blew out the lamp he had in his hand, set it down on a shelf, and then stood with his arms folded, looking with a smile on his amiable wife. The schouwveger's face was now washed quite clean; his clothes were such as were usually worn by the inferior burghers, whenever they went out of an evening to drink a pint of beer with their neighbours,

"I fancy I've pretty well served out the rats in the attic now," said he. "Only guess, Trees, what I have done?"

"Oh, let me alone," answered his wife, in a pet. "You have been serving out the rats these ten years past; but they serve us out the worst. Only leave anything in the attic, and if 'tis only a soot-bag, they have gnawed it to pieces before morning."

"Well, how can I help it? Do you fancy I can catch all the rats in the city? They are always on the move, and they run along the drains and gutters. They don't take a lease of a house; but if they find themselves well off, there they stay. I saw one morning, Trees, a black fellow with a tail long enough to make a pair of garters of. But, dame, your nose is out of joint to-day; you don't ride your hobby easily. Always these sou looks!"

"I look just as I like!"

"To be sure, to be sure—only so much the worse that you do it on purpose. I have noticed all day that you have got a thorn in your foot. Something about lawyers, I fancy, or your aunt in Holland, or legacies, bags of gold, and other castles in the air?"

"'Tis no business of yours. What do *you* know about it?"

“ Well, Trees, listen once for all—quite seriously and without laughing.”

“ Without laughing? You can’t, you merry-andrew, you !”

“ Well, just listen. We have been married now nearly five-and-twenty years ; next year, come St. John-in-the-oil, is our jubilee, our silver wedding-feast.\* All these years you have been running about after lawyers, and tying up wills, and codicils, and registers—and every month carrying ever so many pretty francs to that little black man. If all this money were in one heap, it would be a snug little inheritance by itself ; for there are a good many months in five-and-twenty years. Up to now I have let you do what you liked ; but now every thing is so confoundedly dear. Potatoes are two francs the sack ; meat is so dear that the money I get for sweeping one chimney wouldn’t buy enough for us to point at—and bread, bread !”

“ Yes, much you care what bread costs !” said his wife, scornfully, “ if only beer doesn’t rise in price.”

“ Now, as long as there is enough, even if ’tis something rather coarse, I shouldn’t make a fuss about it, mother dear. A cheerful temper is as good as bread. But I’m getting out of my beat.

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\* May 6th, a feast in memory of St. John’s being cast into a cauldron of seething oil, and coming forth unhurt. The twenty-fifth year of wedded life is the *silver* jubilee ; the fiftieth, the *golden*.

What I wanted to say to you is this: you lie dreaming of *my aunts* and *my uncles*, and of all sorts of miserable legacies you are going to get. Stuff and nonsense, all the time! And every day you get worse and worse, Trees. If you don't leave off—you are growing old now—you will have a screw loose in your head; and if you don't take care, God only knows whether you won't find yourself in the madhouse, with all your Dutch *my aunts* and *my uncles*."

His wife stood up, and answered, with a smile of derision on her lips: "Well, well, what one must hear from one's own husband! Do you mean to say that I am not of a good family?"

"Oh, no, my little wife; you come of a very good family, I know—from the family of Jan everybody. Your father, of blessed memory, kept a rag-shop, and sold all sorts of odds and ends, bits of old iron, and copper, and lead; and people thought he was rich—I suppose because he was such an old screw; but when he died at last, no money was forthcoming, and we got nothing but our cottage. Well, that's quite enough. Your niece goes about selling oranges, your venerable aunt picks up old iron and bones, your uncle's son is a fireman—most excellent, worthy, reputable people, all of them; but that much fat drips from their fingers—*that* isn't true."

“Who is talking of my family here in Belgium? In Holland are Van den Berghs by the thousand.”

“There are plenty more Janssens. These twenty years you have been hunting up all the Van den Berghs on the face of the earth, to see if any of them belong to *our family*, and you have spent foolishly I won’t say how many crowns about it. Moonshine, every bit of it. A man sees just what he likes to see. Go and stand on the wharf by the Scheldt when there’s a bit of breeze, and look at the driving clouds. What will you see? A man on horseback—Napoleon—a giant—a coach-and-four—a dragon with seven heads? You have only to wish—there it is before you. And so it is with you. Trees, dear, you have a regular puppet-show in your brains.”

The dame sat down again, and said, with desponding sadness on her every feature—

“It is wonderful how obstinate you are; and I was hoping you would go this afternoon to our lawyer’s. The rogue, after keeping me waiting these two years, and getting hold of all my crowns—for wax, and paper, and letters, and I don’t know what besides—has told me this very day that my family, large as it is, consists entirely of poor people. He has given me back all my letters and papers in a heap, and told me good-

humouredly enough not to come to his house again."

"Well, that lawyer is a fine fellow. He might go on taking your money; but he doesn't want to fleece you, and he gives you good advice for nothing. There are not many such lawyers to be found—at least so says the song, for I don't know much about them myself; and if they had to live on my money, they would get precious little butter to their bread."

This colloquy seemed to have relieved Mother Smet of the vexation which had worried her all the day; so it was with a milder tone that she replied—

"Say what you like, I shall be rich yet before I am laid in my grave. I am of a good family, and shall have some legacy. This very night I dreamed I found a lump of gold as big as the door-stone."

"Ha!" shouted the schouwveger, laughing, "then that's a sign you'll wait a long time. If you had dreamed of spider's webs, now—that betokens money—"

All at once they both heard a noise over their heads.

"Eh, what's that?" asked the chimney-sweeper.

"Don't you hear what it is?" said his wife,



with a provoking smile ; “ ’tis the rats come out into the attic again, and laughing at you for a fool. Much they care for the fine trick you have played them ! ”

“ Well, that’s wonderful ! ” growled Master Smet ! “ I filled up every hole and crevice just now with chalk and ground glass. I’ll just go and see ; perhaps I left one hole—but I don’t hear them any more now.”

“ But, Smet,” asked his wife, “ suppose we were to become rich some fine day, what would you do ? ”

“ For God’s sake, Trees, don’t worry me with all this stuff about being rich. We are not in want of anything. Our Lord gives us our daily bread, and he gives me my pint of beer with my friends—what more could we wish for ? ”

“ Yes ; but if only you were rich, now ? ”

Her husband put his hand to his forehead, and answered, after a little consideration—

“ What would I do ? Let me see : I’d manage very well, you may be sure. In the first place, I would paint our house and our sign, and gild the A.B. Secondly, I’d buy four hams all at once, to make a good cheer in the winter. Thirdly—what would I do thirdly ? Oh, I’d give four sacks of potatoes and six quarters of coal to the poor widow with her sick children, there round the

corner. Fourthly, I'd buy a house for our Pauw ; and the day he married Katie we would have such a wedding-feast that you should smell it all the way up to the Magpie-hill."

"And is that all, now ? that's well worth being rich for !"

"How do I know what I should do besides ? But, once for all, I should live well, and make my friends live well too."

"And would you remain a chimney-sweep still ?"

"Eh, what do you say ?"

"Whether you would remain a chimney-sweep still ?"

"Yes—that is to say, I should sweep chimneys for my own pleasure."

"Ha, ha, you stupid booby !" exclaimed his wife, bursting into a loud laugh.

"And what should I do else with my time ?" asked Master Smet. "Do you think I should like to sit all day long in the public house ? Let us hear now, Trees, how *you* would manage matters if a treasure from the sky came into our hands."

"Oh, I know how to manage much better. I am of a good family," said the wife, with a tone of exultation. "I should buy a large house in the Kildor, or on the Meir ; I would have a coach and four horses, and a sledge for the winter

I would have my clothes of silk and velvet, with a muff and a boa—”

“What’s that you say? A *boa*—what is that?”

“Oh, something to wear round the neck like fine ladies.”

“Isn’t that the tail of some wild beast?”

“Yes, indeed; that costs something!—and I would wear diamonds on my breast, in my ears, and on my fingers; and behind, my gown should have a long train, like the queens in the old comedies; and wherever I went, a footman should follow me—you know how I mean, with a yellow coat, and a gold band round his hat. And then I should come and walk through this street every day, to make the grocer’s wife over the way burst with envy and spite—”

“Oh, leave off, leave off!” roared the chimney-sweeper, “or you’ll make *me* burst with laughing. Don’t you see my Lady Smet, the schouwveger’s wife, walking the streets with a long train to her gown, with a fox’s tail round her neck, and a great big canary-bird at her heels? If you are not talking like a fool now, Trees, then I knock under. You may put me in the madhouse at once; for one or other of us two has a bee in his bonnet. But only listen, what a row there is up-stairs: the rats are splitting with laughter at you, Trees.”

"But what is the matter up in the attic? What a screaming and scampering! Just go and look, Smet. You'd better open all the holes again, for I think all the rats in the neighbourhood have got together there since you took to playing them tricks."

The schouwveger rose from the table, lighted his lamp, and took a rusty old sabre from behind the great chest.

"I'll let them see," said he; "but get out a few cents ready, Trees; for I want to go and get my pint of beer."

Mother Smet remained below, and listened awhile to the noise that her husband made with his sabre, hewing and thrusting at the rats in the attic. But soon the noise ceased, and she fell into a deep reverie, and dreamed of silken clothes and diamond rings, and footmen with gold bands round their hats.

She remained some time lost in the contemplation of the happiness of being rich; a sweet smile illumined her countenance, and she kept nodding with her head as though her mind were giving reality to the images which her fancy shaped.

At last she heard the stairs creak beneath the heavy tread of her husband; she looked up in astonishment, for she saw no light on the staircase.

"Is your lamp gone out?" she asked.

The schouwveger stalked down the stairs in silence, and came close to her with unsteady steps. He was trembling in every limb, and the perspiration stood in thick drops upon his pale face.

His wife uttered a cry of terror; then she sprang up, and exclaimed—

"Good heavens! what has come over you? What have you seen?—a thief? a ghost?"

"Silence! silence! let me fetch my breath," murmured the chimney-sweeper, with hushed and stifled voice.

"But what has happened, then?" shouted his wife; "you make me feel more dead than alive."

"Silence, I say! speak softer, Trees," mumbled her husband, as if paralyzed by fear. "Don't let anybody hear us."

He came closer to her, stooped his head over her shoulder, and whispered—

"Trees, Trees dear, your dream is come true—a treasure—such a great treasure!"

"Oh, poor, unhappy Smet!" shrieked his wife, in alarm; "he has lost his senses!"

"No, no; don't make any noise, or we are lost," said her excited husband, imploringly.

"But speak out, then; for goodness' sake, what has happened?"

"I have found a treasure exactly as you dreamed."

"A lump of gold?"

"No, a bag of money—all silver and gold. Come, take the lamp; I'll let you see it."

His wife now grew pale in her turn, and trembled with astonishment. Now she began to believe that he was in earnest, and, amid all her emotion, a warm smile played about her lips. Following her husband, she said, beseechingly—

"Oh, Smet, don't deceive me; if it isn't true I shall die of vexation—"

"Hold you tongue, I tell you," muttered the schouwveger between his teeth, as he went up the stairs; "you will betray us."

"But how came you to find it?" asked his wife, with hushed voice.

Master Smet stood still, as though he wished to satisfy the curiosity of his helpmate before showing her the treasure.

"You heard well enough, Trees," said he, "how I struck about on the floor with my sabre. When I got up-stairs there wasn't a rat to be seen, but those blows of mine made two jump out of a corner; they ran between my legs, and disappeared close to the centre-beam on which the roof is supported. I went up to the place with my lamp, but I found no opening nor crevice. After

I had hunted in every hole and corner I went back to the great beam, for I couldn't conceive where the two rats had got to. Though I didn't see any hole, or crack even, in the beam, I struck it with my sabre—I don't know why, exactly. It sounded so hollow and made such a strange noise that I struck it harder and harder, thinking that the rats had taken up their abode inside. All of a sudden a little square plank started from the beam ; and plump ! down came something on my foot, so heavy that I was going to cry out with pain—”

“ A lump of gold ? ”

“ No, not exactly ; a bag of money ! It burst in falling, and all sorts of gold and silver coins rolled about the floor. I felt as if I had had a good blow from a hammer ; the lamp fell out of my hand, I shook all over ; and I was obliged to hold by the wall to come down-stairs. Everything seemed to be turning round and round before my eyes ; I felt like a drunken man. Now come, walk on the tips of your toes, and when you speak, lower your voice as much as you can.”

When they reached the attic, the chimney-sweeper led his wife toward the centre-beam, and let the light of the lamp fall on a large linen bag which lay on the ground, with pieces of money all around it.

Dame Smet fell on her knees with a suppressed

cry of joy, tore the bag open still farther, buried her hands in the pieces of money, remained a short time sunk in silent amazement, and then sprang to her feet. She raised her hands above her head, ran round and round the attic, and danced and jumped, and at last shouted with a loud cry—

“ Oh ! oh ! I am bursting ! I shall split ! Let me speak a bit ! O blessed heavens ! now we are rich, rich as Jews ! ”

Full of terror, the schouwveger seized his wife violently by the arm with one hand, laid the other on her mouth, and growled angrily, and with a threatening voice—

“ You stupid, thoughtless fool ! Be quiet, or I’ll pinch your arm black and blue. Do you want the neighbours to know all about it ? ”

“ Good heavens ! ” groaned his wife, quite terrified ; “ what’s the matter now ? You are making a face as if you would kill me outright. How money alters a man ! All the five-and-twenty years we have been married, I never saw your eyes glare like that ! ”

The chimney-sweeper seemed surprised at his own vehemence ; he let go her arm, and continued more calmly :

“ No, no, Trees, I don’t mean it ; but I beg you, talk more softly, and don’t make any noise. Tell me, where shall we put all this money ? ”



“ Well, let us put it down-stairs in the great chest, and lock it up.”

“ And suppose thieves were to come ? ”

“ Why should they take it into their heads to come just now ? The chest has stood there these hundred years.”

“ Yes ; but you can’t be sure about it.”

“ You must put it somewhere, anyhow.”

“ Suppose I hide it under our bed in the straw ? ”

“ Oh, one can see *you* are not used to money, Smet. Do you think rich people hide their money in their beds ? Put it in the chest, I tell you. If you find a better place to-morrow, it will be time enough to change our minds.”

Taking the second lamp from the floor, the chimney-sweeper said—

“ Trees, you take the money in your apron. I will go down and lock the door, that nobody may take us by surprise ; and take care you don’t let the money chink as you carry it.”

While his wife was descending the stairs with a heavy freight of gold, Master Smet locked the door, and drew the night-bolt ; then he went to the window, to the trap-door of the cellar, to the back door, and tried all the bolts and bars. Meanwhile his wife had locked all the treasure in the great chest, and she was already sitting at the table, staring into the air with heaving bosom,

and lingering on the sweet contemplation of her wealth.

Her husband came close to her, stretched out his hand, and said, with a stern voice—

“The key!”

“The key? exclaimed Dame Smet, in haughty amazement. “It shan’t come to that in our old days—that you should keep the keys! I have kept them in all honour these five-and-twenty years. You would like, maybe, to squander the money in your schouwvegers’ club; but stop a bit I keep the money-box!”

Master Smet shook his head impatiently.

“No,” growled he; “it is to hinder you from wasting all the money. When we had but little, it didn’t seem worth while to save; but now I’ll take care that we lay by something for the time when we are old and infirm, else we may fall into poverty and misery before we die.”

“Well, well, Smet, my lad, money doesn’t do you any good,” said the dame, with an angry, taunting voice. “You talk like an old miser; you make a face like an undertaker—”

“Come, Trees, give me the key.”

“The key? If I have to fight for it tooth and nail, I won’t give it up.”

“Won’t you take anything out of the chest without my consent?”

“ Well, that is to say, I won’t go extravagantly to work ; but that I shan’t buy a few new clothes, and change my old earrings that I have worn so long for a rather better pair—are we not man and wife ? If I were to listen to you, we should be poorer than we were before. If you don’t get some enjoyment out of your money, you had better paint a quantity of ten-crown pieces on the wall ; you would have the look of them all the same, and less trouble with them.”

“ You don’t understand me, Trees. If you go now all at once and let out that we have plenty of money, by wearing clothes which are beyond our station in life, the neighbours will begin to gossip about it, and ask how we came by it.”

“ Well, and what matter if they do ? The money belongs to me ; my forefathers have lived in this house more than a hundred years. Besides, there was no money forthcoming after my father’s sudden death—he hadn’t time to say where he had hidden it. And what harm would it be if everybody knew that I had found my inheritance ?”

“ What harm, you senseless thing ? If the thieves came to know that we have so much money, they would break into the house, steal the treasure, and murder us, perhaps.”

“ How timid the sight of this money has

made you ! I shouldn't know you again, Smet."

"Yes ; and then consider that people wouldn't so easily believe us if we said that we had found the money. God grant we may not have the police on our shoulders ; they may think it is stolen money. Then they would carry off the treasure to the police office, till the matter was properly inquired into. If the law once lays its hand on it, get it out again if you can ! Alas ! alas ! we should be eased of our treasure, and perhaps die in misery, after all."

"Indeed," said the dame, anxiously, "I think you are right."

"O Trees, Trees dear, do be a little prudent for once ; be a little more reserved, and don't tell anybody that we have become rich."

"Yes—if only I can be silent !" grumbled his wife, and she shrugged her shoulders. "I learned to talk from my mother, and she didn't let her tongue grow stiff for want of using."

"Good heavens ! 'tis very unlucky ?"

"If every rich man were like you, it would be unlucky indeed. But can't we let the neighbours know that we have had a legacy ? I have talked long enough about it, I'm sure."

A smile overspread the face of the chimney-sweeper, and his eyes sparkled with joyful sur-

prise. He remained a while in great meditation, and then said—

“That we have had a legacy—but then people would know that we have plenty of money in the house.”

“ Well ? ”

“ And the thieves ? ”

“ Oh, you have lost your wits.”

“ No ; what do you think we will say ?—that we shall soon get a legacy—that we have had tidings of your uncle in Holland—”

“ Of my *aunt*—that will be better ; and if I buy a bit of new clothes, or any little trifle, people will only think that we are using a little of our legacy beforehand.”

“ Well, you see, that will do ; nobody will know that there is any money in the house, and everybody will allow that you are of a good family. But, Trees, you will be reasonable now, won’t you, and spare our money a little ? ”

“ Come, now, *our* money—you mean *my* money. I won’t do more than our position requires.”

“ And we will tell Pauw the same story, or perhaps the lad might take a whim in his head, and turn spendthrift—”

“ There—I hear him coming ! ” exclaimed the dame ; “ make haste and unbolt the door, or he will ask what is going on.”

The chimney-sweeper sprang up, unlocked the door, and sat down again with a calm countenance at the table, as if nothing at all had happened.

Outside the door, in the street, resounded the ditty—

“Schouwvegers gay, who live in A. B.,  
Companions so jolly,  
All frolic and folly—”

and Pauw came singing and capering into the room.

Coming up to the table he said, in a sprightly tone of voice, and talking very fast—

“Oh, oh, how we have laughed! If I had missed such a bit of fun, I should cry out, for my mouth is sore with laughing. Only think, they have made me captain of the birdcatchers’ club!”\*

“Come, come, don’t make so much noise about it,” grumbled his father.

“Oh, ’t isn’t about that, father,” joyously exclaimed Pauw. “You know, father, we had laid by some money to get a new flag made for our club? The fine painter in the Winkel Street—him they call Rubens, because he wears a broad hat and mustaches—well, now, he was to paint a great owl on the flag. Oh, oh, that was a clever notion! This evening, while we were sitting

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\* There are at Antwerp clubs among the lower classes, the members of which lay by a little money regularly, in order to go bird-catching in the autumn with an owl.

having a chat, all of a sudden he brought the new flag. We all jumped up, full of curiosity. Piet Kruls rolled the flag open; we looked at one another—and then we all burst out into such a terrible fit of laughter that three or four of us fell down on the ground, and the others were forced to hold their sides. But there was one who cut a very sour face, and this was the smith. Now guess what was painted on the flag.”

“Oh, always at your childish pranks,” said his mother. “What should there be on it?—why, an owl, I suppose.”

“Yes, yes, an owl with an head as big as a child’s of eight years old; but the fun of it was that the owl and the smith were as much alike as two drops of water. There was such a laughing and such a row! The smith wanted to drag out the painter by the hair of his head—the inn-keeper wanted to turn the smith out of doors; we wanted to make it all up; three pint stoups were broken and two hats crushed—at last, all ended in a good hearty laugh for Rubens promised to alter the owl. But what has come to you? You are not listening to me. Father is looking so solemn, and you, too, mother! You are not ill I hope?”

“It is no time for jesting now,” answered Dame Smet, in a very serious tone of voice. “Pauw, my

lad, I want to tell you something : we are going to have a legacy ! ”

“ Again ? ” shouted the youth, with mocking unbelief.

‘ This time it is true enough. ’

‘ ~~And~~ now this song well of old. Of course, from ~~my~~ aunt in Holland. ’

“ Yes, from my aunt in Holland. ”

“ Come, come, mother, you have grown a little wiser now. It isn’t true, father, is it ? ”

“ It seems that it is true enough this time, ” answered Master Smet, with a confirmatory nod of his head.

“ Ah, well, ” cried Pauw, laughing, “ then I bespeak a new pair of breeches and a dozen shirt-collars, when the legacy comes ! ”

Both his parents held their peace, and looked grave and solemn. Pauw looked from one to the other in amazement, and grumbled :

“ But, mother—but, father—you sit there quite in the dumps about the good news ; tell me what you have heard. ”

“ I have a headache, ” answered his father ; “ talking worries me. I will tell you to-morrow what we have reason to expect. ”

“ And ’tis *my aunt’s* legacy, which has been coming ever since—long before I came into the world ? ”



"Yes, yes; let us be quiet about it now."

Pauw shook his head doubtfully, and thought in himself—

"Something has turned up that they won't tell me. People who get legacies look more merry about it. Perhaps they have had some words; but I won't bother myself about that."

He took the second lamp, lighted it, and then said—

"To-morrow I must get up early, at four o'clock, to go and sweep three chimneys at the Château van Ranst. It is a good two hours' walk from here—so good-night."

"Pauw," said his mother, with a significant pride in her voice, "we are no longer Schouwvegers!—and when you go out to-morrow put on your Sunday clothes, do you hear?"

"Look now, mother; don't take it ill," said the lad, with a smile, "but that is going rather too far."

"And, anyhow, my lady's servant has been to say that you are not to go to the château to-morrow."

"That's quite another thing. Then I shall get a good long sleep. To-morrow the legacy will be flown away up the chimney, just like the other times. Good-night, mother; a pleasant sleep, father."

He went up-stairs with light and merry step, and hummed quite audibly as he went—

“Schouwvegers gay, who live in A. B.,  
Companions so jolly,  
All frolic and folly—”

Master Smet and his wife remained sitting below at least two hours longer. Whatever efforts the dame made to induce her husband to betake himself to rest, it seemed that he could not make up his mind to leave the place where his treasure lay. He had already tried all the doors and bolts over and over again, when it struck midnight. Then, after one more anxious and protracted scrutiny, he followed his wife up the stairs; and still, as he went up, he turned his eyes, ten times at least, to the chest which contained his riches.

### CHAPTER III.

THE nerves of the chimney-sweeper were so much shaken by the finding of the treasure, that the poor man, exhausted and tired as he was could not close his eyes. He turned from side to side, stretched himself out and yawned, then twisted his limbs about, and moaned with long

respirations. His heart beat violently and irregularly; every now and then he felt as if a stream of ice-cold water were being poured down his back.

It happened at length that he wandered off into a light doze; but at the moment when a man is passing from waking to sleeping life, his nerves are most quick and sensitive. The schouwveger could not pass this moment; every time the coming slumber broke the chain of his musings, he sprang up in his bed and listened with terror to some noise he fancied he had heard; and, indeed, the rats in the attic were rushing up and down, racing merrily one after another, or fighting, with loud squeaking and crying—just as if they were still in the house of a poor man, whose slumbers are peaceful and sound, beyond reach of disturbance.

It might be that he had at length, after long twisting and turning, got fairly off, for he snored very loud. Gradually his breathing became oppressed, and assumed a tone expressive of suffering, as though Master Smet were tormented by unseen spirits. The sweat of anguish stood in beads on his forehead; all his limbs were violently contracted.

Suddenly the struggling words broke forth from his constricted breast, and he shouted, in a tone

of distress—"No, no! it isn't true: I have no money! Oh! oh! let me go! let me go!"

His wife, roused from her sleep, seized her husband by the arm, gave him a vigorous shake, and exclaimed—

"Eh, Smet, what are you up to now? Is the nightmare astride of you? or are you out of your mind?"

The husband stared in horror all round the dusky room, and groaned and shuddered:

"Oh, dear me! where am I? Good heavens! I thought I was dead! Is that you, Trees?"

"Why, who on earth should it be? 'Tis all your snoring. You lie there wriggling and twisting like an eel on a gridiron. 'Tis enough to see that *you* are not used to money. It doesn't hinder me from sleeping, though I am so uncommonly glad; but, you see, I am of a good family.'

"Oh, Trees!" moaned Master Smet, wiping the cold, clammy perspiration from his forehead: "oh, Trees, what I have suffered is not to be described! Only fancy: I was scarcely asleep, when something came all of a sudden and sat down on my chest, and I felt as if it was trying to crush in my heart with its knees. It had its claws fastened in my neck, and squeezed my throat up all together. I couldn't make out at first what it was; but it was like a wild beast,

with long black hair, and it had a great knife in its paw. It wanted to make me tell where the money was; and because I wouldn't, it gripped my throat, and was going to stick the knife into my heart. I felt I was dying; then my eyes seemed to open, and I screamed with terror when I saw what it was. Oh, Trees, I tremble now only to think of it: it was a thief, a murderer!"

In a few minutes Dame Smet was fast asleep again.

The luckless schouwveger was not so fortunate. He made no effort to fall asleep again, for his fright had taken away all inclination to rest. For full half an hour he lay, with his eyes wide open, staring at the darkness, and dreaming, though broad awake, of policemen and of thieves, so that at length he jumped out of bed, and dressed without making any noise.

Then he went, creeping along on the tips of his toes, to the place where he knew that a table stood, and felt over it with his hand, searching for something. A sigh of glad surprise escaped him, when he discovered his wife's pocket. He took out the key of the chest, and went down the stairs with slow and cautious steps.

When he reached the room below, he lighted a little lamp, went to the chest, opened it, gazed a while upon the money with an ecstatic smile,

then locked the chest again, and sat down with his head on his hands and his elbows upon the table.

After a little silence, he began musing aloud :

“ Ha ! there it lies all safe. Ha ! to be rich—to have money—what bliss ! But, after all, it brings care and trouble with it, and it breaks one’s night’s rest, somehow. My wife has such grand notions ; she wants to live in a big house, to wear rich clothes, to buy gold and diamonds ! Pauw is young ; he’ll want to play the young gentleman, and spend a good deal ; and so they’ll make my poor money cut a pretty figure ! It will melt away like snow in the sunshine—and at last—yes, at last—I shall have to lie upon straw in my old age, and perhaps go a-begging for my daily bread ! ”

This thought filled him with alarm ; he pressed his hands forcibly against his head, and remained a moment staring, with a pale and bloodless face, into vacancy. Then he continued :

“ Oh, what a misfortune to have a wife who can’t keep her tongue still in her head ! Early to-morrow morning, by daybreak at least, she will be running about among her neighbours, and gossiping and boasting that she is going to have a legacy. Thousands won’t be enough for her ;

she'll talk of millions. Everybody will be full of it ; all over the city people will be talking about the schouwveger who has so suddenly become rich. The thieves will be lurking about our house, and then one of these fine nights they will be making off with the treasure ! I shall be poor again—poor again ! Oh, my God ! what anxiety and misery a rich man has to bear ! ”

After a little pause, he continued his musings :

“ It is odd ! I was as lively as a fish in the water : men called me Jan-Grap, because I was so full of fun. I knew nothing of sorrow or anxiety ; all that God sent me was dear to me ; I sang, I danced, I laughed—I thought there was no king so happy as I was ! And now ? Now I shake at the least puff of wind ; I am afraid of myself and of everybody else ; I can't sleep—my heart is thumping and knocking as if something terrible was going to happen to me. I shall get better soon ; I shall get used to riches. And if I don't laugh or dance any more, 'tis quite natural : a rich man must look grave and stately ; it doesn't become him to be laughing and joking. A body can't have all sorts of happiness at once ; and to be rich is, after all, the greatest.”

This last consideration seemed to infuse some consolation into his heart ; for he smiled, and

rubbed his hands, and mumbled some words of gladness and content. In this mood, a new thought struck him, and he said, in a quieter and more gracious tone—

“When I was only a paltry craftsman, I helped the poor widow round the corner as far as I could. I felt so much pity for her unlucky little lambs of children, that I often wished to be rich that I might raise her out of her distress. Her husband—God rest his soul!—was my best friend; and I promised him on his death-bed that I would care for his children. Well, now I am rich. Won’t I keep my promise? Ha, yes! to do good, to be tender-hearted, to help one’s neighbour! Now—now I feel what a happiness it is to be rich! Well, what shall I give the poor widow? Fifty crowns? That’s too much: they would spend it in extravagance; and if I go to work like that, my gold will soon come to an end. Who knows if I shouldn’t make her ungrateful? Suppose, now, I give her ten crowns? I think that’s enough. They have never seen so much money in their lives. It doesn’t do to give poor people too much at once; they are not used to it, and they become greedy and lazy, when they come by it so easily. One mustn’t encourage begging.”

The schouwveger relapsed into silence, and seemed lost in meditation. Suddenly an expres-



sion of alarm and contempt spread itself over his countenance.

"But, Jan, my lad," said he, in a tone of disgust and reproof, "when you were poor and had to save out of your day's wages, you gave them a great deal more than that, by little and little! Sometimes you put into the widow's hand the cents you were going to spend on your daily glass of beer; and, to make her happy, you stayed at home all the evening without seeing your friends. What a horrid thought! Can riches make a man miserly and unpitying? Really, I feel something that horrifies me. Oh, no, no! away with selfishness! I will put aside the fifty crowns for the widow, and allow her something regularly every week out of it. Perhaps God will reward me, by making my wealth sit easier on me, and delivering me from the strange alarm which makes me shake all over."

He rose up slowly, cast a scrutinizing look round the room, and opened the chest. He stood a while in silence, gazing on the heap of money, the gold and silver pieces of which glittered before his eyes like a cluster of stars. He then took out seven ten-crown pieces, put them in his waistcoat-pocket, and muttered to himself, in a joyous tone of voice—

"I'll just put two more to them; the poor widow

is so very miserable, and it does me so much good—the thought that I shall help the children of my friend !”

Still gazing at his treasure, he fell into a silent reverie, and appeared to be calculating in his mind how much the heap of gold might amount to.

Suddenly, as if he had come to some conclusion, he began to scrape together a large number of gold pieces out of the treasure. When he had occupied himself a while in this way, he went to the table, and counted them over. “ Fifty pieces,” said he, pondering deeply—“ fifty pieces make five hundred crowns ; and five hundred Dutch crowns make about a thousand and fifty francs. This sum I’ll hide away somewhere, where neither my wife nor my son will be able to find it. If any misfortune should happen to me, if thieves or gendarmes should come, or if my wife should squander the treasure, this would still remain for our Pauw ; and if he were to marry Katie, there would still be something left to set them up in housekeeping, and enable them to open a little shop.”

He rolled up the money in a rag, went over to the mantel-piece, drew forward a chair, and, standing on it, thrust his head as far as he could into the chimney. He placed the pieces of money on

some projecting stones inside the chimney, and felt secure that no one would think of searching there for them. Then, jumping down into the room again, he said, with a contented smile—

“Ha, now my mind is a little easier; now I shall be able to sleep.”

He was just about to blow out the lamp and go up-stairs, when he suddenly checked himself, and began to tremble with alarm. He fancied he heard somebody trying to break open the window from the outside; and, indeed, there was a sound as of a man's hand touching the shutters.

The terrified schouwveger fixed his eyes upon the window, and was so paralyzed by fear that the lamp shook in his hand; when, to his great relief, he heard the sound of steps retreating from the window, and a hoarse voice singing in snatches—

“We were so jolly, and we tarried so long—  
Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la!”

“Oh, the drunken rascal!” growled Master Smet. “He little thinks that he has half killed me with fright—the noisy vagabond! The police are fit for nothing! Anyhow, ’tis the rich people that pay the police; why don’t they at least take care that rich people may be able to get a little sleep?”

After listening some time longer at the window, he blew the lamp out, crept softly up-stairs, put

the key of the chest again into his wife's pocket, and lay down on the bed without undressing.

At last he fell asleep, and dozed for, it might be, half an hour, without any other signs of restlessness than an occasional contraction of his arms and legs.

All of a sudden there was a loud noise in the attic, as if something heavy had fallen on the floor. The schouwveger started with terror from his sleep, jumped up from his bed in consternation, and ran against a chair so violently that he overturned it, and it fell on the floor with a loud noise.

Thereupon his wife started up, and exclaimed angrily—

“Tut, Smet, are you possessed, that you are playing such pranks in the dark? What's the matter with you now?”

“Oh, Trees, thieves!” groaned he, with choking voice. “Where is the sabre?”

“Come, come, you are dreaming again,” said his wife, with a sneer. “Do you think the thieves can smell out money?”

“They are up in the attic; listen, listen!” whispered the schouwveger, pointing upward, with his hair on end, and pale as a sheet. And, truly, heavy steps were heard on the stairs, and soon some one knocked loudly at the door of the chamber.

Beside himself with fright, Master Smet threw up the window that looked out on the street, and screamed, with all his might—

“Help, help! thieves! murder!”

And, in order to rouse the neighbours the more effectually, he added to his cry of distress the alarming words, “Fire! fire!”

He saw in the distance two persons who were running at full speed down the street, attracted by his screams.

A voice cried anxiously at the chamber-door—

“Father, father, open the door! Is the house on fire?”

“Oh, you fool!” muttered Dame Smet; “it is Pauw. Let him in; you’ll frighten the lad out of his wits.”

“Where—where is the fire?” asked Pauw, in consternation, as soon as the door was opened.

“It is nothing, nothing at all; I was only dreaming,” stammered his father.

“Ha, I wish I knew what was going on!” said the lad, in perplexity. “It seems to me that our house has been haunted all night long; I haven’t been able to sleep a wink. Overhead the rats are at work as if they were mad; down here I hear talking going on, chairs tumbling about, cries of murder and fire; and when I run down, with quaking heart, I find there is nothing at all the

matter Look you, father, don't be angry with me, but it seems to me as if you were busy playing Punch and Judy."

The schouwveger had sunk into a chair, and sobbed aloud, overcome by the fright he had experienced. The silence lasted a short time, during which Pauw stood awaiting an answer, with amazement increasing every moment.

"If I am not to know," he muttered, "I won't ask any more about it; but, father, what will the neighbours say? Heaven knows, you have roused up more than fifty of them out of their beds with your frightful cry of, 'Fire, fire!'"

"Your father was dreaming," said Dame Smet; "he can't get the legacy out of his head. Go to bed again, Pauw."

"What's that I hear now?" moaned the schouwveger, in fresh surprise.

The street seemed to shake beneath the rumbling of heavy wheels, coming at a great pace.

"Oh, 'tis the artillerymen going with their guns to the camp at Brasschaet," said Pauw; "but 'tis odd they should come through our street."

"What can it be?" exclaimed Dame Smet; "they are stopping at our door!"

Pauw opened the window, gave a look into the street, and, turning round into the room again, said, with a loud laugh —

“ Well, here’s a joke ! ’tis the fire-brigade, with all their engines and pipes ! ”

There was a tremendous knocking at the door ; every blow echoed distressingly through the heart of the schouwveger, who lay so crushed by his terror that he was unable to utter a word.

Pauw thrust his head out of the window again, and asked the men, who were thundering with all their might at the door. “ Holloa ! what’s the matter down there ? Go about your business, and let folks sleep in peace ! ”

“ Where is the fire ? ” exclaimed a voice.

“ Where is the fire ? ” repeated Pauw. “ Why, in the oven of oily Schram, the baker, to be sure ; it’s eight houses off, on the right-hand side of the way, close to the green-grocer’s.”

“ I’ll teach you how to cut your jokes up there ! ” said the sergeant of the fire-brigade. “ Open the door this minute, or I’ll break it open by force ! ”

“ Don’t put yourself in a passion, sergeant,” said one of the firemen ; “ ’tis Pauwken-Plezier ; and if he tried to speak otherwise, the funny rogue couldn’t do it for his life. Just let me manage him.”

He went under the window, and called out—

“ Pauwken, has there been any fire in the house ? ”

“ Yes, there’s a fire every day, an hour before dinner.”

“ No tricks, now, Pauwken. I was just coming through the street with my comrade, and your father was screaming, ‘ Fire, fire ! ’ as if the whole parish was in flames.”

“ Yes, it was my father, talking in his sleep ; he was only dreaming aloud ! ”

The sergeant now broke out in a towering passion :

“ Come, come—I’ll teach you to make fools of the police ! Corporal, run and call the commissary ; we will break open the door, and fine the insulting scoundrels.”

The word commissary struck on the ear of the schouwveger ; he started up, and cried out at the window, with a beseeching voice—

“ Oh, firemen, my good fellows, have patience only a minute ; I’ll run down and open the door.”

He left the chamber, followed by his son. As they descended the stairs, he groaned, with tremulous voice—

“ Pauw, my boy, our house is bewitched ! Oh, now, all the fire-brigade will come in. I am more dead than alive ; I am quite ill with—”

“ But, father, the firemen won’t eat us all up surely ? ” said the young man.

“ Ah, you don’t know, child, what your father will have to put up with ! ” moaned Master Smet, in a dejected tone. “ Pauw, they will search the



house all over to see where the fire was. Since we can't help it now, you lead them round, for I can't stand on my legs."

The young man unlocked the door, while his father placed a chair close to the chest in which his treasure lay, and sank down on it, exhausted and breathless.

Five or six firemen then entered the room. The sergeant recognized the young wag, and seized him in a threatening manner by the shoulder, exclaiming—

"Ha, you young vagrant, you'll make sport of the fire-brigade, will you? How will you like to sit in the stocks, eh?"

Pauw sprang back, and cried, with a loud laugh—

"Look you, Mynheer Fireman, talk of the stocks as much as you like; but I am a free man; and if you dare to lay your hands on me, I'll teach you how to run, though I'm only a schouwvger, and don't wear a copper hat."

Seeing that Pauw was awkward flax to spin a good thread out of, the sergeant turned to Master Smet, and asked angrily—

"Tell me, where's the fire?"

"Well, my good man, it is a mistake; there has been no fire here."

"Ha, you want to conceal it, to escape paying the fine."

"Oh, no; I thank you ten thousand times for all your trouble there has been no fire here."

"And you frighten folks by shouting 'Fire, fire!'"

"Yes, a man has odd dreams sometimes," stammered the schouwveger. "Just look at me, sergeant; I'm all of a shake; my nerves are out of order."

"Get up," said the sergeant, imperatively, "and let us see all the chimneys."

"I can't stand up," moaned the schouwveger, with a voice of entreaty. "My legs sink under me. Pauw, go round with Mynheer."

The sergeant made a sign to the corporal that he should follow the young man. Then he said to Master Smet—

"You sit there by your chest as if you were afraid we were going to steal your money!"

A shudder ran through all the limbs of the schouwveger, and a cold perspiration stood on his forehead.

"You shall pay dear for your jest," continued the sergeant "you'll have to pay the fine."

"Is that all?" muttered the poor terror-stricken Smet. "Make me pay the fine two or three times over, if you like; only for God's sake, get out of my house!"

Dame Smet, who had dressed herself in the

mean time, now came into the room with a smiling countenance; and, as soon as she saw how the matter stood, she said in an easy tone to the chief of the fire-brigade—

“Sergeant, here’s an odd affair. Don’t be vexed about it; it was quite unintentional. I’ll tell you all about it. You must know that we have had news of *my aunt* in Holland.”

The schouwveger stretched out his hand with a gesture of entreaty to implore his wife to be silent; but she paid no attention to him, and went on :

“We are to have a legacy—I don’t know how many thousand crowns. This news has come so suddenly on my husband that he has a fever in his brain—poor man! He has been dreaming that the house was on fire; but you see, my fine fellows, I don’t wish you to have all your trouble for nothing. Drink a pint to our health, and be assured that we are very grateful to you for your promptitude and kindness.”

With these words, she put a five-franc piece into his hand.

At this moment Pauw came down-stairs with the corporal. The latter advanced to the sergeant, brought his hand to his policeman’s cap in military fashion, and said, in a pompous tone—

“Sergeant, there has been no fire in the house.”

After sundry admonitions not to dream so loud another time, the fire-brigade left the abode of the schouwveger. His wife thereupon shut the door and locked it after them.

Raising his hands, the schouwveger said, with a sigh—

“ Good heavens ! if poor men only knew what a bother it is to be rich, they would never wish it. Here is a fine business ! ”

Dame Smet took him by the shoulder, and pushing him toward the stairs, said, half in anger and half in scorn—

“ Yes, a pretty mess you make of every thing. I ought to be vexed with you, but I pity your childish fancies. To-morrow we’ll talk it all over. Go and sleep now, Zebedeus ; and if you must dream of thieves and gendarmes, try to dream quietly. Money has made a fine fellow of you ! Look at him, how he stands there like an idiot with the palsy ! ”

Without speaking a word, thoroughly crushed down and beside himself with the fright he had experienced, the poor schouwveger turned and slowly mounted the stairs to his bedroom.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE morning after these nocturnal freaks, Dame Smet was on her legs betimes, and ran off to the corner shop to chatter and gossip about *my aunt* in Holland and the grand legacy they were going to have; and when the wife of the grocer ventured to express, with some scorn, her disbelief of Dame Smet's oft-repeated story, the latter took out of her pocket a handful of gold-pieces and laid them on the counter, as vouchers for the truth of what she said. Thereupon the four or five dames, who were in the shop at the same time, lifted up their hands, and cried out in amazement, as if they had been favoured with a sight of all the treasures of California.

Half an hour later, not a single person in the neighbourhood could plead ignorance of the fact that Jan-Grap, the chimney-sweeper, had got a legacy of three huge bags of gold. Everybody was making enquiries, and everybody was giving answers; so that in a very short time Jan was endowed by the liberality of his neighbours with more than a hundred houses, and about twenty ships at sea.

While Dame Smet was running all over the city to visit the *magasins des modes*, and to give her orders to a celebrated milliner, Pauw remained at home, at her request, to await the appearance of his father, who was somewhat indisposed by his night's adventures.

And now Dame Smet had been about a quarter of an hour at home ; she was standing before the looking-glass, admiring the brilliance of the huge golden pendants she had suspended to her ears.

Pauw came down-stairs at the same moment, and, in reply to a question of his mother's, he said—

“ Father isn't sick : he is out of sorts, and worn out by the strange adventures of the night ; but he'll be down in less than an hour.”

“ Well, Pauw, just look at me,” she exclaimed, exultingly ; “ what do you think of these ear-rings ? Don't they suit me famously ? ”

The young man looked at his mother. The impression which the jewels made upon him could not have been most favourable, for he shrugged his shoulders, and replied, with a smile—

“ I don't know, mother ; but the ear-rings under your plaited cap look as if they had lost their way somehow.”

“ Now, now, wait a little ; we will soon mend that,” said the dame. “ Only wait a few days, and

your mother will come out in such style that you shall see whether any *my lady* on the Meir can compare with her! She will wear a *chapeau* with feathers in it, a velvet *pelerine*, a purple silk gown, and coffee-coloured boots! And then she will promenade up and down the street, with a darling little parasol in her hand, so grand and so stately that everybody shall see of what a good family I am."

"Well, if there is no remedy for it," said Pauw, sighing, and shaking his head, "for God's sake mother, go and live somewhere else; for such a grand *my lady* in our little schouwveger's den will be enough to make me swear awfully. I don't feel inclined, mother, to be pointed at all my life long and laughed at by everybody."

"Patience, patience, Pauw!" answered the happy dame. "Your father won't change houses yet; he has his reasons. But only let us get the legacy, my boy! I've got such a beautiful house in my eye; that large *porte-cochere* on the St. James's market!"

"Do you know what I'm thinking, mother?" asked the young man, with a sad smile. "I'm thinking that all three of us are out of our senses; and as for the legacy, *if* I had ten crowns in my pocket, I wouldn't give them for the egg that isn't laid yet!"

"Ha! you wouldn't give ten crowns for it, eh?" exclaimed his mother. "Look, there's something like a proof for you, you unbelieving Thomas!"

Pauw sprang back in astonishment, and kept his dazzled eyes fixed on the handful of gold-pieces which his mother had taken out of her pocket and held before his face with an exulting laugh.

"Well, now, what do you say to that?" asked she. "Have you ever seen so much money in all your life before? Are these only clouds driven before the wind, as your father was saying?"

But the lad could not speak; he did nothing but stare at the gold-pieces.

"Have you lost your tongue?" said his mother, jestingly. "You stand there as if you had seen something uncanny!"

"Whew!" said Pauw, quite bewildered; "well I may, when you deal me such a stunning blow as that!"

"And this handful of gold is only a trifle compared with what we shall have."

"Well, mother, mother dear, are we then really rich?"

"Rich as Jews, Pauw!"

"Ha, ha! what a life we'll have! And Katie, poor thing, she'll be out of her senses with joy!"



He began then to cut some extraordinary capers and sang out cheerily—

“Schouwvegers gay, who live in A.B.—”

But his mother placed her hand on his mouth and stopped his song, by saying, in a tone of rebuke—

“Fie, Pauw! singing a poor man’s song—a low song! You must learn to behave like a lad who is of a good family.”

“You are right, mother,” stammered Pauw, in confusion; “I must make another little song—”

“No, no; no more singing or jumping about. A rich man must be grave and solemn.”

This seemed to disconcert Pauw a little.

“Then musn’t I be merry any more?” he asked.

“Yes, yes, on the sly—when you are by yourself; and if you like to toss a good flask off when nobody sees you, the neighbours can’t talk about it. That’s the way rich men manage.”

“When I’m by myself! Do you fancy, mother, I drink beer for the sake of drinking? Why, if I had no friends with me, I’d a great deal rather drink water.”

“Beer, beer! rich men don’t drink beer; they don’t care for anything but wine.”

“And I don’t like wine.”

“Oh, you’ll soon learn to like it. But the first thing you have to learn is to leave off your loose

way of walking up the street, and your joking and quizzing."

"But mustn't I laugh any more then?"

"In the street? No, certainly not. You must carry your head up in the air, hold yourself upright, and look stiff and stern."

"As if I was always vexed with everybody?"

"No, as if you were always abstracted and full of thought. There's nothing so vulgar as laughing and being merry."

"I don't quite fancy that. 'Tisn't worth while to be rich, if you can't have some pleasure out of your money!"

Dame Smet sat down majestically at the table as if she were going to say something very important and memorable.

"Pauw," said she, "just sit down a minute. I have something to say to you. You have sense enough to take my meaning. 'Like seeks like'—"

"Yes, and the devil ran away with the chimney-sweeper—at least, so the proverb goes on to say."

"Don't joke now, Pauw; and listen attentively to what I have to say. 'Like seeks like.' What would you say if you saw the son of a baron marry the daughter of a drysalter?"

"I should think it odd."

"Don't you think, Pauw, now we are so rich,

that people would think it a disgrace if you were to marry a poor girl?"

The lad trembled with fear.

"Heavens! mother, what are you driving at?" he exclaimed, anxiously.

"Look now, Pauw. The shoemaker's Katie is a good and virtuous lass; I have not a word to say against her. And if we had remained poor people, you would have been married to her before the year is out;—but now—you see the whole city would laugh at us."

"Well, let them laugh, if they like," said Pauw, firmly. "I'd rather be a chimney-sweep with Katie than a baron with anybody else;—and look you, mother, you mustn't harp on this string, or I shall be as cross as a turnpike-gate."

Dame Smet put on a cunning expression, and said, in her blindest and most insinuating tone—

"But, Pauw, don't you think that Leocadie, in the corner shop there, over the way, is a comely lass? Black eyes—fine figure—always so well dressed—and such nice free manners; and there's heaps of money there, Pauw! If you would only set your cap at her, now—"

"Well, bless my soul!" exclaimed the lad. "Leocadie! that pale shrimp of a girl, with her ribbons and her curls! why, she's a walking perfumer's shop; I wouldn't have her if she was

the king's own daughter. She is always *parlé franse* with those mincing rascals. No, no, I won't have such a weathercock as that: when I marry, I'll take care that my wife is really *my* wife."

"What!" cried his mother, "are you not ashamed to sit there and dare to take away the good name of people who have four houses, all their own property?"

"I don't want to take away anything, mother; only I won't hear you speak of that gilded grasshopper."

"Well, suppose you have no liking for Leocadie,—you shan't marry Katie!"

"No?"

"No!"

"Well, then, I won't be a rich man—not I!"

"You will wait till we are in our proper position; and then some *mamsel* or other—"

"Some *mamsel*? I shouldn't know how to talk to them. No, no: I won't have anybody but Katie! Father has promised me already that he would take care I married Katie; and he said, too, that we should have such a merry, such a jolly wedding."

"Father will change his mind when he is a little used to being rich. You must forget Katie. I tell you."

"I cannot forget her—I don't want to forget her—and I won't forget her ! Such a dear, good child ! she would die for her Pauw, if necessary—and I am to break her heart and despise her, now we are rich ! If I thought I could ever dream of such a thing, I would dash my head against the wall there."

"I don't wish you to see her any more," insisted his mother.

"Father has told me to go and see her this morning, that she might not hear about our legacy from anybody but me."

"Ha ! then you are a little too late there ; half the city knows it already."

"But, mother," said Pauw, with a voice of tender entreaty, "you must still have a heart ? Only think now, you have regarded Katie as your daughter these five or six years past ; you have loved her as your own child. She loved you, too, so much that we were often forced to laugh at her ; it was always 'Mother dear, this,' and 'Mother dear, that ;' the ground wasn't good enough for you to set your foot on. When she was here to keep you company, there was never a door opened but Katie jumped up to shut it, for fear you should catch cold ; she watched your eyes to divine your wishes—and no wonder : the dear child has no mother of her own ! When you were

ill for more than three months, I am sure she cried three days at a stretch. Every morning she went to the church to pray for you ; she watched whole nights long by your bedside ; and when your illness became dangerous, she shed such floods of tears, and was in such a state of grief, that the neighbours hardly knew which to pity most, you or poor Katie. I always loved Katie ; but since I found out that she would have given her life for yours, I have loved her ten times more. I have quite a reverence for her ; and all the *mamsels* in the city put together are not worth my Katie !—Oh, don't punish her for her goodness ! She would break her heart and die—and you, mother, you would lay her in her coffin as the recompense of her love !”

The tears flowed fast from the young man's eyes as he spoke these words. Before he had half finished, his mother became so deeply affected that she had bent her head down to conceal her emotion. Wiping her face with her hands, she cried out—

“ Pauw, lad, leave off, do ; you would fetch tears out of a flint. Where did you get your words from ? It is all quite true ; the poor child would pine away. And she has never shown us anything but pure, disinterested kindness and affection. It is a pity things should turn out so :

she is not a girl fit for your station in life ; but, rich or not rich, we are human beings still, and have hearts. Come, come, run off to Katie ; fine clothes will help to set her off, and I will do my best to teach her good manners."

"Oh, mother, thanks, thanks !" shouted Pauw, intoxicated with joy. "Do with me whatever you like. If I must mount spectacles, and wear yellow gloves, and set everybody laughing at me, I don't care, if only you won't vex Katie."

He rose up, and was leaving the house.

"Pauw, hold your head up !" said his mother, authoritatively. "A rich man doesn't wear a cap like that ; and here is a satin neckerchief for you, with red and blue stripes. Come to the glass, and I'll put it on for you."

With whatever vexation the young schouwveger might regard the gaudy colours of the satin, there was no help for it ; so he meekly and patiently allowed the magnificent neckerchief to be tied round his neck ; then he sprang out of the door, with a joyous farewell to his mother.

She called after him, reprovingly—

"Pauw, Pauw, no skipping and jumping : behave yourself soberly, as becomes your position in life."

The sunny side of the street was, as usual, crowded with young lace-stitch workers, enticed

from their close rooms by the beauty of the weather; and among them were most of the old dames of the street, basking in the sun and stitching away at their children's clothes.

To please his mother, Pauw had altered his whole bearing, and stalked majestically along, with his head erect, and a conscious stateliness about his whole person.

As soon as he came in sight of the girls, ail ran up and looked at him with their eyes wide open, and with an expression of wonder and even of awe, as if a miracle had taken place before their faces.

This general observation annoyed Pauw excessively. His face glowed with the crimson of shame; and his head began to feel as if it were a pin-cushion, and the girls were filling it with pins. He made great efforts to vanquish his emotion; and, going up to the girls who were sitting not far from the shoemaker's door, he said, in an apparently unembarrassed tone of voice—

“Why, Annemieken, what are you cutting such a face of wonder as that for? Do you fancy I am an elephant or a shark? Eh, you, yonder!” shouted he to a group of dames who were staring at him with their necks stretched out, “what's the matter with you?”

No one laughed; there was a considerable



interval before even Annemie ventured to say to him, with a deferential manner and a quiet voice—

“Mynheer Pauw, I wish you good luck; but I am vexed, after all.”

“Vexed!—why?”

“Why, the street will be so dull, now that the merry Pauw is become a rich Mynheer, and is going to live on the Meir.”

“Come, now, have done with your *mynheers*; I am Pauwken-Plezier, just as I was before.”

At this moment an aged man passed by, quite bowed beneath the weight of years; he took off his hat to Pauw, bared his head silvered with age, and said, with an imploring smile on his countenance—

“Mynheer Smet, if you please, may I speak a word with you? Do not take it amiss, I pray you, that I make so bold.”

The young man began to blush to the very roots of his hair, and exclaimed, impatiently—

“Come, Father Mieris, you are cutting your jokes at me, too, are you? Give me your hand; how goes your health?”

The old man smiled gratefully at the warm pressure of Pauw’s hand.

“It is too great an honour, Mynheer Smet,” continued he; “I have a small request to make

of you. My daughter Susanna, you know her well."

"Know her? Of course I do; a good and tidy lass."

"She is an ironing girl, Mynheer Pauw, and works as hard and as well as the best. I am come to ask your good word with my lady your mother, that she might not forget us, and let us earn a few sous; for times are hard now, and bread is so—"

Pauw was quite bewildered by this time; his head began to turn round and round.

"Yes, yes; all right!" said he, interrupting the old man; "I will do it. But let me alone with all your *mynheers* and *my ladies*. The whole quarter will be in the madhouse soon, I think."

Terrified at this outburst, the old man shrank timidly back, and went away with sad and down-cast eyes.

"Katie is shoe-binding, I suppose?" inquired Pauw of the girls.

"Yes, Katie, poor creature!" sighed Annemie, with a look of deep compassion, "she is most to be pitied. If she survive it, it will be a great blessing."

The schouwveger became pale as death, and stepped toward the shoemaker's door, without further remark.

He found the girl sitting near the little window that looked out into the street. She had her apron before her eyes, and was sobbing aloud.

Pauw seized her hand and uttered a cry of painful surprise; but the sorrowing girl gently and sadly withdrew it, covered her face more completely, while deep sobs of anguish burst from her breast.

"Katie, Katie," cried the young man in despair, "what are you in such trouble about? what is it? Speak to me, oh, speak!"

The girl uncovered her face and raised her reddened eyes to her lover's face with an expression of unutterable grief and dejection, and said, imploringly—

"Oh, Pauw, you mustn't take it to heart: I know it isn't your fault. You would never have had the cruelty to give your poor Katie her death-blow."

"But, for God's sake, what has happened?" shouted the youth.

"I will bear my bitter lot; and even if I pine and die, I shall never blame you, Pauw; and I shall even pray that God may give you a wife who will love you as well as I do!"

"Ha, ha! 'tis the fear of that!" cried the young man, quite relieved. "Cheer up, then, Katie;

between us there is no change: you are deceiving yourself."

The maiden looked at him with a smile of deep misery, and said—

"Oh, Pauw, I am far too lowly a girl to dare to lift my eyes up to such as you. You are of a high family, and my father is only an honourable craftsman."

The young man stamped his foot on the ground with angry impetuosity.

"Who has put such notions into your head, Katie? the wicked tongues of the neighbours, I suppose? Katie, do you listen to their envious talk?"

"No, no," sobbed the girl; "your mother scoffed at us in the shop over the way, and said that no cobbler's daughter should ever come into her family. You must be obedient, Pauw. Leave me alone with my sorrow; it will pass away."

And, with a fresh flood of quiet tears, she added: "When I am laid in the churchyard—when you go out to walk sometimes, and you see in the distance the trees of the Stuivenberg,\* think sometimes of our love, Pauw, and say in your heart—'There lies Katie, who died so young because she loved me too well.'"

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\*A cemetery in the suburbs of the city.

Pauw had covered his eyes with his hands, and trembled with emotion.

"Katie," said he, quickly, and in a tone of deep sorrow, "you are piercing my heart by your injustice. Were my father a king, you should be my little wife still ! My mother herself does not wish it otherwise."

"She feels too bitter a contempt for us, Pauw."

"Well, well ; but you know riches blind people for a moment. My mother has sent me to you ; she loves you as much as ever ; and it isn't ten minutes ago she said to me, 'Rich or not rich, Katie shall be my daughter.'"

The girl began to tremble in every limb ; she looked at the youth with glistening eyes and heaving bosom.

"Oh, heavens ! good heavens !" she exclaimed ; "Dame Smet, you will be my mother still ! The death I saw floating before my eyes will flee away again ; and I may be once more happy in the world ! Pauw, Pauw, oh, don't deceive me !"

At this moment the shoemaker entered the room. He had evidently just risen up from his work, for he had his awl in his hand. He bent a severe look on the young man, and said—

"Mynheer Smet, I am surprised that you dare to come into our house again. We are poor indeed and humble, but we are honourable, and every

man is a king in his own house. It is, perhaps, no fault of yours; but that matters not. Go hence—forget where we live—or else—”

“ Oh, father dear, don’t be angry ! ” cried the young girl ; “ it is not as you think.”

“ Your parents act by reason and by rule,” said the shoemaker, with a bitter sneer. “ As long as we were fellows in the same guild, all was right enough ; but now that they have got a legacy of ever so many sacks of gold, now it would be a great disgrace that you, Pauw, should marry the daughter of a mere nobody—the daughter of a poor cobbler ! But the cobbler has a heart in his body for all that ; and he will not allow you henceforth to cast an eye on his daughter. Go to the great streets, and seek there a wife suitable to your condition.”

“ Master Dries, you are cruel and unjust,” said the young man, stammering with vexation and alarm. “ My mother sends me to you to crave your forgiveness for some thoughtless words she has uttered. It was not seriously meant, and she begs you to be kind enough to forget what has passed.”

“ No, no,” answered the shoemaker ; “ that won’t do. She has scorned us openly, before everybody. You, Pauw, must keep away from my house. We are not rich ; but yet, look you.

it shall never be said that we let ourselves be trampled under foot by anybody."

"And if my mother were to come herself, and confessed to you that she did not mean what she said?"

"Look you, now, that would look like something," muttered Master Dries.

"Well, now, she will come; I'll go and fetch her."

"I saw her go out just this minute," remarked the shoemaker.

"Then I'll go home as soon as she comes back, and ask her to come and speak to you."

"No, no, not so, Pauw; you shall not stay here. And I won't have you come unless your mother is with you. The neighbours are standing in a crowd at our door. Come, come; if all is as you say, everything will come right of itself; but now, I must beg you, Pauw, to leave my house and go home."

The young man turned towards the door, and said to the girl, as he took leave, "Katie, Katie, don't be alarmed; keep a good heart; all will go right enough. I shall be back again directly with my mother."

When Pauw entered his home, he found his father sitting at the table. The poor man was pale, and looked very desponding; his eyes,

wearied with his unwonted and involuntary vigil, were dul and restless.

" Pauw, why are you so red in the face ? " he asked, in some surprise.

" Why, father," was the answer, " I have been to Katie ; she was sitting sobbing and cying so, that I could have broken my heart to see her. The shoemaker wanted to turn me out of doors ; but we have come to an understanding. Are you ill, rather ? You seem to me to look so pale ; shall I run for the doctor ? "

" No, no, it is gone now ; it was nothing but a disturbance of the nerves. And what was the cause of Katie's sorrow ? what made the shoemaker so angry with you ? "

" Why, I don't exactly know ; mother has said in the shop yonder that Katie was not good enough to enter our family ; and thereupon—you can easily fancy how—the shoemaker got on the high horse. But he is off again by this time ; and when mother comes home, I will go with her to the shoemaker's, and set all straight."

" Your mother ! your mother ! " said the schouwveger, with a deep sigh, " she will make us all miserable. She can't restrain her pride, and chats and gossips as if we had ever so many thousand crowns coming to us."

" Three sacks of gold, father, When I was



coming just now from the shoemaker's, Annemie, there at the green-grocer's, asked me if it was true that we had, over and above the sacks of gold, I don't know how many houses and ships on the sea."

"Good heavens!" said the schouwveger, sadly; "'tis very unlucky! With all this chattering and prating of your mother, we shall never have a moment's peace again. All the thieves and vagabonds of the city will be lurking about the house. God only knows how many plots will be contrived to break in here at the first opportunity, and rob us—murder us, perhaps!"

"Yes, indeed, father; that is very likely. It seems the whole city is standing in groups, discussing our wonderful legacy."

"Wonderful legacy?" repeated the schouwveger scratching his head in desperation. "Ah, Pauw, there is not near so much as they say."

"The neighbours say it is at least three sacks of gold," said Pauw, laughing.

"The neighbours are out of their senses."

"Well, father, wasn't there at least one single sack of gold?"

"No, no; only a moderate burgher's fortune: enough to live quietly on with care and economy."

"Whom am I to believe? Mother talks of a great house with a *porte-cochère* on St. James's

Place; of hats with feathers; of maid-servants and footmen; and of so many other things, that I really thought she had found Fortunatus's purse, and we were going to live in a mountain of gold."

"Your mother will bring us to lie on straw again," cried Master Smet, with bitterness and wrath. "But wait—I'll let her see that I am master here. And if I once get off my hook, I'll trample her hat and feathers under my feet, and tear all her silk clothes to pieces; and if she won't dress as she ought to do, I'll turn her out of doors. Yes, yes, don't look at me so, Pauw; I'll turn her out of doors! And you, too; what that's round your neck, you prodigal?"

"Oh, bless me! I had forgotten all about it," sighed Pauw, tearing the satin neckerchief from his throat. "Mother made me put it on; but the fewer coloured rags I have on my body the better I shall be pleased."

The young man now started backward, keeping his eye fixed, with gloomy surprise, upon his father, who had again stooped down with his head on his hands, as though exhausted by fatigue, and was looking vacantly at the table.

After a while Pauw said, half angrily—

"I wish the legacy was—I know where! We were not born for riches; we don't take kindly to

them. Would you believe, father, that I'd rather remain poor than pass my life like this ? ”

“ Oh, my child, don't wish for poverty,” said his father, with a sigh. “ If your mother does not behave more sensibly, we shall soon be cast down again into the depth of misery and want. Perhaps they already stand threatening at our door ! ”

The tone of his father's voice was so singularly harsh and melancholy, that the young man looked at him with a kind of terror, and exclaimed, with painful anxiety—

“ But, father, you are ill—very ill ! ”

“ There's nothing the matter with me ; I am only a little bit tired,” was the faint reply.

“ How is it possible ? Can the money have thus changed us all ? Your eyes are cloudy, your face is pale, your voice is quite changed from what it was ; all is so slow and so languid now, father. Ah, we were always so happy, and so merry ; you used to sing from morning till night ; every word you uttered was so funny that no one could help laughing. I feel sure that money is a foe to joy ; for now and then I find my own head falling on my breast, and something—I don't know what—begins to gnaw at my heart.”

“ Yes, my boy,” muttered the schouwveger

"there is indeed some truth in what you say ; but yet to be rich is a great advantage."

"So it seems!" said Pauw, bitterly. "Since there has been talk of this confounded legacy, I have heard nothing but grumbling and lamentation. I begin to fear that people will soon call us Jan-Sorg (*careworn*) and Pauwken-Verdriet (*fretful*)."

"It's all your mother's fault," said Master Smet, in a tone of vexation ; "her love of extravagance is what worries me. Only fancy, Pauw, she is gone off to look out for a maid-servant ; and she has made up her mind not to have any one who has not lived with some *my lady* ! I set myself against it, and was very angry ; but get an idea out of your mother's head if you can. Strange people in my house ? Why, I shall never sleep in peace again."

"But why are you so afraid of everybody, father ? If we had got the legacy, and if there was a great treasure, here in the house, I could understand it ; but now—"

The front door was opened at this moment, and a personage entered, whose appearance cut short Pauw's sentence.

It was a young footboy, with a golden band round his hat, and clothed in an old livery coat which hung about his body like a sack, and the

tails of which reached down to his heels. The fellow had sandy hair, and a coarse lumpish face, which betokened an unwonted stolidity.

At his entrance, he stared round the room quite bewildered, and muttered, half aloud, to himself—  
“The people in the city are determined to take me for a fool! I’m regularly taken in ; but anyhow, I’ll ask—”

“Well, now, what do you mean by this?” cried Pauw.

“It is only, you see, my lad,” answered the footboy, “I am not where I ought to be. The girls in the street there have taken me in. I wanted to find my lady the schouwveger’s wife, who has, all at once, got so many bags of gold and ships at sea.”

“Well, that is here,” answered Pauw.

“Here, here, in this house?” stammered the footboy. “A *my lady* here? It can’t be.”

“If you won’t believe it, begone as quick as you can, and leave us in peace.”

The schouwveger shook his head in anxious thought, but spoke not a word ; he kept his eye fixed on the table, with a smile of bitter contempt on his face.

“If it is here,” said the boy to Pauw, “then I may as well say what I’ve come about. You

must know I live with my lady van Steen. She took me from running after the cows, and said I should live the life of a lord ; but you wouldn't believe how I have been treated. It is nothing but a thump here and a kick there ! Since I jammed the tail of her half-starved lapdog in the door, and set the window-curtains on fire by accident, she can't bear to set her eyes on me. I hear nothing but—' donkey, booby, country lout,' and—but you have known all about it, I dare say—the words rich people use. I have heard say that your lady wanted a footman, to stand behind her carriage, and carry her muff or her prayer-book. Besides, I can turn my hand to anything—horses especially I can groom and take care of. You are, I suppose, the stable-boy ; and the old fellow there is, perhaps, the coachman of my lady. Put in a good word for me, both of you ; we shall understand one another very well, and contrive to live a jolly life."

Pauw looked at his father with a merry laugh ; but the schouwveger broke out into a furious passion. He sprang up, clenched his fist, and roared to the footboy—

" Get out of my house, you shameless scoundrel ! Quick ! look sharp ! or I'll knock you into the middle of the street !"

The poor footboy, seeing him prepare to execute

his threat, slunk out at the door in consternation, and muttered—

“Now, now, don’t bite me. I haven’t done you any harm. These great city lords—I believe they all have a screw loose in their heads.”

And when he had said these words, he shut the door quickly, and ran away as fast as his legs would carry him.

The door opened again very soon. It was Dame Smet, who strode into the room, darting angry and threatening looks at her husband and her son.

“Pauw,” growled the schouwveger, pale with anger, “I am going up-stairs, for I feel I can’t lay hands on a woman ; if I stay here, I shall do something—”

And, so saying, he went grumbling up the stairs.

“What’s going on now ?” asked the dame, in a haughty tone of voice.

“Oh, nothing at all, mother,” answered the youth. “A stupid lout of a boy came here to offer himself as servant, and we have sent him about his business. If you must hire a servant, you may as well get one who is fit to be seen.”

“Oh, is that all ?” muttered she. “I thought, by your father’s looks, that something dreadful had happened again.”

Pauw took her hand. and asked, with a voice of earnest entreaty—

"Mother, may I ask you something, before you take off your cloak?"

"Yes, to be sure, child; any thing you like."

"Oh, mother, I have been to Katie. If you had seen her, you would have burst into tears; the poor lamb was almost dying. She implores you just to go to her house, and tell her that you are not angry with her; and I, knowing your dear kind heart, mother—I promised you would come; come, mother, come!"

"You wheedling rogue, you!" said the dame, with a smile, "who could refuse you anything?"

Pauw went to the foot of the stairs, and shouted out, "Father, I am going with mother close by to the shoemaker's. We shall be back again in a minute."

And, with a joyous countenance, he led his mother out of the house.

## CHAPTER V.

As if the treasure had been only an envious sprite who had assumed this form to torment the poor schouwveger, his house, once so happy, was changed into a hell of gloom and sadness and discord.



My lady Smet—for so she insisted on being called by the neighbours—had for some days been in delighted possession of her new clothes and of her silk *chapeau*. From head to foot she was covered with velvet and with satin; she wore gold in her ears, gold round her neck, gold on her bosom, and gold on both her hands.

Thus appavelled and adorned, quite like a genuine *my lady*, she roamed all over the city, and felt not the slightest annoyance when she saw that everybody stopped and stared at her as she passed—in amazement or in amusement,—and that many pointed at her with their fingers.

This universal attention was, on the contrary, a source of great delight to her, and flattered her pride extremely. She fancied that the boys said one to another, “There goes the wife of the schouwveger, who has so suddenly become rich as a Jew.”

And all this pointing and whispering was far from appearing to her a rebuke; she thought the passers-by were admiring the stateliness of her bearing, and the grace with which she walked. She read in the eyes of every one she met, “Look, there is my lady Smet! What a fine woman! what dignity! One can see at once that she is of a good family!”

Indeed had not the fame of her wonderful

legacy made her known all over the city, no one would have distinguished her from a real *my lady*—except, perhaps, that the suddenly-raised schouwveger's lady was covered with clothes and golden ornaments, like the figures in the window of a *magasin des modes*; that she carried her head somewhat stiffly, and turned it so slowly and so perseveringly in all directions, just as though it were set on a pivot; that she had great broad feet, and took great strides like a man; that her face was very red, and that she seemed to ask every one she met, "Well, now, what do you think of that? I hope you see now that *my lady* Smet is of a good family!"

She liked best of all to walk round the Meir and the Egg-market, where the most splendid and fashionable shops were to be found. There she would make some little purchases, and gossip by the hour with the shopkeeper's wife and daughters, all about *my aunt* in Holland, and about her intention to take a house, and furnish it as grandly and as richly as that of the first nobleman of the land.

She inquired daily and of everybody whether they knew of a good housemaid, or a good cook, of a coachman, a stable-boy, or a footman. She asked everybody's opinion which was the most stylish colour to choose for the horses she was going to

buy ; and gave it as her opinion that the Meir was not a healthy situation to live in because there was a large drain under the street. Therefore she had determined to take a house with a *portecochère* on the St. James's market-place ; and since the owner would not sell it, she meant to rent it until some good opportunity of buying presented itself.

After having in the course of her ramble sufficiently exhibited herself to the wondering city, she returned homeward ; and she took care never to walk twice on the same side of her own street, so that all the neighbours might have the benefit of seeing and admiring her.

On her former acquaintance she would bestow a cold smile of condescending benevolence. She called some of the dames by their Christian names ; promised them all her protection and good graces ; and this she did so haughtily that the poor people who were the objects of her civility felt their hearts overflow with gall at sight of the proud and supercilious upstart.

The schouwveger was about the unhappiest man on the face of the earth. He knew well that the treasure was not inexhaustible, and grumbled from morning till night at the extravagance of his wife. She avenged herself by calling him a huuks, a miser, a hair-splitter, and averred that

any one could see that *he* didn't come of a good family.

Besides, the money was *hers*, and not *his*, and she might do what she liked with it. She had no notion of living like people who never saw more than one crown at a time; and if he chose to bite a farthing into quarters, and sit wearing himself out like an old miser, she would let him see that she knew how rich people spent their money.

Then the schouwveger would go into a violent passion, and insist on having the key of the chest; and then *my lady*, forgetting the proprieties of her station, would put her arms akimbo, and overwhelm her hapless spouse with such a flood of abuse and threatenings, that he was invariably obliged to beat a retreat, and creep up-stairs, with tears in his eyes, to grumble by himself.

Sometimes matters went still farther; on one occasion their strife had ended in blows. The schouwveger had, after considerable provocation, laid his hand somewhat uncivilly on the shoulder of his disdainful spouse; but *my lady* Smet, irritated by this unwarrantable liberty, had sprung at him like a wild cat, and ploughed his face with her nails.

There the matter ended; but both husband and wife looked so spitefully at each other, and were so furious, that there remained no hope of

reconciliation. For several days not a word passed between them; or if by chance one of them addressed a question to the other the answer was a snarl or a vicious growl.

Dame Smet insisted on taking the great house on the St. James's market. Her husband talked very loud, and declared that he didn't mean to move. This disagreement led to violent and prolonged quarrels, and already the dame had declared more than once that she would go off to her lawyer, and petition the supreme court for a divorce.

Pauw, the merry lad, had lost all his mirth and energy. The everlasting disputes and quarrels of his parents had broken his spirit quite; for, though he talked in an off-hand way, and turned everything into ridicule, he had a tender and affectionate heart.

No joke escaped him now; and when he made a faint attempt to say something lively, it was quite a failure; he couldn't help it—but there was always an undertone of bitterness and sadness in his voice.

Whenever he was alone with his father, he used every effort to comfort him and to soothe his irritated spirit. When he was with his mother, he tried with gentle and loving words to make her see that his father was perhaps a little too over-

bearing, but that his carefulness and frugality might easily be excused.

Poor Pauw's efforts were all in vain. No sooner did his parents meet again than the niggardliness of the one came in collision with the extravagance of the other, and the contest was renewed with increased vigour and bitterness.

In the young man's heart was another point of anguish and depression. His mother had, it is true, abandoned her intention of separating him from Katie; but she had never ceased to impress on the poor child a sense of her great inferiority, and to inflict the deepest wounds possible on the self-respect of the shoemaker.

When Katie came to see her, she insisted on instructing her how to walk, and how to stand; how she must speak, and how she ought to salute her neighbours; how she ought to carry her head, and how she must turn out her toes.

The sorrowful maiden, sustained by her deep affection, submitted with exemplary meekness to the whims and follies of her future mother; she even seemed gratified whenever Dame Smet impressed upon her what a favour, what an honour, they conferred on her in admitting her into so good a family.

In the shop and in the neighbourhood, whenever the matter was talked over, *my lady* Smet

recounted her generosity and true nobleness of soul, and instanced how she had consented, out of mere good-nature, to the marriage of her son with the daughter of a—shoemaker. She had even ventured to say to Katie's father that it was a great honour for him to become a member of so distinguished a family.

The depreciating remarks of Dame Smet were a constant worry to the shoemaker. He did not conceal his vexation from Pauw, to whom he muttered his doubts how the marriage would turn out, and declared that he would put a stop to it, if Dame Smet persisted in treating his daughter like a beggar-maid, who was just tolerated out of charity.

The shoemaker, although only a poor artisan, had a pride of his own ; and he would assuredly have long since refused to admit Pauw into his house, had not both the lad and his father said all kinds of soothing words to him, and implored his forgiveness with tears in their eyes. But though he postponed the final decision, there remained an increasing bitterness in his heart, and he no longer regarded Pauw with a favourable eye.

These untoward occurrences began to alarm the two young people not unfrequently. When Pauw was seated by Katie's side, the tears would flow silently down their cheeks.

Eight days had already passed since the discovery of the treasure ; the schouwveger had not once left his house, except to go to church on Sunday.

It was now Monday, and the evening was falling in ; there had been already a violent quarrel—with this difference, however, that this time it was followed by an apparent reconciliation.

Dame Smet availed herself of the propitious moment to convince her husband that he did wrong in sitting at home all day long, and that it would be better, both for his health and for his understanding, that he should go about a bit among the neighbours.

Pauw promised, at his father's request, that he would not leave the house unprotected ; and so the schouwveger allowed himself to be persuaded to go out and drink a pint of beer with his friends.

His wife had expended much eloquence in the attempt to convince him that he ought not to go into a public-house, but into a *cafe* in the Cathedral Close, or on the Meir, and that he ought to begin to drink wine. But, being now in a good humour she agreed at length that her husband might take a turn outside the city, toward the Dyke, just as he used to do.

When the schouwveger came to the Dyke, and



found himself among his old friends, some time was occupied in congratulations ; but as soon as they had placed themselves round the table to have a game at cards, these remarks ceased of themselves, and the schouwveger felt as comfortable and as merry as before he became rich. How cheering the sound of the voices of his friends ! What real affection and heartfelt peace in every one of their words ! How soft and inspiring the taste of his customary beer ! What a relish there was in his pipe ! How enchantingly the smoke rose in clouds above their heads !

Master Smet felt himself in another world, and for some hours forgot all about his treasure—forgot even his wife. He found again some of his former jokes, and more than once caused his friends a hearty laugh.

The clock of the public-house was striking ten, when the schouwveger, astonished that the time had passed so quickly, rose and said that he must return home.

They tried to keep him. There was in another public-house a match going on between two butchers, which should eat most hard eggs ; and they wanted to sit it out.

Master Smet, who had already remained much too late, through forgetfulness, shook hands with his friends, and assured them that he would come

and keep them company some evenings every week, just as he did before.

It was quite half an hour's walk from the Dyke to the gate of the city, and the road was very lonely.

The night was dark ; but, as the schouwveger had gone this road a hundred times, he walked on without fear.

He felt very glad that he had seen his friends : his heart beat more lightly, and in the darkness a gentle smile played about his lips ; for he was thinking, as he walked, how many pleasant evenings he should spend there on the Dyke, among his old friends, now that spring was come again. And now he had reached the outskirts of the city, and was walking under some high trees, without thought or apprehension of danger.

All at once a suppressed cry of terror escaped him. A man sprang from behind a tree, and held a pistol to the breast of the trembling schouwveger.

"If you scream or cry, you're a dead man," said the robber, gruffly.

"What—what do you want of me?" stammered poor Smet, half dead with fright.

"Your money or your life!" said the other, with a threatening gesture.

"There—there is all I have : a five-franc piece and a few cents."

"You are telling a lie; you've had a legacy. I'll have your money, or I'll put this through you!" roared the thief, whistling at the same time, as if to make a signal to some one at a little distance.

Thereupon two other rogues came running from among the underwood; one of them thrust a handkerchief into the schouwveger's mouth, and the other tripped him up on the grass.

They felt in all his pockets; they took away his silver watch; they tore his blouse, and thumped and kicked him cruelly. The poor man could make no noise, and felt, with unutterable agony, that they were about to murder him.

Frightful words rang in his ears:—

"Kill him, the rascal! he has cheated us, the thief!"

Whether it was that the robbers heard the sound of approaching footsteps, or that they were convinced that nothing more was to be got out of their victim, they gave the schouwveger a few parting blows with their fists, then added a few vigorous kicks, and threw him into a thicket; they then ran away at full speed, and were soon lost in the gloom.

Master Smet remained for some time quite stunned; but, as he had received no dangerous wound, he came round, rose up, and ran as fast as

he could along the road to the gate of the city.

He thought of running into the first house he came to, and asking for assistance to pursue the thieves ; but then he felt that this was of no use, and, besides, he feared that the whole city, and especially the commissary of police, would begin to meddle with his affairs.

Like a true miser—for such he had now become—he preferred digesting his bitter chagrin as best he could, to drawing universal attention toward himself, and perhaps having to answer the inquiries of the police concerning his treasure.

So he walked on, with beating heart, and shaking all over with pain and terror, through the city gate, and along the street toward his dwelling ; and as he walked, melancholy musings on the immense advantages of being rich forced their way into his mind, and more than once he cursed the treasure which had occasioned him such continual grief, so much contention and vexation, so much soreness of heart, and such peril. He thought sadly of his former life, of his poverty, and of his happiness and his uninterrupted mirth ; and sometimes he even asked himself whether it would not be better for him to divide the treasure among his needy neighbours. But all these

speculations vanished at the touch of the demon of gold who held him captive in his grasp; and his heart clung with fiery eagerness to his beloved treasure.

Thus wavering between despair, terror, and covetousness, he reached his house, and sank into a chair with a heavy sigh. His wife and his son tended him with affectionate care, and listened with a shudder to the account he gave of his adventures. The schouwveger could not close his eyes all that night. No sooner did he begin to doze, than he dreamt of thieves and murderers; and, besides, he felt the smart of the blows which he had received on his head and shoulders, and—elsewhere.

## CHAPTER VI.

The next morning a rumour ran through the street that Dame Smet had not any legacy, and had no chance of any. The lawyer who had been worried for years in searching out all her genealogy had said that the Smets had no relatives in Holland, and consequently could receive no legacy.

The mysterious secrecy of the schouwveger gave credit to this rumour. The envy and bitterness of the neighbours, excited by Dame Smet's haughtiness, gladly seized it as a foundation and pretext for all kinds of conjectures and surmises as to the origin of the sudden wealth of the schouwveger.

Their suspicions were still further confirmed when they noticed that three or four police agents were wandering up and down the street without any apparent object; they noticed, too, that every now and then they looked askance at the schouwveger's house, like ravenous birds who have caught scent of their prey, without knowing precisely where to pounce upon it.

Then a story got abroad that just a week before—the very night before the news of the legacy reached them—there had been a robbery at a money-changer's in the city, and that the thieves had made off with a large quantity of silver and gold. Nobody ventured to say directly that the schouwveger was likely to rob any one of a stiver; but then, money could not drop from the clouds; and, anyhow, the Smets must know where they got it from.

Pauw was sitting in the shoemaker's house, at Katie's side; she was working at her embroidery, and had great difficulty in restraining the tears which would trickle down upon her work in spite

of her efforts. The young man's head hung down, and he was silent and moody; his countenance indicated violent and unwonted emotion; his forehead glowed at intervals with indignation and anger; then his features would relax into an expression of utter despondency, or a cold shudder would thrill through his whole frame. He could not help knowing what fearful suspicions were hinted in the neighbourhood about his father; and he was evidently lost in melancholy musing, and trembled beneath the crushing blow of shame.

The maiden, compassionating his distress, made every effort to suppress her own sorrow, and tried to comfort him by saying, with a sigh—

“Pauw, don't give way to low spirits. Men have evil tongues. Don't fret about it. What matters the gossip of neighbours, if your parents can show where they got their money?”

“The money!” muttered the youth between his teeth. “Ah, Katie dear, it is the money that makes us all so wretched! My father is growing as thin as a skeleton; he will fall ill and waste away. My mother, poor thing! I dare not say what I think about her. She has her five senses still; but what will become of her? There are times when I tremble for her reason! And your father is so cross to me! And I can't blame him; he has to submit to so much humiliation. Ah, Katie,

Katie, what will happen now, when up and down the street they say things about my poor, innocent father which make my hair stand on end with terror and shame. Oh, Katie dear, I shake all over; I am full of fear. There is something that tells me we shall be separated; that there is nothing before either of us, all our life long, but misery and sorrow."

The maiden hid her face in her hands.

"Katie," continued Pauw, with a deeper emotion in his voice, "this morning I went quietly to the church, and prayed more than an hour before the crucifix. I besought God, with tears, that he would be so merciful as to make us poor again!"

The girl raised her head, and said, with tears in her eyes—

"Pauw, you must not give way to all these gloomy fancies. There are so many rich people; do you think they are all miserable?"

"I don't know, Katie; but to us, at least, money is poison and gall. Since that wretched day we have had nothing but quarrelling, anger, terror, and suffering. My father was nearly murdered yesterday. Yesterday, the knife of the murderer; to-day, the knife of slander and calumny! Oh, it is dreadful! to hear that my father has been robbing—that he is a thief—and not to be able to



find out the serpent who first cast this venom on my father's name ! ”

At this moment the shoemaker entered the house. His face was pale, and betokened great discomposure ; he looked as if something had frightened him out of his senses.

“ Katie,” said he, speaking very fast, “ go up into your room ; leave me alone with Pauw ; but first bolt the street door.”

The girl uttered a shriek or anguish, and raised her hands imploringly to her father, as if to deprecate some cruel sentence ; but an imperative glance of his eye, and the repetition of his command, compelled her to obey. She left the room, covering her eyes with her hands.

The shoemaker placed himself in front of Pauw, and asked, with a voice of emotion—“ Pauw, where did your father get the money that your mother is spending by handfuls ? ”

The young schouwveger looked at him in amazement, but did not answer quickly enough to please the shoemaker.

“ Speak, speak ! where does the money come from ? It is for your own good I ask.”

“ My mother got it as a legacy,” stammered Pauw.

“ Has the legacy come already ? ”

“ No, not yet.”

"Where does the money come from, then?"

"They have got some in advance, I suppose."

"From whom? From where?"

"I don't know anything about it."

"You don't know anything about it, poor fellow! My poor friend Smet, what will come to him next? Oh, God!"

"But what is the matter?" cried Pauw, in evident terror. "You are quite ruffled. What has happened? I am shaking like a reed; you are killing me with agony!"

The shoemaker took him by the hand, led him away from the window, and said, in a mysterious and melancholy tone—

"Pauw, I was sent for just now to measure one of the servants of the commissary of police for a pair of shoes. It was only a trick: the commissary himself wanted to speak to me. He asked me a great many questions about your father, about the legacy, about the explanations your mother has given the neighbours as to the source of the money she displays everywhere in such abundance. I cannot tell you what the commissary said to me confidentially; but I am very sorry for your father, who was always my dear friend; and if he has done wrong, I shall always lament his unhappy fate."

Pauw stood looking into the shoemaker's eye

with a vacant stare, and shivering as if he had the ague.

"I pity *you*, Pauw, and my poor Katie, too; for she is not to blame — nor you either, Pauw."

"For God's sake, speak! What has happened?" sobbed the youth, quite beside himself.

"Pauw," said the shoemaker, lowering his voice to a whisper, "tell your father to be off out of the way as soon as he can; for the officers are coming to apprehend him."

"To apprehend him!" exclaimed Pauw, with an expression of indignation and pride on his face; "to apprehend my father! Ha! ha! how absurd!"

"Believe me, Pauw," repeated the shoemaker, in a tone of entreaty; "take my advice, or your father is a lost man!"

Then, putting his mouth close to Pauw's ear, he whispered, almost inaudibly—

"A large sum of money has been stolen from a money-changer's; they suspect your father of being, at least, an accomplice."

Pauw shuddered violently, and stared at the shoemaker with fixed and glassy eyes.

"What!" he exclaimed, "can you believe such a slander? Do you think it possible that my father is a thief?"

"No, no; but if he cannot show how he came by the money, how can he exculpate himself?"

"He *will* show all about it. How can you doubt it?"

"So much the better. I have asked him several times, but there was always something about him that was not clear and straightforward. Do just as you like, Pauw; but you see, until the thing is sifted to the bottom, you must keep away from here. Katie has nothing but her good name. You must not rob her of this, her only riches."

A shriek of despair and of agony broke from the young man's heart. He sprang up, and exclaimed—

"Ha! I'll know all about it; I *will* know all about it."

And, with these words, he ran out of the room into the street.

When he entered his own dwelling, he found his father alone, sitting in a chair.

He locked the door and bolted it, and said, with eager haste—

"Father, father dear, don't be angry with me; but I can't keep it any longer: I *must* know all about it."

The schouwveger gazed at him in astonishment.

"Father, tell me—ob, tell me now—where does

the money come from that my mother is showing to everybody ? ”

“ We have received it as a legacy,” was the reply.

“ No, no, the legacy hasn’t come yet ; you have got in advance, haven’t you ? You have borrowed it here in the city upon the legacy you are going to receive ? ”

“ Well, yes. Why do you trouble yourself about it ? ”

“ Where have you borrowed it ? where ? ” repeated the young man, with feverish impatience.

“ But, Pauw, what has come to you ? ” cried the schouwveger, in a severe tone of voice ; “ you impudent fellow ! to cross-examine your father as if you were his judge ! ”

This word affected the youth deeply.

“ I will, I must, I am determined to know ! ” he screamed.

Master Smet shook his head sadly, and said, in a desponding tone—

“ Pauw, you are asking me something that I cannot tell you now.”

“ That you cannot tell me ! ” said the trembling youth, with a deep sigh. “ Oh, good heavens ! ”

“ What is the matter with you, Pauw ? ”

“ **Father, father,**” exclaimed he, “ a large sum of money has been stolen from a money-changer’s ;

people suspect you of being an accomplice in the robbery."

The schouwveger was struck with dismay, but he exerted himself to hide his discomposure.

"It is only a slander of some envious people," stammered he; "don't disturb yourself about them."

"Alas, alas! the gendarmes are coming, father, to apprehend you!"

A death-like paleness overspread the schouwveger's face; he uttered a low moan, and began to tremble on his chair.

The sudden emotion of his father filled Pauw with alarm. He clasped his hands in an attitude of supplication, and implored his father—

"For God's sake, father, speak! Where—from whom—did you or mother get this money?"

The schouwveger continued silent.

"Alas!" said Pauw mournfully, "can it be that my father dares not declare where the money came from? Alas! I shall die of shame!"

At this imputation, made by own his son, the schouwveger covered his eyes with his hands, and began to weep bitterly. The tears which escaped from between his fingers and fell to the ground so affected the poor young man that he uttered a loud cry of anguish and sorrow.

He threw his arm round his father's neck,

kissed him tenderly on the forehead, and said, with tears—

“Oh, forgive me, father; I am so miserable!”

“Accused by my own son!” sobbed the schouwveger, “Oh, God! how have I deserved this?”

“No, no,” said Pauw, beseechingly; but I am compelled to hear you accused, and I cannot vindicate you. People ask me where you got the money. Oh, father dear, do tell me!”

“I cannot—I must not,” repeated Master Smet.

And observing that these words drove the colour again from his son’s cheeks, he added—

“But be sure of one thing: your father is an honest man.”

“And the gendarmes, father? will you not tell them?” cried Pauw, trembling violently.

The schouwveger rose up, as though he wished to avoid further questioning; and pointing with his finger to the door, he said, in a tone of command—

“Pauw, go away; leave me alone; I command you.”

“Oh, father, father!” cried the youth, wringing his hands in despair,

“Obey me at once—go away!” repeated the schouwveger, with evident irritation.

Pauw raised his hands above his head, and fled from his home with a shriek of terror and suspicion.

For about half an hour the schouwveger was all alone. His eyes were fixed and still, but he saw nothing ; he was pondering all the vexation and misery the treasure had brought with it, and how his house was changed into a hell of unrest and of suffering. During this gloomy reverie there arose and grew in his heart a feeling of bitter hatred toward the fatal money which had robbed him of the peace and of the happiness of his life. The demon of avarice tried, indeed, to crush the insurrection of his better soul ; but the thought that his own son believed him guilty, and the indescribable terror which the approaching visit of the gendarmes excited in him, lent him sufficient strength to resist its fascinations.

He resolved, at length, when the officers of justice entered his house, to explain everything frankly ; and even if they took away the treasure with them, in God's name, then, he would be a schouwveger again, as he had been before.

This resolution made him feel lighter at heart, and even cheered him so much that he felt he should again be merry and open-hearted, as Jan-Grap had been in days past.

When Dame Smet returned from her morning



promenade, her husband repeated what Pauw had said; and he added that he had made a firm and unchangeable resolve to declare everything openly, and even to surrender the treasure into the hands of justice, if it were demanded.

His wife knew much better than he did what rumours were in circulation about them, and what they had to fear. She first of all poured a torrent of abuse on the poor shoemaker, who, she said, had gone to the commissary, and, out of sheer envy, had set all this mischief afloat. Then she made her husband repeat again what Pauw had said, and answered, with a scornful laugh—

“But, Smet, what a blockhead you have grown! The word ‘gendarme’ makes your heart shrink within you. Have you committed theft or robbery? What can they do to you?”

“’Tis all the same; I won’t tell a lie before the judge.”

“No—tell it all right out, you booby! You know well enough that when justice lays its hand on anything, there is no getting it out again. The lawyers and the men from Brussels would make fine fun with your money! They would have a good laugh at the stupid bird that let itself be plucked so easily!”

“Say what you like, I will conceal nothing—and, secondly, this money, d’ye see, begins to

choke me terribly: I wish it were now in the mountain where they say all this cursed gold grows."

Dame Smet flew into a violent rage, stuck her hands into her sides and snarled—

"Ha! that's the tune you're going to sing, is it? Well, we'll see! 'Tis *my* money; *your* forefathers never had a stiver more than enough to keep them from dying of starvation day by day. What! you will give up the inheritance of my father to the lawyers? Quick—speak out! do you abide by this stupid resolution?"

Her husband, disconcerted by the fierce glare of her eyes, and by the fear that matters would not end with words only, did not dare to say *yes*; but still he nodded his head affirmatively.

"You thief!" cried she. "You will rob me of my gold, and give it away to strange people who have nothing to do with it, will you? Well, then, I will not remain a moment more the wife of such a simple fool. I'll be off at once to an advocate. I'll be divorced from you—the law allows it—and then you may be poor, if you like, and sweep chimneys; for meanness runs in your blood—low rascal that you are!"

"But, wife dear," sobbed the affrighted schouwveger, pale as death, "only listen to sound reason."

"What sound reason? You have never had a

grain of sound reason in all your family. Speak, I tell you—will you behave as I wish, or not ? ”

Her husband remained silent.

“ Well,” growled she, “ I’ll make very short work of it. I’ll be off with my money, and you shall never set eyes on me more.”

And as the schouwveger remained silent, and with his head hung dejectedly down, she flamed forth into more violent anger. She rushed to the chest, and began in good earnest to fill her pockets with money, and packed up a great deal more in a table-cloth, shaking all the time with passion, and muttering—

“ Well—you shall see ! Stay you here, Jan-noodle—and let the gendarmes fit a halter to your neck at their ease ! Fare you well—*au revoir* ! I’m off for America in the first ship—ay, farther than that too—so that I may never hear of you again ! ”

The schouwveger knew well enough that his wife had not the slightest intention of putting these formidable threats into execution. Still, he shuddered at the thought that she would be running round the neighbourhood with all this money about her, and making herself a laughing-stock to everybody ; so he made a spring at the door, drew the bolt, and put the key in his pocket.

His wife, finding herself thus a prisoner, burst

out into wild invectives, and used every exertion to take the key from her husband by main force. And this domestic conflict raged on until the schouwveger lost courage and gave way, promising faithfully to do just what his wife wished him to do.

It was then resolved that, in case the officers of justice made their appearance, they should affirm that the money came to them from the father of Dame Smet, and that they had kept it secret thus long. It would not do to speak of an advance upon the expected legacy, because they could not say who made the advance. The rest of the money they would hide again in the beam where they had found it, and they would place the little plank which covered the opening in its former position.

Dame Smet overwhelmed her hapless husband with threats of what she would do to him if he should betray, by word or look, where the money lay hidden.

When the treasure had been carried into the attic, to the very last piece of gold, Dame Smet tried to raise her husband's spirits and to rekindle in him the love of riches ; but the schouwveger was like a man stunned at the thought of appearing in a court of justice. This seemed to him a disgraceful, a punishable matter ; and now he

trembled, in all sincerity, like a thief, who is caught in the fact. He heard nothing of his wife's glowing descriptions; but the slightest sound in the street affected his nerves so much that he seemed at each moment to hear the awful voice of the gendarmes or the police.

And in the intervals of his paroxysms of terror, he muttered in a tone of the deepest anguish—

“Cursed treasure! devilish money!”

## CHAPTER VII.

AN hour later the little narrow street was full of groups of people, who were discussing in amazement some unusual occurrence.

While they were chatting, every one's eyes were anxiously fixed on the house of the schouw-veger, at the door of which a gendarme kept guard.

Katie was leaning against the wall of her house, with her apron at her eyes, and weeping bitterly. Some girls who stood round her seemed to participate in her grief; and Annemie, especially, made many attempts to console her; but she herself could hardly restrain the tears which stood glistening in her eyes.

The largest group was posted immediately opposite the schouwveger's door, and there were exchanged all kinds of edifying reflections and observations on this strange event.

"Serves her right!" muttered a fish-wife; "this will teach her to *my lady* herself—the upstart minx, with her silk bonnet and her satin gown! Now she can tell all the honest folk in the house of correction what a good family she comes of. And if she wants to show herself off, the scaffold is quite large enough!"

"Yes, she comes of a great family—doesn't she?" said another, with a sneer; "at Vilvoorden\* she'll find six or seven hundred of her cousins!"

"But how is it possible?" said an old chair-mender, with a sigh. "I would have trusted Jan-Grap with my last stiver."

"Such good, upright people, who never did anybody an injury!" added another.

"Who cared so little for money that they were always giving alms, though they were not over well off themselves."

"The most amiable, the best lad on the face of the earth!"

"So merry and so clever! and *they* to rob like this—to break into a house in the night."

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\* A prison at Antwerp.

"Yes," remarked the tailor's wife, "after this nobody will be able to trust his own brother; everything that goes on two legs is a thief. So much the worse for them that let themselves be caught."

"Come, come, Betty," said a mason, laughingly, "'tisin't quite so bad as that comes to, either. Because your husband cabbages a bit of cloth now and then, you think there are no honest people left."

"Ha! you've cheated the gallows," snarled the tailor's wife. "You've got the mark of 'em on you, you rogue!"

"Thank you very much, Betty darling!" said the mason, with a smile and a bow.

"Serves her right!" interposed the fish-wife. "I don't like looking on at other people's troubles; but if *my lady* the schouwveger's wife is to figure on the scaffold, I'd be off to the great market, if I was on my deathbed."

"Fie, you shrew!" exclaimed one of the girls. "I can't think how you can take pleasure in the misfortunes of your neighbours. What good will it do you, now, if the Smets are sent to prison?"

"You simpleton!" said the fish-wife, with a smile of contempt; "you would rather see thieves running about at large, I suppose?"

The girl was about to reply ; but at this moment an old dame thrust her head into the circle, and said—

“ But, bless my soul ! do you know how Jan-Grap did the job ? ”

Everyone looked at her with intense curiosity.

“ Only think ! ” she continued. “ Never trust anybody again as long as you live ! I’ve always said, and I maintain the same now, that the law ought to prevent so much gold money being put in the windows before people’s eyes. Yes, when a poor body is standing at a money-changer’s shop, and his eyes fall on the heaps of gold-pieces ’tis just as if the devil was tempting him. I’m old now ; but, for all that, whenever I pass a money-changer’s, and the gold twinkles before my eyes, then my heart begins to beat terribly, and I’m all of a shake with longing ; you wouldn’t believe, now, that I’m quite afraid to trust myself. There’s Trees, the dustman’s wife, who is always standing staring into the windows ; only yesterday I said to her, ‘ Well done, Trees ; that’s the way to the gallows ! ’ ”

“ Yes, yes, to be sure,” remarked the chair-mender ; “ more than one have been made villains of, only by the sight of money.”

“ When you have seven children in your house, all shaking and shivering with hunger and cold,”



grumbled a mechanic, "and you see great heaps of gold lying there doing nothing, and think that one little piece would make you and your children so happy, it is indeed enough to make a man forget himself."

"But, Mother Beth, go on with your story about Master Smet!" was the universal cry.

"Ha, yes; well, it was like this. Poor Jan-Grap had got the bad habit of standing at the money-changer's window, to look at the piles of gold-pieces. Eight or ten days ago he was sent for to sweep a chimney; it was at a money-changer's, and there he saw heaps of gold. That very night he broke open the money-changer's door, and stole as much money as he could carry."

"What a thief!" said the tailor with a sigh.

"He managed uncommonly well," continued the old dame; "and never a crow would have cawed about, if his stupid wife, with her airs and her finery, had not let it all out."

"Now, do you know whom I pity most?" said a girl: "'tis Katie, the shoemaker's daughter. Look at her, standing there, poor creature; she is half-dead with grief."

"I can well believe that," was the reply. "Dame Smet was always telling her that she should be a *my lady* too, and live in a big house on the Meir. She has turned the poor thing's

head; and now all her castles in the air have tumbled to pieces. She was going to be married; now she'll have to wait ten or fifteen years, till Pauw has served out his time at Vilvoorden."

"How can Pauw help it, if his father has done wrong?" stammered the girl.

"Yes, but you see," mumbled the old dame, "the footprints in the money-changer's house show that the schouwveger was not alone."

"Poor Pauw! poor Katie!" said the girl, with melancholy voice, as if oppressed by a painful conviction.

"The gendarmes won't catch Pauw," said one. "He's a slippery rogue; he's made himself scarce betimes. He's over the frontier by this time, you may be sure, with his pockets well-lined."

"Kobe, you spit-venom!" exclaimed the mechanic. "I saw Pauw on the ramparts only a minute or two ago. He was running up and down like a body who has lost his senses."

"Don't you see, he knows all about it? If a man isn't guilty, he has no cause for fear."

"No; I suppose you wouldn't have him laugh when the gendarmes came to seize his father and mother!"

No one had any doubt of the schouwveger's guilt; most of the neighbours even felt a secret

joy at the disgrace which had fallen on his supercilious wife.

Yet many stood there with sadness on their countenances and in their hearts, and really mourned over the fate of Master Smet and his son. The whole affair to them was a mystery. Such fine fellows, beloved by everybody for their good-humour and kindness—that *they* should have perpetrated a robbery at dead of night! Jan-Grap and Pauken-Plezier, who seemed to live in such full trust in God's providence and grace—that *they* should have committed so horrible a crime—for lust of gold!

But, though these friends of the schouwveger's tried very hard to find arguments to vindicate him in their own minds, the sight of the gendarme who stood at the door, overthrew them all at once.

The schouwveger was all this time sitting in the front room of his house. He was quite prostrated, and had buried his head in his hands. An officer kept watch over him while his wife was being examined in the back room.

In this room there were assembled two or three personages of the supreme court of judicature, and in addition, the commissary of police and two gendarmes. They had made Dame Smet sit down opposite the judge, who was to interrogate her.

She smiled with wonderful boldness, and did not appear in the least disconcerted.

"You say," continued the judge, "that you have had the money in your house a long time, and that it is a part of your father's inheritance?"

"Yes."

"Yet it is notorious that your father left no money of any kind behind him."

"I suppose I know best about that," replied the dame without hesitation. "What he gave me during his illness would not, of course, be found after his death."

"And to how much, now, did the money amount that you have kept concealed hitherto?"

The dame seemed to reflect a moment.

"Come now, speak; if you don't know the exact sum, how much was it—about, as near as you can guess?"

"I see clearly," said Dame Smet, with a smile "you are trying to catch me with some trick or other; but it won't do, gentlemen, I am not to be caught so easily."

"How much?" said the judge, with an accent of command.

"It might be a few thousand crowns."

"But how many thousand?"

"I don't know exactly; I haven't written it in any book."

"Was it ten thousand?"

"Yes, more than that."

"But how can you explain that you have lived here for twenty years as poor working-people; and now, all at once, you run about from shop to shop with your pockets full of gold? Here are hundreds of crowns spent in clothes and jewels; and now you are trying to get a house that would stand you in at least four thousand francs a year."

"Everybody has his own tastes. I am of a good family, and I expected that I should soon have a legacy from *my aunt* in Holland, who is enormously rich. So I said to myself, 'I will save up my money till I can begin to live in a style suitable to my rank.'"

"How much money have you in the house now?"

"No more."

"How, no more? Yesterday you showed a whole handful of gold-pieces to the owner of a house on the St. James's market. What has become of that money?"

"Suppose I chose to give it away, and didn't wish to say to whom?"

The judge shook his head angrily, and said—

"You are making up a story, and not telling the truth. We'll find a way to bring you to your

senses. Your husband is now going to appear before us. Take notice that if you speak a single word until I ask you a question, you shall be taken out into the other room."

Then, turning to a gendarme, he said—

"Bring the husband here."

When the schouwveger entered the room and saw the judges of the supreme court there, he began to tremble so violently that the gendarme was obliged to support him to the chair which had been placed for him. He was bloodless as a corpse, and did not seem to hear the first questions of the judge.

They gave him a little time to recover himself, and in the meantime the examiners interchanged significant looks with one another, as though the mortal terror of the suspected man convinced them that they had the real criminal before them.

What most disconcerted the schouwveger was the sight of his wife, who seemed wonderfully cool, but kept her eye fixed on that of her husband with a penetrating severity of expression.

Master Smet had resolved to tell the whole truth; but now that his wife held him fascinated by the expression of her eye, his courage quite forsook him.

"Now, answer me," said the judge to him at length; "where does the money come from that we find all at once in your possession?"

"My wife—my wife has inherited it," said the the schouwveger, with a confused and stammering voice.

"From her aunt in Holland, isn't it?"

"Yes, I believe so."

Dame Smet became livid with repressed wrath; she shook with the violence of the efforts she made to restrain herself, but it was all in vain. She exclaimed, with angry impetuosity—

"Confound you! what are you prating about there?—He has had a blow on the head, gentlemen; he has no more sense than a baby six weeks old. What use is it to ask questions of such a poor simpleton?"

"Gendarme," said the judge, authoritatively, "take the wife by the arm; at the least word or sign lead her off!"

Dame Smet trembled with rage, yet she did not dare to speak again. It was probably not without design that they kept her in the room; for the examiners carefully took notice of all the changing emotions which depicted themselves on her countenance.

"You say, then," asked the judge, turning to the schouwveger, "that your wife has inherited some money from her aunt in Holland?"

"Yes—no, no—from her father—rest his soul!" was the feeble and reluctant answer.

"Yes and no? Take care, my man; don't play your jokes with the law. You may have cause to rue it. Now tell me plainly and without circumlocution,—where does the money come from?"

Master Smet returned no answer. The examiners thought that his silence was intentional, but they were wrong. The poor man was quite paralyzed by terror; he could not speak.

"Is it always thus," continued the judge, "that you have accounted to the neighbours for your sudden wealth? Have you not spoken of a sum of money which you had borrowed in advance, on the security of your expected legacy?"

"Oh, sir, sighed Master Smet, rubbing his pale forehead, "I don't know. Yes, I believe it was so."

A peculiar expression of contemptuous compassion passed over the features of the examiners.

"And the money you borrowed amounted to a considerable sum? Some thousand crowns?"

"No, no—a few hundreds."

"Not thousands, then?"

"I don't know clearly."

"Speak the truth," exclaimed the judge, raising his voice, and using a gesture of threatening; "we



know all about it. Your wife is better advised than you are. She maintains that you have borrowed several thousand crowns."

A fresh nervous paroxysm shook the poor schouwveger.

"It is possible," he faltered out; "I don't know what I am saying. Yes—some thousands—"

The judge allowed a few moments to elapse, and then addressed him in a voice of reassuring kindness:

"My man, you are not straightforward, and you are contradicting yourself at every word you say. I will tell you what you are accused of; perhaps you may then see that you have nothing to gain by concealing the truth from us. About ten days ago, on a Friday night, a considerable quantity of gold and silver was stolen from a money-changers. You are suspected of being the thief; and all the circumstances, your own words themselves, witness against you. If you don't wish to be led off to prison by the gendarmes, tell me at once and truly, where the money came from that has been seen in your wife's possession."

The schouwveger stared at the judge, quite bewildered, and unable to utter a word.

"You admit, then," asked the judge, "that you are guilty, and that you have committed this crime?"

"No, no," exclaimed the terrified man ; "I have not stolen—"

"Can you explain to us why, on that very night, you roused the neighbours by your cries for help ? why you shouted, ' Fire, fire ! ' ? Was it not in order to make them believe that you had been all night in your own house, and thus to conceal your criminal visit to the money-changer from the eyes of justice ? "

"I had been dreaming," sighed the schouw-veger, with a scarcely audible voice ; and then his head sank down on his breast as though he had been stunned by a sudden blow.

"We know enough," said the judge, rising ; "we shall obtain further evidence by searching the premises."

He gave the signal, and Master Smet and his wife were seized by the gendarmes ; and all who were present followed the judge.

The terrified husband and wife were led all over the house ; everything was thrown into confusion, not the smallest corner remaining unexplored.

Dame Smet was quite unconcerned, and smiled, from time to time, at the fruitlessness of the search. She looked her husband full in the face at intervals, and seemed thus at once to encourage him to stand firm, and to

threaten him if he lost his presence of mind.

In the attic several planks were taken up ; for the plaster with which the rat-holes had been stopped excited suspicion. But they found nothing.

The judge asked many questions about the gold that had so mysteriously disappeared, but he could not extract from Dame Smet any sufficient explanation. The schouwveger leaned, almost insensible, against the wall, and could give no answer. He gazed at the beam like a man petrified ; his treasure was there !

Amazed and vexed at his fruitless efforts to discover the stolen money, the judge abandoned the search and slowly descended the stairs.

Smet and his wife were again brought into the room, and there the gendarmes produced their ropes and handcuffs, at a sign given them by the judge. When the schouwveger saw these degrading preparations, he uttered a mournful shriek, and fell fainting on a chair.

His wife, on the contrary, regarded these preliminaries with a smile of disdain, as though she thought them but a feint to shake their courage.

"For the last time," said the judge, in a severe tone of voice ; "there are the cords with which

your hands will be tied behind your back. You will be led as a criminal through the streets to the prison. For the last time I beg you, for your own sake, to speak the truth. Where did all your money come from ? ”

The schouwveger was half dead with terror and apprehension ; the perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead ; and, as though his fear had deprived him of speech, he stared unconsciously at the floor.

“ Well, now, speak ; where did the money come from ? ”

A mournful scream echoed at this moment from the front room, and, before the judge could finish his question, a young man sprang shrieking into the apartment. He looked round with a glance rapid as lightning ; and he must have heard the question of the judge, for he fell on his knees before the schouwveger, and, lifting his hands with a gesture of earnest entreaty, he cried—

“ Oh, father, father ! where did the money come from ? Oh, for God’s sake, speak ! *You steal ? you a villain ?* Gendarmes, cords, handcuffs ! No, no, it is impossible ! it is a hideous dream ! ”

The deadly paleness of the youth, his hair standing erect with fright, and the unutterably powerful appeal that lay in the glance of his eyes, made so deep an impression on the schouwveger

that he burst into a flood of tears, and exclaimed, with a tremulous voice—

“I have deserved it all ! God has punished me !”

“Deserved ? deserved ?” yelled Pauw, tearing his hair in agony.

But Master Smet drew himself up, wiped away the tears from his eyes, and raising his son from the ground, he pressed him to his heart with eager affection, saying in a cheerful tone—

“No, my child, your father has done very wrong ; but he is an honest man ; he will explain all.”

And turning himself to the judge, he said, with calm deliberation—

“Sir, I will show you the treasure, and you shall see how the money came into our hands.”

Dame Smet thrust her fists into his face threateningly, and roared, with her features convulsed by passion—

“If you dare, coward !”

“Gendarme, lead the wife away !” said the judge.

“There is no need, sir,” said the schouwveger, “my resolution is taken ; I will explain everything to you as I ought to have done at first. I have not stolen ; it is a treasure I have found.”

Pauw fell on his knees in the middle of the

room, and exclaimed, with tears of joy and gratitude—

“ Oh, my God, I thank thee, I thank thee for thy mercy and goodness ! ”

“ Are you now ready to give us a full explanation ? ” asked the judge.

“ Yes, yes,” replied the schouwveger ; “ but, sir, I have a request to make. Will you have the goodness to grant it ? ”

“ We shall see ; if it is possible.”

“ You see, sir, this money has made me miserable ; it is the pest of my house. Oh, have compassion on me, and take this plague away ! take it all away with you ! ”

Dame Smet began to sob and cry aloud.

“ Well, show us the treasure,” said the judge, with a voice of authority.

The schouwveger led the officers of justice up to the attic, showed him that the great beam was hollow at the bottom, and said—

“ The gold is in there. Ten days ago, one Friday evening, the rats were scampering about the attic and making a terrible noise ; I was chasing two of them with an old sabre that is now hanging behind my bed. By chance I struck this beam, and was astonished at the hollow sound it gave ; at the second blow, a square plank and a bag of money fell out on my toes. I have no-

thing else to say, gentlemen, except that the fear of thieves, and the fear that you would take away the money from us, have made me say and do a great many foolish and wicked things. This, you see, is the pure and simple truth."

And with these words he took the plank out of the beam, and showed the judge the cavity.

The judge stooped and drew out the bag of money ; a large number of gold and silver pieces rolled out on the floor, because the bag, rotten with age, had burst a second time. But, at the same time, there fell from the beam something else, which the schouwveger had not noticed. It was a small, well-worn pocket-book, with a parchment cover.

Conjecturing that this book might contain a confirmation or a refutation of the explanation made by the schouwveger, the judge seized it eagerly, and turned it over with very remarkable attention.

Turning to the weeping Dame Smet, he asked—

"What is your father's name, my woman?"

"Vandenberg, Peter Vandenberg," sobbed she.

Without further remark the judge ripped up the bag still wider, and gathered out of it a certain number of pieces. Then he made a sign to his companions, and, drawing them aside in a corner, he said to them—

"This man speaks the truth ; there are no criminals here. This little book is a memorandum-book of the wife's father, telling the sum of money which he had deposited, from time to time, in the beam ; and he has even written in it that he destined the whole of it to his daughter. We know the man had the reputation of being miserly and rich ; and as he died suddenly, he had no time to say where his money was hidden. Besides, look, the treasure contains old ducats, French crowns, and even Brabant shillings. It is not money like this that the money-changer has been robbed of. We have nothing further to do here."

His hearers nodded their heads approvingly.

Then going up to the schouwveger, the judge said—

"My man, you have given yourself a great deal of unnecessary trouble and vexation. The money is legally yours."

"Oh, take it away with you !" implored Master Smet.

"Simpleton !" said the judge, with a smile ; "we have nothing to do with it. Listen ; the seven hundred and sixteenth article of the city statute-book says : 'The right of property in a treasure belongs to him who finds it on his own premises ; if he finds it on any other man's premises, then half belongs to the finder and half to



him on whose premises it is found !' This house is yours ; consequently, the whole treasure belongs to you."

" Then the plague must remain in my house ! " muttered the schouwveger, discontentedly.

To Dame Smet, who came rushing forward with joy and eagerness, the judge said—

" Dame, this gold is the inheritance your father has bequeathed you ; you must regard this little book as his will. Farewell, and try both of you to make a good use of your riches."

While the officers of justice were leaving the attic, the dame was gathering the money, in speechless haste, into her apron, and then she ran downstairs with it, snarling the while at her husband—

" Coward ! confound you ! I'll pay you out for this ! "

When she had brought all her treasure downstairs, she threw it in the chest, took out a handful of gold-pieces, locked the chest, and then ran out into the street, and strutted with haughty exultation through the assembled crowd, who stood gaping and staring after her until she had disappeared from the little street.

Pauw was quite wild with joy. He rushed down the stairs to go to Katie ; but, seeing the

shoemaker and his daughter in the street, he seized a hand of each, and cried—

“ Ha, come, come, Katie dear, it was all moonshine ! Master Dries, come with me ; my father will be so happy if you come and wish him luck.”

Already the result of the search was known to the waiting crowd.

“ Pauw, Pauw, good luck, *Mynheer* Pauw ! ” shouted the young girls, clapping their hands with sincere and hearty congratulations.

“ Oh, call me always Pauwken-Plezier ! ” said the young man, imploringly, as he led the shoemaker and his daughter toward the door.

“ Long live Pauwken ! Long live Pauwken-Plezier ! ” resounded through the street.

The schouwveger no sooner saw his friend the shoemaker than he burst into tears, and rushed to meet him with open arms. Pressing his old friend to his heart, he sobbed aloud—

“ Oh, Dries, look, this is the happiest day of my life ! I totter on my legs with joy. What I have suffered from this cursed money passes all description ; no pen could write it ! ”

“ Is everything all clear now ? ” asked the shoemaker.

“ Yes, yes ; we found the gold here in the house ; it was the inheritance of my wife.”

"God be praised, Jan! I have been sitting shaking all over as if you were my own brother."

"Well. Dries, you are all the same as my own brother. Listen; now we'll make haste, and let our children be married."

"But you are a rich man now? Your wife?" muttered the shoemaker.

"What do you mean by rich?" said Master Smet, merrily. "I am still Jan-Grap, your friend. We've sung out our song about *my ladies* and *mamsels*! Now that I don't mean to bother myself about the money, I'll soon see whether I'm master or not!"

"I ask nothing better than to see my child happy," answered his friend. "Not for the money; but they have loved one another, with a virtuous love and with our approbation, many a long year. My poor Katie—I believe she would have wasted away, really, in case—"

"Come, come, not a word more about such horrid things as that!" exclaimed the schouw-veger, "Let me see: drawing up the papers; the banns in church;—yes, within seven weeks we'll have the wedding-feast! Ha, that shall be a feast, friend Dries! That shall be something to talk about! Money shall be of some use for once. I'll invite all the neighbours, and we'll set off in

five or six coaches to Dikke-Me or to Jan-Stek's.\* We'll take the fiddlers with us, and we'll dance and *flikker*, we'll sing and jump—bless me! won't we then?"

His voice failed him, and he burst suddenly into tears.

"What is the matter, Jan?" asked the astonished shoemaker.

"Nothing; 'tis nothing at all, my friend," faltered out the schouwveger; "only my gladness sticks in my throat. My heart is full—running over. I have gone through so much these last few days, that I seem now as if I had escaped out of hell!"

With increasing emotion, he continued—

"That's settled, isn't it, Dries?—our children are to be married as soon as possible, without a single day's delay?"

"'Tis rather soon, isn't it?"

"Good things are never too soon: this cursed money may come in the way again. But, Dries, I've one thing to ask of you. You see, your temper is rather short, and my wife's tongue is rather long; now, these two things don't get on well together. She will be sure to show her teeth when she sees you, for she fancies it is all your

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\* Two large taverns outside the city of Antwerp favourite resorts of the citizens.

doing that the officers of justice paid us a visit. You're looking rather sour about it. Now, keep your temper, man, and be reasonable ; and a little accommodating, too. My wife may be uncivil to you : well, let her have her way. We have the disposal of our children, anyhow ; and if we make up our minds that they shall be married, who is to hinder it ? ”

“ That is true.”

“ Well, now, you won't be put out by a few words and ugly faces, will you ? ”

“ No ; I'll act as if I were blind and deaf.”

“ Come, now, that's spoken like a sensible man. Give me your hand ; that's settled, then.”

He turned then to his son and Katie, who were standing at the window, clasping each other's hands, and had probably heard all that had been said ; for their countenances beamed with radiant joy, though quiet tears were trickling down their cheeks.

“ Come, Katie,” cried the schouwveger, “ hug me round the neck, girl ; seven weeks more and I shall be your father ! ”

The girl ran, with an exclamation of heartfelt gladness, and threw her arms round the schouwveger's neck. Pauw had rushed toward his father under the impulse of a similar emotion ;

and all four were rapt in the bliss of true, sincere, heartfelt affection.

"Eh! eh! what this going on in my house?" resounded all at once through the room, in a threatening tone.

As though this voice had thrilled painfully to their hearts, they released themselves from each other's arms, and looked with astonishment toward the door.

There stood Dame Smet, tossing her head in the air, and with a smile of ineffable contempt on her face.

"Well, well, these are pretty doings!" exclaimed she; "I can't leave the house a minute but when I come back I find it full of cobblers!"

The shoemaker's face became pale with rage.

"Yes, yes; be as sulky as you like," said she, with an expression of scornful disdain; "I shall only laugh at you for your pains. I am mistress here."

"But, Dame Smet—" stammered the shoemaker.

"Dame! dame! I am no *dame*," snarled she; "you must say *my lady*, when you presume to speak to me!"

Pauw looked steadily at his father, for he saw that he was quivering with anger and vexation.

Dame Smet pointed to the door, and said to the shoemaker, in a tone of great excitement—

“Be off! quick! out of my house with your dainty daughter! That such mean, vulgar people should ever cross my threshold, indeed! ’Tis a good thing that we are going to live on the St. James’s market, with a *porte-cochere* all to ourselves!”

The shoemaker took his daughter’s hand, and led her out into the street, muttering to himself as he went.

Then burst forth the schouwveger’s wrath in an impetuous and irresistible storm. He uttered unintelligible sounds; he sprang at his wife—but Pauw had placed himself between them, and kept them apart with desperate effort.

“Let me go! let me go!” yelled Master Smet. “I’ll twist her haughty neck for her.”

Pauw prayed, and implored, and shed tears, and made such successful resistance, that his father had time to recover himself and cool down a little.

After a few more threats and execrations, the schouwveger said, as if quite overcome—

“Come, Pauw, come up-stairs, or that woman will give me a fit of apoplexy.” And, according to his wont, he ran quickly up the stairs to avoid further altercation.

The whole day was spent thus in quarrelling and in sullenness. The dame declared she would not hear Katie's name mentioned, and poured out a flood of abuse against the poor girl and her father.

Now she had the notion of some *my lady* more firmly fixed in her head than before. Leocadie, at the corner shop, had already become far too vulgar to be admitted into *her* family.

Pauw did nothing but weep, and retired into his room very early, to bewail his wretched fate in solitude.

At length the schouwveger went slowly upstairs, muttering, in the bitterness of his soul—

“The plague is still in my house, I see ! This cursed money ! I wish it would sink down through the earth into the pit it came from !”

## CHAPTER VIII.

VERY early the next morning, when the first beams of the sun were beginning to disperse the gloom of the little street, the shoemaker and his daughter were on their way to church ; but they had scarcely left their door, and walked a few steps down the street, when the girl suddenly



stood still, and said, pointing to the schouwveger's house—

“Father, look! Master Smet's door is wide open; the windows are all bolted still!”

“Good heavens! what can it be?” exclaimed the shoemaker. “The lock is wrenched off the door. Depend on it, the thieves have been there to-night. Come, Katie, I will knock them up.”

And so saying, he began to kick at the door to awaken the inmates of the house.

“Don't kick so hard, father,” said the girl, trembling with apprehension; “you'll frighten Dame Smet. Wait a bit; give them time to get their clothes on.”

After a short pause, the shoemaker began to kick again; and when he heard, a few moments after, the sound of footsteps on the stairs, he entered the house.

“Who opened the door to you?” asked Dame Smet, in a menacing tone. “Didn't I tell you you were to keep away from my house?”

“There you are at it again!” growled the schouwveger. “Pauw has gone to the first mass, I suppose. But, anyhow, Master Dries can't have dropped through the ceiling.”

“No, no, my friends, it is not as you think, said the shoemaker; “your door has been broken

open. I am quite in a fright ; I am afraid something has happened."

"The door broken open !" shrieked Dame Smet, while a mortal paleness overspread her face ; "oh, my money, my money !"

She ran with an eager cry to the chest, and threw it open. A stifled groan broke from her breast ; she covered her face with her hands, and fell on a chair, sobbing in anguish and despair.

"My money—my money is gone !" she cried "stolen—stolen !"

The schouwveger seemed surprised at the unexpected tidings, and remained a moment staring round, as though he were asking whether he ought to laugh or cry. But in a moment his mind recovered itself ; a smile ran over his features, but he forcibly repressed this indication of gladness ; and, that he might not add to his wife's distress, he behaved as if he were quite amazed—yes, even somewhat afflicted.

Katie had taken Dame Smet's hand, and was crying with sincere sympathy.

"Jan," said the shoemaker, in a soothing tone, "'tis a great misfortune my friend ; but you must not be crushed down by it. God giveth—God taketh away. I am very sorry for your distress."

"My distress !" said Master Smet, speaking in a low voice, that his wife might not overhear him ;

"If you fancy I'm going to shed one tear for this bewitched money that was doomed to make me wretched, you are much mistaken, friend Dries. I am sorry for my wife ; but for that I should say — ' God be praised that the plague is well out of my house ! ' "

" Oh, oh ! " groaned Dame Smet, wringing her hands, " my money—my poor money ! the legacy of my father ! ' Twill be the death of me. "

And, indeed, the poor woman looked so dreadfully ill, that the schouwveger feared she was going to faint away, and, running for some vinegar, he poured out a handful, and rubbed it on the face of his wife ; but she repelled him angrily, as though she would not be tended by him.

" Let me alone ! " she cried, snappishly. " You are in high feather about it ; I see it clear enough on your hypocritical face ! "

" Come, now, Trees, " said he, " you mustn't take on so about it. The money is gone, sure enough ; but our miserable life, our quarrels, and all our vexations and grievances, are gone away with it too. Come, come, dame, pluck up your courage. I shall set to work again briskly enough. We shall live in peace, and our days will glide away merrily, just as they used to do. "

" Oh, mother, mother ! " cried Katie, " how unfortunate you are ! "

"Yes, sobbed the dame, "You, only you, child, have any sympathy with me. The unfeeling log of wood! there he stands grinning in my face! He'd see anybody die before his very eyes, without giving them a single word of comfort. I feel grateful to you, Katie, for crying with me. Oh! oh! my money, my money!"

At this moment Pauw came running down the stairs.

"Eh! eh! what's up now?" said he, with a laugh. "I begin to believe that our house is bewitched. And, Katie, *you* here? with my mother? Ha, ha! then you've made it all up?"

"Be quiet, Pauw," said the schouwweger; "a great misfortune has happened. The thieves have stolen all our money in the night!"

"Well, thank God! thank God!" shouted Pauw," cutting an unusually vigorous *flikker*; "that's capital! Now, Pauwken-Plezier will be a schouwveger again!"

His mother, deeply wounded by his unfeeling rapture, sprang to her feet, and exclaimed, angrily—

"You, too, you good-for-nothing boy, *you* laugh at my distress!"

The young man took her hand, and murmured, in a tone of sympathy and affection, as though

he had now first grasped the real state of the case—

“ Oh, mother, I never thought of that ; you have been crying ! indeed, indeed, you must be in great distress.”

And he led her gently back to her chair, sat down by her side, and, pressing her hand tenderly, he said—

“ Mother dear, look up a bit. The loss of the money must be a great trouble to you—I quite feel that ; but think, now, that we were not happy with it. Since it came into our possession, there have been more irritation, more quarrelling, more vexation, in our house than in all my life before. You and father—you used to be so affectionate to each other, and every thing was so comfortable and so nice, that one couldn't be better off in the king's palace. From the day the money was found, you have been always sad, and always looking as sour as vinegar ; father has been growing thin, Katie has been pining away, and I was losing my wits fast. There was nothing but suffering and annoyance ! ”

“ Yes, Pauw, but it was all your father's fault,” answered the dame ; “ he couldn't bear his sudden wealth ; but I, who am of a good family, I was born to be rich, you see.”

“ Yes, everybody knows that well,” said Pauw,

with a gentle, insinuating voice; "but you are my mother for all that, and you have no other child but me. And since you know now that the money made father and me miserable, you, who are so tender and loving, won't you take a little comfort? Won't you say to yourself: 'In God's name, then, 'tis all the same if only we are peaceful and contented?' "

"To be poor—*poor!*" said Dame Smet, sobbing afresh.

"Come, Trees, be a reasonable woman!" said the schouwveger; "isn't affection worth more than anything else? We have lived so long together, and we have loved each other so truly—so we will again; and perhaps hereafter you will bless God that he has taken the wretched money from us."

"Hold your tongue," snarled she; "I dare say you have been praying for this."

"But, mother," continued Pauw, "only think a bit how things were before. Father and I—we were always full of mirth; we had always something funny to make people laugh; everybody loved us. There was never a cross word in the house, or in the street, or in the whole neighbourhood, everybody was a friend to us."

He threw his arms round her neck, and murmured, with thrilling tenderness in his voice—

"Look, mother, this beautiful and happy life

will come back again ; father and I will drink a pint of beer the less, and save to buy you a fine dress now and then ; and as Katie will live with you, you will be waited on like a *my lady* ; we shall love you, and treat you with respect. You will have more happiness and enjoyment in your life than you would have with the money."

"But, Pauw, lad, what will people say when I pass along the street ?" said Dame Smet, with a melancholy voice.

"What will they say ? Oh, mother, I'll go with you and father this very day, and will have a walk on the Dyke. I'll walk by your side, and give you my arm ! I'll carry my head up, and look everybody full in the face. We are honest people. Those who don't know us won't care about us, and those who do will say that we are sensible, strong-minded people, who take thankfully either fortune or misfortune, as it pleases God to send it."

The half-consolated dame began to weep afresh. She pressed her son to her heart, and said—

"In God's name, then, I shall be a rich woman some day ; if not now, then it will be hereafter. You must be a *schouwweiger* again, then, Pauw. It frets me ; but as it cannot be otherwise, and since you like it—"

She then released Pauw, and bestowed a similar embrace on the girl at her side.

"Come Katie, darling child, you are the best of them all," sobbed she. "Men don't know what it is to be rich ; but you would soon have got used to it, wouldn't you ? Well, 'twill come some day. Don't fret about it. *My aunt* in Hollaud can't last much longer ; she must be more than eighty years old."

Pauw had silently left the room without being observed.

Suddenly, as though a terrible thought had pierced her heart, Dame Smet began to tremble ; she sprang up, and, stretching out her hands toward her husband, she exclaimed—

"Oh, good heavens ! Smet, there's five-and-twenty crowns to be paid at the jeweller's. Oh, my God, what a debt ! We shall never be able to pay it ! To be poor isn't so bad—but to be in debt !"

And with a lamentable voice, she added, "There is one way—'tis very hard, but anything rather than debt—I'll take my jewels back to him."

The schouwveger pressed her hand, and said cheerfully—

"No, no, Trees dear, you shall not take anything back ; you may keep all you have got."

"But who will pay for them ?"

"I will, I will, Trees."

"You ?"



“ Yes ; I had put a little money on one side, to provide against accidents, and for Pauw’s wedding, Wait a moment ! ”

He placed a chair on the hearth, thrust his head up the chimney, reached out a piece of cloth in which he had wrapped the money, and then he went to the table, and spread out a number of gold pieces on it.

Dame Smet was deeply affected by the sight of this little remnant of her legacy. A glad smile played on her features ; her bosom heaved ; and she gazed without speaking on the glittering gold.

“ Look you, Treets,” said her husband, “ this money belongs to you ; you may do what you like with it ; only, I beg you, let us keep the greater part of it for Pauw and Katie’s wedding, and to set them up in a little shop.”

His wife said nothing, and seemed lost in deep thought.

Suddenly their attention was arrested by the cry—*aep, aep, aep !* which seemed to come from the cellar ; and they all turned their eyes in that direction with a smile, for they had no doubt that it was Pauw’s voice.

And in a moment he was heard singing, as lively and merry as ever—

“ Schouwvegers gay, who live in A. B.,  
Companions so jolly,  
All frolic and folly—”

and he came bounding into the room, making the most surprising gestures and grimaces.

He had put on all his chimney-sweeper's clothes, flourished his brush in his hand, and had blackened his face with soot,

"Hurrah!" shouted he; "Pauwken-Plezier's come again! Father, mother, Katie, I'm so happy. Let us all be merry again! Sorrow and spleen are afraid of a black face! Come, sing, dance, and mirth forever!"

Paul took Katie's hand, and proceeded to dance round the room with her; but the girl resisted his affectionate violence.

When he saw the chimney-sweeper's clothes which he had worn from a child, and in which he had enjoyed so much peace and pure joy, Master Smet was affected in a very extraordinary manner. He burst into tears, and sobbed aloud with joyful emotion.

"Well done, Pauw! Ha, that's right, lad!" he shouted. "There's nothing can beat a schouw-veger's life! If your mother will let me, I'll put on my black clothes too. Ay, ay, Pauw, mirth for ever! So be it!"

The mother made a sign to them to be quiet, as though she had something weighty to say.

She then turned to the shoemaker; and, reach-



