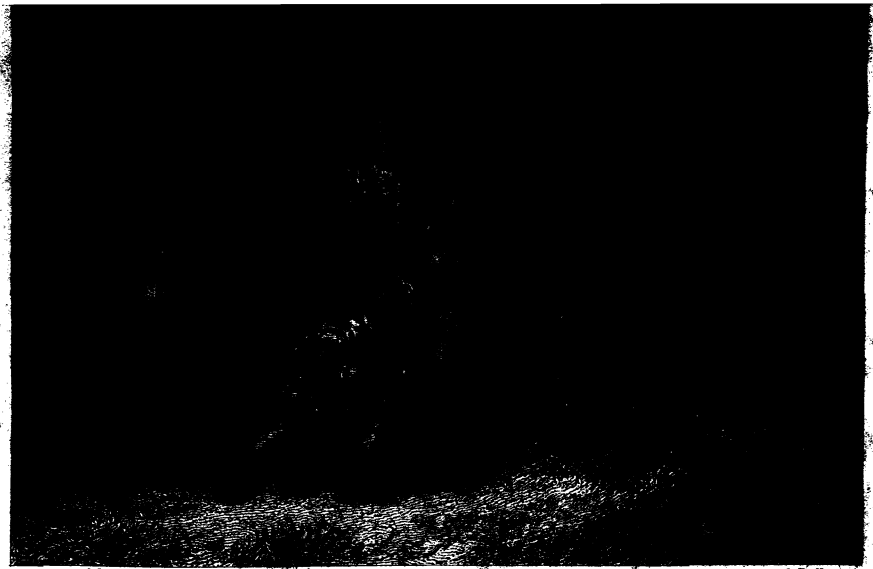

T. Stothard del. S. Bull, sculp.

"As the two rivals advanced towards them, Sir Montfort and the stranger crossed their swords, & fought for several minutes while Peter fled.

JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND;

A TALE,

By

T. C. GRATTAN, ESQ.

"A black smoke rose up as the divine powder was added, and the beldam laughed outright with joy at seeing her work go on so bravely."

LONDON

JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND:

A Historical Tale.

REVISED AND CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR,

THOMAS COLLEY GRATTAN,

AUTHOR OF

"THE HEIRESS OF BRUGES," "AGNES DE MANSFELDT," &c.

Nought is there under Heaven's wide hollownesse
That moves more deare compassion of minde,
Than beautie brought t' unworthy wretchednesse,
Through envie's snares, or fortune's freakes unkinde.
I, whether lately through her brightnesse blynde
Or through alleageance and faste fealtie,
Which I do owe unto all womankynde,
Feele my hart perst with so greate [illegible]
When such I see, that all for pitty [illegible]ld dy.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STRE

BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;

J. CUMMING, DUBLIN.

1843.

TO

SIR ARTHUR BROOKE FAULKNER.

My dear Friend,

Were not the reading world so intolerant of mere undisguised *prefaces*, I should not have been induced to cheat it into attention and bespeak its favour, by pressing your name into such light service as this; nor have carried into public a correspondence which is so much the pleasure of my private life. But there are several reasons for my choosing you as a literary sponsor on the present occasion, independent of the motives of regard and respect implied in every Dedication. It is perhaps sufficient to mention the sympathy which I know you to feel in my subject.

We have cut through the fogs of a Dutch winter together. While I sought inspiration in the chronicles of the olden time, and you drew from the still deeper and purer wells of practical philosophy, we were now and then encouraged by glimpses of fair forms, showing through the mist enough of grace and beauty to add truth to fancy and embellishment to fact. You have traced with me nearly every locality of my Heroine's adventurous life. You can, therefore, better than any one else, admit the probability of my imaginings, and vouch for the veracity of my descriptions.

Yet I have been, if not actually disheartened, at least much discouraged, in venturing on ground so unexplored as the countries I have chosen for the scene of

this and my last novel. By readers who will believe in my pages, the redundant wealth of Netherland annals may be guessed at. To understand it thoroughly, many a folio must be waded through, teeming with such lore.

If I can, even with moderate success, bring some of those abounding subjects to light, I shall be satisfied. To paint Holland as it was four centuries back—torn by factions and the prey of a rapacious usurper—may convince some sceptic as to the influences of civilisation, who sees the same country to-day, in an aspect of union and energy which extracts our admiration, in spite of the many revolting anomalies in a people so selfish and unsocial: while, on the other hand, we may marvel at and draw a moral from the spectacle of a nation so changed by commerce from its once generous and chivalric character, as to hate in the abstract and grudge to others the liberty so bravely won and so amply enjoyed by itself. While universal Europe throbs with painful exultation at each new detail of Polish heroism, and glories in the well regulated triumph of popular right in England, Holland is the exception which proves the general rule. For *there* is to be found a whole people imbued with those prejudices against European freedom, so nauseously natural in the sycophants who bow down, body and mind, in the closets and ante-rooms of despotism.

Yet it is probably the egotistical narrowness so remarkable in the Dutch character that creates the present display of national power. When each individual takes care of number one, the total of the country's interest is in safe keeping. But so much that is abstruse may be connected with this topic, that I will

merely throw it out as a text, on which I do not profess the capability of preaching.

Quite independent, however, of any purpose of utility is the pleasure derivable from the composition of such a book as this. History, properly so called, is but a profound science, by which the mere student is more fatigued than improved, but which is to the Novelist a buoyant recreation. The writer of Romance, who brings men and women to move on the well-known scenes of history, walks on real grounds, with forms instead of shadows, and lives in a fresh springing circle of beings and events, that are of interest and value, in proportion as they do not violate the general truths of Nature, or those which the world has agreed to consider as admitted, if not proved.

But this career of romance-writing is as perilous as it is seductive; and might deter any one who does not despise the reproach of imitation. Are sculptors or painters to be frightened, because great artists have used the chisel or brush before them? And must authors of my own pursuits throw down the pen, because others have done miracles in the delineation of that nature which should be our common study? Must I, for instance, let Jacqueline of Holland rot in a niche of vulgar history, because Mary of Scotland, or English Elizabeth, has been granted a new patent of immortality, from the hands of the first Romance-writer of the age? No. I, at least, will persist in offering my mite towards these illustrations, doing justice to female worth, and exhibiting the baseness of History's favourites — mispainted and miscalled, like "the *good* dukes" who figure in these pages — until the fiat of fair criticism commands me to stop: and then, like the reclaimed robber (in Gil Blas, is it not?), who

unsuccessfully tried a more regular walk of life, I can grasp my stick in my hand, and take to the "Highways" again.

On looking back on what I have been writing, I feel called on to acknowledge having met a few exceptions in Holland to the dearth of those generous courtesies which give so superior a charm to other countries. I need not specify all names. But in referring to the several individuals who kindly furnished facilities for the performance of my present task, I must mention Baron Van Tuyll d' Ysledom.* This gentleman, whose near neighbourhood to the ruins of Teylingen, and whose connexion with the existing Castle of Zuylen (both of such interest in the history of my Heroine), made his ability to forward my object equal to his wish, knew how to add value to his information by that cordial hospitality which, joined to the external appearance of his place, makes the sojourner fancy himself on some transplanted spot, of what will soon again, please Heaven! be entitled to be called "merrie" England.

And now, in conclusion, let me, my dear Faulkner, entreat you to excuse my thus having used your name for my own purposes — were it only for my withholding epithets of eulogy, which might offend your modesty, but which should be exaggerated indeed to express more than I feel of esteem and friendship.

Yours very sincerely,

T. C. G.

June, 1831.

* Baron Van Tuyll died, to the great regret of his friends, since the above passage was written, which is a further reason for letting it stand in the present edition.

JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND.

CHAPTER I.

On the southern limits of the wild district called the *Zevenvolden* *, close to the desert plains of the ancient county of Drent where they were washed by the Zuyder Zee, a species of hunting tent, but of much better materials than those used by the rude sportsmen of the forest, was suspended from the overhanging branches of a knoll of oaks. It was surrounded by groups of prickers, with bugles slung across their shoulders, and holding in leash greyhounds of the large red Albanian breed, and Flemish brachs of coarse and spotted skins; varlets, tending horses caparisoned with long coverings; soldiers, armed at all points and halberds in hand: but the active movements of those who prepare for the chace, the joyous songs, the cries of dogs, the flourish of horns, did not break the silence of the place. It had often been the scene of similar assemblages; but at no former period, nor even during the four centuries which have elapsed since that day, had it been sought by so distinguished a company, or for so serious a purpose.

Under the pavilion were two persons. The one, a man of more than middle age, sat with his hands clasped together, his legs crossed, and his elbows resting on the arms of a large chair, which was garnished with the unusual luxury of a cushion. Notwithstanding this attitude of lazy indifference, he did not seem at his ease. He appeared incommoded by his riding dress of brown cloth of Bruges, although his doublet was open on his breast, and his red leather girdle was loosely buckled round his portly waist.

* Seven forests.

A few short, grisled hairs fringed the circumference of his large head, which was covered with a hat of grey felt. His rosy jowls were whiskerless; nor was there mustachio on his upper lip, nor beard on his chin. Nothing but the texture and pattern of his dress was characteristic of the man of quality or the sportsman.

Standing near to him, and leaning on a bow of Spanish yew, a female of elegant form, and a face of melancholy beauty, listened, but with a pre-occupied air, to his discourse. Her features were more strongly marked than those of mere girls in early youth; yet they joined a bloom and freshness, rarely found after the very spring-time of life, to a decided dignity that only belongs to womanhood; and her face displayed that harmonious brilliancy which can receive the imprint of suffering without being withered by it. She was dressed in the fashion of the wealthier females of Holland, in a robe of fine white kersey, over which was a light blue pourpoint of the same stuff, close fitting her bust and waist, but with loose flaps that reached the knees. Her hair, worn in great profusion, was fancifully garnished with side plates and rings of gold, studded with precious stones; and beneath her high cap of green velvet hung innumerable curls, of light brown, tinged with occasional streaks of a shade that was all but auburn. Her shoes of blue morocco were sharp pointed, and turned up almost to the instep; and a narrow belt of blue silk was fastened in front with a diamond aigrette, below which hung two points of gold filagree work.

"You see the good effect of piety and prayer, my lovely countess, my much honoured daughter," said her companion, in the French language, but with the harsh accent of the north. "While you encountered such manifold perils, I unceasingly offered up masses for your success; and here you are, safely arrived in harbour, or at least, your bark is launched under fair auspices."

"Yes, but on a stormy sea!" replied she, with a heavy sigh.

"What then? You have a bold and skilful pilot to conduct it," replied the disguised ecclesiastic, with a satisfied air. "The son, brother, and uncle of kings, himself

the regent of an empire, is the man to throw defiance in the teeth of your unnatural cousin. By the shrine of St. Willebrod, this is what I call a marriage! Half the princesses in Europe will envy you."

The beautiful huntress, for such she was, as well in spirit as in seeming, threw her azure eyes to Heaven, and a tear glistened on their long lashes.

The churchman looked peevish and dissatisfied; and in a tone half angry and half cringing, he continued,

"Nay, madam, recollect it is he alone that can now save your heritage from utter spoliation. Who but the royal Glocester can make head against all-powerful Burgundy? or show the world how bad is his title to his misplaced name of 'the Good?' How but by his aid are your faithful vassals to be saved, and your free towns of Holland and Zealand to hold their freedom? And one daring friend, Zweder Van Colemburg, with his see of Utrecht, what is to become of him, should ambitious Philip surprise us, without other help than our enmity? Let me tell you, my honoured princess, that in this perilous game it is I who have the largest stake, for the *good* Duke Philip would hunt me down to the death if he suspected but a tithe of all I am doing for you."

"My reverend lord, let your anxieties rest on their true base," replied the lady, with a somewhat disdainful pride; "things have gone too far to allow of my holding back; and you need not to learn that Jacqueline of Holland comes of a race which has ever feared dishonour more than misfortune."

"Ay, that is spoken like yourself, like the descendant of your noble line," replied the re-assured bishop, rubbing his hands with selfish joy; "and if you would make surety more sure, if you would rivet one link, to join us all in a chain of common safety rather than of common risk, is not this the time? What can be more lucky than my presence to tie the nuptial knot? and when could you better change the title of affianced bride for that of wedded wife?"

As he raised his eyes to those of Jacqueline, his discourse was at once cut short at seeing them sparkle with indignation. And dropping his looks again towards the ground,

where they were commonly fixed whenever he spoke, he listened without interruption as she replied: —

"Count, or prelate, for I give you your choice of titles in this matter of secular or clerical concern, it is well at this outset of our enterprise that we understand each other. Your alliance is of high price to one in my forlorn situation, and still more valuable is the aid of England's regent. But for neither can I forego the sense of my own dignity, nor incur the blame of my own conscience. I am satisfied, if Heaven wills it so, to be the most wretched of women; but I will die sooner than do aught I may be ashamed of. How, then, can you counsel me a secret marriage while another husband yet lives, and ere my hated bonds are broken?"

"Nay, your interest and his highness of Glocester's, leave little doubt of your unlawful marriage being at this hour annulled, even if John of Brabant yet live to receive the bull by which his Holiness will sever your union. Both divorce and widowhood may at this moment be yours. Then hesitate not on weak scruples, from which I am ready to absolve you."

"Alas, alas!" said Jacqueline, sinking on a chair similar to the bishop's, "how often on my sad and dreary path of life have I met those ever ready to remove the scruples of my conscience, and point out the broad road to crime!"

"Crime, Madam Jacqueline!"

"No less, reverend count. When my first affianced lord, the Dauphin, fell a victim to perfidy and poison, and I lost at once a promised husband and a crown, how many a tongue held forth to check the tide of natural remorse, with which I looked on the unholy union with my hated cousin John! And when I did yield me to the counsel of my *friends*, and sacrificed myself to the mere phantom of a spouse, who could scarcely bear the burden of his own infirmities, much less uphold me and my rights — how was I urged, ay, by this very pontiff, Martin V., to overcome the terror which made me, as I declared in full assembly to the states of Hainault, tremble like an aspen leaf, whenever my boy-husband threatened to approach me!"

"Ay, my much honoured daughter," rejoined the

prelate, with an unsanctified leer, "and no wonder you should shrink from the approach of such a mere mockery of manhood. But how different now your lot! How different the gallant Glocester, when *he* come towards you full of love—"

"Hold, my Lord Zweder! Another word like this—another look, irreverent in you or insulting to me, and that moment I break off this conference, cut short our project for ever, and return to my poor town of Amersfort, trusting my fate to Heaven!"

"Ay, madam, it is this I was taught to expect—and it is for treatment like this I have risked my whole temporal good in your almost desperate cause! Thus your devoted vassals, your faithful towns of Holland and Zealand, your brave commons of Kennemer and West Frise are all sacrificed to a woman's caprice!"

"Ill-fortune has made me used to bear hard words," said Jacqueline, with a proudly dejected air.

"Cannot good sense teach you to value kind ones? Can you not—"

"Hark ye, my lord bishop! I came not here to harm my cause any more than to list your lectures. I would not do myself the ill to quarrel with you—so hear me! I am ready to complete my contract with Humphrey of Glocester, when God in his mercy shall take him that calls himself my husband, or the pontiff in his wisdom shall break the bonds he himself forged for me."

"Nay, this is well spoken; and more than this—"

"Ask me no more—my tongue will not play the hypocrite to my heart. I cannot list to words of love when Glocester is the theme. I love him not, nor does he love me. Motives of state, that join so many a prince and princess in unsuiting bonds, lead both of us to this marriage—nothing more. As Humphrey has valiantly fought for my poor cause, so shall I faithfully honour him. As he has gallantly sought my hand, so shall I give it him in gratitude and troth. But love! Ah me, I never knew it, nor ever may I hope to know its charms! The lowliest wench that tends a peasant's swine may sooner prove the

sympathy of heart for heart, than I, born to a state in which love is no denizen. And yet methinks, that had I —"

"Hark! look out, madam!" interrupted the bishop, who had paid little attention to the faintly uttered musings of his companion's reverie. "Do you not hear the trumpet that was to signal their approach? Yes, there they come, two knights with their squires. It must be the duke and Ludwick Van Monfoort. Cheer up, cheer up, fair daughter, to meet your affianced lord!"

A brighter expression did for a moment lighten Jacqueline's face; but it was kindled at a source far different from the bishop's imagining. It was revived ambition that gleamed in her proud mind, and animated her fine countenance, at the prospect of meeting him, who had already fought for her rights, and was now their chief hope. She rose from her seat, and, with somewhat of a woman's weakness adjusting her tresses and head dress, she advanced to the opening of the tent. There she was met by her own and the bishop's pages, with a young woman some half dozen years her junior, the most favoured and attached of the few maids of honour who had faithfully followed her vicissitudes, from the time of her unhappy marriage with her cousin-germain, John Duke of Brabant. The pages were, like the soldiers and other attendants, in plain suits, unmarked by any badge or cognizance that could denote their service. The young woman was dressed much in the same fashion as the princess, except that the colours she wore and the adjustment of her hair were carefully suited to her still lighter complexion and the less serious expression of her face. A smile beamed on her lovely mouth, blushes covered her cheeks, and her slight figure seemed elastic with joy.

"Well, Benina," said Jacqueline, with a composed air, "your duty of the watch is finished. Duke Humphrey comes to the rendezvous?"

"Yes, yes, madam, look yonder through the vista towards the beach, and see them coming! They took us quite by surprise, notwithstanding all our vigilance. The little bark sloped round the jutting point of the bay by the north, while Hendrick and myself, with the bishop's page,

the two halberdiers, and the trumpeter, all strained our eyes towards the south."

"'Tis rarely, my good Benina, that love looks so wide of his mark! Nay, blush not more deeply, my poor maiden — thy cheeks were already sufficiently dyed in the colour of confession."

"Ah, madam, spare me those words and looks! Be merciful to the weakness you have not hitherto reproved!"

"Reprove! Heaven forbid that I should! Were I thy rival, Benina, I should blame and hate thee. But my envy of thy delight is that of ignorance, not anger. Would that I, too, could feel my pulse throb and my brow flush like thine! Ah me! but it must be sweet to love and be beloved!"

"See, madam, they approach — the duke and —"

"Thou needest not to announce the brave Fitz-walter, Benina — thine eyes have been the heralds of his coming. I wish thee all joy and happiness, my faithful friend!"

"And you too, my gracious mistress, will you not be joyous and happy? Oh! let your face be decked with smiles at last — you, who of all the earth most merit happiness, and, more than me, have right to hail it now. Your gallant lover, the royal Glocester, comes to claim your plighted troth, while I, alas! have only hope and fancy to build on. Oh, cheer up, madam, and meet the prince with smiles of welcome!"

Jacqueline made no reply to this warm-hearted effusion, but stood with complacent gracefulness to receive the new-comers. The bishop also quitted the tent and advanced towards them; while the soldiers and servants formed in lines, to do them honourable salutation. As Glocester advanced he threw his large cloak to an attendant valet, and discovered his manly figure, dressed in a plain close suit of Lincoln green, over which hung no ornament that might betray his rank; and his low round cap of velvet was simply adorned with a band of the same, fastened by a gold buckle such as any English gentleman might wear. A short dagger in his girdle was his only weapon; and it was but his princely mien and fiery glance

that bore witness to the identity of the impetuous protector of England.

The companion closest to his side, and who bluntly did the office of chamberlain in presenting to him the obsequious bishop, was a man of middle age, middle stature, and middling manners, such as characterised the majority of the rude and independent nobility of Holland and Zealand in those days: — men, who to feudal power joined little of chivalric refinement; and in their isolated castles maintained a fierce war with their factious neighbours, or the towns which detested and struggled against their authority. Ludwick Van Monfoort was only distinguished from his class by a never-changing fidelity to the cause of Jacqueline, emulated by few of her titled vassals, in her unlucky wars with her uncle, John the Pitiless, secularised Bishop of Liege, whose recent death had restored her to those rights of heritage which his victorious iniquity had some years before wrested from her. This blunt warrior could not, on the present occasion, be induced to lay aside completely his warlike apparel. Beneath his russet doublet a slight hauberk of iron wire was partly visible; his long double-handed sword was slung by a brass-studded baldric at his back; and his head was covered by a close cap of red cloth, the distinctive mark of the *Hoeks*, the faction to which he belonged, in opposition to the grey bonnets of the *Kabblejaws*, who had been for nearly a century their inveterate enemies. In other respects the dress of this stanch adherent did not belie the nominal purport of his visit to the Zevenvolden; and his whole appearance formed a mixture of sporting, chivalry, and brigandage.

Close to Glocester, but not in a direct line with him, nor yet so much behind as to denote a servile station, walked a knightly looking man of about thirty, which was exactly five years below his own age, in a similar costume to his, and with that peculiar air distinctive of an English noble. A few paces behind was a younger man, whose rougher aspect, coarser apparel, and measured attendance on Van Monfoort's movements, spoke him a squire suited to such a knight.

"Welcome, most gracious duke!" said Jacqueline, as Glocester saluted her, with the ceremonious courtesy prescribed by the strict rules of chivalry, but with none of the familiar warmth which might have been expected from a gallant prince to his affianced bride. — "Let your heart interpret my gratitude for this new proof of zeal. I am a beggar even in words."

"Countess, I am here not less by inclination than duty," replied Glocester. "I owe it to my honour as well as to your misfortunes, to succour and cherish you at all risks. I have vowed my sword and my life to your service; and St. George be my warrant that I will keep my vow!"

The tone of this reply sunk into Jacqueline's heart. She had never felt towards Glocester as at that moment. When he had first espoused her cause and contracted a promise of marriage with her, she was a mark that any prince of Europe might have aimed at; and in the subsequent vain struggle against the united power of John of Brabant and Philip of Burgundy, her ambitious champion might have been supposed to fight for her possessions, rather than her person. But now, when nearly all was lost, Hainault irrecoverably, and even Holland but partly held, and that by a most doubtful tenure, the unflinching perseverance of Glocester seemed perfect heroism in her eyes, and gave her, for the first time, the most delicious conviction a woman can feel — that it was *herself* alone that formed her champion's inspiration. She therefore answered in terms of still stronger gratitude; and then turned with grateful dignity, to acknowledge Lord Fitzwalter's respectful salutation, and the less courtly one of Ludwick Van Monfoort.

"In sooth, my lord," said she, "it spreads a gleam of joy across my mind to see his highness accompanied by so distinguished a follower as yourself. With such gallant support as you and my brave lion of Urk here, there may yet be hope of good."

Van Monfoort acknowledged his title, smiled grimly through his grisly beard and thick mustachios, and shook his shoulders with a peculiar twist, that brought his sword

round and enabled him to clap his hand on its huge hilt.

"This be my pledge," said he, grasping the weapon; while Fitz-walter added a few words, in a tone of deep feeling, expressive of his devotion to Jacqueline's service.

"Thanks, my good lord," said she, "are the only guerdon which the poorest of princesses can offer to the bravest of knights."

"Oh, Madam, they are more, far more than I merit or expect," replied the Englishman, with much emotion; "but better days may be in store," added he, in a lighter tone, as if recovering from a too serious mood.

"Let us hope so!" exclaimed Jacqueline, "though alas! we may never see the like of those gay and happy times when merry England and his gracious highness here did more than meet honour to my small deserts. It is a poor return I now can make for all the courteous gallantry lavished upon me then — a stolen reception in these wild woods, a sorry tent, and a mock hunting party, in lieu of a brilliant court, a splendid palace, magnificent jousts, and feats of chivalry."

"Countess," said Glocester, with a spirited air, "we are too much honoured in your service to feel aught wanting to ennoble it. Fitz-walter is ready again to put his lance in rest, and run a tilt in your cause, in a more glorious field than the narrow lists of Westminster or Windsor. Think no more of these child's sports — we must now turn our thoughts to manlier deeds."

"Ah, noble prince, my heart is full, and the sight of that now faded favour, which I see his lordship with constant gallantry still wears in his cap, recalled those halcyon days with a too acute remembrance. That favour, Lord Fitz-walter, marks an ungracious contrast to your fidelity — it changes its colour."

"Which I never shall, as heaven is my hope," said Fitz-walter, placing his hand on his heart, while Benina Beyling, who had stood timidly blushing behind her mistress, felt her brain turn, as she almost sunk with excess of happiness.

"Come forward, Benina," said Jacqueline, "and take

Lord Fitz-walter into your care. She will, I warrant her, my lord, give special heed to your discourse, for England's sake and for your own, though her gratitude may not be garrulous. Van Monfoort, tend well this gallant lord, he shall be in your charge to-day. My page and my lord bishop's here will do the office of chamberlains in this our Court of the Zevenvolden. Now, gracious prince, come with his reverence and ourselves into our sylvan closet of council. Alas! what bitter mockery does fate make of princes and their pomp!"

These concluding words were uttered in a tone of deep sadness, that suddenly broke down, as it were, the forced gaiety of the sentence or two which preceded them. The lovely speaker, whom misfortune had taught to moralise, entered the pavilion followed by Glocester and the bishop, while Fitz-walter and Van Monfoort, under Benina's auspices, took possession of another tent, hastily thrown up within a short distance, but just out of hearing of that conference on which the more elevated triumvirate immediately entered.

CHAPTER II.

THE bishop, a selfish person, quite unconscious of his own insignificance and dulness, began the discourse; and feeling himself, as it were, at home, did the duties of host, as such men always do, by placing themselves and their affairs in the post of honour. He seated himself in his cushioned arm-chair, and in the elation of the moment forgetting decorum, and *almost* servility, exclaimed,

"Ah, this is a proud day for Zweder Van Culemburg! — most royal protector, my delight is infinite to meet you. Now the rebellious citizens of Utrecht must quail and accept the commutation — ay, and doff their greasy caps, with thanks, to my lowest proctor. When does your highness's noble domination reckon on the arrival of your forces? Ludwick Van Monfoort tells me bluntly they

are coming, but says not *when*. How many thousand heroes do you bring to your aid, most princely protector? — you make your first advance on Utrecht, eh? Ah, let the base burghers quail! — ungrateful slaves, who would not add a ruby to their prelate's mitre, nor a doight to their prince's revenue, nor a ——"

"Before Heaven, Madam," said Glocester, abruptly, "your reverend ally here, unlike the Genoese bowmen at Agincourt, does not let those he came to aid take the front of the battle! — he leads the van more like a principal than an auxiliary. May God and St. George guard me well; but I thought I came here to serve your cause against perfidious Burgundy, not to fight for this holy suffragan against his beggarly parishioners. How is this, fair countess? — or, mayhap, your reverence will set me right?"

While Jacqueline answered Glocester's sarcasms by a smile, and threw a glance of ineffable contempt at the churchman, the latter, recalled to a sense of his indelicate egotism by the duke's reproof, muttered a not very satisfactory commentary on his former text.

"Your highness marvels," said he, "that I should touch first on what seems my own interests in this conference. But wherefore, let me ask, is it wondrous that I should be moved by the impulse that regulates all men — ay, and all women, by this fair lady's leave? Suppose I do think of myself, why not? Do I not risk all to serve our common cause? — and why should *my* good alone be overlooked? Why should the Bishop of Utrecht be forgotten — at least by him who wears the mitre? No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it, and cherisheth it, says St. Paul."

"Nay, countess, with your good leave," said Glocester, intercepting the indignant reply which had begun to speak in Jacqueline's looks, "I will briefly answer the worthy prelate's questions, and speak to this matter as seems meet. And first, be it known to your reverence, I am no polemic, nor can I quote Scripture, though worse than either of us has done so before now. Moreover, I tell you frankly that I am no friend to alliances with churchmen; one bishop has been the bitter foe of the countess here, pitiless John

of Liege, whom neither religion nor relationship could appease. Another has been the bane of my life, as well you may know, pernicious, wanton Winchester! — and, without undue offence I see nothing good to be gained in a league where selfishness holds the first place."

"But listen, my lord duke, awhile ——"

"Let me tell you, prelate, that Humphrey of Glocester is used to be listened *to*, not curbed, in speech or action. Nor shall any priest dictate what even froward Beaufort dared not!"

"By St. Willebrod, the patron of my see, if your highness takes so high a tone with your friends, your enemies may well, I trow, call you imperious and irreverend!"

"My *friends!* — Hold there awhile, good bishop, nor speak too rashly. I am quick to give enmity, but slow in lavishing regard, particularly to those of your cloth. I do not mean that hunting suit, which, 'fore George, I honour more than sacerdotal robes."

"'Tis you who speak too rashly, lord protector. Nor is this fit discourse from layman to a priest; nor, let me add, of likelihood to serve the cause you boast of being pledged to. My crosier to a lame man's crutch! Is it thus I am to be treated? Madame Jacqueline, do I deserve this from your friends?"

With these words the bishop rose from his chair, and paced the tent in much perturbation; while Glocester sat quietly, enjoying the storm he had raised. Jacqueline, little less gratified at his free treatment of the selfish being (who only received back what he was himself too ready to deal out to others when he dared), yet feared that a premature breach might follow the too-marked expression of Glocester's fiery contempt. She, therefore, in a soothing tone, entreated the bishop to resume his seat; and by a persuasive look showed the duke her wish that he should make some amends for his abruptness. He quickly complied, and said —

"Come, my lord bishop, be not too quick to take offence. Let this pass, and we will talk more coolly. But, by the rood, it moved me to hear you begin our council with what should have come last in order."

"Well, let be it not revived," said Jacqueline, interrupting the prelate's reply, — "you are both friends now, and must, for my sake, make allowance for each other's way of thought and speech. Be satisfied, reverend sir, my good ally!"

"Blessed be the peace-makers!" exclaimed the hypocritical retailer of the sacred dicta, resuming his seat, quite satisfied to brook the sallies of so powerful a censor as England's protector, and thinking he had shown sufficient spirit at his rough usage.

"Now let us, my good lords, come calmly to the matter of our meeting," said Jacqueline, "and discuss, in serious mood and measured phrase, the subjects we have so much at heart. Remember we are about to cope with a mighty antagonist; and, for the love of a righteous cause, let us mutually add to each other's strength, by bearing with each other's weakness. For you, bishop, and me, we uphold each our own interests in this quarrel; for should the tyrant, Philip, crush me in this struggle, you too must become his victim. But let us bear in mind that this noble prince espouses my just but almost desperate cause, and therefore acts in yours from motives alone of generous devotion. Let our gratitude ——"

"Noble and beauteous Jacqueline," interrupted Glocester, "let no more mention of that word put shame upon my feeble efforts."

"Nor need we overstrain his highness's pure motives," chimed in the churchman, with a sulky and envious sneer; "pledged by the honour of knighthood in your cause, and bound by the holy ties of affianced faith, methinks the hoped-for enjoyment of your various counties of Holland, Zealand, and Friesland, to the north, with the contested claims for Brabant and Hainault, to the south, besides the succession to the Bavarian fiefs, which, on the death of your noble mother, Madame Marguerite, must be yours in virtue of direct inheritance — methinks all these, with the possession of a bride so beautiful as it needs no flattery to pronounce you to be, are enough to urge on this puissant prince, without seeking to prove him influenced by superhuman virtue."

The prelate's eyes being, as usual, fixed on the ground, he did not see, as Jacqueline too quickly did, the rapid flush that spread over Glocester's brow during this speech, nor the impetuous movement which impelled his open hand against his forehead, nor the forcible compression of his lips, all speaking an inward struggle of no common kind. Her sensitive mind, accustomed to disappointment and deceit, read a volume of evil import in these omens. The current of her words seemed checked; nor did the duke give utterance to a single phrase. The bishop, who expected interruption at every point of his verbose speech, looked up in surprise, which become instantly triumph, when he saw the evident confusion of Glocester's looks.

"Nay, nay, your highness," said he, with a patronising tone, "take not my words too much to heart — I meant not to mortify you, but to show our fair ally here that I can probe the recesses of men's minds, and sift the secret motives that impel the acts of all. Noble prince, be not cast down."

"Tut, tut, good priest," said Glocester, impatiently repelling the hand which the bishop placed on his, "waste not your words, nor wear the day in child's play like this. I tell you, prelate, you know me not; nor could the cunning of all earth's hierarchs unravel the mystery of my present thoughts. A baby's hand may strike deep discord from a ghittern's strings. Even so have your foolish words jarred on the feelings you could not play upon. Enough then! — Time presses, and each man's deeds must now be the interpreter of his motives. Fair countess, pardon me for being a moment turned aside from your especial converse — I play the gallant badly, and perhaps the statesman worse! Nature made me hasty, though not heedless, as you shall find ere long."

"Princely Glocester," replied Jacqueline, "I may not read your secret thoughts, but I can divine the causes that affect them. Lack of happiness sharpens the mind's eye, as want of sight quickens the blind man's touch. Then hear me now at this outset, ere one irreparable step be taken in our most perilous enterprise. If, as I fear me,

you repent our mutual pledge, if a realm's good is risked by it, if your great brother Bedford, trammelled by Burgundy, looks on our union with an ill eye, as marring mightier plans of state — this moment I release you from your vow, and will dare alone the manifold dangers of my quarrel. Speak to me frankly, freely, without set phrase, or courtly guile — I wait for your reply."

"Madame Jacqueline!" exclaimed the bishop, in cruel perturbation; "Countess! for the love of the saints — in the name of the holy martyrs, I conjure you to recal these ruinous words! Duke of Glocester, I must not let you answer! As a prelate of the holy church, as a protector of this princess's rights, I put a bar upon your speech, if it would violate a sacred engagement, on which my whole — that is to say, on which *all* our safety depends! Oh, woman, woman! what little wisdom did the fruit of knowledge give you! — when, indeed, will you bruise the serpent's head?"

While the reverend speaker once more started from his chair, paced the tent, and rubbed, or almost wrung his hands with agitation, Glocester continued seated, and looked firmly on Jacqueline, during both her and the bishop's harangues. When the latter had subsided into interjectional murmurings, the duke calmly spoke.

"If," said he, "I had wanted proof of Jacqueline of Holland's magnanimity, or sought a contrast between woman's greatness and man's littleness, St. George, have I not them before me! But I need not this. From the day on which you, too beautiful Jacqueline, sought the court and the protection of my late brother, Henry, whom the King of kings assoil! to this present eventful hour, I have known you for all that is great in spirit and virtuous in heart. I have sworn my life to your service, and no mortal power shall make me swerve from that great duty. It is true I am thwarted in my ardent wishes. When Henry lay on his death-bed, almost his last request was that I should not quit England more, nor embroil myself in the quarrels of France. But I did not heed the dying weakness of even a hero like him. I judged for myself, invaded Hainault, fought for, and lost your cause. Now,

Bedford, great and good as he is, reiterates the vow of our royal brother, and urges me, by all the interests of the realm, to abandon you and rest at home. But the wishes of a living regent restrain me no more than the prayer of a buried king, even though Burgundy and Britanny, those intriguing dukes, have gained all Bedford's confidence, and make my conduct the pretext for loosening the ties that bind them to the cause of England. Again, old Winchester, that pieled prelate, that manifest fireband, whom our late King Henry hated as I do, who never put foot in church but to pray me mischief, he, with some factious lords, dares implicate my motives in making your cause my own, and fulminates anathema and ban against me on the head of it. But nought shall stay me while I wield the power of England, till my young nephew, Henry VI., may take the reins of state, or till death strikes the sword of office from my hand. Three thousand gallant soldiers, men at arms, bill-men, and archers mixed in due proportion — are now on the sea, and ere three days they must, if God keeps the wind in its present course, be landed safe in Holland."

"Praise to the Lord of Hosts, and may the wind hold westwardly!" uttered the bishop, at the same moment thrusting his head out of the tent, and raising his palm towards the favouring point of the compass. "May St. Peter blow a strong breath into the canvass, and the Virgin sit at the helm!" continued he, turning again into the tent and laughing outright with joy, on feeling the light breeze which crept gently up from the Zuyder Zee into the forest. "Oh, brave Glocester, how I honour you! Ha, ha, Burgundy! you are forestalled at last. What will the schismatic chapter of Utrecht say now, when they see the heroes of Agincourt level their pikes, and bend their bows, and point their culverins at my side! Ha, ha! ha, ha! Ah! my fair countess, did I not bid you be of good heart? Let the Zevenvolden ring with joy!"

"By St. Paul, I could almost laugh myself, at the antics of this mitred mountebank," said Glocester, in a half whisper to Jacqueline, as the bishop walked up and down. "'Tis pity he has not a cock's-comb in his cap. No, no,

he will not suit our alliance, countess. His mummery reminds me of Judas in the miracle play, which they acted for us at Windsor."

"He may be most useful though not disinterested," said Jacqueline, in the same tone.

"*Use* him, then, but trust him not," rejoined the duke. "I am no astrologer nor cabalist, nor know I the grand magistery; but King Alphonso's three-sided crystal is not wanting, to show me that this priest will surely betray us as it may answer his ends to do so."

"Well, your highness," asked the bishop, coming forward, "what say you to the countess?"

"Something trite, and more true than your last homily, I'll 'gage for it," answered Glocester.

"Whatever your princely protectorship pleases," said the obsequious priest. "I begin to see your humour, and will let it pass. What more does it now suit your highness to communicate to Madame Jacqueline and myself?"

"I tell you honestly, prelate, somewhat to her I would not trust to you."

"And well that may be, from a lover to his betrothed. Would you that I should walk abroad awhile?" said the prelate, with a significant leer.

Another gloomy blush and frown passed over Glocester's brow. Jacqueline saw it, with pain and pride. She felt her colour rise as her heart swelled; and she rapidly said,

"Duke, have we more to hear of your design? If so, his reverence may again be seated — if not, let us seek the greenwood, and try the fortune of the forest."

"In sooth, fair countess, I have not more of moment to communicate just now; but this, which you may kindly construe as important — I must return this night to England."

"Return this night to England!" echoed the bishop.

"To England?" said Jacqueline.

"Ay, by my faith! and sorely against my will. Would I might dare to stay, and at once peril my life in this contest!"

"What! will you not fight, then, in this cause — not lead your troops to quell my factious citizens?" asked the bishop, with panting anxiety, while Jacqueline silently gazed on Glocester.

"Reverend count," said the latter, "I may not lead the troops even in a better quarrel. But I *will* fight, ay to the death, or God abandon me, in her just cause! Know, Madam, that my duel with tyrant Burgundy is all decided on. His last acceptance of my terms of combat reached me four days gone, ere I quitted Westminster. My brother Bedford is our umpire; the place of fight not yet arranged; the day not named. But in the interim, I am bound by solemn pledge of knighthood to hold myself unharmed, to take or give no gage of combat with another, to keep my body whole for my opponent's revenge, and to hold my arm apart from any less noble quarrel. Thus, then, it is. Lord Fitz-walter commands the coming troops —he being, by a different pledge, bound not to fight in person against Burgundy, but free to battle with all the world beside. My heart is in every blade, and my prayer for victory shall thrill in every bowman's string! That it may wait on these valiant legions, I shall daily visit the shrine of St. Erkenwald, our great city's patron, and ere long I shall myself, with the blessing of St. George, for England, and St. Michael for chivalry, do justice on the body of false Burgundy, and free you from your thrall. For the rest, I arranged the whole plan of conduct with Fitz-walter and Van Monfoort, in the bold lion's den of Urk last night, and on our passage from the island to the main this morning. We will confer with them anon, if so it please you, Madam; and then I must away once more for England, to fit me for the issue of the coming combat with our deadly enemy."

"But, your highness," said the bishop, impatiently seizing the first pause in Glocester's speech, "you have not yet said one word of the main point of all — the contract — the marriage 'twixt the countess and yourself —"

"Hark! By St. Hubert's bugle, the hounds have caught the scent! Come, Madam, to horse, to horse! and one brave burst into the forest!" exclaimed Glocester, starting from his seat and rushing out of the tent.

CHAPTER III.

THE cry of the dogs, which had afforded Glocester so opportune an excuse for escaping from Bishop Zweder's persecutions, was indeed caused by one of the stragglers having caught the scent of a stag. When the duke sallied from the tent he saw every thing without in a state of anxious commotion; the brachs wildly strove to escape from the men who held them in leash; the greyhounds stretched their long necks, convulsively moved their pointed ears, and strained their sharp sight into the wood. The horses neighed and pawed the earth, and the varlets and prickers looked anxiously for some signal that might tell them to begin the chace.

"Holloa! Fitz-walter! Van Monfoort!" cried Glocester, "out, out into the forest; there is a stag on foot — to horse, to horse!"

At the summons the two warriors appeared, with Benina and the pages, and all the attendants sprang forward to hasten every necessary preparation. The bishop somewhat astonished at Glocester's abruptness, came forward with a bewildered look, as if he was more at fault than any hound of the pack; and Jacqueline never shewed so little alertness on hearing the music of the chase, though the horns flourished and the bugles blew in stirring discord with the deep voices of the dogs. She grasped her bow, and slung her quiver at her back instinctively; but she thought only of the duke's strange manner, and his looks of deep confusion at every mention of the marriage-contract, still more unaccountable when coupled with his solemn vows of devotion to her cause. While she stood in the tent, deeply musing on this manifest inconsistency, Benina entered, astonished to find the countess the most backward of all who were to join in the coming sport. To her respectful and anxious expressions of this feeling, Jacqueline replied, that she had been taken by surprise, that she was not altogether prepared, but she assumed as light a demeanour as she could command, and quitted the pavilion.

" St. Hubert, be my guide!" said the bishop, in reply to some impatient remarks of Glocester, " if I ever dreamt of taking horse to-day; otherwise, noble duke, a better stud should have been at your command. But choose among the half dozen —"

" 'Fore George, it is such a choice as Satan had of the six sextons of Glastonbury — an unseemly set they are. What's here? — a roan gelding for the pack-saddle? — and this shambling Flemish mare, fit for some fat dean of the *gilden* in a slow-paced pageant! — and this? *Vertu Dieu!* I'll not raise the foot-cloth, lest the carrion crows dart on their prey a week too soon! but never mind — let me mount this Friesland hackney, I'll warrant it he has a comely trot, quite equal to the speed of these yelping curs. Ah, prelate! I much fear me the breed of bishops is, like their studs and kennels, sorely degenerated since the day when these forests of Drent were granted to your predecessors, on the tenure of their hunting in them daily six months in the year."

" Let me hold your stirrup, noble duke, as your great-grand-uncle, the Black Prince, did for John, King of France, when he mounted his destere after the fight of Poictiers. Why, yes," continued the prelate, while he settled himself in his crimson-covered saddle (Glocester having declined his assistance, and standing waiting for Jacqueline's approach), " yes, those rude churchmen you speak of, more poachers than priests, readier to sound a horn than raise a chalice, to bend a bow in the forest than a knee at the altar, they are, thank Heaven! extinct; and in their humble successor somewhat of godliness may have taken place of gracelessness. Yet, still we hunt at times, my noble duke: and I, as Count of Drent, am bound to send yearly to my liege lord, the emperor, a certain tribute of sanglier's tusks, wolf's tails, and orox' horns."

" What! have you still the orox in these forests. Methought they were quite rooted out, and nought more noble than a wild boar left to give spirit to the chase."

" You are mistaken then, duke, for the great orox, auraux or urus, the hugest of the cow kind, still exists; in small numbers, it is true, but enough to spread terror

in the purlieus of the forest, as brave Van Monfoort here can vouch."

"I killed one not six months past, with the aid of four bold comrades," said Van Monfoort, "and your highness quaffed your posset cup at Urk last night, out of one of his horns."

"Indeed!" said Glocester. "That may be; but I heed not the goblet, gallant comrade, when the mixtus is good and the welcome cordial, as was the case at your hospitable home. But, here comes the countess."

He soon with due gallantry assisted Jacqueline to mount her palfrey, while Lord Fitz-walter did the same service to Benina Beyling. Glocester was greatly pleased to recognise their horses for two he had himself given to Jacqueline, and proud of the contrast they presented to those of the bishop's ill-furnished stud.

"By Heavens, Fitz-walter," he exclaimed, "it is glorious to see these bright creatures in the graceful attitudes of female horsemanship! How different from the unsightly display of women in Guienne and Britanny, who cross their saddles like coarse cavaliers!"

"Ay, or the ladies of Suffolk, whom the 'Boke of Bury' tells us were in a great vein for wearing breeches," answered Fitz-walter.

"What noble animals are those?" continued the duke. "'Tis kind, is't not, Fitz-walter, of the countess to let my poor present meet me here face to face?"

"'Tis like herself, a type of good taste and better feeling."

"Yet I, Fitz-walter, with such a prize within my reach — ay, in my very grasp, — I, like some base and burley clown, as if the blood of Plantagenet had suddenly frozen in my heart ——"

"Hush, my gracious lord! nor let this deep emotion speak in your tone or looks—the countess waits."

"On, then! Let misery wear the mask of glee — and England's protector play the mummer!"

With these words Glocester urged on his little pony towards Jacqueline, and took his station at one side of her richly caparisoned palfrey; the bishop occupying the other, on the lean and long-tailed steed whose embroidered hous-

ings concealed a carcass that was scarcely libelled by the duke's ridicule. Resolved at once to conceal his own unquiet state of mind, and give no time for Jacqueline's observations or the bishop's untoward remarks, Glocester launched forth with assumed gaiety into all the rhapsody of a sportsman's delight, while the brachs were let loose into the forest, and began to give tongue as they caught the quarry's scent. He begged of Jacqueline to press forward; and she, nothing loth, soon entered into the fullest spirit of the scene. But the bishop found himself hard set to keep up with their increasing pace, and was too happy when the ill-trained pack very soon came to a check. Glocester, disappointed and disgusted with the unskilful display of both dogs and huntsmen, pointed out his displeasure in no set terms.

"Call you this hunting, reverend count?" said he, turning to the bishop, who was however too far behind to hear him distinctly; "ah! well I wot me you had lost the spirit of the good prelate Palatines of old! Far other sports from this — if sport it may be called — would old Bishop Walter of Rochester, or Leicester's mitred abbot afford, were we in their chace to-day. Did ever a man see such bungling grooms as those? What whooping and hallooing! What rioting and railing! And St. Hubert save us from such dogs — such babblers and skirters! Ah, countess! when we roused the hart-royal from his lair in Sherwood brakes, and you honoured me by mounting this palfrey for the first time, we had different sport from this."

"'Tis true, my lord, that England takes the palm in sylvan sports," said Jacqueline, coldly, and somewhat piqued, both at the sorry exhibition of the bishop's pack and the duke's blunt censures, while he, heedless of their effect, called out impatiently in his native tongue —

"God's pity, Fitz-walter; but it maddens me to see these bungling loons so mar our chance of sport! Ah, were the masters of my stag-hounds, Dick Lazenby, or Gervaise Gwynne, to the fore to-day, with Merkin, Grappler, Pillager, and half a score couple more, what work should we have! Do, good Fitz-walter, yourself lay on

those hounds. Let them draw up the wind — let them strain on a good vent, hold high their heads, and like the horses of the sun run all abreast!"

While Fitz-walter cheerfully obeyed, the duke addressed Jacqueline.

"Now, Madam, you shall see if aught is to be done with his reverence's mongrels, for if any man can make them hunt, Fitz-walter can."

"Are English nobles wont to do the duties of huntsmen?" asked Jacqueline, somewhat sharply.

"Yes, countess, and at times the deeds of heroes," replied Glocester, rather sternly; "and know ye, Madam, that he before you is Lord Warden of Windsor Forest, Woodward of the vert and venison, with verderers, foresters, rangers, serjeants, and yeomen prickers, all in his command? Right, good Fitz-walter! — on, brave warden;" added the duke, again in plain English,

"'Like the bold hunt, which rathe and early rise,
His bottle filled with wine in any wise' —

How go the rhymes? — what's next? Ay, ay —

—'The mellow horn to winde,
The stately harte in frith or fell to finde.'

Well hunted, gallant knight!

'Blow your horne, hunter,
Blow your horne on highe;
In yonder wood there lies a doe
And she is loth to die —
So hunter blowe your horne!"

"And what thinks your highness of our dogs? Are not these spotted brachs rare animals?" asked the bishop, who had now come up.

"I fear me I have told my thoughts too freely," said Glocester, with a significant look towards Jacqueline; "but a grain of truth in the greenwood is worth a pound of flattery in the court, as our old proverb says. Countess, you forgive my candour?"

"Would that it spoke out more plainly!" said she, with a sigh; but she instantly recovered herself, and added, "yes, duke, I most fully pardon your censure of our imperfect sport, provided you do justice to our wish that it were better."

"Better! — how — what — why?" said the bishop. "Can better hounds be than these spotted brachs? Why, they are famous — does not your highness think them choice? What better sort could be?"

"My good bishop, I may tell you in an English rhyme, which the countess will understand, though you may not;—

'So manny menne, so manny mindes,
So manny houndes, so manny kindes'—

and many a one, to my mind, is better than your spotted brachs. We have for instance, our southern hounds for strict training, our northern for fleetness; the white stag-hound, good at stratagem from his abundant phlegm; the black, with great memories; the brown for courage; the yellow for perseverance. There are leymmers and hariers, gazehounds, and greyhounds."

"Well, very well! — set aside the rest, and let's look to the greyhounds. Where can you match me this grand Albanian breed? — Are they not the true model of a grey-hound? Are they not the real sort so vaunted by Zeno-phon in his treatise on hare-hunting, and by Arian in his book on coursing?"

"By our Lady, bishop, you puzzle me sorely now! I am no clerk, and know nought of those worthy sportsmen whose writings you quote; but if they will match their dogs, be they of what breed they may, against some I am ready to produce —"

"Nay, duke, one of those authors wrote eighteen hundred years ago, and the other, Anno Domini 150!"

"Even so, even so; I answer them and you with some couplets from as prime a scribe as either, and this is the true picture of a good greyhound:

'Head like a snake,
Neck'd like a drake,
Back'd like a beam,
Sided like a bream,
Tailed like a rat,
Footed like a cat.'—

and such meant the princess in 'Sir Eglamour,' when she promised a present to her knight —

'Syr, if you be on huntynge fonde,
I shall you give a good greyhounde,
That is dunn as a doo;
For as I am true gentylwoman,
There was never deer that he at ran
That might escape him fro.'"

"Hark! hark!" hallooed Fitz-walter. "Away! there goes a stag, by St. George!"

"Nay, he is not worth following, countess — not he, Fitz-walter," cried the duke; "he is but a knobler, or at best a brocket."

"Did I not know the keenness of your highness's eye, I should say a staggart," said the lord warden.

"A butt of malmsey to a cross-bow, 'tis at the best a brocket!"

"I yield to your highness."

"Yet I might not be able to decide the wager, Fitz-walter, for there goes the quarry full speed down the wind; and with these runnion curs we may never hope to chace him again in view."

While the duke and his noble follower thus argued the identity of the young stag, in his different stages of growth from one year up to four, Jacqueline, less technical but more alert, quickly drew a shaft from her quiver, placed it steadily in her bow, threw the light rein, garnished with silver bells, loosely over her arm, and taking prompt aim, as the frightened animal bounded through the forest a few roods in front, she sent the arrow unerringly to its mark. It entered the neck, close to the shoulder-blade, a sure and deadly wound, as was made evident by the immediate limping pace which succeeded the former graceful boundings of the now "stricken deer." Exclamations of applause burst from Glocester, Fitz-walter, Van Monfoort, and the bishop, while Benina uttered a laugh of triumph at this new proof of her noble mistress's skill; and the huntsmen instantly laid on several of the hounds, which were sure ere long to overtake the prey, had they only tracked by the blood that trickled from its wound.

"My lord, I honour your prudence and policy," said the bishop, approaching to Fitz-walter, while Glocester complimented the countess; — "a true courtier is never wiser than his master, or he is a fool for his pains."

"And how, my lord bishop, have you found out that rare quality in me?" asked Fitz-walter.

"Tut, tut, my good lord; what man of sense would forfeit his patron's favour for proving that a stag bore an antler more or less on its horns?"

Fitz-walter smiled contemptuously; but Van Monfoort, who stood close by, holding his horse's rein, exclaimed, "I'll tell you a thing, Bishop Zweder; you know as little of the bold candour of chivalry as this English earl does of the guile of priestcraft; and I prophesy that your cunning ways will lose you more than they ever gained. Beware lest the Canon of Diepenholt slips in between you and the chapter, while you think you manage them so well."

CHAPTER IV.

BEFORE any reply could be made to De Monfoort's blunt speech, the whole company were filled with some astonishment, by the appearance of two men, who suddenly came from the thicket in the direction which the wounded deer had taken, surrounded by the huntsmen and hounds, who had just before gone off in pursuit. One of the strangers was a young man dressed in the fashion of the Frisons. A small and low-crowned hat of brown cloth allowed a profusion of thickly-curled chestnut hair to escape and fall about his shoulders. His green vest was fitted with short, wide sleeves, puckered into several plaits, under which appeared others of leather, tight to his arms, and reaching to the wrist, where they closely fitted, without band or buckle. His ample *bracca*, or *haut-de-chaussées*, of the same stuff as his vest, came down nearly to his knees, above which they were confined by a running string, and below them were tight pantaloons, like his under-sleeves, which showed the form of the legs down to the ancle, where they terminated. A *chaussure*, half shoe, half sandal, covered his feet, tied with leather cords. In his whole dress there was not a single button, the use of which (in more modern costumes) was supplied by various strings and small brass buckles. Besides the bow which he carried in his hand and the quiver slung at his back, a short straight sword was suspended from his girdle. Although not more than twenty-two or twenty-three years old, he joined to features of fine expression an air of manly intrepidity; and would have

appeared tall and robust beside any other figure but that of his companion.

That other, a perfect giant, stood a full head taller than him. His dress was nearly of the same form, but of much coarser texture; the juppon, or close vest, being of dog's-skin, the laces of his thick sandals reaching in transversal bands up to his knees, and his head, in lieu of hat or bonnet, being solely garnished by a clotted mass of thick red hair, rolled up tightly on the crown, and fastened with a catgut tie. Stuck in his belt was a long-bladed knife, with a stag's-horn handle. He carried in his hand a weapon called in those times a *torquoise*, a simple club, converted into a formidable mace, by the addition of eight or ten iron spikes projecting all round its thickest end. The face of this man expressed a brute energy almost ferocious, and its deep lines proclaimed him half a century old. His small grey eyes sparkled beneath a pair of bushy red eyebrows by which they were half hidden, and more than one scar added new fierceness to his ungainly aspect. His left hand held the forelegs of the wounded and still struggling deer, which he had slung across his shoulders, and whose blood trickled down his arm from the wound in which Jacqueline's arrow was still fixed. A dog of immense size and savage mien, whose grey hair, tinged at the roots with red (the effect of the extravasated blood forced out by violent exercise), announced him to be of the real Pomeranian breed, trod close in his master's track. Unheld by leash or collar, he never attempted to run abroad; yet his snarling look and bristling back showed the fierce passion which urged him to make war upon his less ferocious fellow-brutes.

"In God's truth, countess," said Glocester, as he surveyed the strangers, "yon giant with your brocket on his back, is not a bad copy of the Faunus and his kid in the statue gallery of the Louvre."

"Yes, and methinks his companion might have stood as a copy of the Acteon, which fills the opposite niche," replied Jacqueline, gazing on the young man.

"'Fore George, he is a comely youth. But how is it, my Lord of Utrecht, that you let armed archers and mace-

men traverse your domains? The forest laws of Drent are indeed lax, if pillers and poachers may roam into the very pathway of their count. I'll question them. Holloa, good fellows!" continued Glocester, riding forward, "by what right do you pace these forests, bow in hand, and seize the deer of the count bishop, your liege lord?"

"As for the deer," replied the younger of the strangers, in better French and with a purer accent than the duke himself, "we picked it up wounded just now, and brought it in courtesy towards the sound of the hunting-horns. For the rest, we are now, as well as you, on the territory of Friesland, and you may know that it is the right of all free Frisons to carry arms when and where they please."

"For the love of our Lady," whispered the bishop, in considerable trepidation, "have nothing more to do with them! they are a race of men, or demons rather, who have killed more counts of Holland and have taken more Bishops of Utrecht than I have hairs on my head!"

"We shall see if they will not treat me better," said the haughty prince pressing forward. But the bishop caught his arm, and with an almost stifled voice, continued —

"For my sake, most potential protector, if not for the Virgin's, let them pass on! Oh, if I should be known to them, ruin may follow your imprudence. Duke! duke! stand fast! It was on these very grounds that Florent the Second was murdered by Gambala, the free Frison!"

"Let me on towards the menacing hinds!" cried Glocester. "Down your arms, outlaws!" and with the words he placed his hand on the dagger, his only weapon, and urged on his horse. The giant, for so he might truly be distinguished, immediately placed himself before his young companion, flung his dying burden from his shoulders on the earth, and his rapid and piercing glance seemed to fly from the end of his mace to the duke's head, as if he measured the exact distance which the death-stroke would require.

"You are a dead man if you advance, and our cause utterly lost!" exclaimed the bishop, seizing the reins of Glocester's horse and turning round his head. Then ad-

dressing the giant, he anxiously said, in the low German jargon,— "My worthy, my gentle friend, do I not know you? Have we not met before?"

"That may be, for I have been in many a fight, as you may read in my face," gruffly answered the man.

"And your name, kind comrade?"

"Oost, the dyke-digger."

"And *mine?*—you remember mine, don't you, my brave Oost?"

"I know nothing of you, and care less."

"Praise to St. Willebrod!—the wretch!" muttered the re-assured bishop, turning round towards Glocester, who had been held in check by the persuasions of Jacqueline.

"And you, young gentleman," said the prelate again, but in French, "methinks your face is familiar to me. You are of Amersfort, Gouda, or Utrecht, eh?—You have seen me ere now, have you not?"

"Nor you, nor any of your company—neither am I of the towns you mention."

"And where do you come from—where are you going?"

"We follow our sport in the forest, nor hold ourselves bound to answer inquiries as to whence we come or where we go."

"The Holy Virgin be your speed wherever you go, so it be not on our path! On, on, my good youth—pursue your sport, and take your own way. Come along, Madame, come along your—highness!" continued the bishop, the last word in a whisper the very nadir to the title.

Glocester, however, gave little heed to these dissuasions. His choler, fiercely excited, seemed only to be appeased by the punishment of the daring outlaws, as he conceived the strangers to be.

"By God's grace!" cried he, "I cannot suffer this indignity. To be bearded by unmannered loons! Bring up yon lubberly halberdiers and seize these fellows! Have you no summary Court of Swainmote here to try and hang them on the nearest tree? Secure them, bishop, at least, and bear them off, before they escape into the thicket again!"

"For the love of Christ do not call me bishop!—speak lower, or let me be burgher, or master, or any

meaner title," whispered the prelate, while Jacqueline said aloud —

"Nay, you have not much cause to think those men imagine flight. They stand with the sturdy air of honest independence, and it were shame to harm them. They may, too, be friends of my cause."

"Oh! were we sure of that," said the bishop, "there would be no objection at all to carrying them off, and punishing them for his highness's pleasure. But it is ten to one that every Frison is your foe — and most sure they are all *mine*. Therefore we must treat them civilly and discreetly — so prithee, noble duke, let them pass on their way, nor risk a riot. They may be backed by others, as I much suspect from their bold bearing."

"Whither go you, young sir?" asked Jacqueline, in a gentle tone.

"That question I have already declined answering," replied the stranger, taking off his hat for the first time during the parley, and showing his fine forehead and countenance to the greatest advantage.

"Your course seems bent towards Zealand. Party feuds run high in these divided countries, and I would fain know to which side you belong—you wear no badge."

"I would not have one seen," rejoined the youth; "yet I might be proud, fair lady, to bear that which should distinguish your friends and followers."

"Courteously spoken, by St. Paul! and with all the air and tone of gentle blood," said Glocester, who had been completely cooled by the bishop's amusing logic, at which he, Fitz-walter, and Monfoort had heartily laughed, while Jacqueline had addressed the young man.

"I prithee speak him fair," said she again to Glocester. "Benina, is he not a noble looking youth?" she continued, while the duke approached him.

"Princely!" said the maid of honour. "St. Mary grant that he may be a Hoek!"

"I never before felt the harshness of this bye-word of our cause — it suits well with the Lion of Urk, or many another partisan, but sounds odious to designate a being like him," said Jacqueline.

"Would you he were then a Kabblejaw?"

"Ah, dear Benina, name it not even in jest! — Hush! he answers the duke."

"Why should I not, sir, if concealment serve my purpose? You and your company are all, like myself, in plain unliveried suits — yet I draw no inference to your disfavour," replied the young man, to Glocester's reproach that he seemed to court secrecy.

"Ah! Fitz-walter," said the latter apart, "is it not too bad to be thus twitted, and with truth, at this game of hide and seek? Is it meet that I dare not muster my blue-coated servitors even as when I drove old Winchester and his tawny-backed varlets into the Tower? You speak with prompt and pertinent remark," resumed he to the young man; "let us at least know whom we have conversed with — what is your name?"

"Sir, I have yet no name — although I bear my father's. But of my own I have yet to earn the title; and when a fit day comes I will not shrink from proclaiming it, to any who dares to question me."

"'Sdeath, Fitz-walter, is it not hard that I may not throw my gage to this bold boy?"

"Your highness needs not such dishonour; he shall have mine. There, my young sir, I fling you *my* defiance; and tell you that if occasion ever offers I will pluck your secret from your very heart, if your lips refuse to reveal it."

The young man calmly took up the glove which Fitz-walter had dashed on the ground; and drawing off one of his own, he threw it with less violence close by the feet of the challenger's horse.

"So far, sir, we are on equal terms," said he. "I cannot ask a name while I am not free to give my own. But know you, you have not to deal with an ignoble man, nor one that may not make you eat your boasting words, as, by the Virgin and my Lord St. Andrew, I here pledge myself to do, and to dye that faded favour in your best blood, if ever we meet in open lists or fair-fought field!"

"Enough said! It is a wager of battle — I witness the pledge, and offer myself for umpire," said Glocester.

"Would that the day were come, to be honoured by such a judge!" exclaimed Fitz-walter.

"Day and judge are to me alike indifferent," haughtily observed the stranger.

"What an insolent rapscallion!" muttered the bishop.

"I like him not the worse — they were my own words in reply to Philip of Burgundy's challenge," said Glocester.

"Well, well, my fine fellows," cried the bishop, "ye may now follow your course; and may God have you in his keeping, young man, to prepare you for the lance and battle-axe of this right worthy gentleman!"

The stranger proudly moved on, followed by his stern companion; and as he passed by Jacqueline, he again doffed his bonnet, and made a low obeisance to her and Benina.

"I cannot let him depart in this ungracious way," said the countess; "sir, let me thank your courtesy in having restored the quarry, which, but for you, were lost to us. Should we meet again, remember I am your debtor; and may St. Michael be your shield, when you redeem your pledge with yon redoubted knight?"

"An angel could not guard me better than such a prayer, hovering 'twixt me and Heaven."

"On, on to the forest depths! The day is going fast, and these hounds may mend their manners as the game is stirred," cried Glocester, urging away Jacqueline, who prepared to follow his summons, and gracefully bowing, turned her horse from the young man's side. But he, respectfully stepping before the palfrey's head, begged her to pardon his freedom in warning her of danger on the course they seemed bent on following.

"What, is there then indeed loose company in the forest? St. Willebrod protect us! I thought so — I thought so — let's retire to the boats and sail away," cried the bishop.

"Is that the threatened danger?" asked Jacqueline, calmly.

"No, madam — at least, not to my knowing," replied the stranger, with a tone of offended pride. "But these gentlemen are little cognoscent of the forest, if they know not that in this month of September the straggling rem-

nants of the Orox and Bonassus herds come down in this very track to the sea-side, raging and furious."

"Holy martyrs! it is too true. This must be the very district called the wild-bull-chace: — is it so?" exclaimed the prelate, perturbedly.

"It is," said the young man; "and hark! may St. Andrew be my hold, if I hear not the snorting of the monster even now! Oost, heard you that?"

To this latter question, in the dialect of Friesland, the giant only answered by grasping the young man's waist, and forcibly lifting him behind a thick clump of twisted oak roots, which presented the appearance of a natural redoubt. He then loosened his knife in his belt, but without drawing it, and grasping his mace in both hands he stood prepared, with that pale but stern anxiety which marks the face of the intrepid man, who knows his peril but fears it not. At the same instant, the horses and dogs, every one, startled and trembled, in the instinct of brute alarm. The very deer that lay on the ground, in the last gasp of death, made a struggling effort to rise, and expired with a shudder of fear. In the next moment a roar of terrible depth resounded through the forest, and the monster which sent it forth appeared close to the group, crashing through branch and briar, with an air of savage majesty at once appalling and sublime. His height and bulk were enormous, double that of an ordinary sized bull; he was jet black, with the exception of a broad stripe of white running along his back, as was visible while he stooped his huge head to the earth, butting against it, and tearing it up furiously with his short thick horns; while his eyes gleamed like fire-balls under the tuft of hair, curling, garland like, on his front; and he lashed his long tail and shook his mane, that hung full six feet from his neck, and swept the ground.

"Fly, fly!" cried the young stranger, as he drew his sword, and stood in the shelter of the trees; but his warning was not wanting to most of the party, and came too late to the rest. The huntsmen, acquainted with the terrible voice of the orox, ran in every direction, or climbed the nearest trees, even before he appeared; the dogs dis-

persed, yelping from fright, with the exception of that belonging to the dyke-digger, which stood close to its master, with trembling joints but bristling hair, displaying nearly as he did, a mixture of terror subdued by resolution. The horses, one and all, reared up, bounded, wheeled, and attempted to gallop off. Several of them succeeded in the attempt. That which was mounted by Benina, received ample aid from its terrified rider, who gave a loose rein and urged it to its utmost speed. Glocester's pony and Fitz-walter's stout, sturdy, and hard-mouthed beasts completely mastered their riders, and carried them in different directions into the thicket. The hardy Van Monfoort, who was on foot, at the first alarm abandoned his horse, stepped up beside Jacqueline, and aided her in holding in her restive palfrey, but not with sufficient steadiness to enable her to dismount. The bishop, at the first curvet of his agitated garron, was flung sprawling into a tuft of blackberries, and his face and hands soon streamed with the mingled juice of the crushed fruit and his own blood, which the thorns profusely shed as he rolled himself deeper and deeper in the covering of the briars.

The first victim to the fury of the orox was an unlucky pricker, who, slipping from the branch which he grasped, in an effort to mount an oak, fell to the earth, and was in a moment lifted on the fierce animal's horns, and tossed bleeding and breathless to a distance of several yards. The prostrate ecclesiastic was the next object of attack. The monster bounded towards him with roars of increasing fury, mingled with which were the shouts of the observers, who thus hoped to distract his attention from the shrieking priest. As he sprang forward, a tree of full fifty years' growth met his career; he struck it with his broad front, and shivered it like a splintered lance; it fell right over the bishop's otherwise imperfect shelter, and by its shadowing branches saved him from destruction.

Jacqueline was now on the ground, and while Van Monfoort held the curb of the almost frantic horse with both hands, as a final means of turning the wild bull's rage, she placed an arrow in her bow, and (with a courage, which on many as great a trial proved her one of the bravest of

women) she scorned, or perhaps saw the hopelessness of flight, and discharged the weapon with a steady hand; it struck the animal close to one eye, and broke against the bone. Irritated by the obstacles which kept him from the bishop, and inflamed by the smart of the wound, his long beard was now white with foam, and he darted with a tiger-spring full against the spot where the countess and Van Monfoort stood. The horse, which the latter still held, now burst from his grasp, and in a desperate plunge for escape, fell on his knees over the branches of the broken tree. The orox almost instantly transfixed him to the earth, and then gored him in a shocking manner, as he lay groaning and snorting with agony and fright. At this moment the young stranger, who, during the brief space occupied by the appalling scene, had been held in his giant companion's grasp, succeeded in breaking from it, and sprang to Jacqueline's side. Spurning all false delicacy or forced reserve, he caught her in one arm, and made an attempt to bear her away towards the clump whence Oost had followed him, while Van Monfoort, with more respect but equal valour, covered their retreat and stepped backwards after them, his huge two-handed sword pointed towards the pursuing orox. The young stranger, whose keen eye looked around at every step, saw now there was more danger in an attempted retreat than a desperate defence. He, therefore, turned again, and placed himself beside Van Monfoort, calling out to him to stand firm. The intrepid Ludwick stopped short, and answered by a cheering word. Oost stepped up a little, inclining in front of his companion, the dog flanking both. Jacqueline might have now fled with a fair chance of safety from behind this living rampart; but, from what occult sentiment or sympathy we pretend not to decide, she stood still, encircled by the young stranger's arm, and seemed satisfied to share the peril which he had rushed into for her sake.

As the orox plunged towards them, with horns and visage streaming in the gore of the torn horse, Van Monfoort and the stranger opposed their swords' points to his broad front, and in the same instant Oost dealt him a terrific blow on the head with his mace. He might as

well have struck against a rock; the iron points pierced and perhaps splintered the bone, but the monster never swerved. He, however, raised his neck and head for one instant to its utmost height, either from the effects of the stroke, or to gain a better aim for the fatal plunge which immediately followed directly at the stranger and Jacqueline, for they formed but one mark. Oost stepped another step forward, and threw himself before them; there was but one blow between him and death. Stooping almost to the earth, against which the heavy head of his mace rested, he raised the weapon up with a fierce jerk in both hands, to the elevation of his own head, as he sprung erect to his full height. The descending muzzle of the brute, as it came down with an equal speed and tenfold force, caught the uprising blow. It was the vulnerable part, the spot held by Mother Nature, as she plunged this monster and its kind in the exempting mould of their terrible strength. It reared up and tottered back; in an instant the swords of Van Monfoort and the young stranger were in its breast, and the more effective knife of the dyke-digger was deeply plunged into its throat; his dog at the same time sprang at its lip, and, with the sagacious tenacity of its breed, held down the animal to the earth, on which it sunk in a flood of gore. A shout of triumph burst from the victors, echoed by a scream from the bishop, who had just forced himself from his place of safety, and began to fly, why or where he knew not. But at this new sound, which he could not imagine aught but the monster's roar, he flung himself prostrate again, and would willingly, like the ostrich, have plunged his head into the earth.

The busy group of combatants saw that the business was over. Jacqueline, too, knew that the danger was escaped. Compassion was her first feeling.

"Fly, fly, Van Monfoort, and succour the huntsman, if he yet live!" said she.

Her next impulse was gratitude. She hastily untied the girdle from her waist, and turning to the young stranger, who left the completion of the butcher's work to his com-

panion, she said, with brimming eyes and a trembling voice,

"Take this, wear it for the sake of her whom you have saved. Ask not who I am, but if the day ever comes when you discover it, remember that I shall value *this* as one of the brightest in a whole life of misfortune!"

"Beautiful and generous woman," cried the stranger, "I do not merit this; nor dare I accept a gift, lavished on one who may not venture to declare even his name."

"Keep it, keep it — my heart vouches for your nobility — quick, put it up! they come!"

The young man hastily tore open his vest, and thrust into his bosom the girdle, much more precious from the manner of the donor, than from the intrinsic value of the embroidered silk and the diamond aigrette by which it was adorned. But Jacqueline, whose eyes followed the movement, felt a thrill of disappointment and regret, at discovering on the breast of the stranger's inner doublet, the broad red cross of St. Andrew — the badge of the followers of Burgundy! She would have given worlds to have recalled her gift. It was too late. Van Monfoort and the bishop, with the wounded huntsman, were close by, and Gloucester and Fitzwalter near in sight, the one having mastered and the other abandoned his horse.

The scattered elements of the late confusion now soon gathered round; and last of all came Benina Beyling, having recovered from the alarm which led to the abandonment of her noble mistress; and conducted by Gyles Postel, Van Monfoort's squire, who had joined her from the tent where he had been left, to prepare refreshments for the rest of the party. When she reached the spot of action she found Jacqueline standing with the Duke and Lord Fitz-walter, the two latter busied in excuses for their involuntary evasion of the peril, and in lamentations for her slaughtered palfrey; to none of which she seemed to pay much attention, being more engaged in inquiring after the hurts of the wounded man. Van Monfoort was employed in examining the reeking carcase of the slain orox, while the bishop, after having wiped his face into a most sanguine exhibition, was in close conversation with

Oost, who was occupied in cutting off one of the horns, the other being already stuck in his belt. The young stranger was removing the blood from his sword, with an apparent intensity worthy of a blade polisher of Dinant or Liege; but Benina, who had a sharp eye in matters of feeling, thought she discovered a depth of expression in his face beyond the purpose to which he seemed so devoted.

To the bishop's urgent entreaties that the dyke-digger would give him or sell him the orox horns, he received a brief and positive refusal. But when he at last appealed to the young stranger to persuade his follower to compliance, the request was compromised by Oost ceding one of his trophies. The other he handed over to his companion, with some solemn form of words, not comprehended by the rest of the party, but which the latter explained to the inquisitive prelate to be a rude invocation on presenting a drinking horn, as old as the early Barbarians who had peopled these wild districts. The bishop, though but half satisfied, pulled from his girdle the leathern purse, which he had not lost in his late mishap, and offered some pieces of money to the dyke-digger, which the latter refused with an expression of savage scorn in his looks, and turned away as if he escaped from an insult.

A very few minutes more sufficed to finish the scene. The strangers took their leave and departed; Ludwick Van Monfoort having exchanged a cordial grasp of the hand with each of his late comrades in the common danger. The Englishmen gave cold and haughty salutations. Benina smiled kindly on the young man; who was however astonished, hurt, and for a moment grieved, to see an expression of reserve, and almost he thought of resentment, on the beautiful countenance of her who had a few minutes before rewarded and thanked him as the preserver of her life. He felt, however, that he had then no possible means of exploring the mystery that surrounded her and her feelings; and he took his way towards the southern border of the forest, close followed by his huge attendant, and the dog, who threw many a longing look backward at the dead monster, as though he had not quite glutted his enmity.

The rest of the party did not remain long behind. A proposal of adjournment to the tent was quickly acted on; and a repast was soon laid out of materials brought the previous night, in the boats which had conveyed Jacqueline, the bishop, and their little suite.

The wounded huntsman was now placed on board, together with the dead deer, which was proved to be a three year old, or brocket, establishing at once the quickness of Glocester's eye, and disproving the bishop's surmise, of Fitz-walter's sneaking subserviency. The skin of the orox and other records of the exploit, were also carried away; and the bishop boasted of the whole, and displayed the tribute horn which he destined for the emperor, with as much exultation as if he had really believed himself the chief hero of the day.

After a short discussion, Glocester set sail with Van Monfoort, in the skiff belonging to the latter, for his castle in the little island of Urk; while the bishop, Jacqueline, and their followers, embarked on their return to Amersfort, accompanied by Fitz-walter, who was destined to take the command of the English troops, expected to land almost immediately in one of the islands of Zealand.

CHAPTER V.

To the general reader, not familiar with the epoch of our story, a brief sketch of its history may be acceptable, in as far as it concerns the personages already introduced, or about to be offered to notice.

At that time, the first half of the fifteenth century, the power of the house of Burgundy was in rapid rise to the dominion which under Philip, surnamed "The Good," it acquired, and for a period of fifty years maintained. This greatest of the dukes of his race or title was, at the date of the scenes recorded in the preceding chapters, in the prime of life and the full exercise of his vigorous ambition. He was a powerful and accomplished prince, a brave warrior,

and a liberal patron of literature. Good fortune following, as it generally does, the march of cautious enterprise, seemed to take unusual pleasure in heaping its favours on him; but he, as is too often the case, abused his luck by several acts of injustice and tyranny. The chief of these — by no means marked by historians with its merited reprobation — was the ungenerous perseverance with which he pursued Jacqueline of Bavaria, Countess of Holland and Hainault, his cousin-german in a double degree; his mother being sister to Jacqueline's father, Count William, and Jacqueline's mother, Marguerite, being sister to Philip's father, John Sanspeur, who was murdered in the year 1419, in the presence and by the authority of the dauphin of France, who succeeded to the title on the death of his elder brother, Jacqueline's first affianced husband, and became subsequently Charles VII. A just principle of filial vengeance, which he however afterwards suppressed for the indulgence of more politic passions, kept Philip for several years in fierce hostility with the new dauphin, and made him at once the most powerful ally of England, and the deadliest enemy of France. In the wars of Henry V., his fidelity to that monarch was unflinching; nor had he yet swerved from that which he owed his infant son and successor, who was represented in France by his eldest uncle, the great Duke of Bedford, the Regent, at that time in the zenith of his fame for wisdom and valour, and unstained by the disgrace of having consented to, if he did not originate, the sacrifice of Joan of Arc, one of the truest heroines of history.

Philip was now the sovereign of Burgundy, Flanders, Artois, and several minor possessions; but his thirst for aggrandisement made him resolute on obtaining not only the neighbouring duchies of Brabant and Hainault, but of extending his territories by the conquest of Holland, Zealand, and all the tributary provinces which stretched up to the Northern Sea. The marriage of Jacqueline, their hereditary countess, with John of Brabant an imbecile boy, was highly favourable to his projects, as it was an assurance that no heirs were likely to arise between him and the heritage to which he was next in succession. He there-

fore supported with his whole power the nominal husband against the ill-treated wife; and when, indignant at repeated outrages, she fled to England for protection, and became affianced to Humphrey of Glocester, (also known in his country's annals as the "good Duke,") Philip supported John with a force too overwhelming to be resisted by the English prince, who, with his affianced bride, was driven out of Hainault, she taking refuge in Holland, and he returning to the duties of his Protectorate at home.

John the Pitiless, the secularised bishop of Liege, uncle to both Philip and Jacqueline, one of the worst men of days too fertile in vice, had previously commenced a war against her, founded on a shallow pretext, and had, as before stated, defeated all her efforts for the defence of her rights, chiefly through the aid of the feudal despots with whom Holland abounded, and whose admiration of Jacqueline's fine qualities was overcome by hatred to her race, which had for several generations shewn a rare and generous sympathy with the people of the towns against the ennobled tyrants by whom they were oppressed. Jacqueline was forced to cede her rights to her atrocious uncle for the period of his life; but its termination, shortly previous to the opening of our story, reinstated her in the still imperfect possession of her inheritance. No doubt existed of the Bishop of Liege having died by poison; and opinion loudly pronounced the niece he had so injured to be the instigator of the deed. A gentleman of Holland, named Van Vlyett, a partizan of Jacqueline, and one of the Hoeks, was tried in the summary fashion of the times, and executed for the imputed crime. Philip, who had succeeded by his uncle's will to the territories of Liege and other states, was not accused of the deed, which benefited him as well as her on whom the suspicion fell. The secret of this was the prosperity of the one and the misfortunes of the other; a rule which regulates through all the gradations of life and fortune, the praise or the obloquy of the world. Philip, however, soon obtained from John of Brabant, his impotent creature and cousin (for all the actors in this political drama were near relations), a commission empowering him to occupy, as governor in his

name, his wife's possessions; and it was in virtue of this delegated authority that he now prepared to carry fire and sword into the last refuge which was left to our hapless but still undaunted heroine. To give a final sanction to his conduct, Philip had employed his utmost influence with Martin V., the recognised pope, to refuse the divorce she solicited so urgently, and to annul the contract by which she had become affianced to Glocester. And to detach that intrepid but imprudent champion from her support, he had, with the assistance of the Duke of Britanny, gained considerable influence with the regent, who soon saw that Philip would sacrifice every feeling of friendship or fealty, in furtherance of his designs for still more general dominion. Hence the efforts on the part of Bedford to conciliate Philip, whose sister he had married, and to temper his brother's ardour, alluded to by Glocester in his conference with Jacqueline.

Another means resorted to by Philip to paralyse Glocester's exertions, more it is likely from cunning than courage (of which, however, he had a large share), was a challenge to single combat, on the ground of some dubious phrases reflecting on his veracity, in letters from the latter. The whole correspondence is preserved by the chroniclers, and it bears evidence to the talent of "the good" dukes, in maintaining their respective causes by the pen, and their readiness to defend them with the sword. Until the terms of the combat were finally arranged by a sort of general council, which, under Bedford's auspices, sat at Paris on the whole merits of the case, Glocester was, as he has told, prohibited from any personal efforts against his antagonist's cause or in Jacqueline's quarrel. He was supposed to be in England while he made his stolen visit, to explain his conduct and to reassure the almost disconsolate countess; and while Philip, on his part, was in reality making the most vigorous preparation for the invasion of her possessions, he kept up, in his castle of Hesdin in Picardy, a shew of complete devotion to exercises fitting his coming duel, and to brilliant jousts and other sports, belonging more to chivalry than to actual war.

The affairs of France on the one hand, and the dis-

puts in England between Glocester and the Bishop of Winchester on the other, gave Bedford enough of concern and employment to prevent his interfering in the approaching contest between Jacqueline and Philip. To maintain the latter stanch to the English interests was the regent's chief object; and whatever his private sympathy might have been, his political regard was little likely to be excited for one whose unfortunate quarrel was shaking the very foundations of Philip's alliance, and involving all England in the peril she was about to incur.

Jacqueline was therefore, with Glocester's sole exception, unsupported by any foreign ally. Her most influential domestic one was the Bishop of Utrecht. He was forced into her quarrel by Philip's inveterate hostility to him, in consequence of his formerly opposing, from feelings of personal pique, John the Pitiless, who had used his best efforts, but fruitlessly, to prevent Zweder's election to the see, when he was but Dean of Osnaburg in Westphalia. Philip vowed that he would dispossess Bishop Zweder, though the mitre should be placed on the poorest curate of Friesland, and had spurned some cringing efforts towards submission already offered by the prelate, who became also deeply compromised in a closer dispute with the insubordinate Chapter of Utrecht, which had gone so far as to threaten him with expulsion, on learning his overtures so scornfully rejected by the duke. It was then that he immediately turned round to Jacqueline's cause; and, as has been seen, made it his own — as long as was convenient.

Several of the other towns had with great spirit espoused the quarrel of their persecuted countess, and embarked their very existence in the same venture. Amersfort was chosen by her as her residence and the seat of her little court; where, aided by her mother, a woman of masculine mind and determined character, she endeavoured to organise the efforts of her friends into some serious display of preparation for the struggle. One of her most active and most remarkable partisans was Rudolf Van Diepenholt, a man of good family, but merely an obscure canon, until he was fixed on by the people of Utrecht as a

fit candidate for the bishopric, of which they were resolved to deprive the present possessor. Others of Jacqueline's supporters will appear incidentally during the progress of our story.

The ancient antipathies of the Hoeks and Kabblejaws had for the moment been agreed to be laid aside, at least as far as actual hostilities were a proof of hatred. A truce was established between them, and for a few short weeks no blood had been shed—a rare circumstance in the annals of a century—and the annual meeting for the exercise of archery, called *Jay-shooting*, (from the appearance of the object aimed at,) was about to take place at Tergoes, in the island of South Beveland, at which it was agreed to collect the sense, (so to call it,) of the conflicting factions, on the great question of sovereignty which now agitated the country.

These two factions, so often alluded to, had acquired their respective titles in a way highly characteristic of the rude times in which they flourished, and of the piscatory pursuits and habits of thought of the amphibious race to which they belonged.

During the contests for power, about the year 1350, between Marguerite of Bavaria, Countess of Holland, and her son William, grand-uncle to Jacqueline, some of their respective partisans, the most powerful men in the country, held a repast, at which a frivolous argument took place on the question, whether the Hoek (fishing-hook) might be said to take the Kabblejaw (cod-fish), or *vice versâ*. A serious quarrel was the consequence of the dispute; the different parties affixed on each other the words which formed the matter of argument; distinctive badges were assumed; and the whole population, for full a century following, was divided into two desperate political sects.

It was thus that with all the barbarous hostility of old times, a vein of rude humour almost invariably mixed. Political nick-names owed their application to chance, or some association connected with ridicule. Gueux, Roundhead, Tory, Whig, have no distinct signification as titles of powerful parties, and only give us notions of ignoble and vulgar factions. Leaguer, Conventicler, and a few

others, vaguely mark the purpose of their partisans, but carry no moral meaning with them. It was sufficient for our forefathers thus to designate antagonist sects, and at most to fasten on them some title of burlesque. The more impressive epithets by which men now distinguish their opponents (such as radicals, corruptionists, ultras), are among the proofs of a more regulated energy in the human mind, or at least a more serious spirit in their hatred.

The chief leader of the Hoeks (who had all declared for Jacqueline, and who may be called the liberal party) was Ludwick Van Monfoort, whom our readers already know, a rough warrior and a bachelor, who, in his aversion to restraint, would not submit to even the silken chains of matrimony. The principal person on the opposite side was Floris Van Borselen, a married man, and the father of a family, who, like the rest of his party, was at once a slavish partisan of absolute right and tyrannical wrong, and in his domestic relations as thorough a despot as the master to whom he bent his knee. It is to the castle of this chieftain, in the southern point of the island of South Beveland, that we must now conduct our readers, and introduce them to both it and its lord, on the third day following the occurrences in the Zevenvolden, which occupied our opening chapters.

The castle of Eversdyke was a fair specimen of the structures which at that period abounded in the feudal territories of Holland, Zealand, and the neighbouring provinces. It rose on the edge of the Hondt, or West Scheldt, opposite to the coast of Eastern Flanders. The beach did not in that part present the, at times, picturesque object of white and sun-gilt sand-hills. It was, like the greater part of the coast of the island, composed of a bank of brown, orange, or red coloured earth, which protected the naked surface of the *polders**, and formed the only rampart between the sea and the rich pastures, and the flax plantations, the staple produce of the island. Beyond this dyke, which was of moderate elevation, extended a rude

* The technical name of the low grounds immediately adjoining the dykes.

pier formed of huge black stakes, intermixed with pieces of rock, against which the angry waves broke and foamed unceasingly. Protected by this pier were generally seen lying at anchor a few heavy and flat-bottomed vessels, suited to the navigation of the shallow seas of Zealand. A large lock or basin completed this little harbour, and appeared intended for the occasional discharge of the waters from the plains beyond.

Close to this basin, so as to command the harbour, rose the square tower which composed the principal feature of the castle. It gradually decreased in breadth from the foundation to the roof, and this mode of architecture, adopted for the purpose of strength, gave an air of greater height than the construction actually possessed. A narrow river bathed the base of this tower, which was only to be approached by means of a wooden draw-bridge, so rapidly inclined that the part next the edifice was full twenty feet higher than the opposite end, a precaution common to those castles which were so frequently exposed to sudden attacks from the pirates who infested the coast. The lower parts of the tower contained no windows, but were furnished with several narrow casemates, which proved that in case of siege it was destined for the reception of the cattle and provisions of the garrison, who kept their quarters higher up. The upper parts were irregularly furnished with windows, great and small, and the building was crowned by a roof so pointed that the snows of winter never found it a resting-place.

The detached house, built of wood and clay, at times inhabited by the chieftain, with the out-buildings close under the protection of the tower, showed nothing peculiar; nor did even the village of Eversdyke, a few hundred yards distant, on a somewhat sloping ground, a place of refuge in case of inundation. The only striking objects around were the high signal masts called *bakenen*, on which the chieftains hung out their banner, when they took arms for the public cause, or in a private quarrel. But this old custom was now beginning to fall into decay, being superseded by the establishment of clocks, which called the vassals to arms, and one of which thrust out its

grotesquely ornamented dial just under the roof of the tower; some huge nests of storks hanging at the other side, annually enlarged in their dimensions, and constantly occupied from generation to generation.

In one of the chosen chambers of this castle, Floris Van Borselen, its haughty master, and his lady-wife, who was by birth, education, and feeling, a Frison, of noble, but we can scarcely say of gentle blood, occupied two unwieldy chairs of grotesque and comfortless accommodation, which were placed close to one of the high and narrow casements that opened to the westward; and they looked out over the rude outworks of the place, and on the ocean, which spread away to the not distant isle of Walcheren. But it was not on that ocean that their thoughts were fixed, nor did the little skiff which came dancing upon its waves from the main land which lay opposite, form the subject of their conversation. That turned on the probable fortunes of their eldest son, Vrank, who had been some years before launched on the wide sea of life, with prospects no doubt flattering, but on a voyage which experience told them was at the best exposed to difficulty and danger.

"My good husband and gracious master," said the dame, "I do yet think, with all becoming deference to your wisdom, that no cause of misgiving actually exists on that particular head. His letters, though few, are written in clear broad characters, and contain dutiful words for you and me, and due phrases of affection for his sisters and brothers: and he seems to manage well the honorable recompense of his calling, and to understand the honour which it confers, and he always invokes his patron's patron, my Lord St. Andrew, whom he has chosen, and whose badge he wears."

"My good wife," said Van Borselen, with an expression which was meant for a smile, but was much more of a sneer, "what has all that to do with the subject of our anxiety? Can the broidered badge of St. Andrew protect while it covers a young man's heart? Or will his duty to father or mother save him from the perils of a lascivious court, from the corruption that besets a traveller in strange

countries, and the chance that he learns to forget, or what is worse, to despise his own?"

"Nay, but our dear son Vrank ——"

"Is only a youth, and subject to youth's failings! That is my ready-made answer to your reasoning, wife. Seven years may have improved, but they have not been like to change him."

"Oh, I hope not!" said the partial mother.

"Well — I hope not, too," rejoined the husband, who was in a mood of unwonted mildness, "for when he left us he was a promising — a glorious boy, the pride of my heart, and Heaven grant he may yet prove the honour of our ancient race!"

"He will, he will! If ever youth came to grace and goodness, Vrank Van Borselen will — my dear, dear boy!" exclaimed the fond mother, wiping away tears of pride and joy, from cheeks that had furrows just deep enough to mark her on the middle road of life.

"Still, my good Bona, my worthy helpmate," said the father, with a voice less and less harsh at every word, "there was in his disposition a fearful leaning to tenderness of heart, that unmanly weakness which leads some degenerate boys to love, ay, even to marry, women other than those their parents prescribe for their wives."

"Oh, fear nothing ——"

"I am not used to *fear*, my good wife; but if ever a child of mine — if ever even Vrank should so forget his due obedience to me, I swear, as I am a gentleman and a Kabblejaw ——"

"Oh, my good master! do not swear, for I know your inflexible nature — Oh! do not suppose aught unworthy of our favourite child."

"Well, well, I will not swear — yet; nor imagine that worst of all evil. But I wish, oh, how keenly! that this boy of ours was once again back among the rude virtues of his native land, and free from the blandishments of those southern climes, where our hardy plants are withered, and the fruit becomes rotten before it is well ripe. — What skiff can that be bearing this way up against the breeze? It has no pennant that I can see — yet it ought to be my

brother James's too—Is it not? it stands over from Biervliet, and may bring news from Flanders. Would that it might tell me that young John Uterken is coming!"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the wife, "for then the war would be sure to begin again. Let us at least enjoy this little interval of quiet, and be content."

"Content! not I, by our Lady, till our foes are down, and that adulteress, that poisoner, that female firebrand, cast out from the country!—Content! while the white flag flies on my limits, while my banner is not hoisted on the bakanen, while Zegher of Hemsted rides on the same path with me, and I may not draw my sword, but must doff my bonnet to him and the like!—Content! But our meeting at Tergoes to-morrow will end this inglorious state of things. Uterken and his brave Flemings may arrive ere long, and the Kabblejaws once more throw up their grey caps for joy!"

As the chieftain harshly uttered these words he stalked along the narrow chamber, as if every stride were to carry him closer to his foes, or farther from the galling durance of inaction. Some further conversation, if so it might be called, when more than nine-tenths of the talk was on one side, brought the unequal colloquists not much nearer to an accordance of opinion. But the time it occupied allowed the skiff to approach very close to the beach which stretched under the castle ramparts. When Van Borselen had in some measure vented his stern humour, by bursts of declamation like those we have recorded, and which his wife attempted to soothe, but could by no means control, he turned his attention again to the little vessel, now evidently steering for the rude pier, which afforded ample depth for small craft to run close under the mouths of the few culverins which garnished the rampart at its seaward face.

"It is, it is my brother's boat," cried Van Borselen. "There flies his green pennon, with the three silver stars of the Borselens, at the mast-head—and, eh? What! By St. Peter and St. Paul, the red cross of Burgundy on a white flag hangs out at the stern. This is good, this is good, this is good! The duke will not long tarry while

his banner is in the wind. The skiff is moored — John Uterken in his boat-cloak steps ashore.—Let us receive the brave youth becomingly. So, so!"

With these words he reseated himself in his chair of state, and assumed a position as stiff and formal as it. With back erect, feet firmly fixed, and arms in a line with those of the piece of furniture on which he evidently modelled his attitude, he looked as calm and stern as Dutch gravity and feudal pride prescribed, and immoveably awaited the entrance of the young man, who now stepped quickly on through the various approaches to the main body of the building. The movements of Vrowe Bona Van Borselen were always more rapid and detailed than those of her much older lord, even when going the same round of conduct, bearing to them about the proportion that the speed of the minute-hand did to that of the hour-hand on the dial of the castle clock. She therefore resumed possession of her oaken seat, with much quicker and more evident efforts at preparation for a suitable carriage during the coming interview. She smoothed her kirtle of thick brown samyte down over her knees, leaving only just enough of her legs displayed to show the blue hose on her ancles and insteps, high upon which were the brass clasps of her untanned shoes. She next gave an additional pull to her girdle and fastened it into the buckle, advanced on her cheeks her plaited wimple of the fine and snow-white lawn called sendell, which was spun by her own maidens; then settling on her shoulders her tippet, handsomely embroidered in Ypres needlework, she hemmed and coughed, and made some swan-like movements with her long neck, and finally adjusted herself in harmony with her husband's attitude, to which hers formed a suitable parallel. They sat there statue-like for some minutes, without deranging, by the interchange of a word or look, the rigid dignity of feature and muscle; though the quick-sounding steps, which echoed on the stone stairs and through the narrow corridor, proclaimed an unusual want of form in the visitor's approach.

And in a few moments more the door of the chamber was flung back on its clumsy hinges; and instead of dis-

playing the formal figure of the armed pursuivant, or fat old chamberlain, who regularly announced all comers, and ushered them in between a file of serving men, the youth who had made such short way from the skiff to the audience-room, now stepped, or rather bounded forward, and advanced towards the stately couple, threw aside his cloak, took off his bonnet, and dropped on one knee. The quick sight of maternal love could not for a moment be dimmed by doubt. Vrowe Bona, forgetting every thing but the heart-yearning which for seven long years had been drawing her insensibly to this happy moment, started from her seat, as though an effigy had sprung from its pedestal, and indifferent to tippet, wimple, or kirtle, she threw herself into the open arms of her son, and kissed him, hugged him, and cried over him, in all the grace of natural ill-breeding.

Whether it is that a father's memory is not so prompt to recognise his child, or that the pride of a Zealand gentleman and a Kabblejaw triumphed over the parent's feelings, Floris Van Borselen did not follow his wife's example, but sat still in his arm chair, while she blubbered forth her welcomings, and stifled the replies that the affectionate youth in vain essayed to utter. During this struggle it was, however, evident that the chieftain knew his son, and that decorum held a terrible tussle with delight. His body moved not, but his knees shook, his hands convulsively grasped the arms of the chair, his mouth was drawn down, his lips quivered, his eyes winked, and his whole countenance displayed that ineffably ludicrous expression which one sometimes sees in the weeping cherubs of a monument. Young Vrank saw his father's constrained emotion, and succeeded in approaching close enough to take the outstretched hand, which, for all its nervous straining, trembled as the youth respectfully pressed it to his lips. But the mother never quitted her son, but clung to him at the other side, and made him in fact, what a dutiful child morally is, the true link that joins its parents in a chain of love.

At this moment a perfect tumult was raised in the antechamber, and even at the very door of the *sanctum*, where no sounds but the measured accents of etiquette were ever

before known to enter. A group of four or five children, boys and girls from the age of fifteen down to ten, had gathered in the corridor on hearing the arrival of their long wished for brother Vrank. The servitors too, old followers of the family, and more recent reinforcements to the household, who had all known or heard of their young lord's fine qualities, unable to resist the children's example, crowded after them and pressed forward; while the old governess, in her sendell coif and black hood, and the older chamberlain with grey head and wide breeches, threw their bodies as a rampart between their lord's privacy and the boisterous intruders, and spread their arms across the door-way to block up the passage.

"Let them all in, let them all in!" cried Floris Van Borselen, springing up on his feet and throwing his arms round his son's neck. "Let there be holiday and jubilee to all within sight of the weather-cock on the tower!—Oh!" continued he, as the children and servants rushed in, jumping, shouting, laughing, and weeping for joy, "Oh, that I, too, could dance and cry!"

With the lightning's speed the joyous feeling ran through the castle. The rough watchman on the rampart, the guards at the gate, and the grooms in the court-yard, all caught the impulsion. The artillery sent out successive peals across the strait to the main-land beyond; and the very ban-dogs in the fosse seemed to howl in a unison of fierce but thrilling welcome, such as the grey walls of Eversdyke had not rung with for years.

CHAPTER VI.

THE scene just described will be evidence of the good reason which Vrank Van Borselen had to love and reverence his parents, who, let their peculiar dispositions be what they might, united much of that tenderness which was common to the unpolished but kindly people of Zealand. Vrank still remembered, in their fullest force, and was in a great

degree ready to act on, the early notions of obedience which his father's very name inspired; nor had all the acquired polish of manner, which between six and seven years' service under the Duke of Burgundy had grafted on his natural refinement of thought, weakened the influence of the associations which attached him to the land of his early youth. Yet he could not sympathise with the rude prejudices of the country he now visited after so long an interval, even though his father was most deeply imbued with them. He considered the social state of the people as little removed from barbarism, and he looked on their savage and ignoble feuds as a perfect solecism, in an age when chivalry flourished elsewhere, in all the seducing brilliancy of fierce, yet elegant warfare. He was revolted by the recollections which rushed upon him, as he approached his home, of that passive submission to the will of his parents relative to affairs which, according to his creed, ought to be of the heart; and he felt that nothing could ever induce him to submit to the right of disposal over his very person, which the worthy fathers of Zealand claimed from their children of either sex, as undisturbedly as they enjoyed their hereditary fiefs. In short, Vrank Van Borselen was, in the halls of his ancient race, as much superior to the rude but honest beings around him, as he was in the court of Burgundy, France, or Rome, to the libertine and unprincipled swarms which the strong heats of civilisation are too sure to engender. He was a young man in advance of the times he lived in; in whom reason took the mastery of passion, while good taste at once subdued and strengthened the force of warm feeling. Even in those days of enterprise, and amidst men of the boldest daring, he held a high place, and was generally considered destined to do great things, not so much from his fine talents, evident as they were, as from a rare display of solid judgment capable of directing them in the right road. Philip of Burgundy, his lord by adoption, but to whom he was bound by no allegiance, beyond reciprocal services, held him in high esteem; and had recently employed him in two missions, (on one, as a subordinate auxiliary, on the other, as an independent agent,) either of which many an

older follower would have felt honoured by, and might have managed less ably. To render a succinct account of these missions, the latter of which had finished with his delivery of a sealed missive to his father, was the duty which Vrank proceeded to perform, as soon as the first burst of welcome had subsided into a less turbulent delight, and ere the evening repast was served up in the eating-hall to which they soon adjourned. Vrank took but little heed of the repast itself, beyond the mere indulgence of an excellent appetite. He saw that it was served without those strict forms of etiquette to which he had been for some years accustomed, and also that the various dishes of which it was composed seemed but so many modified preparations of the two grand staples of Zealand cookery, fish and wild fowl. But he had for the last few weeks been daily recalled to the recollection of old tastes and customs, by displays nearly similar and always analogous to that which was now spread before him.

"My precious boy," said the mother, following with anxious eyes every morsel that he lifted to his mouth, in the large pewter spoon, or on the sharp point of his clumsy knife, "it does me good to see thee eat. Look, my noble master and gracious husband, how our dear son relishes that mixture of chopped salmon and skelfish, and no wonder, for the juniper sauce might give vigour to the palled palate of a Middleburgh burgher. Change your young master's platter with a helping of yon' wild duck, coddled in kelp," continued she, to the serving-wench who aided the cook and kitchen varlets, in their duty of not only dressing the meal but in serving it, as its various parts succeeded on the board.

Floris Van Borselen, to allow his son free scope for eating, had turned his eyes again on the despatch which Vrank had before read to him, his own ignorance of the French language making that an insurmountable task to himself; and deaf to his dame's observations, he pondered over the words which he could not decipher, and examined the ducal seal of Burgundy, with a proud satisfaction at this proof of his being in actual and direct correspondence with one of the most potent sovereigns of Europe.

"Now, my dear child," resumed Vrowe Bona, "put aside thy platter. I see the duck is too fishy for thy taste, and in truth till the frost sets in these birds have a sea-weed flavour; but this larded curlieu stuffed with Picardy chestnuts will please thee better — it has been four days steeped in vinegar, and is as tender as a Breda capon."

"In very truth, my good mother," said Vrank, with a smile, "I can eat no more — all the dishes are excellent, but I must now give over — you see my father has ended his repast, and I must continue the account of my travels."

"Eat no more! Why child, what is come over thee? Thou canst not have lost thy native taste, nor expect French juncates or condiments on our truly national board! Neither thy father nor myself, Vrank, ever allow such pernicious adjuncts to our homely fare."

"You do me wrong, dear mother, if you suspect me not to relish the good cheer you give me — but where have been your eyes? There must be bounds to mortal ability? I have made a most hearty meal."

"Alas! Vrank, is this thy notion of a hearty meal? Ah! much I fear me indeed that foreign customs have over-refined thy wholesome appetite. Why, the old curate of Ovenesse, who crossed from the main-land yesterday, and made his morning meal with us, ate to his own share a young turbot, two pickled plovers and mashed parsnips, with the full half of a broiled bittern, a wing of which would make more than thy whole supper, and a slice of the red-rinded cheese of Edam — and good Father Sibrant is no great feeder neither."

Vrank had nothing more to reply; but his father now took up his cause, and gave a new turn to the conversation.

"In verity and fair argument, my good wife," said he, "it doth seem to me that Vrank has done due honour to the viands, and enough to prove himself a true and hearty Zealander. Press the boy no more — let him quaff another horn of hydromel, and reserve his remaining powers for the crowning dish of our feast, the emblem of our cause, the type of our hopes. Ay! for as sure as that royal Kabblejaw smokes on its platter, so sure shall we triumph over those rebellious Hoeks, whom to-morrow shall see put down

for ever. Honour to thee, my Lord Kabblejaw, and great praise and prosperity to thy cause!"

This last apostrophe, in a voice most seriously ludicrous, was addressed to a huge cod-fish, which the head cook carried up in procession and placed on the table, while the attendant varlets and wenches solemnly followed, some with sauces, and others merely doing mute honour to the occasion. The fish had a wreath of flowers stuck with skewers upon his head, and his tail was crisped and twisted up by a string, fastened to the side fins, adding an air of pert stupidity to the straining eyes and wide spread mouth of the dead idol, to which many a living one might form a parallel.

Vrank could not resist a smile, though mixed with pain, at the gravity with which his really high-minded sire thus paid tribute to the degrading tyranny of party spirit. Luckily for him his father did not observe the doubtful expression of his face; and he did not dare to refuse partaking of the venerated dish, nor fail to clear off a goblet in its honour, which ceremonies he well remembered were the tests of those political principles of which Floris Van Borselen was now the leading champion.

"Let the board be cleared, and the second table furnished," said the chieftain, in his usual tone of command; and his recovered air of rude dignity seemed now no longer to be broken by any intrusive weakness. He had partaken of the mystic emblem of his political faith; and his whole mind was suddenly turned into the broad but troubled channel of public affairs. His orders were immediately obeyed, by the removal of the several dishes, and the supply of others of more solid substance, to the long stone table which stood at the farther end of the hall; the upper, or place of honour, being by feudal usage elevated by several steps, and on occasions divided from the lower by a folding screen. At present, this inferior compartment was filled by even more than the ordinary occupants of its table, many of the household being allowed by peculiar courtesy the great honour of feasting almost in the company, but certainly in the sight, of their lord. He and the members of his family, who had all, down to the youngest boy, been

admitted to his table on this happy occasion, now soon retired. As they moved away, the respectful ardour of their servitors could no longer be restrained, but it burst forth in a loud shout, whose three-fold repetition made the bare walls ring, and shook many a cobweb on the smoke-dried beams which supported the unceiled roof of the hall. Among the loud voices which pitched their highest notes in this chorus, that of Oost the Dyke-digger sounded pre-eminent, and many of his fellow choristers were forced to cease their cries and stop their ears, which seemed literally split by his hoarse yet piercing tones. It will be judged that due deference was paid to this infrequent but by no means unknown visitor at Eversdyke Castle, when it is told that he was foster-father to young Vrank, who had been born and nursed in the hardy climate of Fricsland, his mother's country. Oost had been more than once employed as the agent of communications between his lord's possessions in that country and in Zealand, and had now accompanied Vrank, as guide on the wild route where we first introduced them to our readers, and which it was intended he should soon retrace on a commission still more important. Leaving the wassailers to their coarse enjoyments, and taking leave for the night of the two blooming girls and three boys who formed the junior members of the Borselen family, the father and mother, attended by Vrank, were soon again seated in the private saloon, or withdrawing-room.

"So, my son, you have indeed commenced a brilliant career!" said Floris Van Borselen, exultingly, as he resumed his chair, Vrank standing respectfully beside him, and the mother discreetly retiring, though not quite out of ear-shot of a conversation too important for her to bear a direct part in.

"This truly is honour in a double degree! Be proud of it, my boy, and know your place — and now answer me one or two points still. When the good duke's ambassadors, to whom you acted as secretary, laboured so well with your aid to decide his holiness to annul the mock contract with Glocester, did no one on his part back Jacqueline's prayer that it should be confirmed?"

" My noble father, make me not vain or imperious of the distinction done to me by my princely patron. St. Andrew be my witness, I bear no arrogant notion of my own merit, but hold myself in all humility, as honoured far beyond my deserts. On the part of the Duke of Glocester — "

" Vrank, this will never do you good! The man who knows not his own merit can never make it felt by others. The higher you hold your head, the more will the vulgar crouch beneath your feet. Stoop to their level, and they will try to trample on you straight."

" I covet no triumph over the mean herd of men, my father; and perhaps did I toss my head too high in life, I might miss my footing in its slippery paths, and stumble from my very attempts to soar."

" Well, well, go on just now in your own track. We'll discuss this point anon. Continue your speech. The Duke of Glocester — "

" Was represented by a single emissary at the papal court, a dark, mysterious man, who held no pomp nor apparel, but came, and staid, and went, in gloomy singleness. Yet it was said he had mighty influence over his holiness, and he at all times commanded his private ear. Nevertheless, my gracious lord, our noble duke's ambassadors received from the pontiff's own hands — I can aver it well, for I read, attested, and copied the document — a letter to the duke, assuring him that ere long a bull should issue, annulling Madame Jacqueline's contract with Glocester, and prohibiting her marriage with him, even should her lawful husband, John of Brabant, die before her."

" As he most surely must — for a life of debauchery, and a feeble frame like his, cannot last much longer. But who was this secret emissary that vainly strove to thwart thine and the lords ambassadors' good labours? Some noble, or some proud knight, chosen by haughty Glocester for this mission?"

" Not so, my father. He was a simple priest, untitled and unbeneficed even. Strange rumours were afloat as to his character and conduct. Report even said that the fierce lustre of his eye was lighted at unholy fires — that his

cheeks caught their livid tinge from the poisonous vapours of forbidden works, from furnace and crucible —"

"The Virgin and St. Philagon be my speed, Vrank, but thou makest my blood curdle and my flesh creep! Hark ye this, good wife? And have I not right to dread the contact of foreign fellowship for this our boy? Heretics and sorcerers admitted even to the pontiff's privacy! Preserve us, Heaven, from the like! Let our cold clime keep the plague of southern corruption from us?"

Vrowe Bona was content to remain silent, satisfied in her own mind that neither demon nor devil could have power over the virtue of her beloved son Vrank, but not caring to contest the point with her husband. Vrank, however, felt disposed to lessen his father's horror at his communication, and remarked that the close confidence to which this English priest was admitted by the Pope was argument against the reports to his disfavour.

"And even supposing them true," continued he, "it was still plainly proved that he had gained no power by magic or black arts over the pontiff's mind. For as he passed from the secret closet on the last morning of the mission, I marked him, while I and my lords the ambassadors waited in the ante-room, smile such a smile as a fiend might have worn. We all thought our labour lost, and that Jacqueline's cause had triumphed. But, to our great marvel, the next minute admitted us into the sacred presence, and the important letter was delivered by his holiness himself into the ambassador's hands."

"Well, my boy," replied Floris, "that only proves what Scripture says, as I am well assured by the curate of Overnesse, that the pope is stronger than the devil; and moreover that he outwitted the English conjurer, if such he was. And what became of him after?"

"That I know not. We all of the embassy instantly departed, to convey the sacred missive to the duke at Hesden, along with a duplicate for the Duke of Brabant at Brussels. And you may judge the joy with which the good Philip learned this issue to our important mission; for the pope's decision relieves him from all fear of Jac-

queline's being able to maintain her cause, and will force her to break her lawless intercourse with Glocester."

"And proud I am, as the duke is happy, my dear Vrank, that you have contributed so greatly to ruin the cause of that adulteress—to carry the point that will drive her to submission and penance. The poisoner of her uncle! The bane of our country! Prosperity or peace can never smile on us till this new Jezebel is cast to the dogs."

"Pardon me, my father, if I am bold in saying you take up this matter too warmly. I did my duty in labouring to do my good lord's bidding, but I have no virulent hatred to the Countess Jacqueline, for in the first place she is a woman —"

"I am not so sure of that, Vrank. She may be a fiend, an incarnate devil in woman's shape."

"My dear father!"

"Is she not an adulteress?"

"That at least proves her to be a woman."

"Why, perhaps it does."

"Then she is unfortunate, father."

"What better luck could befal her? Did she not poison her uncle, the count and bishop?"

"I never knew that it was proved."

"Was not Van Vlyet hanged for it? and was he not a Hoek? And is she not joined in a common interest with that hated faction? Is not that proof of all and more than is laid to her charge? Does it not make your blood boil, as it does mine, Vrank, the very mention of the foes of our race? Are you not in heart and soul, for life and death, a Kabblejaw?"

"Father," said Vrank Borselen, in a tone of dignity that calmed for a time even the fierce heat of party spirit, "I am in heart and head, by feeling as well as duty, your son. Your cause is mine, and my life belongs to my country. I will uphold to my death the quarrel of my gracious lord of Burgundy against this usurping countess, because I believe it just; as I laboured against her intended marriage, because I thought it sinful. But I war not in the spirit of persecution. Her sex and her misfor-

tunes claim my pity; and as to those who have espoused her cause, I shall combat them as enemies, but I cannot hate them as men."

"Not hate the Hoeks! Have pity for Jacqueline!" exclaimed the father, all his powers of endurance overcome by this climax of his son's degeneracy; "Saint Philagon, give me patience! Is this a child of mine? Is this Vrank Borselen? O shame, shame! Wife, Bona, Vrowe, come hither! Come forward and look on this boy, and vouch to me that he is mine. By the blood of the Borselens I doubt it now! Not hate the Hoeks? Monstrous, monstrous! Hark ye, young sir, you *must* hate them, you *shall*, or by St. Peter and St. Paul I cast you off for ever!"

"Oh, Vrank, Vrank, if your father swears, it must be so. Do, my dear boy, for the love of the Virgin, and of St. Andrew, your patron's patron, whose badge you wear, hate them cordially every one, man, woman, and child; hate them like a good Kabblejaw and a pious Christian!"

"Christian or Turk, he *shall* hate them, abhor them, loathe them as I do, as my father, and my father's father did! Have we not for three generations followed them with fire and sword? Have we ever served them in peace, or spared them in war? Have we not done them every wrong in the power of men to do? And shall we not hate them? Vrank Borselen, hearken to me, and bethink thee that your grandsire, and his sire, are listening to my words. Be reasonable, do not embitter this happy day by an obstinate prejudice; remember the wisdom of your ancestors, and hate the Hoeks!"

"And, dear Vrank, have no pity upon that wanton, who fled from her poor young husband, who was but a child in her hands, to the arms of a foreign paramour," added Vrowe Bona, with a supplicating tone.

During these harangues the young man felt himself blush deeply for his prejudiced and ignorant parents. But he loved them not the less, and he was really sorry that an intemperate avowal of his tolerant feelings had caused them such evident pain, or disturbed the harmony of their previous sensations; he therefore resolved to temporise with what he could not hope to conquer, and said—

"My most honoured father, and you, good mother, be not offended at my speech, nor doubt my zeal because I did not well weigh the words that vouched for it. Be not too hasty with your son; recollect I am but as a stranger in the land, and have forgotten much of its perhaps wholesome feelings. Give me but a little time—let me but know the recent causes of enmity, and revive the recollection of old hatred to the foes of our house, and I warrant ye I shall not disgrace my name."

"Bravely spoken, Vrank!" said the father, grasping his son's hand, "I knew thy blood would rise, and I condemned thee hastily. Thou dost promise, then, to hate"—

"I will do my best, father, to obey you in all things."

"Oh! that is enough, my gracious husband; do not agitate him too much to-night, his precious brain requires rest!" exclaimed the mother.

"Ay; and to-morrow, as we go along to Tergoes, he shall hear enough to rouse his fury to the fitting pitch, in which every true Kabblejaw should meet his deadly enemy."

"But are we not now in truce with the Hoeks? Is not to-morrow's meeting one for the friendly exercise of the arbalette, and fair and peaceable discussion?" asked the son.

"Beshrew me, Vrank, if thou be not still a child! St. Peter and St. Paul forbid that we should any of us meet a Hoek in friendship. It is a time of truce, no doubt; but such a truce as the lion and the tiger grant each other while they take breath to renew the tug for life or death. To-morrow shall tell thee, boy, how the gentlemen of South Beveland bide together in peace; and, perhaps, the next day may let you into the secret of their ways of warfare. Ho, there!" and, as the chieftain struck his hand on the plain oak-table, an attendant entered.

"Tell Fritz Stoop Van Stitchel, the vesture-maker, to prepare instantly a Kabblejaw cap on the pattern of mine, and the fit of Mynheer Vrank's brown bonnet yonder, to be ready to-night for wear at dawn to-morrow."

"May it please your nobleness, old Fritz is already drunk, with the mixture of beer and French stimulants served out to the household by your worship's orders."

"Let him get sober then, directly, for by St. Paul, the cap must be made to-night," exclaimed Van Borselen.

"Nay, father," said Vrank, "it may not be possible for the poor tailor to become sober at your command, though it was easy to get drunk by your permission."

"Not possible! What shall dare to be impossible, when I command it to be done in my own castle? By our Lady, Vrank, you forget yourself in more ways than one! Let Stoop Van Stitchel make the cap, drunk or sober, or the point of his needle shall be blunt in comparison with my wrath. Away!"

When the attendant withdrew, Vrank remonstrated against the necessity of his appearing at the meeting next morning with any badge except that of Burgundy, in whose service he was; and, moreover, specially employed in it even then; but the father had nearly relapsed into his intemperate mood at this apparent demur, and insisted so angrily that his son should be equipped in the distinctive cognizance of his hereditary sect, that he submitted with the best grace he could to what he considered a *dis*grace of no common order.

This point agreed to, he resumed the account of his journey into Friesland, whither he had been sent by Philip, immediately after he returned from Rome, to prepare such of the nobles there as were averse to the cause of Jacqueline, for the duke's intended invasion of her states.* Vrank next recounted his homeward expedition through the Zevenvolden, under the guardianship of Oost; their exploit against the orox; their subsequent passage through the plains of Drent and Overyssel; the picturesque route of Guelders; their voyage down the Meuse, and final visit to James Borselen, the brother of Floris, on the mainland of East Flanders, from whose castle near Biervliet they had just come over with the news that the levies under John Uterken were on the point of embarking for Zealand, the precursors of Philip's own intended armament.

But in all these communications Vrank said not one

* Friesland, at this epoch, had its factions as well as Holland and Zealand. The *Schieringers* had taken part with John the Pitiless, and the *Vetkoopers* with Jacqueline.

word of his encounter with the strange hunting-party, nor his gage of combat with an unknown knight—and he half trembled, from old associations of boyish dread, at the possibility of betraying to his father, by word or look, a hint of his adventure with the beautiful huntress, whose gift he had from the moment he received it worn round his neck, and close over his heart.

After many careful assiduities on the part of the good vrowe, who herself prepared his night mixtus or posset-drink of mulled Gascoigny, he took a dutiful farewell of both parents, received their double blessing, and retired to the chamber of honour, which had been hastily prepared for his accommodation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning the loud screaming of horns, and the roll of an ill-braced drum, awoke Vrank from a sound sleep, and told him that preparations were making for departure for the meeting at Targoes. He was soon equipped, in a suit more consistent with his rank in life than the one he wore on his journey through the Zevenvolden; for he had sent forward a supply of clothes from the duke's palace in Picardy, which had safely travelled through Flanders with a caravan of merchandise consigned to his uncle's care at Biervliet, and Vrank, with his usual accuracy, had managed to a day the time of his own and his wardrobe's simultaneous arrival. Nor must this be wondered at; for not only was the post at that period established in those parts of Europe, but the passage to and fro of carriers and baggage-waggons throughout the rich and commercial states of Flanders, was performed with a despatch and regularity scarcely exceeded at the present day. Vrank now abandoned the costume of Friesland, the adoption of which had been necessary during his mission to that country, and he donned a far more elegant dress, but one probably little

more becoming to a face and figure so independent of ornament, and which had shown off to such advantage the garments he now threw aside. On the present occasion he wore the gallant equipment suited to a nobleman of Burgundy, France, or Brabant, for at this period the distinctive marks of provincial costume were all merged in one style common to those countries. Vrank did not, however, display such a suit of splendid materials as he would have worn in the palaces of Dijon, Paris, Brussels, or Hesdin. He had no wish to shock his father's plainer taste, nor to excite the envy of those with whom he was about to associate. His only anxiety was to wear what was at once becoming to his own person, and consistent with the princely service in which he was engaged. His mantle of dark-blue cloth was modestly lined with grey taffeta, and purfled with *gris*, a costly but not showy trimming; his surcoat was bound with a plain silver-wrought edging; his hose was not party-coloured, but of unpresuming white. In short, he bore none of those gaudy or garish tints to which, however, on fit occasion he had not been averse. The broad red badge of Burgundy showed plain on his doublet, which his open surcoat now no longer concealed, and his gilt spurs on his brown-tanned boots bore evidence that he had gained the proudest distinction of chivalry. He soon girt his sword by his side, with a broad waist-belt of highly polished black leather, studded with silver points, to match the edging of his surcoat and the buttons of his doublet. And then, to put the finish to his equipment, and in his opinion to ruin the effect of the whole—he clapped on his head the important grey cap—clumsy, ill-fashioned, and worse fitting, with many a wry stitch, in the placing of which the drunken tailor had consumed several hours, and as many ounces of what learned clerks call "midnight oil." Below this obnoxious head-gear a profuse clustering of carefully combed and perfumed curls hung down, as was their wont, on the wearer's shoulders. But still as he looked on himself in the little polished steel reflector, stuck with its rude oak framework in the wall, he was utterly dissatisfied with his appearance, and quite disgusted with the intolerable cap, a

just emblem, he thought, of the low, coarse, and senseless cause it typified. Had he lived between three and four centuries later, he might have seen the most civilised people in Europe, in imitation of ancient Rome, adopt a similar emblem — for a cause too holy to be degraded by any badge, or ruined, however it was retarded, by its frantic disciples.

"Ah!" thought Vrank Borselen, "if I might dare to wear round the rim of this vile bonnet the bright blue girdle that now encircles my neck, and let the brilliant aigrette that is on my bosom dangle on one side of my head, what a different air should I have to-day! how much more honourable would I hold my Kabblejaw cap than the most proud-plumed helm in Christendom! — But hold! am I not letting gallantry outrun calm sense and rational reflection? Is it meet that I rush headlong, like the impetuous herd of men, into a tangled forest of sentiment and passion, in which I may be wildered, and it may be, lost? Is this becoming a prudent knight, one honoured with a sovereign's confidence, and jealous of his own esteem? Well reasoned, admirably argued, steady Vrank Borselen, as I am dubbed here at home, or Sir Francon the wise, as they call me elsewhere! But what has reason or argument to do in this case? Can they stop the throbbing of my heart against this girdle, that holds me as in a spell? And what is this influence that has so fixed itself in my mind? A woman, but once seen, and even then unknown! Springs this deep sentiment from any fathomable source? Is it her beauty? I have seen as beautiful. Her air of dignity, her tone of melancholy pride? Have I not known the noblest dames and damsels of Europe, and mixed with all varieties of the happy and the wretched? No — it is that I did her service and that she was grateful, that I admired her and that she rejected not my homage. There is the spell that raises the spirit of love — Ha! hold again, Sir Francon, Love! aha, beware thee of that elfin sprite, which hitherto thou hast held at nought! take heed of passion's pit-falls! Am I not caught already?"

While the youth thus soliloquised, he had inadvertently

placed himself on a great iron-clasped chest, one of those double-purposed articles of furniture, which held the wardrobe and afforded seats for the tenants of the sleeping rooms of a Zealand castle, and those of other countries to much later days. Totally forgetful of all external matters, and absorbed in reflection, he was deaf to the sounds of horn and drum, and the clamour and clatter which they had awakened. He had mechanically opened his doublet, and drawn forth the sparkling ends of the precious gift from the unknown lady of his incipient passion; and as he gazed on it, he continued his monologue.

"Of what rare virtue is the simplest token from one we —— are inclined to love! How it recalls each movement, look, and word; and keeps alive the pure flame of sentiment which she has lighted! But how far more should I prize one phrase traced by the fair hand that placed this gift in mine—one document of thought, one record of the mind! No, not all the ringlets that ever were shrined in broqch or woven in bracelet are worth one written word from those we —— love—ay, out with it, though there be magic in the sound! And who may this enchantress be? who the mixed company that tended her so closely! that fat old flatterer?—her father, no doubt. And the proud foreigners, for such they were? The haughty bully who so questioned me?—perhaps her husband! Yes, yes, too surely such, for his whole tone was that of legalised command. And my challenger? And that sturdy brigand-looking warrior with his red cap? A Hollander he must be, and a Hoek — of course an enemy! Oh! let me soon escape from these rude regions, where men are savages still — where I must meet perhaps to-day in bloody hatred, him by whose side I whilom braved a common danger, and whose hand I never grasped but once, and that in friendship. But *she* — whose waist has been bound by this silken band — is this arm ever to clasp it more?—when may I meet her, and know for whose sake I wear this pledge? I tremble to seek her, for an enemy she must be.—An enemy! how foul a word for one so fair! Yes, the whole party must have been licensed in their sport by the Count Bishop of Drent and Utrecht.

When they spoke together, I caught a mention of his name, and they seemed to stand upon his rights when they first challenged Oost and me. And as we coasted the Zuyder Zee, on our way southward, their boats stood for the main, right between Urk and Schokland. Some rich merchant, haply, from Amsterdam, with his daughters, an island chieftain, and two English visitors, to whom he gave a cast in the prelate's chace of the Zevenvolden. But could that face of dignity have sprung from servile trade? — That pensive grace be caught from vulgar commerce? Heaven and St. Andrew guide me — I know not what to think, nor if I had not better forget it all —"

"Why, Vrank, boy!" exclaimed Floris Van Borselen, giving a rude slap of his broad palm to his son's shoulder, which made him bound up as though his body were moved by a spring. "Why, what art thou doing? Dangling that gew-gaw like a fool of the town *gilden* playing with his bauble and bells! Five good minutes have I stood here watching at thy elbow, and thou heedest me no more than yonder signal mast that stands out on the rampart."

"Your pardon, father — my mind was—"

"At the end of that tassel, was it not? Ah, Vrank! Vrank! this will never do! at least in Zealand, however it may suit the lazy ways of Burgundy and France. And, God's grace, what finery you have donned; — how your hair stinks of rose-water and ambergris! — And, eh? what trimmings, what silks! why it would puzzle a star-gazer from the topmost spire of Rotterdam to count the buttons of your doublet!"

Vrank was relieved, by this coarse bantering and the grim smile that struggled through his father's beard, from the first alarm that his thoughts had been divined or that he had given unconscious utterance to them. He saw that old Floris was not after all displeased at the bravery he exclaimed against; and his modesty half guessed the fact that his father saw himself, as it were, not unflatteringly reflected in the person of the son.

"My dear father," said he, returning the smile, and carefully thrusting the aigrette and ribbon-ends into his doublet, "I could not dress more plainly, in honour to his

highness of Burgundy; and I hope, in spite of your sarcasms, you do not think me a popinjay?"

"Why, that badge *does* look well upon thy breast, and I love to see that rapier by thy side, and those brave spurs upon thy heels — but most of all, it cheers my heart to look at thy cap, Vrank! Now, indeed, doth thy features wear the semblance of thy grandsire's!"

"I hope, Sir, to emulate his virtues."

"There is no fear for thee, my boy, if thou as cordially as he did, abhor the Hoeks. And so, at length I see thee in thy full honours — Sir Francon de Borsele, as the French chronicler calls thee, in this year's Titles of Chivalry, which hangs up in gilt and painted parchment under the Borselen banner in the Armoury. And thy spurs were gained at that terrible battle of Crevant! Many a noble head was laid low that day, Vrank?"

"Yes, father, French, Scotch, and Lombards, fell thick before our lances."

"Poor fellows! all strangers to those who killed them! Ah, Vrank, war is a sad thing when it forces us to fight against men whose very names we know not — to gash with rapier or battle-axe faces quite new to us! But it is glorious work to slaughter our own countrymen — real enemies — miscreants, whose features are as familiar to us as our sword-blade. Ah, how we thrust home when we pierce the heart that hates us and that we hate!"

This eulogy on civil war, and the reasoning which supported it, so contrary to the generous notions of chivalry, made Vrank Borselen shudder. His father did not suspect that emotion, for he could not comprehend its source.

"My honoured sire," said the youth, "you must believe how truly I wish to square my opinion and my conduct by yours. But such sentiments as these are, I confess it, somewhat foreign to those I have been brought up with. Our princely Duke Philip, the great Bedford, and all the other models of our chivalry, hold civil war to be a barbarous evil, and ever hold back the armed hand instead of urging it on against the breasts of fellow countrymen, who, though differing from us in some shade of thought, or on some point of local interest, have the same

land to love, speak the same tongue, and most commonly descend from the same stock in which our own blood has its source."

"Vrank," cried the impatient chieftain, "I have listened to thee till my blood tingles at my finger's ends and throbs in my temples—I can bear no more! Thou art almost a ruined man—but I must snatch thee from thy perilous career of false opinion, and bring thee once more back to our right ways of thinking. Now is unfitting time to shew thee thy folly—we must to horse—but bear this in mind, as the words of thy sire speaking the maxims of a glorious race of ancestors: there is but one line of conduct right—at least for this country, and I know or care for no other—and that is to stick firm to the Kabblejaw cause, and pursue with unflinching hatred the vile Hoeks—to show neither pity nor mercy to them, sex, age, or condition; and if by possible chance, in a moment of frenzy, or instigated by the devil, thine own father should join their ranks, plunge thy rapier up to the very hilt in his heart, to spurn him to the earth, and trample him under thy feet—"

"What, sir! my own father—you! my noble, my honoured, my beloved parent!" exclaimed Vrank, hoping to recall the rage-impelled chieftain to reason.

"Ay, boy, me, me! Floris Van Borselen, who is—at least I honestly believe it—thy own sire. In such a case it is thy bounden duty to kill thy father, as in like case, so Heaven be my speed, I could have done by mine!"

"But ——"

"Not a word more, Vrank—not a word! on thy duty I command thee to be silent! Ah, my boy, much, much I fear me thy principles are loosened almost too much for remedy—but it shall not be my fault—I will do my duty; so, come away now, my boy," added he, with recovered serenity, but still with a tone of solemn anxiety springing from sorrow at his son's degeneracy, "our horses wait, and we shall be barely in time for the meeting. But hark awhile! What is that effeminate trinket that you have put up so carefully, but which you gazed on just

now, like your lady-mother counting the beads of her rosary?"

"Oh, nothing, sir — a trifle, a token, a mere trinket, as you call it."

"'Tis woman's gear, Vrank — I know it; and your confusion confesses it."

"Father, there is nought to be confused at, and little to confess. It is a keepsake from a — friend."

"'Tis well, boy, you made that pause, for had you said a mistress, by St. Peter and St. Paul! I had ——"

"Nay, father, don't give yourself the trouble to swear — I did not say a mistress, nor could I with truth, for I have none."

"Vrank — thou art my child, every inch! I never had a mistress but the good vrowe thy mother. I never ran joust nor tilt, nor carried the favour of woman on helm or shield. But in my youth, and in our native land here, men exchanged pledges of regard more worth than those. My good friend Oliver Peterkins, of Zuric Zee, once gave me a steel gorget, and I gave him in turn my ten-inch two-edged dagger; and Simon Van Swigel, when I saved him at the fight of Zwoll, threw his iron chain-belt round my neck as a pledge of brotherhood. But your southern gallants and galliards are not cast in such a mould, and silken band and filigree-work are now, may-hap, the fashion!"

"Not among men, my father. But if a female be your friend ——"

"St. Philagon forefend! Oh, Vrank, if friendship takes that guise, 'tis like the devil in the skin of a snake!"

"Yet methinks that friendship, to be truly worthy of the name, requires the softness of the one sex blended with the warmth of the other."

"And a right slothful cloak 'twould make to wrap up manliness in. No, Vrank, no! Women were meant for other uses than to make friends of them. But I have only now time to tell you to beware of them. And much it needs you to steel yourself, when you return to the allurements of the court. They creep into a young man's bosom, Vrank, as cunningly as a Lombard's poniard

into the crevices of his enemy's armour. There is poison and treachery in all they say or do; in their nods and leers, their courtesies and caperings, their counter-smiles and dumb show! Beware of them, my boy! their bracelets and girdles, their spangles, their embroidery, tiffanies, tinsels, ruffs and ribbands—their crisped hair and painted faces! When they weep with one eye they can wink with another—ah, the crocodiles! they should be whipped and pilloried, or their daubed cheeks be stigmatised with the searing iron! Much, much it grieves me to know that even in our good duke, you have a bad example on the score of these false syrens. There is scarce a bush from Dinant to Dijon out of which you might not beat a bastard of Burgundy's; and they say sad things, Vrank, of his doings with that English countess. Ah, my boy, take heed of them, but most of all beware the married ones! You blush, my poor boy — 'tis a sign of grace and virtue, Vrank; I like it at thy age. But enough of this: now let's away — we are too late already!"

When Vrank and his father had affectionately embraced the vrowe, and the young branches of the family tree, and partaken of a hasty breakfast, they turned fairly out into the court-yard, mounted the horses which stood prepared, crossed the bridge already mentioned, and set forward on their way, in due form of state.

Four trumpeters on horseback opened the march. Next came six gentlemen whose lands depended on the fief of Eversdyke, fully armed, lances in rest, and each followed by their squires, a bowman, and two varlets. To this advanced-guard succeeded the squire who bore the furred mantle of honour of the chief. Another carried the war-sword, five feet long, with a twisted blade, such as is represented in pictures as wielded by the archangel that guarded Paradise. Finally came the third squire, holding the plumed and jewelled hat of his noble master. After these three squires advanced Heer Borselen (an appellation belonging to the higher class of Zealand and Dutch nobility) on his best horse. Vrank followed close, but at some paces respectful distance, and almost mixed with the officers of the household, dressed in their blue mantles,

and all well-mounted. A bold but motley-looking band of followers on foot, irregularly armed, and clothed in defiance of all uniform, closed the procession. Each man carried a cross-bow, or arbalette, or long-bow, or sword, or dagger, or axe; and Oost, the dyke-digger, was no undistinguished object in the crowd, bearing his huge turquoise, still marked with the monster's blood. Rude music, bad instruments, and worse players, sounded the notes of advance; and the whole party had soon passed the moat and taken to the unpaved route, which was tracked by the deep marks of waggon-wheels, and afforded bad travelling in the humid soil.

In most other parts of Europe it was broad day-light when Vrank and his father set out for Tergoes; but in the heavy atmosphere of Zealand the sun had not yet appeared; a thick, cold fog hung in the air, and shrouded the whole face of nature. At times, a gust of wind, coming from the westward served to shake this vapoury curtain, but not with force enough to sweep it from the earth to which it clung. The sound of the tide beating against the dyke which guarded the beach, many feet more elevated than the travellers' heads, was like the melancholy murmur of nature over the sad scene it had made. The breeze sighed in the long flaggers and rushes that grew in the stagnant ditches, at either side the way, by courtesy called a road, and the loud flapping of wings and harsh screaming of the water-fowl, rising at every step, proved that animal and elemental nature were in concert. Vrank could just dimly see his horse's head in the mist; he felt the cold fog in his very bones; he hugged his cloak close round him; he thought of the gay vintage of Burgundy, at that very time in full activity; of the blue skies of Italy; of the bright atmosphere of Artois; all bringing sad comparisons, and he could not resist one reflection of mingled regret and remorse.

"Can I love this land? Yet I might still have been a patriot had I never left home!"

He gazed on his father, who seemed absorbed in thought, with open mouth inhaling the dank air, as naturally as an infant imbibes the mother's milk. Vrank could

not help at once wondering at and admiring the striking figure on which he gazed. Floris Van Borselen was, like his son, well-grown and strong; the upper part of his face was marked and good; but the lower was enshrouded in a grisly beard. His dress consisted of a mixture of peace and war, marking, in the same spirit with his rival, Van Monfoort, on the hunting party in the Zevenvolden, the suspicion with which every individual of either faction ventured abroad, even in truce or sport. Van Borselen wore next his body a coat of light mail, formed of scales of iron, in imitation of fish skin, and descending half way down his thighs, which with his legs were clad in close-fitting garments, also of leather, thickly overlaid with broad straps coming up to his knees, in the same fashion as those worn by Oost, the dyke-digger. His arms were shielded by shoulder-plates of well-wrought steel, and the gorget which covered his breast guarded that vital part; his head, instead of skellet, or bacinet, or mortier, or any other usual covering of proof, displayed, as our readers may guess, the beloved cap to which the Kabblejaws and Hoeks (with the sole difference of colour) entrusted the protection of skulls, on whose natural power of resistance they rationally, but modestly, seemed to calculate; for even in fight the several factions took pride in thus risking their sconces to the search of blade and battle-axe, which often no doubt cleft a skull as scantily furnished within as without. And trailing from behind Van Borselen's head, hung, on a level with his horse's tail, that preposterous sort of pennon of scarlet cloth called a *lamberquin*. One hand carried a bow of prodigious strength, and at his side his rapier (fully his own length as he sat in his saddle) was tucked snugly to his belt by a hook, large enough to have hauled along the largest Kabblejaw, either fish or flesh, that he ever bowed down to or stood up for.

"Dost thou know my thoughts, my good Vrank?" said the chieftain, suddenly turning round towards his son.

"No, father," replied the almost startled youth.

"Then I'll tell thee. I was just thinking what would

be the best and easiest method of picking a quarrel, and breaking all terms with these pernicious Hoeks at this truce-meeting by and by."

Vrank blushed crimson at this new outburst of the insensate spirit of faction.

"Brave boy!" exclaimed the father, "I see thy best blood is up at the very mention of the miscreants!"

Vrank found that his father could not understand his blushes, any way, and he rejoiced in the conviction.

CHAPTER VIII.

After a march of between two and three leagues, which appeared to Vrank double their real extent, the party arrived near its destination. The place of meeting announced its own vicinity long before the fog allowed it to become evident, by shouts and music of that varied and irregular kind, which indicated a mixed assembly, indulging in what is proverbially called with us "a Dutch concert." The trumpets of Heer Borselen blew a proud flourish in honour of his approach, and the sound was answered by an ample burst of salutation. The mists were gradually growing thinner as the sun-beams pierced through and dissolved them; and the sight which soon opened on Vrank had much of the charm of those fairy decorations which the perfection of scenic art occasionally displays in our theatres. The gauze-like veil of vapour softened down the coarseness of many of the objects which shone through it, and threw over all an air of vague illusion which there are few subjects in nature that may not be improved by.

Several tents, in patches of distinct and regular encampment, first struck the view. These were composed of cloth of various manufactures and colours, intermixed with stripes of gaudy silk, the general effect of which was extremely brilliant. Each of these pavilions was surmounted either by a pennon, banner, or larger flag, all differing from each other. The banners indicated the noblest families of

Zealand. The large flags belonged to the several corporations of the neighbouring towns, or to the peasants, who had the right to participate in the annual exercise of the arbalette; and each of those standards showed a flaring image of St. Sebastian, the great patron of archery, or some other rude emblem of the sport.

The different fraternities, or companies, had mostly all arrived, and stood in groups before their several encampments; the nobles, like Van Borselen, in suits nearly warlike, the *gilden* in uniforms of different coloured cloth, with various distinctions of trimming, scarf, or body-belt. And many females were intermixed, of all ranks and classes; some smiling openly in natural beauty on the scene, others in black velvet masks (the common custom of the times) shrinking from exposure to the crowd. And still some straggling chieftains were seen from time to time approaching, their names shouted by their heralds or trumpeters; and a few of the *gilden*, who came from the neighbouring islands of North Beveland, Duveland, or Schowen, made their more tardy appearance, banners flying, music sounding, and each body preceded by its fool, whose jack-pudding tricks formed the most laughter-moving episodes of the day. In the wide space, round which the tents formed an irregular circle, four posts, about the ordinary height of a man, were erected at equal distances from the shooting stations; and on each of these posts was a wooden figure representing a bird, the genus of which it would have puzzled a naturalist to define. One of those effigies seemed of considerable honour, for it was completely clothed in feathers of as many sorts and colours as formed the borrowed plumage of the jay in the fable. Standing-places for the archers were erected at various distances from those objects which were presently to exercise their skill; and on a lofty mast in the very centre of the ground a white flag was hung out, in signal of the truce which was in full force — as long as the violence of the opposing factions chose to maintain it.

When Floris Van Borselen was recognised at the limits of the encampment, a simultaneous rush was made towards him and his party by numbers of the people on foot, while

several of the mounted gentlemen spurred on their steeds to pay their respects to their acknowledged chief. Vrank observed that every one of those had grey caps, such as his father and himself wore; and upon looking toward the encampments he was sorry to see that a considerable number of the assembly remained on their ground, and that all those who refused his father the courtesy of a greeting, wore the red head-gear that distinguished the opposite faction. In his opinion this argued ill for the probable tranquillity of the meeting; for if sullen reserve (and he thought he distinguished such) was to usher in the day, what was to be looked for when passions were excited, words ran high, and weapons were at hand? Vrank will not be suspected of timidity — at least he never was by those who knew him — but he could not help wishing himself away from the scene, which was so likely to become full as turbulent and coarse as it was at present novel and picturesque. He vaguely remembered having been brought when quite a boy to some of those yearly meetings by his father. The face of one of the fools brought back a rush of recollections of those days. But having been placed early at the celebrated College of St. Omer, under the care of a maternal uncle who was governor of the town in the service of France, he was now for the first time, if not actually to witness the scene, at least to comprehend it.

Vrank was introduced by his father in due form to the whole shoal of Kabblejaws, in the midst of whom they were. His appearance excited some admiration, great respect, and infinite envy. But every other feeling was absorbed in delight at the recognised badge of Burgundy, and in the triumph it inspired in the duke's adherents over their already hated and now despised opponents. The tumult of congratulations that ran through the Kabblejaw groups told the adverse party their secret, which Vrank's appearance confirmed; and, much sooner even than he expected, symptoms of quarrel burst forth, of which he was forced to admit himself to be the unintentional cause.

As Floris Van Borselen, having descended from his horse, proceeded with his son and their suite, towards the pavilion set apart for the judges of the sports, of whom

the chieftain was the very first on the list, a number of the noble Hoeks, followed by many of their inferior partisans, advanced towards him, with any thing but that air of conciliation in which people generally meet half way. One of them, a determined looking man in the prime of life, who was evidently the leader in the absence of Ludwick Van Monfoort (excluded from the benefits of the truce by a sentence of banishment pronounced against him by John the Pitiless, and not yet legally removed), strode forward to Floris, and exclaimed, —

" Heer Borselen, what does this mean? I protest in the name of every Hoek here present against the violation of the truce. What! are we to be braved and bullied by the badge of Burgundy? Do you dare to force into our privileged place of sport, a minion of false Philip, who durst not come himself?"

This sudden attack took the Kabblejaws quite by surprise. They had not, in their own relation, reckoned on the effect to be produced on their adversaries. Even Van Borselen had overlooked it; and as for Vrank, he thought that a truce was a sacred safeguard for all opinions and principles. But he was the first of the party with whom he was now identified, to recover from the surprise of the attack directed so personally against him. He stepped up close to the speaker, and was about to answer him in no measured phrase, when his father caught his arm, and cried out, —

" Stand back, boy, and let me speak to this outrage. Heer Hemsted, your bold and ill-mannered speech merits another reply than words; but I suppress my anger in consideration of my contempt."

" Contempt!" cried the fierce leader of the the Hoeks; and the word was repeated by the mass of adherents who closed round him, in every variation of angry emphasis.

" Ay, by my saint, contempt!" said Van Borselen, " for I and the Kabblejaws present hold ourselves and our cause so sure, and yours so desperate, that I despise your railing and scorn your reproach."

" Enough said!" cried Zegher Van Hemsted, " friends,

partisans, Hoeks, ye all hear this? Back to your stations, all! and to arms!"

"Quicker than I hoped, by Heavens, but not quicker than I wished!" exclaimed Van Borselen, "Kabblejaws, on your guard! out, weapons, and be ready!"

"Away, women! Strike the white flag! String your bows! To your ranks! Firm and fast!" and various other technical phrases common to the riots of the times, were vociferated by both parties, with a rapidity and a noise quite stunning to Vrank, who saw in one moment the whole scene converted as if by magic into a field for mortal combat. As for him, he felt that he had nothing to do but to fight. His blood was as high up as that of any Kabblejaw or Hoek around him. There was no time for reflection. So he drew his sword like the rest, and kept close to his father, convinced that there was nothing like regularity to be looked for, nor any particular post for him to occupy in the onslaught for which all made ready. The women and boys fled in every direction. The fools gave up their merriment, and sought safety as best they could. Every thing announced a fierce contest; when a man of remarkably acute and energetic mien, evidently of the priesthood, but dressed in the semi-secular frock at times allowed to churchmen, advanced into the central space, and without doffing his bonnet, which was neither red nor grey, but of neutral black, he spoke as follows:—

"Nobles, burghers, peasants! I speak to ye all alike, for all have their equal rights to-day in this yearly meeting for the national sport. Are ye all mad? Has a sudden breeze swept over this plain, casting frenzy on ye, as the destroying angel's sword scattered pestilence over Israel? You, Floris Van Borselen, and Zegher Van Hemsted, you! what frantic spirit drives ye to this excess, which so many ready-made maniacs seem anxious to imitate? High-blooded nobles of Zealand! Steady burghers! Hard-working peasants! do none of ye hold your best privilege as aught? Shall it be recorded that the exercise of the arbalette was for one whole year given up? for if it do not take place to-day, your charter of privilege allows it not to-morrow? And how many a tenure and frank pledge

hang upon its regular observance? How many a contract is formed from Jay-shooting to Jay-shooting? And what confusion will result through the whole island if you persist in this violation of your own laws? Pestilent dog, desist!" continued the speaker, to a man who had nearly climbed the mast, for the purpose of taking down the white flag; "lay not your daring hands on that emblem of peace! While that floats, all who hear me have time to think, and I may bring all to the level of common sense. Will any one give me a reason for this folly, this madness?"

The authoritative voice and manner of the orator produced a considerable effect on those in his hearing; and the whole throng became silent in successive degrees beyond him, as a pool recovers its calmness, from the centre of the circles into which a stone had ruffled its surface.

"You use harsh words, canon, but I will answer them," said Van Borselen. "It is the insolence of the Hoeks that forces us to arms."

"It is the outrage of the Kabblejaws that causes this," cried Zegher Van Hemsted; and many at either side echoed their leader's words, in a confusion that mingled them all together.

"Hoeks and Kabblejaws! Kabblejaws and Hoeks! Listen to me!" cried the ecclesiastic, in a voice of thunder. — "What would you have?"

"Blood! Revenge!" and many such pithy words were the replies to this question.

"Ye shall have it — plenty — more than you wish for — your foes' destruction and your own!" continued the priest, with a tone and attitude that might have suited a prophet. His words caused an immediate calm among the crowd. "Ay, ye shall be glutted with blood and vengeance, I promise ye — but would not ye like a little pastime too? Be wise, men of Zealand! If you cut each other's throats before ye contest the palm of skill to-day, it will be said that ye mutually feared the trial, and that ye rushed on death from the mere dread of defeat."

"He says well! He is right! Rudolf Van Diepenholt for ever!" were among the loudly-shouted tributes of

applause which followed this speech. It was evident that this candidate for a bishopric knew the people he had to deal with, and by his united appeal to their interests and their pride, he produced completely the effect he wished. Both parties were evidently brought a little nearer towards reason. The next point was to conciliate each without degrading the self-consequence of either; and that seemed beyond the skill of even Rudolf Van Diepenholt.

"But suppose that we consented to give up our revenge till the sports were finished and the prizes adjudged, we must first receive a concession for Van Hemsted's insult," said Floris Van Borselen.

"We must, we must!" vociferated the Kabblejaws.

"Ere our swords are sheathed, the outrage offered to us in the appearance of this young man must be atoned for!" cried Van Hemsted and the Hoeks.

"By what right dared you insult my son?" exclaimed Van Borselen.

"How durst he come among us with the badge of Burgundy on his breast?" retorted the Hoeks.

"Ye should bow down to it, as the type of your sovereign and liege lord!" uttered one party.

"Rather tear it off and trample it under our feet, if he do not remove or hide it!" cried the other.

And so matters were as likely as ever to terminate in battle and bloodshed; when Vrank Van Borselen actively stepped out in front of his party, before his father or the others could restrain the movement; and his fine figure and ingenuous air, commanding at once admiration and attention, he spoke.

"I claim to be heard in this dispute, first as a stranger even to those who are my friends — secondly, as a native Zealander, and in my right as a free citizen — thirdly, as the representative of Duke Philip of Burgundy, whose authority is owned by at least one half of those present, and has yet to be disproved by the rest."

"Hear him! Let him speak! Go on, go on!" sounded from all sides, and by degrees the throng began to press gently inwards, as if Vrank formed the centre of general attraction. The women returned to their original places

in the crowd; and even the fools stole out from their hiding holes, like snails after a shower.

"I came not here," continued Vrank, "either to offer insult or to bear it. I wear the badge of the sovereign I serve, because I am here on his special service. But I cannot condescend to take offence in my own person at an outburst of hate against my sovereign's crest, neither will I consent to take off or conceal what is my proudest mark of honour, next to these spurs on my heels and this sword in my hand!"

Exclamations of applause followed these words, in which even Van Hemsted himself could not resist joining, for there was a modest intrepidity in the young knight's bearing that was irresistible to the brave.

"Now," resumed Vrank, when he could again command a hearing, "it only remains for me to say what I *will* do to preserve the peace in this honourable assemblage of the national estates. I will, with my father's permission, and I hope with general approval, withdraw from the meeting, in which I have no personal interest — no object to gain by my presence, and no principle of duty to infringe by my absence."

Loud bursts of applause at this dignified arrangement of the difficulty overwhelmed Vrank from all sides, each party vying with the other, the one to evince their pride, the other to display their generosity. Several of the leading men of either party attempted to be heard, but every individual voice was drowned in the common chorus; while Vrank, having received a word of consent from his father (who saw the prudence, and in fact the necessity of the thing), gracefully retired from the throng, and before the debate could take any new turn to disturb the unanimity he had produced, he gained his horse, vaulted into the saddle, and quitted the limits of the encampment. But he could not do this as privately as he wished, for several of his father's friends, most of them youths, inspired with a strong feeling of respect at the *yongheer's* * moderation, resolved to show it by escorting him beyond the bounds.

* A title corresponding to "young Sir" in our language, and corrupted into the less respectful appellative, *youngster*.

Having performed his part, he did not court any distinction from the crowd of all ranks and both sexes which pressed towards him on his retreat; so, clasping his cloak over his breast, he was not to be distinguished from the grey-capped Kabblejaws with whom he rode. As they cleared the lines of the encampment, a procession of burghers came in; and among other stragglers were two females, masked and on horseback, attended by a single servitor who rode close behind them, his large cloak and hood, or capuchin (worn indiscriminately by both sexes) not allowing any one to penetrate the incognito of the party, either by means of mistresses or man. As the group of young Kabblejaws made way for these new comers, they passed many jocose and not over-refined remarks on the fair maskers and their follower. A quickened movement of the horses only proved that the riders did not relish the pleasantries and were anxious to excape from them.

In a few minutes more, Vrank exchanged brief leave-taking with his new-made friends — he with polished reserve, they with boisterous cordiality. They lavished on him a profusion of invitations to their own and their fathers' castles, and promised him immediate visits at Eversdyke; and finally greeted him with a parting shout, which he escaped from by clapping spurs to his horse, and pressing quickly back on the road by which he had come. He stopped for a few minutes as the shout died away and the shouters returned to their sports, and he looked back towards the scene he had quitted, more from passing curiosity or listlessness than from any wish of impressing its features on his memory. He saw the tents standing gaily, and the banners floating brightly, the white flag above all, as the mist rolled off to the sea, or rose up towards the sun, which now lighted the whole scene, and showed the waves of the full tide, rippling on the shore in wreathes of snow and silver. On the right the spires of the town of Tergoes rose up in the haze, seeming to shake the vapours from their drowsy heads, like a newly awakened dreamer breaking from the fumes of sleep.

Vrank acknowledged to himself that the scene was beautiful and peculiar. But long habit, even stronger than

novelty, made him sigh for the accustomed charms of southern landscape, in all the variety of hill and dale and foliage; and this marine view, though lovely in its kind, wanted the strong link of pleasing associations to enable him thoroughly to enjoy it. He again turned his horse's head, and dropping into a mood of pensive thought, which so often succeeds the tumult of sudden excitement, he let the animal take his own slow pace; and the turbulent scene he had just escaped from was only kept present to his mind by the distant strains of music, mixed with faint shouts, which told him that the jar of discord was quite appeased, and that the sports had begun.

We cannot follow Vrank Van Borselen in all his successive topics of the reverie, which occupied him for the two hours consumed in his return to Eversdyke. The quick shifting reflections that arose upon him were as rapid as the undulations of the waves which he saw at his side, as he rode along on the summit of the dyke that separated them from the teeming plains to his left; and his thoughts were moved like those waves, by a bright and mysterious influence, that caused their ebb and flow. Yet Vrank was not in actual cogitation on the doctrine of the tides, although he had that analogous feeling to guide him towards the discovery of their secret, which was only made much later than his time. He ran over in a thousand variations the chief subjects that occupied his mind; and let these manifold changes take what turn they might, still the words and looks of the unknown huntress seemed the combined principle which gave the tone to all, and round which all revolved.

CHAPTER IX.

No sooner had Vrank withdrawn from the encampment, than every one of the assemblage, who a few minutes before were ripe for war, were now actively engaged in preparations for the sport they had so readily abandoned.

The archers took their stations in platoons, each under the orders of a leader chosen from among the most expert of the several fraternities. Nobles, burghers, and peasants strung their bows, and placed their arrows with a frank equality, which merged, for one day in the year, pride, avarice, and servility (the natural badge of the several tribes), in a feeling of fair and generous rivalry. The fools of the various companies, the only privileged cowards present, who gave way without shame when others were, if but for shame's sake, obliged to stand firm, now gave free expression to the delight that many others suppressed, for fear of being thought too happy at the general escape from danger. But the truly brave, and they were a large majority, loudly joined in shouts and gusts of joy, for they who are readiest for fight on due cause of quarrel, are ever the first to acknowledge the pleasure of escaping its necessity. The little *pylrapers*, or arrow-gatherers, boys lightly clad, with osier hats, and each a long narrow basket on his arm, in which to deposit the picked-up weapons, took their posts, and the fools began their gambols, which formed a leading feature in the doings of the day. A given prize, and some peculiar privileges for the year to come, were the reward of him who distinguished himself, by some feat of a superior mixture of absurdity, with the coarse wit which the rough-spun manufacture of native drollery allowed. Many efforts were therefore made by the fellows who "wore motley in their heads," to distort poor humanity into the most grotesque and humiliating forms; they all appeared in the masquerade best suiting their tastes, some as mis-shapen monsters, or strained representations of beasts or birds. But one threw an air of satire into his metamorphosis, by appearing covered with scales, like a huge fish, an artificial tail tied up in the Kabblejaw fashion; and appended to the monstrous effigy of a cod's head, which covered his real one, was a huge hook; while a bonnet of the prevailing cut and pattern of both factions surmounted the head, one side made of grey and the other of red cloth. This fellow rolled about through the different groups with the true impartiality of a place-hunter, sometimes attaching himself to one party, some-

times to the other, taking money from each and cajoling all, with a burlesque veracity of time-servingness, that had more effect in putting both parties in good humour than any thing short of a well-fought battle could have produced.

In a little while every thing was arranged, and the arrows and stones from long-bow or cross-bow, whizzed and whistled through the air, singly or in vollies, according to the order of the day. The three plain figures of birds, in all the nakedness of wood and paint, were successively shot at, missed, or hit by the three estates of the meeting, which had each its own mark for separate practice; the feathered non-descript before mentioned was reserved for the general trial of skill, at which all the estates were entitled to discharge their shafts. This was so constructed that when struck in any of the extremities it turned, spinning round on the iron pivot which fixed it to the stake; but when hit directly in the centre of the body, in the part which was considered to represent vitality, a spring was started, causing an instant uprising of a laurel-crown or wreath of flowers, which was immediately placed on the head of the successful marksman or marks-woman — for females were not excluded from the right of archery on these occasions.

And now, a certain number of trials having taken place at the three unfledged effigies, lots were drawn for the order of succession in the honour of aiming at the other. Some of the managing umpires, one of whom was Zegher Van Hemsted, were observed to make a rather shuffling distribution of the lots as they were drawn by the different candidates; and it was found that the first two fell to the share of two of his own party, and the third to one of the masked ladies who had entered the shooting-ground at so late a period of the meeting; and the lower numbers indiscriminately to Hoeks or Kabblejaws, male or female.

The first of the archers, a practised marksman, covered with medals, the tokens of previous success, shot away the three arrows without effect, having only once struck a feather off the plumed effigy's tail. The second aspirant, also a tried man, equally decorated as the former, was

scarcely more successful, having missed with his first two arrows, and only hitting an outspread wing with the third, which sent the bird spinning round for a few seconds, but did not entitle him to the prize.

The masked lady next took up her bow, and drawing her arrow to the head with careful aim, it darted straight off, struck the mark in the right place, shook from it a shower of plumage, and sent the laurel-crown springing up in triumphant elevation.

A shout, which sounded as if it had been ready rehearsed, if not quite ready made, burst from the Hoeks, who gathered round the fair bow-woman, for fair she was presumed to be. The adverse party joined in equal demonstrations of applause to her who had no semblance of party; the laurel-crown was lowered from its spike, brought forward, and given into the hands of Floris Van Borselen, the senior of the judges, indiscriminately chosen among the nobles. He took the emblem of honour, and, advancing close to the lady, who leant gracefully on her bow, he placed the wreath on her head, and uttered some set form of compliments, and cried aloud —

"Long live our sovereign lady," ——

"Of the arbalette!" he would have added, according to the phrase in these sportive coronations; but the sentence was cut short by Van Hemsted and his friends, who vociferated a repetition of Van Borselen's words.

"Long live our sovereign lady!" rang along the beach, sunk into the sands, and died on the surface of the sea, which had no echoes to return the sounds; and when, with respectful violence, the mask was (according to custom) removed from the lady's face, the gazing throng beheld the beautiful and beaming countenance of Jacqueline of Holland.

Promptitude and stratagem seemed on this day the chief tactics of the Hoeks; surprise and consternation the lot of their opponents. The Kabblejaws stood with open mouths and staring eyes, true emblems of their fishy prototype. A serried phalanx of adherents now took their station behind and on each side of Jacqueline, who stood out in front, with all her accustomed air of intrepidity,

whenever danger was to be grappled with or difficulty overcome. The ladies of the party were close by, to support with applause every word she uttered, or obey with ardour any act she might commanded.

"Brave Zealanders! my subjects and my friends!" said she, in a firm tone, "I am come among ye to save ye the necessity of the debate which was meant to follow these sports; I am here to claim my hereditary rights as your sovereign. Who is there to combat them? Does not Heaven itself seem to sanction my title, which no one dare gainsay? Has not a miracle enabled this weak arm to gain the prize in your sports, at the very first attempt? Your own hands, even without your will, have placed this emblem of dominion on my brow — your own voices, speaking the involuntary fiat of justice, have proclaimed my authority!"

Van Borselen and his faction began to recover from their astonishment, and various murmurs arose among them.

"It was a trick — our words were stopped short — we never meant to hail you more than queen of the sports — we reject your claims to our allegiance — we deny you for our sovereign."

Such were the replies made by the Kabblejaws. The Hoeks shouted to the skies, —

"Long live our sovereign lady! Long live Jacqueline, Countess of Holland, Zealand, and Hainault!"

And as the shout died away, the strain was taken up by one single and shrilly voice, that of the double-liveried fool, who screamed out harshly —

"Long live Jacqueline!" and quickly placed himself in front of her party.

"Hearken to me, mistaken men!" exclaimed the countess, waving her hand for silence towards Van Borselen and his party. "Is there one among you who can reason on your assertions, and disprove my title by argument? I am ready to list to him; and will, by the mouth of my faithful adherents here present, answer and refute every objection that can be made."

"I accept the challenge, countess," said Van Borselen,

"for such we acknowledge you, though no more our sovereign, your birth-right being vested by marriage in your husband, our legal lord, and by him deputed to the potent and magnificent prince, Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, governor and rewart of Holland and Zealand, to whom life and health!"

"Long live Duke Philip, our governor and rewart!" resounded from the Kabblejaw columns.

"Philip for ever!" cried the fool, wriggling across to the side of the last shouters, jingling the bells that hung from his fins, and chuckling with laughter, it might be thought, at both parties.

"Speak then, Heer Borselen!" cried Van Hemsted, "argue the point of your treason, and cease those senseless shouts, which even yon fools laugh to scorn."

"'Tis you who are a traitor, Heer Hemsted. I fling back your foul reproach. Is not Duke John your liege lord, as he is mine? Is not Philip his legal deputy?"

"No—neither one nor the other. Our sovereign is this princess, here, the descendant and successor of twenty-six counts, and in her own right our lady liege. An illegal and nominal marriage with her cousin-german, the shadow of manhood or princedom, brings no attaint to her right, which I and my friends are ready to uphold."

"Her marriage was legal, by holy dispensation," exclaimed Rowland Uterken, father to the young man whose reinforcements from Flanders were hourly looked for by the Kabblejaws.

"'Tis now dissolved, by sacred rescript," replied Arien Van Hemsted, the brother of Zegher.

"'Tis false!" cried Van Borselen; "though well we know such rescript was sought for by Glocester, her para—"

"Hold there, friend Floris!" cried the fool, putting his hand before Van Borselen's mouth. "Had you finished that filthy word, the argument would have ended with swords not tongues."

"Away with this impudent idiot!" exclaimed Van Borselen, pushing aside the fool.

"Privilege, privilege!" shouted the latter; "fools, all

take part with your fellow, and who then will be left to oppose me?"

"Will no one stop that mummer's mouth?" cried Van Borselen.

"And let old Floris talk all the nonsense! Privilege for Heer Borselen! Privilege, privilege!" exclaimed the fool again, slipping through the hands of those who made no violent efforts to retain him, and dancing across to the opposite party, who hailed his return with shouts of laughter.

"Again I say 'tis false that the marriage is broken or the contract with Glocester confirmed by the pontiff," resumed Van Borselen, with impetuous gravity, and drawing forth a parchment—"here is the attested copy of his holiness's letter to the Dukes of Burgundy and Brabant, to falsify the assertion."

"And here is the pontiff's bill of divorce and separation!" cried the man who had accompanied Jacqueline and Benina Beyling, (and who until now had stood close to the former,) holding up a scroll, flinging off his capuchin as he spoke, and displaying the sturdy figure of Ludwick Van Monfoort, in the full costume of his party.

A yell of acclamation burst from the Hoeks on recognising their intrepid leader, whom some had expected and others knew to be among them. The bravest of the Kabblejaws shrunk for a moment at beholding their fiercest opponent, whom they one and all thought to be in the exile of his lonely Island of Urk.

"Bravo, bravo!" cried the fool. "Long live old Ludwick! Long live Jacqueline! Long live the Hoeks! that is as long as they have the upper hand."

"This is meet—this fits well in all its parts," said Van Borselen recovering his self-command, but still in the imperfect utterance of passion. "Jugglery, forgery, and treason all combined—and a banished felon at the head of all!"

"Floris Van Borselen, thou hast said, and I swear by the blood of the martyrs those words shall stick in thy throat again, in the death-grasp which this hand shall give thee!"

Van Monfoort spoke his threat in a tone and with a look of such calm yet terrible ferocity, that it thrilled through both friends and foes. He caught his gorget in one hand, and flung aside the collar of his cloak with the other, as though they choked him. He was the first to break the silence.

"So much," said he, "for our personal affair — now for the more important matter of this meeting. Men of Zealand, I solemnly demand your sworn allegiance to Jacqueline, our rightful sovereign. Here is the bull which annuls her marriage with the deboshed stigmatic John of Brabant, and confirms her rights to your fealty and faith."

"Fellow countrymen and friends! be not cajoled or frightened by flattery or threats!" exclaimed Van Borselen. "Though Holland set the example of revolt, let our islands be firm and loyal. Listen not to this Dutchman, nor the degenerate Zealanders who back him. His statement is false — yon scroll must be forged. Here is the pontiff's letter, signed by his sacred hand, and sealed with the holy seal of St. Peter."

"Read! read the rescript!" cried a hundred voices.

"Ah, my friends! you ask more than I can perform," replied Floris — "the sacred document is in Latin."

"Read your bull, then, Van Monfoort!" exclaimed the crowd.

"By the mass!" cried he, with a grim smile, "ye have done a miracle — ye have brought Van Borselen and me to a level. This scroll also is in Latin — at least I believe so — but I can safely swear it is not in Dutch, and beyond that I pretend to no skill."

"Nor have you much in that," said the fool, while a hollow murmur of laughter ran through either party. On this the fool, who seemed ready to take every opportunity of restoring good humour, danced out in the middle of the throng, and said —

"I told you all as much as that if ye wanted a sage, ye might send for him to Bethleem. But as wisdom may come out of a fool's mouth, what do ye think of making Rudolf Van Diepenholt read both the scrolls?"

A shout of acclamation was the answer, and the canon

was immediately put forward. He seemed ready enough for the task; and taking the documents from the hostile chiefs, he examined them closely, while a solemn and anxious silence was preserved by the throng, which little by little narrowed the space that had erewhile separated the parties.

"Stand back, ye rabble route! Back, Hoeks! Back, Kabblejaws!" cried the fool, running down the lines at either side, shaking the bells of his bauble in the faces of the foremost, and thus keeping the crowd in proper limits. "Stand back all! Would ye stifle this honest priest, and so destroy the eighth wonder of the world? and smother me, the only fool among ye who has the sense to act wisely, and the wisdom to talk nonsense? I'll warrant ye his reverence here requires air — for if he has not a couple of pontiffs sticking in his maw, I pledge myself to swallow my bauble, bells and all!"

"In good faith the fool has hit on the truth," said Rudolf; "and neither of these proud nobles has disgraced himself by a lie. These scrolls came from the rival popes —Van Borselen's is signed by Martin V., and Van Monfoort's by Benedict XIII."

"What! by Peter de Luna! By that Spanish impostor! old Olla Podrida!" scoffingly cried Roland Uterken.

"And is he not as good as his Italian rival, that obstinate anti-christ?" retorted Zegher Van Hemsted.

"Anti-christ in your teeth!" said Van Borselen.

"Ah, what tough picking you give my poor friend Zegher!" said the fool, in a tone of plaintive mockery.

"Come, come, brave lords, an end to these cabals!" exclaimed Rudolf Van Diepenholt; "they but waste the day and wear out the patience of every reasonable man. Can the conflicting degrees of two opposing priests suffice to set a nation by the ears? What are these rival popes? If one advances, the other retreats — one like some animal fearful of the land, the other like a creature apprehensive of the water. In my mind, the acts of neither of these self-styled popes is worth a straw; and both being nullities, the countess is and ought to be considered free to act on the dictates

of nature and reason. What! shall these aged and decrepid priests for the short remnant of their lives endanger private peace and the salvation of the christian world! what is the mock sceptre which these spiritual sovereigns wield?"

"Something like this," said the fool, holding up his bauble.

"What is the tiara, on such inefficient heads?" exclaimed the canon, not heeding the interruption or the laugh it excited.

"A fool's cap, without bells," answered the fool.

"A truce, a truce, my young friend," said Rudolf smiling, "there is a time for all things, and even assumed folly may be out of season."

"Not till real wisdom come into fashion, so I have still a long day for my sport," replied the fool.

"Give me back the pontiff's letter," cried Van Borselen sternly. "It is in vain to argue against impiety and rebellion. This meeting may now best dissolve. Whoever holds true and stands stanch to his legal lord may follow me. And for ye, obstinate men, who hold the cause of that false countess, whose crimes I forbear to name, know that a force is this instant perhaps coming to our aid that will crush your rebellion, even before great Philip himself appears."

At this instant a flash was seen to lighten through the distant fog, which, far out at sea, had settled into one thick but sun-lit cloud, and hovered over the waters, like some huge bird that could not rise into an upward flight.

"Mark ye that flash?" cried Rudolf Van Diepenholt, "hear ye that peal?" as a low rumbling sound rolled along the water, and died faintly as it reached the shore. "Again — another! they are not chance bursts of thunder, men of Zealand — they are the signals of mortal aid, sent by Heaven to the cause of virtue and right. Hark, how the artillery peals! and list ye the music sounding on the waters? They are the heralds of England's power, of great Glocester's friendship — to rejoice all true hearts, and make the false ones quail. Now, my brave fool, you may caper and jump for joy."

"There then goes my cap, faction's silly emblem — there

my bauble, the plaything type of power — wisdom to-day might play the fool, and shall not folly learn to be wise?" exclaimed the grotesque representative of motley faction, assumed to suit his purpose; while with every word he flung away the trappings of his mummery, and soon showed to view the person of one of the wittiest, bravest, and most generous youths of his time — Lewis, bastard of Hainault, the natural brother of Jacqueline, who loved him with an affection that the heart's best feelings had legitimatised. Having held out to the very last chance of serving her cause, in his castle of Scandeuvre in Hainault, he at length gave up a hopeless contest, and taking his course to Avignon, where Pope Benedict XIII. held his court, he obtained the divorce which Martin V. had refused; and had arrived with the important document the very day previous to the meeting, at which we have seen he acted so conspicuous a part, as accordant to his gay humour as it was serviceable to the cause he considered his own.

At this new apparition of so distinguished a friend of Jacqueline's, breaking into identity from his masquerade, the downcast Kabblejaws ventured not one word, but turned with the straining looks of despair on the development of the force that seemed destined to overwhelm them with ruin.

A few more discharges from the artillery totally dispersed the cloud that had so long obscured the English fleet, which now came breaking through the floating fragments of mist and smoke, in all the majesty and beauty peculiar to such a spectacle. The ships of those days, though, individually, far less graceful and elegant than those of our own, formed, when seen in a mass, as on the present occasion, a pageant much more showy. Their construction had been greatly changed within half a century. They were now of much larger size. Half way up the masts were castellated platforms, from which stones and arrows might be discharged in fight; and decks were about this period added, with a most cumbrous but imposing wooden building at either end, ingeniously embarrassing to the movements and management of the vessel, but giving to the squadron the appearance of a floating town. The ships were decked

with gilding and painting; armorial bearings and badges were embroidered on various parts; banners of costly workmanship and brilliant colours were hung out, and the sails were of purple, azure, and other hues, shining with work of gold. Add to these appearances the glittering mass of armour, presented by the peopled decks; the gleaming of weapons in the sun, the shouts of the crew, and the crash of martial music bursting over the waters, and a notion may be imagined of the effect produced by the English fleet, which now came along in all its pomp and pride.

As the ships drew nearer and nearer to the shore, and coasted along the narrow channel, saluting as they passed, the enthusiasm of Jacqueline's friends grew beyond all restraint. Following the example of young Lewis, of Van Monfoort, the Hemsteds, and other leaders, they flung themselves on their knees before her, swore allegiance to her sway, and vowed their lives to her service. Many of those who had so sternly opposed her, now gave way to that impulse that leads men to go with the stream, and makes them offer up incense to success. But Floris Van Borselen, Roland Uterkin, and several other sturdy Kabblejaws withdrew in sullen enmity, with muttered vows of unceasing hatred. And whether it was the effect of this unbending hostility, or that some thoughts of Glocester's dubious conduct flashed across her mind, or that some other secret pang had fixed its cold stings in her heart, certain it was that Jacqueline in this proud moment wore not an air of triumph, but looked more like the victim of a sacrifice than the idol of an ovation.

CHAPTER X.

When the discomfited Kabblejaws retired from the scene just described, they held a hurried council on the best measures to be taken in this unlooked-for crisis. The spirit of faction, often more active than the purest essence of patriotism, excited the confederates into energy and

union. Couriers were despatched all over the islands of Zealand and into Holland, advising their partisans of the danger; and Floris Van Borselen took upon himself to send off his son Vrank, in the utmost speed, to warn his brother James to hurry the reinforcements of young Uterken, and then to hasten to the castle of Hesdin in Picardy, where Duke Philip held his court, and was, with his wonted magnificence, entertaining the Dukes of Bedford and Britanny, with a numerous train of nobles, in a series of feasts and shows of unusual splendour.

On Van Borselen's return to Eversdyke, full of the important affairs of his country, he hurried to the family sitting-room, in search of his son, whom he found, to his amaze and indignation, tumbling on the rush-covered floor, with a group of his brothers and sisters, enacting the part of some terrible animal—

> "The Indian griffin with the glistening eyes,
> The fiery dragon,"

or some other insatiate monster, with the unbounded applause of his young companions, who never before, and probably never afterwards, spent a couple of such hours of boisterous delight as had rapidly flown over in this exquisite sport.

"Holy Martyrs! St. Peter and St. Paul! Virgin Mother! was ever the like of this beheld?" exclaimed the astounded chieftain, standing in the door-way, with his eyes fixed and his hands upraised.

"Why, Vrank! Heer Van Borselen! Sir Francon! Son—jongheer—Knight! do I live to see this? Do you know who you are? Do you remember the scene of this morning?"

"I was striving to forget it, father," said Vrank, rising up, and composing the ruffled state of his attire.

"Striving to forget it!" echoed the chief. "Do you hear this, Vrowe? You who sit there as satisfied as if you were gazing at the Dance of Death, the Descent into Hell, or some other frolicsome pageant, such as the French mummers gave out at Middleburg.—Is that fit work for our son?—Are you not ashamed of such doings."

"My good master, blame me not — I did rebuke the dear boy for so rumpling his lovely suit of kersey and taffeta — and see! — may Saint Hedgwiga, the patroness of Housewifery, grant me grace, if here isn't a rent in his sleeve that would take old Stoop Van Stichel an hour to fine-draw!"

"A rent in his sleeve! — rumpling his taffeta! Oh, is it come to this? Is the solemn pride of the Van Borselens sunk so low that their degenerate sons turn tumblers and heel-kickers, while mothers look on and laugh, insensible to their own disgrace!"

"Oh, my gracious lord, speak not those cruel words, nor look those severer looks! In sooth I meant no harm, nor did Vrank, I'll warrant him. Alas, it is rare that we see a scene of frolic or joy; and it made my heart glad to look on this! But it shall end here — the children shall retire, and we shall get the sleeve of Vrank's doublet soon stitched up."

"Speak not to me of doublets or stitching, good wife, while the fate of our country hangs on a thread! Vrank, you must within an hour set out for Flanders, and thence with the utmost speed for Duke Philip's court at Hesdin."

A burst of sorrow from mother and children answered this sentence of death to the brief joys of Eversdyke.

"Within an hour!" exclaimed the Vrowe, "what, ere the evening repast can be got ready! recall your words, good my lord — let our dear boy at least tarry till he eat one hearty meal — till the young crane just now caught and plucked has time to be roasted, and the porpoise stews tender in its own fat — and the march-pane can be frizzled with comfits ——"

"Peace, peace, good wife! If Vrank have thoughts of hunger let him eat whatever comes to hand — but I trust he has still enough of the spirit of his race not to think of feasting while his country claims all his care. Follow me, son, and receive my instructions!"

Within the limited hour Vrank was once more upon the waves, with ample advices for his journey, and in the lubberly-looking skiff which, to the disgrace of Dutch ship-building, seems still the model of their vessels. The

dark blue pennon of Eversdyke was at the mast head, and the flag of Burgundy at the stern. Oost, the dyke-digger, furnished with messages, and such tokens of credence as in those days answered the stead of letters, for the Frison chiefs in the interest of Burgundy, took his place at the prow; and as he leant over, with his huge *turquoise* in his hand, he looked a rough-modelled figure of Hercules, or some other club-man of antiquity. Vrank sat at the stern; and as the breeze bore him away from the rude home, his visit to which seemed like the flitting shadow of a dream, a feeling of melancholy came across him, which is only to be excited by a separation from what we love. And did Vrank, then really love this stern abode, this unsocial monument of his family's harsh pride and ungracious power? It was even so. The deep-fixed instinct which leads men back, in despite of reason, to rest a portion of their own pride on the mere antiquity of their race, was at that moment working powerfully in the young man's bosom. He had felt none of it in approaching Eversdyke. Long habits of the world had overcome the early feeling, and he rather despised than venerated those tokens of an obscure aristocracy, which he had learned to look on as a very dubious honour. But this short contact with the old customs of his forefathers, this new breathing of his native atmosphere of feudality, revived the latent principle which he believed extinct; and as he gazed back on the gray walls of the castle he could not suppress the thought, that he should like to live and die there after all!

Another feeling, of a kind quite new to him, contributed to strengthen this awakened, rather than created, attachment to his home. It was the pleasure he had felt in even two hours' acquaintanceship with those young relations, bound to him by a tie of which he scarcely before understood the nature, but which, as experience has told many a man, is too strong to be severed by absence or time, or almost by ingratitude and wrong. Vrank only knew this new sentiment of brotherly love in its most endearing aspect. He thought it delicious then; and in after life he never forgot the two hours' romping with the young playfellows who had so naturally established, without

claiming, an equality with him, and to whose level he had at once descended, without the pain of an effort or the consciousness of degradation.

To those young objects, who had in so short a space gained such a hold upon his sympathy, his sudden departure was a real misfortune, in proportion to the delightful surprise of his coming, and the wonderment he excited while he staid, by his handsome looks, his fine dress, and above all by his active gambols on all-fours, and the magnificent growl with which he played the monster. Brother Vrank, as they imagined him, had ever been their beau-ideal of all that was sublime and beautiful; that he had surpassed their notions was probably less a proof of his merits than of the imperfect growth of their imagination. But certain it is that the force of that impression never wore away, and those delighted brothers and sisters ever afterwards considered Vrank Van Borselen as one of the finest specimens of mankind — as well they might, on even better grounds than those of early impressions.

Good Vrowe Bona was thoroughly grieved at the bereavement of her dear boy's society. She felt as though she could have gazed on him for ever, and as he left the castle she was strongly impressed with the belief that she should never see him more. For many hours she knew not how to escape from this painful feeling; her husband's announcement of new hostilities seemed to overwhelm her with unusual terror. She knew that Vrank was to come back with Duke Philip's forces; and a heavy presentiment, which, with the weaknesses of superstition, she encouraged rather than repressed, told her that the coming contest would be fraught with dire calamity to the house of Borselen. Glad of any escape from such sad bodings, she hurried off to her homely occupations, like a regal functionary of a more recent date,

> "Nothing loth
> To marinate her fish, and season broth."

During the progress of these home-feelings and domestic considerations on the part of the family of Eversdyke, the elated party of the Hoeks indulged, as was

fairly allowable, in some extravagance. For the first time for a long course of years they saw themselves with the upper hand, and if it opened cordially to the grasp of good fortune, it is not astonishing that it should become sternly clenched in the very face of the foe. The Hoeks, in fact, assumed an attitude of vigorous decision; they soon showed themselves at all points in great force. The English troops, under the guidance of Lord Fitz-walter, landed without opposition on the coasts of Holland and the Island of Schowen, and spread themselves in the various towns which now unhesitatingly acknowledged Jacqueline, in virtue of the right which never fails to be awarded to might. Young Lewis of Hainault, Van Monfoort, the Hemsteds, and other leaders, put themselves at the head of their respective contingents. Rudolph Van Diepenholt set forth on a round of exhortation to the seafaring interests of the state; and Jacqueline, overcoming all personal emotions, took at once that attitude of active influence to which her station was so well entitled, and her character so well adapted.

And very soon was the whole exertion of her own and her friends' energies called forth. The limited theatre of action hurried on events and crowded the doers into a narrow space. Ere Vrank Van Borselen reached the shore of East Flanders, John Uterken, with his expedition of considerable force, had left it; and, promptly navigating those inland seas, he within two days made his landing good, near Haarlem, to which place his father had retired, and with equal despatch and skill, he advanced upon the town. But ere he could reach it, or take up a position of defence, he was vigorously attacked by Jacqueline's forces, under Fitz-walter and the other leaders; while she herself, her bow in hand, and mounted on a gallant steed, a gift from the English lord to replace the one she had lost, rode along the ranks, harangued the troops, and was present throughout the action The Flemings were, after a bold resistance, totally defeated and dispersed, young Uterken escaping from the field with great difficulty, and taking refuge with his father in Haarlem.

During the fight, the English, the Hollanders, and

Zealanders, vied with each other in acts of courage; but when it was over the rivalry ceased. Then faction took up the task which valour had but half finished, and the butcher-work of warfare began. Every Hoek who held a prisoner instantly commenced putting him to death, without regard to the pleadings of humanity or justice; these unfortunate men being Flemings, and therefore meriting on no pretext to be put out of the pale of generous hostility. Jacqueline was reposing after the fatigue and excitement of the action, in a tent not far from the scene, attended by her faithful Benina, who, though unable to overcome the timidity which kept her distant from the conflict, was ready at the princess's side to congratulate her on its result. Lord Fitz-walter, too, was with her, as he had been all through the fight, forcing her to keep aloof from its more imminent perils, and when her courage urged her on, opposing his armour covered-body between her and the arrows, which flew thick, but from which neither of them received any harm.

While they now exchanged hurried observations on the event, and mutual expressions of compliment and courtesy, an English officer came forward and announced to his general that their Dutch allies were, without mercy, despatching the prisoners in the most summary manner.

"What then, is there some new attack? Are we surprised? Is the victory to be gained again?" cried Fitzwalter, springing forward and seizing his sword, in the prompt movement of courage that never imagines defeat.

"No, my lord," replied the officer, "there is not a foe to be seen, but those poor wretches whom the Hoeks are doing to death."

"This must not be, Madam?" said Fitzwalter inquiringly; but Jacqueline had anticipated the question, by quitting her seat and rushing towards the opening of the tent. Benina and the Englishmen, with some guards and attendants, followed the countess. Impelled by humanity, she ran forward to the nearest group of soldiers, whom she saw indeed employed in their ferocious work, killing with knife, sword, or battle-axe the defenceless Flemings, who with scarce an exception stood the butchery in the

sturdy fierceness of despair, scorning to ask the boon of life which they knew would be refused them. But one wretch seeing a sudden gleam of hope in the approach of Jacqueline, sprang from the man who already raised his battle-axe to give him the death-blow, and with loud cries for mercy ran towards her whose looks beamed with the angel attributes of power and pity. The disappointed murderer flew after his victim; and ere the latter could reach the safeguard he reckoned on, a blow desperately meant, but imperfectly aimed, fell on his shoulder instead of his head, and he sunk weltering in blood at his pursuer's feet. The latter immediately flung down his battle-axe, and drawing the dagger from his girdle he prepared to plunge it in the wounded man's throat. But at this moment Fitz-walter, who had outrun the rest, seized his arm, and Jacqueline, close to him, commanded him to release the Fleming.

"Release him!" cried the astonished Gyles Postel, Van Monfoort's squire, for it was he who enacted this ferocious part. "Do you not see, Madam, that he is one of those rascal Flemings?" and he accompanied the words by a sudden jerk, which freed his arm from Fitz-walter's grasp, and brought the dagger close to his prostrate prisoner's throat.

"Wretch!" cried Jacqueline, throwing herself on her knees, and placing her hands before the dagger's point, while Fitz-walter and the other officers seized Gyles Postel, and violently separated him from his gasping victim.

"Villain!" exclaimed Fitz-walter, "how can you do this cruel deed?"

"Villain, you call me?" said Postel, in rude and broken French, and with a brutal tone, "and for killing my lawful prisoner? How many did you and your English king put to death after the fight of Agincourt?"

"Fellow!" exclaimed the Englishman.

"Oh, answer him not, Lord Fitz-walter!" cried Jacqueline. "Fly, fly, and stop the massacre! Look at yon cruel chiefs, whom I blush to call my countrymen, how they stand coolly by and see these monstrous deeds!"

Then turning to Gyles Postel, she continued —

"Base-minded slave, how durst thou parley with yon noble lord, or bandy words when thou shouldst obey? For this bloody act, and for thy insolence, I command thee never to meet my sight again. Ludwick Van Monfoort even shall not claim thy pardon."

"Your mother, countess, would not treat me thus — she is less squeamish," replied the squire with a sullen scowl, which at once made the blood mount to Jacqueline's brow and thrill in her veins.

"Audacious wretch! Wouldst thou dare asperse my noble mother?"

"Asperse!" muttered the fellow, with a malignant and contemptuous curl of his lip.

"Holy Virgin, grant me patience!" exclaimed Jacqueline. "Away, miscreant, lest I send thee prematurely to thy doom! Go, skulk among the butchers of the camp — live in the shambles, and never dare appear again in honourable arms!"

Gyles Postel met this sentence with a look of ruffian rage; but he did not move.

"Oh, God!" continued Jacqueline, raising the head of the wounded man, "why am I forced into scenes like these, which I must work out with such vile instruments! May not the blood of this poor wretch which stains my robe discolour my reputation? For how will history tell this murderous tale? May not its heavy hand, that never falls light on princes, load me with the odium of the deed I execrate, and its false pages echo the pestilent breath that even now taints my fame!"

"It shall not be my fault else!" muttered Postel, with a diabolical expression of countenance, as he picked up his battle-axe, wiped the blood from its blade, and slowly retired. Jacqueline, with Benina and her attendants, quickly followed up this first instance of her humanity, and in as far as it was possible she put a stop to the massacre. Many lives were saved by her means and the assistance of the English troops, who, having no particular cause of hatred, were on this occasion as ready to be the saviours, as they would have been, in their own personal quarrels, to become the destroyers of the beaten foe. For such was the

spirit of the age, in which an idolatry for what was called honour, and a disregard for every feeling of humanity, seemed the ruling principles of man.

As to Jacqueline's conduct on this occasion, while we pronounce it generous in one aspect, we can hardly call it just in another. Gyles Postel acted quite in unison with his fellows, and with those who should have known better and felt less fiercely. It is natural to abhor the tiger-principle of cold-blooded cruelty, wise to prevent it, but not fair to hate the beast, formed by instinct, or the being made of habit. At any rate it is unwise to turn either the brute or the human monster on ourselves. But a bold and proud mind overlooks consequences and scorns them; it flies to the rescue, nor regards results. So did Jacqueline; and she soon had cause to rue, although perhaps she did not repent her conduct.

The effects of this first battle in Jacqueline's favour were, as is usual in such cases, prodigious. The wavering became decided, the timid bold, and the brave prudent. Cowards are ruined by success, for they invariably become rash. But the courageous man who is calm and unruffled in the contest, is sure to plant reflection on the vantage ground of victory. Another action soon took place between the adverse parties, near Gouda. But in that affair neither English nor Flemings had to do. It was one of those exquisite bits of social slaughter, so cherished by Floris Van Borselen — and not by him alone — and Hoeks and Kabblejaws there met hand to hand, without any intrusive foreigners to snatch their pleasures or share them. The latter faction was again defeated; and the triumph of the victory soon reached the walls of Utrecht, and half rejoiced, half terrified our old acquaintance, Zweder Van Culemburg, the very reverend count bishop of that important place.

For the worthy prelate, during all the rapid circumstances of Jacqueline's success, had been tossed in a conflicting tumult of doubt. It was not from any lack of the craven impulse above alluded to that he did not become as rashly impetuous as any coward in the country. Had he mixed in the tide of victory, he would no doubt have par-

taken the gale of triumph. But he was quite aloof from all the bustling excitement of action. He had certainly on frequent occasions harangued from the altar and held forth in the pulpit, in a very martial tone. He recommended his people to put on their armour and to gird their loins, and made sundry allusions to Gabriel's fiery sword and the urim and thummim of Aaron's breast-plate. But while all these scriptural exhortations seemed to mark him on the high flood of valour, there was a sort of back-water of what is generally known as its better part, that regularly brought Bishop Zweder at night to the very place he had started from in the morning, and preserved him in a state of most agitating uncertainty. The results of this will be seen in the sequel. But in the mean time the chapter and people of Utrecht went on vigorously in the good cause which their prelate left in abeyance. Their ships were promptly fitted out and manned. Jacqueline's light blue ensign floated on them; and William of Brederode, her gallant admiral, soon cleft the Zuyder Zee with fifty prows, of vessels impelled by favouring winds and the oars of her stanch adherents.

CHAPTER XI.

Yet while all went thus apparently well with Jacqueline, she alone formed a contrast to the elation of her party. She neglected nothing that could serve the common cause; her activity was untiring; she sped from place to place; received and replied to deputations from the towns; and presided over every movement, civil or military. Yet all was performed with the air of an automaton, that has the faculty without the feeling of action. Common observers did not perceive this; for there was at all times a high, not to say haughty bearing in our heroine, that was rarely changed in her intercourse with ordinary people, and through which they could not penetrate to discover if she was affected by weal or wöe. But to those in her intimacy

the depression of her mind was evident, even though they could not fathom its inmost depth. Her brother, Lewis of Hainault, and Lord Fitz-walter saw and marvelled at it. Benina Beyling alone was in her confidence, and alone knew the truth.

It was now four days after the victory of Gouda, in which Jacqueline had borne no share, and she was within an hour of entering her town of Amersfort at the head of a large portion of her native troops. The English allies were all concentrated and cantoned in the island of Schowen, their head quarters being the town of Zuric Zee. It was not thought politic to excite any feeling of rivalry in the good patriots of Holland, against the foreigners, whose superior dicipline and equipments might give rise to humiliating comparisons. Lord Fitz-walter, therefore, attended Jacqueline's movements without any apparent command, and more as the representative of Glocester, her affianced lord, than as the commander of the English army. He rode close to her on the present occasion, accompanied by Lewis of Hainault; and the lively sallies of the one, with the serious efforts of the other, were exerted to the utmost to cheer the object of their equal anxiety, and make her wear the best air in entering the town, which was her chosen residence, the seat of her government, and where her mother awaited her arrival with all the energy of a proud spirit anxious to display its triumph. But all the efforts of the gay brother or the grave lord (and in the gravity of the Englishman there was an emotion deeper than mere diplomacy) were ineffectual to subdue the profound air of melancholy which oppressed the victorious Jacqueline.

In all her movements from place to place, Jacqueline rejected the use of those horse litters, the common conveyance of women of rank; and being most expert and graceful in the management of her palfrey, her delight in the exercise was probably mixed with pride in displaying herself to the people in the most becoming aspect. She now rode along, accompanied by a suite befitting her state. Several attendant ladies formed the most attractive part of her train; and among them Benina held, as usual, the place

closest to her mistress. At about a league's distance from Amersfort a halt was made, to finally arrange the order of the procession in which the town was to be entered, and the Countess Dowager of Hainault, with the deputation of citizens, be met on an occasion so important. While the chiefs busied themselves in their various stations, Jacqueline beckoned Benina towards her, and riding a little apart from the rest, she spoke —

"Come close to me, Benina—keep near me in this meeting with my mother—in this double trial of her shame and my own. Even though I may not seek the solace of thy words, thy very looks of sympathy will support me."

"My duty ever keeps me where my gracious mistress wills; and would that I had power to remove the feeling I am so little able to relieve! — to show the injustice of her harsh judgment on herself."

"Benina, you speak against your convictions."

"So may the Virgin help me, Madam, as I speak truth! I think you have no cause for self-reproach, yet I see you suffer, as though you were as criminal as you are guiltless."

"Benina, thou art thyself of noble blood — thou knowest the pure pride of womanhood — and yet thou holdest that I, a princess, am not disgraced by what would have brought shame to the simplest gentlewoman of my train!"

"Heaven witness for me, my kind mistress, as I see with other eyes, and as I believe most truly, the two matters on which you have given me your gracious confidence. As to his highness of Glocester's conduct, it cannot bring reproach to you."

"No, Benina — that I could bear, for I could prove it false; but it brings self-contempt home to my heart's core! I feel the scorn of his rejection rankling deep!"

"Use not that word, good Madam, it does not suit the case. The duke wooed you in all the fervour of a lover, and won your consent to his suit ——"

"And now abandons me, for scenes of low intrigue and libertine adventure! Has Jacqueline of Holland survived that truth?"

"'Tis not so, Madam! in good sooth you do yourself dishonour, and may do his highness wrong ——"

"Tut, tut, Benina! I saw his perfidy in his glance, the first moment of our meeting in that fatal forest — doubly fatal to my dignity! His every look confirmed it in our conference with Bishop Zweder, whose coarseness at least brought out the truth from this false duke, and Van Monfoort's recital of the scene at Urk proves the worst."

"Deal lighter by his highness, Madam; consider the toils in which he is beset — the influence of the other dukes, the interests of England."

"No influence, no interests, Benina, should stand between an honourable man and the woman to whom he is pledged."

"But, Madam, you take for granted, perhaps prematurely, a sentence which the duke has not yet pronounced on himself."

"Yes, yes, he has, Benina. He whose words or looks throw even a doubt upon his troth is condemned beyond redemption — but let this pass! It is a subject more political than personal — it wounds my vanity, my pride, my honour, but it does not touch my heart. I have in this case exposed no weakness as a woman, betrayed no duty as a sovereign. But in that other, Benina! Oh, what an age of shame have I brought on myself by the folly of a moment!"

"Forget the unworthy topic, Madam; let your mind turn back into its proper channel. Think upon royal Glocester in a fitting light. I feel assured he will soon return to you freed from those state-obstacles that trammel him, to make you his own ——"

"Never, Benina, never! I swear to you that Glocester shall never possess this hand! No forced allegiance shall bind him nor any other to me — nor could I *now* bestow this heart, such as a chosen husband should possess it."

A deep sigh accompanied these words, and Jacqueline pressed her hand against her bosom to keep down the rising weakness.

"Alas, alas, Benina, dost thou not pity thy poor mis-

tress? Thy pity I will take—nay ask, while that of others would drive my proud spirit mad. But thou hast been all to me in many a trial—my friend in defeat and sorrow, and now not less so in victory and shame."

"Dearest Madam ——"

"Nay, speak not, my kind Benina, it is vain to oppose this utter anguish. Have I not disgraced my birth, my station? Has not that luscious poison that I longed to taste entered my very heart? Have I not plucked the fatal fruit of knowledge and discovered my shame—or culled that other as treacherous, which travellers tell us is bloom without, but ashes within? Even so was that one deep draught of love's bitter waters—for it *was* love! Yes, Benina, I felt the bright unburning flame dart through my soul—my head reeled and my breast heaved in the intoxicating influence, and I, at last, for the first time in life—in my six and twentieth year, Benina, really felt the passion whose power they would limit to the first spring of youth! and for whom? A stranger—a mere youth compared to me—a creature of Burgundy; nay more, nay worse than all, one of that base and odious faction, my country's bane, my own worst enemies, my rebel subjects! Oh, 'tis too bad! Remorse has no sting poignant enough to punish me!"

"I must, I will speak to you, my mistress, and you will pardon me, I know. Indeed, Madam, you do yourself wrong; you could not have loved this youth, so briefly seen, so soon to be forgotten. He did you a service, he bravely threw himself 'twixt you and danger, you felt a natural gratitude, that's all. This is not love, my noble mistress, you mistake the passion quite."

"List to me, Benina! Thou art wise, good girl, but in thine own conceit, when thou wouldst take a tone of deep experience over thy poor mistress. Alas! my friend, it needs no years of study, no learned lore to read Love's lessons. The voice of Nature, speaking in the gentle air and breathing in the wild flower's odour, is not more easily understood than Love's whisperings in the breast. Its light is like the sun's. The heart is as ready for its first beam, as is all earth to catch the opening glance of day.

Sensation is but a clasped volume till *it* touches the spring. Oh, it is not to be mistaken. All else may be assumed — friendship, valour, piety — but love admits no counterfeit. Yes, it *was* love that urged me towards him, that threw him in my way, that laid the snare to which I rushed so rashly; but it was fate, Benina; I was doomed, and might not escape my lot!"

"Impossible, my beloved mistress. It could not be that you could love such a man as that, without one single badge of nobility, to say nothing of royalty, to which you are entitled in a lover — one noteless, quite unable even to give a name in answer to Lord Fitz-walter's challenge, or the duke's command. Would not the Countess of Holland have felt the proud blood tingle in her veins?"

"She *did* feel it tingle, alas! alas!"

"A mere adventurer, my mistress! Perhaps an outlaw; at best some low-born hunter."

"Nay, nay, Benina, thou art too rapid in thy conclusions. The youth had nobility stamped on his mien, wisdom was in his words, valour and chivalry in his whole bearing. Never did love tempt a woman in fairer guise, and had not that badge been on his bosom, branding him as the hot iron sears a felon, and marking him my foe, — but what do I say? Even had he not displayed that damning proof of enmity, have I not seen him since with vile associates, carrying that cap which marks each insolent head as that of a rebel subject? And to such a one as this have I given my girdle — a mark of honour such as princes have fought for, ay and not often gained. Shame, shame, Jacqueline! Hurried away by impulse — by passion even — to scandalize thy race. But did he not risk his life to save mine? And if in a double sense my enemy, was not his conduct the more generous?"

"Madam, he knew not that ——"

"Peace, prithee, good girl, nor labour so hard to rob me of my only consolation."

"Indeed, madam, I am sure the young man knew you not, but would have done as much for any female in like peril."

"The more a hero he; for others gave the reins to their

coursers in that perilous hour, and returned just in time to reap the glory he had gained."

Jacqueline had no sooner uttered this than she felt it injustice. It did not require the deep blush on Benina's cheeks (half from remorse at her own timid desertion, and half from resentment at the aspersion on Lord Fitz-walter) to bring the countess to a true sense of her words. She, with her usual frankness with her favourite and confidant, acknowledged that she had spoken hastily, but she did not confess, perhaps did not quite understand, the feeling that had moved her.

"Indeed you do but justice to the noble Fitz-walter," replied Benina to her mistress's apology; "he has often and often told me he would peril his life a thousand times in your service."

"He *has* done so, Benina," answered Jacqueline; "never may I forget his conduct in the late fight, nor the risks he braved to keep me from them."

Benina glowed still deeper at this tribute to the Englishman's praise, yet shuddered in revived horror at the dangers he had encountered.

"Ay, my mistress," said she, "and he would again give like proof of his attachment. Would that you would charge him to seek out that presumptuous youth, and drag your favour from his bosom!"

"Forbid it, Heaven! Benina, art thou mad, to breathe a thought which might cause the youth's destruction — that is, let me say, which might betray my disgrace?"

"Ah, Madam, is the secret then safe in the keeping of yon Kabblejaw?"

"Yes, I will vouch for his honour. Come, Benina, I must end this subject here. Let's talk of it no more—at least not of *him!* Let me but remember my own weakness, and bitterly repent it. Let me gain strength to atone for one disgraceful moment! Let me rise up against the oppression of my shame, as I did at the meeting of the archers, when my heart swelled, and my arm was new nerved at the very sight of this unlucky man, in his new aspect of rebel as well as foe!"

"And how he skulked from meeting your presence,

Madam! Neither I nor Ludwick Van Monfoort could fix our eyes on him in the whole crowd of traitors."

"Albeit that *his* might have been fixed on *me!*" thought Jacqueline.

"Well, well, Benina!" said she, "here let this matter drop, and be discreet, my friend, in proportion as the secret is of import. Now let us on with this sad march of triumph, to meet my mother. And there again, Benina, what a sting assails me! My mother, of blood so pure, of mind so proud, to be at the mercy of a dastard murderer's tongue! Oh, God! can it be true what this base Gyles Postel bruits abroad and boasts of? Can Marguerite of Bavaria have leagued with such as he, and urged so foul a deed? And did Van Vlyett die a just death? I cannot, will not entertain the question — my blood boils, yet it freezes again with dread to sift the calumny. Let me meet my mother with the best countenance I may!"

The order of the procession was soon resumed; and Jacqueline, recovering her general aspect of proud yet melancholy beauty, rode at the head of her victorious troops, supported by her gallant brother, and the other chiefs who had so well fought her battle. The ensigns of the beaten Flemings were borne before the main body of the troops, and some hundreds of prisoners saved from death graced the triumphant march, their chains clanking in sad harmony with the insulting crash of music, and the shouts of the rejoicing people.

The deputation of magistrates, attending on the dowager countess, met Jacqueline at the city gates. The ceremonies usual on these occasions were gone through, and the keys resigned by the haughty mother to the humble daughter, who at all times, even in her highest state, paid a deferential regard to the parent who had ruled her in early life, and who even now held a powerful influence over her. And justly so; for though she was the mover of her wretched marriage with John of Brabant, she had repaired that error of judgment, by a constant adherence to Jacqueline's cause when an open rupture became unavoidable. And also in the whole of the contest in Hainault against Philip of Burgundy, Countess Marguerite

had been unceasing in her endeavours with this her nephew to gain terms for Jacqueline, humiliating herself in vain entreaties, laying in a deep fund of hatred against the relentless victor, affording shelter in her castle at Valenciennes to her oppressed child, and finally flying with her to Holland, and joining her fate with hers in the contest which was now on foot.

The greetings over, the ceremonies past, and the day closed in, Jacqueline was delighted to find a late repose from the excitement and fatigue she had gone through.

CHAPTER XII.

Enough may have been gathered from Jacqueline's own words to give a general notion of her state of mind. But very much beyond our skill would be required to paint, in all its conflicting details, the agitation of her various feelings. Pride struggling with sensibility, and passion battling with reason, she strove, how vainly! to hate the object that had caused this tumult in her heart and head. Then she would have turned the whole tide of regret upon herself, in angry reproaches. But this was an equally vain attempt. Human nature cannot be long at war with its own weakness. A thousand spontaneous excuses rise up with the most rigid self-accusings; and even with the very sentence passed by our judgment an appeal goes to the heart, which never refuses mercy. Therefore, when Jacqueline was self-condemned, she was self-pardoned too. It has been seen with what warmth she repelled Benina's undervaluing hints relative to the young stranger. The very pride which reproached her weakness was interested in upholding its object. So while the strongest of her self-accusing passions was thus neutralising its attack, no wonder that those which rose in her defence gained a complete though unacknowledged victory. Had in fact the youth who had so gallantly defended, perhaps saved, her life— who was so brave, so elegant, so handsome, been also

a partisan of her cause, she would unhesitatingly have indulged the feeling he had so strongly inspired. For Jacqueline, panting from early youth for that passion which she felt herself so capable of enjoying, was instinct with the conviction that it would and ought to level slight shades of distinction between age and rank. She had for years looked out with an intense, but to no other eye visible, anxiety for some one to whom she could give her affections. But she felt that esteem, admiration, and perhaps gratitude, should first be due; and she had never met an object that united such claims, with that not-to-be-described attraction which consists neither in person, manner, nor character, but which throws a hue over each, that makes a woman satisfied that all is better than perfect — that it suits and sympathises with herself. It is this that accounts for so many attachments, which to common observers appear incongruous. But similarity is not necessary to produce sympathy. Colours the most opposite blend together, and form a whole of beauty. Sounds the most different produce harmony. Dispositions the most varied go well in fellowship; perhaps because we at once submit to and value what is so distinct from our own habitual tone of thought and feeling, too common to ourselves to be prized in another.

Humphrey of Glocester had come nearer to the moral standard which Jacqueline fancied she required, than any of the princes who had sought her hand, or any of the nobles she had an opportunity of knowing. Had circumstances permitted, and had he followed up the momentary feeling excited in the tent of the Zevenvolden, it is more than probable her regard for him might have grown fast, through those gradations which form the respectable but artificial attachment generally called love. But Glocester's subsequent manner during that interview quickly checked the incipient sentiment, and perhaps prepared Jacqueline the better for the reception of that which was so soon afterwards excited. And how forcibly did that explain to her at once its own nature, and that of those she had previously experienced! We do not pretend to say that our heroine fell all at once into those ecstacies of passion

which the spells of fairy-land are supposed to inspire. But it is most certain that she did grow redolent of that magic balm of feeling which soothes and purifies the mind on first meeting with the being whom nature intends that it shall love. That pleasure in what we see of them, that wish to know more, that indefinable conviction of their worth, on grounds that we care not to examine; and that *something* which supplies the absence of the very qualities we had ever before thought essential to the inspiration we then acknowledge.

These are among the symptoms of that passion which many for themselves may doubt — which some will perhaps confess to — but which all must believe to be that which influenced the whole future fate of our heroine. Had she felt it for the first time ten years earlier, she might have escaped from its effects. But at her age it was never to be effaced. The bud which opens to an April sun may close again and ripen for some later ray; but the full-grown flower, catching the summer's beam that bursts its prison, must either bloom or wither in the glow. So was the fate of Jacqueline's heart at stake. To combat the impression she had admitted in her own despite, formed the great business of her life. But as all feelings of high enthusiasm are strengthened by opposition, whether from oneself or others, she thus, in endeavouring to stifle those sensations, unconsciously preserved and nourished them into a passion. But many auxiliary feelings lent their aid to harass her too sensitive mind. That arising from Glocester's conduct may be well imagined. Those connected with Gyles Postel's wide-spread insinuations concerning her mother were now the uppermost of her anxieties.

Marguerite of Burgundy, Duchess Dowager of Hainault and Holland, was one of those second-rate characters of history and inferior beings in creation, which may be all described by one sentence. Haughty, harsh, cruel; with little talent to redeem the want of virtue; upholding her child from pride rather than affection; and only sent down to posterity by the fortuitous circumstance of her birth, and her admitted confederacy in attempted crimes, too common to the age in which she lived to gain even the

revolting tribute of our wonder. Every rank of society was in those days imbued with an indifference to human life that seems repugnant to man in a civilised state. Reckless of their own, they lose much of their claims to admiration for deeds of apparent heroism. Unsparing of that of others, they inspire disgust rather than horror — for murder was a common-place, every-day occurrence. Kings, princes, and nobles walked abroad reeking with their victims' blood, as butchers of to-day parade their shambles. We loath their deeds, but scarcely shudder at them, as we do in imagining the high-wrought atrocity that leads to modern guilt. The frequent poisonings and poniardings of the times we treat of, and the assassinations by pistol-shot for full two centuries later, deprive those events of much of the romance which attaches to daring and unusual deeds, particularly to deeds of blood. There is really something more singular, and therefore more striking, in the picture of an individual shrinking from such acts, and in the efforts of persuasion necessary to excite to their commission. Such a scene we shall presently have to describe.

It was now night. The external rejoicings had ceased; and the strong castle of Amersfort was undisturbed and silent. The household had all retired. Benina Beyling had left Jacqueline's apartment. Her women were dismissed; and no one remained with her but her mother, the Countess Marguerite, who sat by the side of the little platform on which stood the copper brazier with burning charcoal, the means then used to warm all rooms but dining halls; and even in these the fire was generally made against a *reredosse,* the "multitude of chimneys," so marvelled at by a later English chronicler, not having become common in Europe.

The conversation of the countess, prolonged far beyond the usual hour of retiring, turned upon the recent events. The dowager took the lead in the discourse, asking many questions of her daughter as to the progress of her arms, the particulars of the battles, and the state of matters with Glocester, to all which inquiries Jacqueline gave respectful answers, but in some instances with reserve, and

in most with a lassitude bordering on apathy. Her mother went on nevertheless, and with an air almost as absorbed as her own, but showing a mixture of restlessness with thought, as though some unformed purpose struggled in her mind. She ran on at times with a fluent string of questions, without waiting for the answers to those first put; and she sometimes started, muttered a few imperfect words, or fixed her eyes and compressed her lips, in a manner that seemed to Jacqueline quite awful, when coupled with the memory of Gyles Postel's dark accusation. She shuddered often as she caught the stern expression of her mother's face, half in shade and half lighted by the pale red blaze that rose from the brazier and tinged its outlines. Chime after chime had been told by the castle clock since the attendants had retired, but Countess Marguerite took no note of the increasing hours, and Jacqueline, certain that it was long past midnight, was yet unwilling to urge her mother's departure; for she herself felt spell-bound, wishing, yet daring not, to broach the subject she would have given worlds to speak on. She hoped her mother would give some opening which might lead to it; and while anxiously watching for such, she started with surprise, and a dread she was quite unused to, as the old countess suddenly exclaimed —

"Van Vlyett did not then die for nought!"

"Oh, was he then indeed guilty?" cried Jacqueline involuntarily.

"Guilty!" repeated his mother. "Perhaps he gave the draught, which was drugged by another hand — perhaps thy perfidious uncle was sent prematurely to his doom — all that may be; and by the law the agent of justice is called guilty in such a case. So far poor Van Vlyett paid the forfeit of this deed, which restores thee to thy rights, my child; and as they now seemed secured by these late victories, I say he did not die for nought."

Jacqueline saw she had quite misunderstood her mother's exclamation. She shuddered while Van Vlyett's crime was thus almost admitted and openly defended; and the acknowledgment that he had an accomplice terrified her quite. But it was not for the reputation of Gyles Postel she was

alarmed. She would have uttered that name at once, and have plainly mentioned the insinuations he spread abroad, but she was restrained by dread of a bold avowal on her mother's part. She now scarcely doubted her guilt, and she dared not risk destroying its only negative disproof, by forcing a confession, perhaps a vaunt of complicity.

"Good, my mother," said she with averted eyes, "let us not rake the ashes of the dead — if Van Vlyett did the deed for which he suffered, God assoil him, and grant that it may not lead to war and mischief instead of the good you see!"

"How now, Jacqueline! desponding in the very hour of triumph!"

"Not so, my mother — but still uncertain of results, and doubtful if a cause resting upon crime deserve success."

Jacqueline felt that she had said too much — that she had almost upbraided her mother. She would have qualified her words or claimed pardon for them — but she felt as though that would be adding insult to accusation. The reply to her observations relieved her from that anxiety only by entailing a greater.

"My daughter!" said Countess Marguerite, "when wilt thou learn by experience strength of mind, as thou hast by nature boldness of heart? How mayest thou contend with cares of state and thy many foes, if thou canst not see that expediency and justice mean the same? Can villany be softened by fair words, or the wolf subdued by the bleatings of the lamb? Must not a trap be laid for the monsters of the forest, and an ambush set for pitiless men? Is it crime to rid ourselves of tyranny? Thy cause is good, my child — Heaven prospers it! But not till usurping Burgundy and imbecile Brabant lie as quiet in their tombs as does old John of Liege, art thou indeed secure. Thou must become a widow, Jacqueline. Death, who has no rival for his sceptre, must sign thy divorce, since they cavil at Pope Benedict. Then Glocester shall have no impediment between him and thy arms. And when my one weak nephew sleeps the long sleep, who knows but Philip, the strong one, the insatiate robber of

thy rights, may find his hour at hand, and leave thee wholly free! Heaven is good, my daughter, to raise up instruments for the helpless; witness Van Vlyett, if he did the deed — Glocester, whose bravery is thy right arm! And others may spring up in thy hour of need — or act in thy behalf, my child, without exposing themselves or thee to danger. So now to bed, to bed, and dream of happy days! Think that thy mother watches and prays for thee. — Hark! Two o'clock! How the hours fly! I am late — to bed, my Jacqueline — rest thee well!"

A kiss accompanied these words; and though her mother's lips had never pressed hers as softly as she thought a mother's should, Jacqueline fancied that they were never so harsh as now. The kiss thrilled through her frame. She could not return it; and she made no attempt to speak in reply to the final blessing which was murmured over her. The dowager took her ready-lighted lamp, and hastened from the room, by a door opening into her daughter's private closet, and thence communicating with a passage joining her own, of which passage the two countesses alone kept the keys.

Jacqueline gazed at her mother's figure as it passed away, as lightly as though innocence and youth impelled it. She would not trust herself to follow up in thought the contrast which the truth presented. She was thoroughly unhappy; and a sense of fear oppressed her, as though she had been in contact with something unholy; for, added to the dread of her mother's complicity in the deed that was done, was the fear that she contemplated others as atrocious. She endeavoured to sleep, but in vain — or if for a few brief minutes she sunk in slumber, scenes that would have taken hours in real action crowded upon her in frightful succession. The blackened face and writhing form of her poisoned uncle — Van Vlyett, on his gibbet — Gyles Postel mixing the fatal draught, or reeking with the blood of the slaughtered prisoners, were the principal objects; and the figure of her mother gliding through every scene added a tenfold horror to each. She started at length from her unquiet bed. Her lamp was expiring. She felt as though she had been asleep for hours; and

unable to support the torture of her doubts and fears, she suddenly resolved to rise to seek her mother, and at once put an end to her suspense, let conviction bring what pain it might. She wrapped her night-cloak round her, took from a table the key of the private passage, and passed into her closet without a moment's pause. She applied her key to the lock with no hesitating hand, for she rather wished to give notice of her approach. She entered the passage, and as she gained the opposite door that opened to her mother's closet, she stopped an instant and heard the clock strike three. She doubted for a moment if she were not the sport of magic,—again she thought that she still slept,—for how could such an age of torture have been compressed into one little hour? Recovering this check she pursued her way, unlocked the door, entered the closet, and soon hurried through it into the adjoining bed-room. The lamp which the Countess Marguerite had carried away still faintly glimmered on the table. Jacqueline approached the bed with a half desperate determination to waken the sleeper, and resolve the question of her innocence or guilt. As she raised the curtain her hand trembled, her heart sunk, and she again felt overpowered with the dread of having her fears confirmed. But then in a movement of convulsive haste she raised the velvet drapery; and to her mixed relief and terror she saw that the bed was untenanted.

Starting back in alarm, a pang of personal fear was her next sensation—why or wherefore she knew not. But might not her mother, in her turn, have fallen a victim to the fate she so remorselessly invoked for others? and might not some treacherous hand be near to deal the blow to *her*? As she stood transfixed with fear, a murmuring sound broke on her ear, proceeding from the little chapel, which was only separated by a small ante-room from the bed-chamber. It was her mother's voice! It sounded like accents from Heaven.

"Thank God, thank God!" cried Jacqueline, dropping on her knees and clasping her hands, "she is safe—she is at prayer! while I suspected, and was almost ready to accuse her of crime!

CHAPTER XIII.

SPRINGING on her feet again, she felt irresistibly impelled to steal towards the chapel, to witness and join in the orisons which affected her so deeply. She moved quietly across the floor and into the ante-room. The door communicating directly with the chapel was open; and this temple for private worship — or perhaps for secret sin — was hung on each side with tapestry, so placed as to admit of one person gliding between it and the wall, without touching either. The deep and earnest tones of Countess Marguerite's voice came from the upper end, near the altar; and Jacqueline stole along for some yards, to where she knew some cunning oylet-holes were left in the broidered web, to allow of an observer looking through without much chance of detection. Anxious not to disturb her mother's solemn devotions, she scarcely ventured to breathe; and placing her eye to one of the interstices, she looked on with pious anxiety.

She saw her mother indeed — but how accompanied? She sat at a table close below the altar-steps; beside her were two men, leaning and listening to her hollow-sounding voice; on the table were two tall brass candlesticks, from the tapers of which a lurid gleam fell down upon the group, showing several open rolls of parchment, two daggers, and an iron collar, an old instrument of torture; while Jacqueline, gasping from suppressed agitation, recognised beyond doubt in one of the men, the odious countenance of the murderer, Gyles Postel. His look was as usual, dogged and determined. It was impossible to read in it any reflection of Countess Marguerite's discourse. Whatever that might be, his mind seemed quite made up. Not so with the other man. He was also young, but his face gleamed with an expression of uncertain fanaticism, as if his whole soul was in the affair debated, but his purpose not decided on. He leaned forward, holding the edge of the table firmly with each hand, and staring into the dowager's face as she lectured or read. Her back was to

Jacqueline, who only saw by her gestures that she was in argument rather than mere conversation, and with evident reference to the parchment before her, which she held open with one hand, and occasionally pointed to or struck with the other. Jacqueline was for some minutes unable to comprehend a word of what was uttered. Confused, shocked, and alarmed, all buzzed in her ears. The chambers of her brain seemed at once to echo the sounds and render them indistinct. The first words she understood were positively from scripture! Was then her mother indeed at prayer? Was she reading from the sacred scroll passages of comforting import to the ruffian who had slandered her, and to his unknown but ingenuous-looking companion? The thought was one of those meteor gleams which hope casts across a generous mind, wishing to think well of another, and striving to shut out the less dazzling light of truth, when that other is a relative and ought to be a friend. But in the present instance reality soon dissipated the illusion. Taking advantage of a moment's pause in the Countess Marguerite's discourse, the stranger said, with a constrained energy of manner —

"But even supposing, most gracious Madam, that I, a liege subject of our much-honoured and grievously injured lady, Countess Jacqueline, have a right to slay her oppressor — and the weighty reasons you have adduced almost convince me that I have — am I authorised as well to slay this duke without hearing what he has to say in his own defence? Let me be better assured on that head, I pray you. I have considered and studied it well — but St. Austin, in his Civitas Dei, is strong on the point — 'Whoever slays even a criminal,' says he, 'without lawful authority, shall be judged guilty of murder — *velut homicidia judicabitur!*' — What say the pleadings on that head?"

"Thy scruples, young man, do thee credit, and thy learning proves thee studious as well as virtuous. Great honour do I hold it to engage such a youth in our holy cause. Hearken, then! Thus saith the pleadings — 'It is lawful for any subject, without any particular orders from any one, but from divine, moral, and natural law, to

slay a tyrant; as may be proved by twelve reasons, in honour of the twelve apostles. The first three reasons are drawn from the authorities of three moral philosophers — three others from St. Augustin's dogmas of sacred theology — three from writers on the civil law, and three from examples drawn from holy scripture."

"Read, read those high authorities," said the young man, with strained looks.

"To cite the whole pleading at length, my young friend, would consume the night, but hear the names — St. Thomas Aquinas, St Peter, Sabelliars, Aristotle, Cicero, Boccacio, — and hearken to the summing up, — 'A subject who puts a tyrant to death does a work deserving praise; being lawful to put him to death, it is allowable to cheat him by flattering speeches; it is fair and just to cut him off suddenly by ambush, when it is to save the life and property of one's sovereign from the spoiler,' — and is not Philip a spoiler? — Is not John a tyrant?"

"That, noble dame, I not only admit, but will die for — the authorities are good, but St. Austin's words are as strong — therefore —"

"And what saith St. Paul, good youth? 'To follow the literal sense of the Scriptures even, is death to the soul!' And what rule of law or morals has not its exception?"

"I begin to see the light of these reasonings, my honoured madam. Pardon me if I seem bold in pressing the argument — but the cases from scripture? — are they noted in the scroll?"

"They are, and argued on at length. The first is that of Moses, who, without any authority, slew the Egyptian that tyrannised over the Israelites. The second is that of the high priest, who had the wicked Athalia waylaid and murdered. The third, that of St. Michael, the arch-angel, who, without any orders from God, killed Lucifer, the most perfect creation that God had ever made. And did not Joab slay Absalom the conspirator, even contrary to the commands of David, his father and king? — but who afterwards thanked Joab, as a good and loyal knight, as God rewarded St. Michael with riches and power; and as

thou shalt be thanked, and rewarded, and honoured, my good youth, when thou hast released thy lawful sovereign, Countess Jacqueline, from one or other of those cruel tyrants who oppress us all."

"The reasoning is unanswerable!" said the young man, with a firmer expression of countenance, as if he were by degrees convinced.

"And what," continued the dowager, "is the conclusion drawn from all those inspired arguments of this great doctor of theology, this learned expounder of law, this eloquent advocate of right? Why this — list to his words — 'Such is proper death for tyrants. They should be slain by ambush and way-laying, or other the readiest means, improper to be used towards good men.' And for this reason we are bound to preserve our faith even to our own deadliest enemy, but never to a tyrant!"

"And what faith do we owe to Duke Philip or Duke John? Are *they* our masters?" said Gyles Postel, turning his leaden look on the neophyte; "is there a clerk in your college, John Chevalier, who can prove that?"

"And think awhile of her who is your lawful mistress," resumed the old countess. "Let your thoughts turn to her and her sufferings, from these her odious relations, my own nephews, whom I cast off and doom to their well-merited fate. For as sure as we see the flame of these consecrated tapers, which I took from yon altar to light our conference, so sure shall Philip of Burgundy and John of Brabant die the death of tyrants ere a week be passed, and then burn for ever in —"

A thrill of horror ran through Jacqueline. She leaned back against the wall, and did not hear the remainder of the impious sentence. But her feelings were too much wound up, and her curiosity too intense to allow of more than a moment's interruption. She resumed her station close to the tapestry, and looked through the narrow opening. She saw the young student, for such his dress, now plainly seen, proclaimed him to be, standing up, one of the daggers in his hand, and his countenance lighted to actual fury, as he exclaimed —

"Yes, I swear it again and again, one of them shall die

by this hand, immolated at the shrine of vengeance, in honour of thy beautiful daughter, the Countess Jacqueline, to whose cause I devote myself body and soul!" and with these words he kissed the dagger's hilt.

"Noble youth!" said the dowager, "thus wilt thou gain great glory here, and eternal joy hereafter. But calm thy transport. The holy vow taken, we must now regulate the means and method of the deeds to be done. How, my brave friends, will ye decide on your separate victims?"

"It is to me indifferent," said Postel; "but I think I had better take Philip in my care. I know the ways of his people better than my young friend, John Chevalier. I hand over to him his namesake, the mock husband of her who so inflames his idolatry. And sooth to say, I am not such an enthusiast for her sake. I will kill Duke Philip for *you*, my honoured lady, for the goodly sum in golden crowns which fills this purse, and the honourable place that is to be the meed of success. The eloquence of Doctor John Petit and his long pleading was not wanting to convince me of the justice of whatever I am well paid for."

A half chuckle accompanied this speech, as Postel chinked a leathern bag in his hand, and then secured it in the girdle of his doublet.

"Take then this dagger!" said the dowager; "it is of Milan steel, three sided, and its point should be kept from moisture, mind thee; let it not quit the sheath——"

"Until it finds a fleshy one in Duke Philip's body. I understand you, Countess, and shall not wipe off the anointment, trust me!"

During this diabolical arrangement, the young student, just initiated into the scheme of death, had seized with avidity the scroll from which Countess Marguerite had drawn her arguments, and he pored over its contents as if they were the very manna of righteousness, instead of the essence of sophistry, iniquity, and nonsense.*

* This pleading of Master Jean Petit in defence of the Duke of Burgundy's having obtained the murder of his cousin-german, the Duke of Orleans, is given at full length by Monstrelet: it consists of about eighty octavo pages, and is one of the most curious documents of the times. The confusion of argument and authorities is quite preposterous. The Psalmist and the

"Take it with you, noble youth," said the dowager; and the young man immediately folded it up and put it under his cloak, while she proceeded—"Take it with you, read it word by word, imbibe the inspiration that dictated it. And can Philip, my ingrate nephew, dare to throw a doubt, even when the dagger is against his breast, on the high authorities which justified his own father, my beloved brother, whom God pardon, for ridding the world of a tyrant, not half so pernicious as he is himself? Nor he, nor his poor minion, nor John of Brabant, nor their creatures and tools, may controvert one argument, much less avert the blows that are about to be dealt them. Will you then, John Chevalier, since you are so called—Chevalier that will be ere long, by title as well as by name——"

"And chamberlain to the beauteous Countess Jacqueline! Such is your sacred promise, Madam; repeat it, that I may be assured of the only reward I seek, the felicity of daily beholding the most lovely being that ever wore human form!"

"Such is my positive pledge to thee, on the honour of my noble race!" said the dowager, while the trembling Jacqueline grew cold and pale, at finding her fatal beauty the inspiration of this young fanatic.

"I am now then ready for your bidding," said John Chevalier, with a solemn tone.

"Lay down the dagger, then," replied the dowager. "Thou shalt do a deed of safe and lawful death; but I leave to this gallant squire the task of a bloody sacrifice and a desperate risk. Look at this collar!" and with the words she took up the rusted engine of suffering which lay on the table. "This instrument is made to fit all necks—a clasp more or less straitens or sets it loose—the throat it circles, in the grasp of a bold hand, may be made soon to rattle in death, or if the culprit merit delay he can be left to linger as long as justice deems his meed. Methinks,

Prophet—David and Daniel—the Saints and the Apostles—authors, sacred and profane, are mixed up together with a perversion of sense, truth, and justice, in the most monstrous manner. It was recited before the Dauphin, afterwards Charles VII., the king of Sicily, and a crowd of cardinals, princes, and other nobles. The orator recommending himself and his cause to the protection and support of "God his Creator and Redeemer, his glorious Mother, and my Lord St. John the Evangelist, the Prince of Theologians."

good champion of a righteous cause, the narrowest span will best suit Duke John of Brabant! So take it with thee; seek his privacy on some forged commission; even if detected, and this trinket found upon thee, what does it prove? 'Tis out of use, and none may suspect it for its purpose—it is a good dissembler, and may teach thee a lesson. It was picked up by chance—a curious relic, bought for a trifle, digged from a ruin, or what not? A scholar as thou art, bold Chevalier, needs not the hints of a simple matron such as I. But read the precepts and reasonings of the divine doctor whose noble writings are in thy bosom; do as I have done, and learn the whole by heart—to thee, learned youth, an easy task—to me a work of labour and hard study. But thirst for knowledge can be only quenched at the deep fount of truth—and *there* I have found it."

"I take this collar and this sacred scroll, as the symbols of truth and justice, on the mission on which I now enter," exclaimed Chevalier, enveloping both objects in his cloak. "No danger shall hold me back, no torture terrify me, no power absolve me from my vow. What is once consecrated can never be desecrated—such is one mighty precept of theology—and I stand here its living type!"

"And what wilt *thou* do in this good cause?" said the dowager, turning to Gyles Postel.

"Plunge this blade into Philip's heart!" was the brief and calmly-uttered reply.

"Enough—enough!" exclaimed the presiding priestess of these diabolical orgies. "Now let us all break up; and with the dawn be ye both on your several routes. Replace these holy candlesticks on the altar—recommend yourselves to your saints, and speed you on your work! Good night, brave friends, I thank you for my daughter as for myself."

"I need not her thanks," muttered Postel.

"I will work out my claim to call myself her devoted servitor!" said Chevalier aloud. Jacqueline shrunk back, half imagining that the glance of his protruding eyes was fixed on hers.

In a minute or two after the dowager had retired, Gyles Postel took up the candlesticks, and with irreverent care-

lessness scrambled upon the altar, and placed them in their wonted stations. While this went on, Jacqueline, bent on one purpose, let the cost be what it might, slipped quietly round behind the altar, and gaining the opposite side of the chapel, stationed herself close to the door of entrance from the great corridor, still screened behind the tapestry. When Postel had finished his task, she heard him say to his companion —

"Well then, wait here awhile — I will descend and see that all is safe below, and quickly return to conduct thee through the private passage. Meanwhile thou canst say a few paters and aves, or a short prayer for the souls we shall soon send to purgatory."

As the wretch passed by Jacqueline's station he moved the tapestry with his shoulder, which shook, while he laughed at his own impiety. She shrunk back, as though the very canvass had been a conductor of contamination, and looking towards the dimly-lighted altar, she saw Chevalier standing still before it. A new notion immediately flashed across her. She threw off her cloak where she stood, and gliding back, she soon gained the rear of the altar. Convinced that religious feeling worked deep in such a mind as Chevalier's, and knowing that one mysterious sentence had more power on such a mind than volumes of evidence, she resolved in the impulse of the moment to address some warning to him, to which the state of his feelings, and the scene around him, might give a solemnity she could not hope to belong to her. But her own frame of mind at that instant was as near to inspiration as mortal feeling may be; and there are few men even in a less superstitious age who might not have been profoundly struck by what followed. Raising her arm, with no premeditated movement, but thus giving to her figure an air such as we attribute to supernatural visitants, her night-robes of pure white hanging in loose drapery, and her features concealed by the altar's shade, Jacqueline glided out, and exclaimed, in a voice that trembled as though it came from the recess of the sacred tabernacle —

"It is written —'Thou shalt do no murder!'"

Terrified, as well at the sound of her own voice in such

a situation, as by the almost phrenzied start of the young man and his instant falling on his face on the altar-steps, as though her words had violated the divine precept they uttered, Jacqueline felt for a moment as if suspended between life and death. But the youth as quickly raised himself on his knees, and with uplifted hands burst into an exclamation of prayer. Seeing this she instantly disappeared behind the canvas, regained her former position near the door, gathered up her cloak and wrapped it round her; and then hearing the stealthy foot of Gyles Postel returning up the stairs, she hurried into the corridor, resolved to put her first design into immediate execution. Jacqueline had no personal fears in confronting this man; yet she shuddered as she saw his figure ascending the stair, in the rays of the lamp that burned all night in the corridor. She stood on the upper step; and as he placed his foot on it he threw up his eyes and recognised her. He started back, and gazed at her without uttering a word.

"Follow me!" said Jacqueline, pointing to a door on the opposite side of the corridor, towards which she moved. Postel involuntarily obeyed her, for he was as much affected by her sudden appearance and manner as was possible to a being so little susceptible of abrupt sensations. She entered the room, taking the lamp from its marble pedestal on the corridor and placing it on a table. She then shut the door. As she did so, the ruffian placed his hand on his dagger, in actual fear of a defenceless and innocent woman.

"Attempt not to menace me," said Jacqueline, observing and mistaking the action.

"I do not menace you, countess," said he; "but——"

"But what, then?—Why that hand on your poniard's hilt?"

"Why do *you* close the door? This looks like treachery —even, Madam, when I am about to do you important service," and he looked searchingly round the chamber.

"That the treacherous fear even their own weapons, is an old saying," exclaimed Jacqueline; "you may well doubt yours, Gyles Postel, for it is vowed to a bad cause."

" 'Tis to *yours*."

" No, I disown, I scorn the service of assassins. I trust my cause to Heaven, and will have no other ally. Give me up that infernal weapon — I command you, on your allegiance — and instantly abandon your base design against Duke Philip."

" Countess Jacqueline," said the ruffian, recovering his self-possession on seeing our heroine's agitation and his own security, — " countess, you have taken Gyles Postel for the first time in his life at fault — and that is another score in the debt I owe you. It was you then that moved the tapestry, erewhile, which I thought the wind, and which my companions did not mark ?"

" Your companions, fellow ?"

" Come, countess, no insult now ! you have not your English braggarts at your back ; and by Heavens this poniard would as soon find a sheath in yours as in Duke Philip's breast ! Sooner, mayhap, for you have dishonoured me — think you I forget the field of Haerlem ? Beware then, and let me name your mother as I list — is she not my companion in this venture ? I know you overheard us just now, and can judge of my former hints concerning her."

Jacqueline was overwhelmed with terror at his words, and the look which accompanied his deliberate tone. His eyes seemed thirsting for her blood. She turned towards the door, intending to fly to the protection of the young enthusiast in the chapel ; but Postel stepped between her and it, and said —

" No, no ! — you shall not escape, to rouse the household and betray your best friends — perhaps to retrace your steps to the protection of the English lord."

" Wretch !" exclaimed Jacqueline, indignation rising above her fears.

" One more abusive word, and the dagger is in your heart !" calmly cried Postel, seizing her by the arm, and laying his hand on the weapon's hilt. " You have put yourself in my power," continued he, " and you must take the consequences. What a fool you supposed me, and have proved yourself to be ! Did you then think to bully

Gyles Postel by big words and looks? Your mother knows me better, and you shall know me too. What brought you here? Why did you beckon me in? Have you turned fickle to Fitz-walter for my sake, as you did to Glocester for his, and to Duke John for Glocester's?"

"Audacious villain!" cried Jacqueline, shaking off the ruffian's hold, with a tone and look of impassioned dignity, which for a moment paralysed his ferocity. "I see that I am indeed in your power — that I have madly believed myself strong in my hour of utmost weakness, — but still I defy as sternly as I despise you. I scorn your threats, and disown your service. Take my life, if you will — but if you have one spark of manly feeling, do not outrage my honour and my innocence, by such atrocious words as these!"

"Why did you outrage *my* honour, and turn me over to all the infamy your authority could command? Do you repent the injury you did me? Will you repay it — largely?"

"I will make no terms with you," replied Jacqueline proudly; "release me now, and I promise to pardon you, and keep silent on this outrage, on condition that you attempt not Duke Philip's life."

"Conditions! you are truly in good trim to make them, countess, are you not?" said the fellow, his natural brutality struggling through the awe inspired by Jacqueline's bearing, and the irresolution caused by his conviction that he had suffered that brutality to carry him too far.

"What would you of me?" asked the princess.

"That on the very first occasion you dub me knight with your own hand, as you did at Haerlem to others less meriting knighthood than I do. Thus you will wipe out the stain you so cruelly threw on my honour. Next, that you pledge yourself to give me ample sums of gold, to equip me as a champion of your chivalry should be equipped. This solemnly sworn to, you may retire, and learn not to meddle with men like me, nor mar the projects intended to aid your cause. Refuse these terms, and by this hand I swear the door shall open instantly, and a witness from the chapel — you have seen or heard him — shall enter and find you clasped in my arms!"

"I promise it all!" cried Jacqueline, shuddering with disgust and dread, uncertain if the dogged villain might not act up to his threat, and only thinking of escape, without weighing the doctrine of moral obligations. "Stand by, and let me pass; I will do all you require."

"Softly, softly, countess — there are two points to be considered first; and you will see I hold your reputation dearer than yourself. Were you to go out in this dishevelled dress, and meet on the corridor your other champion, or some straggling domestic, what might not slander say? I will first retire with my friend, young Chevalier, and leave you a clear passage. The next security for your honour, in another view, is this, that you give me some token in pledge of your promise; you might else forget it — for princes have short memories, you know!"

"You cannot doubt my word. Did one of my race ever break faith?"

"Good countess, I have no learning, and am bad at logic. Give me, therefore, at once that ruby ring from your finger, or the door flies open, and who lists may enter it."

With these words he made a gesture, as if to clasp Jacqueline's waist, and laid one hand upon the bolt.

"Ask not this ring — it was my father's gift — the only relic left me of his love."

"What else have you to give? I see nothing but those tresses, that may be recognised as truly yours. Shall I cut off one with my dagger, and wear it like a favour in my cap?"

"Here, take the ring; profane not my person by touching even one curl of hair. Take the ring, and Heaven absolve me if it is crime to part with it!"

She took the gem from her finger and handed it to him. "Lie there, a credible witness of our compact!" muttered he, placing it within his doublet.

"Now set me free!" said Jacqueline. "Away from my presence, and God turn thy hardened heart from its terrible intent!"

"Farewell, countess!" said Gyles Postel, with a triumphant and insolent smile. "Farewell, and remember this lesson — be discreet and silent. Recollect you have

not only my character in your keeping, but that your mother's and your own are at stake. Let your conscience be satisfied — you have acted your part well, Leave the good duke and your honoured husband to the care of Heaven — and of *us*. And let me warn you, once for all, beware of uttering a hint, or breathing a thought of this!"

He clapped his hand on his dagger with these concluding words, gently opened the door, and left the room. Jacqueline sunk on a seat, and almost fainted from the revulsion of her high-wrought feelings. She was roused to sensation by hearing the steps of the conspirators as they descended the marble stair; and the distant closing of a door told her they were beyond the castle walls. She then sought her mother's room, determined to reveal every word that had just passed; and by an appeal to every feeling of maternal love, womanly softness, or Christian charity, to avert the dreadful deeds, towards the execution of which the associates were even then on their way. She soon passed the chapel and the ante-room, and reached her mother's chamber. The loud breathing from the bed told her she already slept. More shocked by this proof of remorseless cruelty, than if she had seen her mother in agonies of repentant suffering, she could not brave the risk of rousing her, and incurring a scene of probable reproach and outrage. She passed through the room and the adjoining closet, fastened the door carefully, gained her own chamber, dressed hastily, awoke a faithful attendant, and before the dawn had fully broken, she summoned Ludwick Van Monfoort to a secret interview in her private cabinet.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

We must now turn our attention from scenes which have so long occupied it, to others forming a strong contrast with them. We must abandon both the camp and the court for solitude and desolation; political conspiracies for absorbing passion; the wiles of sophistry for tricks of magic; the mainland shores of Holland for the lonely and billow-beaten island of Urk.

But before we altogether transport our readers to that wild spot, we must go back a little from the regular progress of our story, to trace one anterior passage in the life, and a few variations in the feelings of a personage who, though a while out of sight, has not, we hope, yet escaped from the reader's mind — their sometime acquaintance Humphrey, the good Duke of Glocester. We have not now to treat of him in his capacity as the champion of a princess, the rival of a sovereign, or the ruler of a realm; but simply in that character from the pains of which pride, valour, or ambition cannot give impunity — as the slave and victim of that fatal passion which swallows in its vortex all the rest, and which forms the staple not only of romantic fiction but of real life. We have not yet seen Duke Humphrey in the light of a lover. It is as such that we have now to paint him.

Glocester's attachment to Jacqueline was composed, no doubt, of many of the best elements of love, but not of these entirely; for mixed with admiration for her person, and esteem for her virtues, were views of aggrandisement and distinction, emanating less in devotion to her than in his own ambition. Had no other object crossed his path of high and honourable duty, it had been well, perhaps, for her, and certainly so for him. His attachment might then have been by degrees purified from all its dross, and

he might have loved at once with the fervour of passion and the dignity of pride. But his fate was different; and ere long he was doomed to sacrifice all the ennobling qualities of such a state, at the shrine of that infatuation which, in the phraseology of a writer of the century later than his time, "is no longer love, but a vehement perturbation of the mind; a monster of nature, wit, and art; a burning disease and raging phrensy; a wandering, extravagant, domineering, boundless, irrefragable, and destructive passion."

The object which had inspired this very combustible combination was a certain damsel called Elinor Cobham, one of the daughters of Reginald, the third lord of that name. She had been chosen, with other young ladies of high quality, by King Henry V., to fill the post of maids of honour to the Countess Jacqueline, when that monarch espoused her cause, and received and treated her with such distinction in England four years previously. When Glocester repaired to Hainault with his affianced bride, Elinor Cobham was one of those who followed in her suite. But after the fatal issue of the war, when the English auxiliaries were forced to abandon the province they had at first conquered, and Glocester obliged to return home to the duties of his protectorate, the lately appointed maids of honour reaccompanied him, leaving Jacqueline to the attendance of the faithful Benina Beyling, who remained with her at Mons, until the burghers of that her "false and traitorous town," as she wrote to Glocester, broke all their oaths of fealty, joined Dukes Philip and John her persecutors, and forced her to fly and take refuge with her stanch adherents the Hoeks, in the marshy fastnesses of Holland.

Jacqueline had never observed or suspected any thing between Elinor Cobham and Glocester, although she neither loved him little enough to be on the perpetual watch of envious vanity, which forgets the object of its fancied attachment to catch at slights and dishonour done to itself—nor well enough to have an open eye for all his good qualities, but remain sightless for every violation of fidelity. Yet a projected union of mere political expediency, with a

prince every way worthy of her hand, left Jacqueline's heart, as has been amply explained, totally free from the tormenting anxieties of love; and the high-minded woman who has no fixed attachment for an individual of the other sex is sure to possess no feeling of rivalry for one of her own. Jealousy, the base-born offspring of selfishness and envy, is wholly incompatible with generosity of heart or greatness of soul; for the first is too confiding towards others, and the second too confident in self.

Glocester had become enamoured of Elinor the very first time he saw her, which was at one of the splendid entertainments given at Westminster, in honour of Jacqueline. The observation of the amorous and libertine duke was attracted by a sylph-like figure, winding with more than common grace through the mazes of the dance; and the ray of romantic enthusiasm which beamed from her dark grey eyes, and lit up the expression of her irregular, scarcely handsome, but still most striking countenance, threw also into Glocester's bosom that momentary warmth which in court-gallantry is ycleped love. He singled her out, and made her his partner in the dance alternately with the Dutch princess, whose brilliant beauty and splendid adornments could not efface the impression of the younger and less important object, who had already entered into unconscious rivalry with her. Glocester had a broad bosom for the reception of amorous impressions. He found ample room for two attachments at once. He resolved on the spot to carry on a double design and gratify a double passion; to pay his court to both fair ones, the one on the high road of honourable connection, the other in the winding paths of illicit love.

It has been seen with what success his open and avowed project was in the first instance carried on; how he gained the consent of Jacqueline and the countenance of his brother the king, who was well pleased to see English influence in the way of being extended and fixed both in Holland and Hainault, stations so important as a mart for English commerce, and as a ready road to carry military operations into the very heart of France. And be it observed, in passing, that the policy of that day in this

respect has been ever since and must be still the tenacious aim of England, until all views of continental influence be abandoned, and she rests satisfied to become an isolated speck on the ocean of politics, as in the map of the world; great in internal wealth, domestic peace, and theoretic knowledge, but narrowed and cramped in the science of morals and the arts of social life, which, to him who has seen mankind on a broader scale, appear what give the noblest character to a people, and the highest value to existence.

Elinor Cobham was nothing loth to meet the flattering gallantries of her potent and princely admirer. She was ambitious and vain, as well as susceptible of more tender emotions, and highly tinctured with that irregular talent which renders its possessors so liable to such a temptation as now assailed her. Her self-taught pen and pencil had both made frequent and astonishing attempts to embody the vague imaginings of her romantic mind. Wildly brought up and almost uneducated, her natural genius supplied the place of teaching and example, but it ran riot the while. She was deep read in the extravagant romances which bounded the literature of ladies of fashion in her time. Her father's library lay open to her indiscriminate use; and though printing had only begun to glimmer on the horizon of knowledge, she had still great food for such an appetite as hers. She early knew, almost by heart, the whole contents of a copy of "the boke of Romaunts, shone with claspys and bound with silver," the stories of Sir Launcelot of the Lake, Sir Tristan de Leonnois, and numerous others; and she often illustrated the wild inventions of her own muse, whose lessons were learned in such works, with illuminations modelled from the curious and precious MSS. of "The hours of Anne of Brittanny," and the like, with a taste if not a skill that would not have disgraced Francesco Veronese or Girolmo Dei Libri, the most renowned artists in that now-forgotten line.

But unfortunately for Elinor she did not confine her studies or pursuits to such a course of practice as this. Her ardent mind, panting for variety of knowledge, and boldly seeking it in the highest and lowest spheres, had

plunged into both the mysteries of astrology and the mystification of magic; but to neither of those intricate subjects could she find her way alone. Reading confused, and thought distracted her; and she felt as if relieved from incipient madness by the chance discovery that her father's chaplain had given himself up, body and soul, to all the occult and forbidden sciences, a knowledge of which she was certain could never be acquired without a guide. This man's name was Bolingbroke, a dark and desperate impostor; who, not content with the secret practice of his various arts, felt a moral longing for young and inexperienced converts, analogous to the desires of some juggling priest of old, for those innocent victims who bowed at the shrine of his false gods.

The intimacy between the professor and his pupil became close and deep, more so perhaps than history has revealed or we can fathom. But it is certain that when Glocester first made his advances towards Elinor's heart, her mind was not uncorrupt. She was by nature an adept in coquetry; art had matured her into a practised hypocrite; and having been so long labouring to cheat herself, it was not astonishing that she should readily follow the tempting lure which told her she might dupe another. To marry Glocester was her aim and study. Bolingbroke set his whole mind to aid her object, and every possible means were employed to work on the passions and the feelings of him, who little knew the deep design that was undermining and counteracting his own.

It does not enter into our plan to detail the manœuverings of female blandishments and priestly guile by which Glocester was met in every advance; how he was coaxed on and repulsed by turns; wound up, let loose, and played with, as an angler manages the victim on his hook. It is sufficient to state the result. He succeeded in his designs on Elinor, but it was such success as brings ruin to the victor as well as the foe he defeats. Glocester bought his triumph by the sacrifice of princely faith, royal dignity, and personal esteem. In a moment of delirious dishonour he swore to retard his marriage with Jacqueline, and never to complete it without Elinor's consent.

On these conditions he triumphed, and a long succession of excitements increased the growth of a passion which indulgence is falsely supposed to pall. Bolingbroke was deep in the confidence of the guilty lovers, and he was in the sequel despatched to Rome, with full, but secret powers from Glocester, to induce Pope Martin to refuse his consent to the demanded annullation of Jacqueline's union with her cousin, John of Brabant. It was thus that Glocester's secret persuasions with the pontiff, be they what they might, were employed to accomplish (while he was supposed to thwart) the very object which his enemy, Duke Philip, was so assiduously labouring to effect.

The success of Bolingbroke's mission has been already told, in the conversation of Vrank Van Borselen with his father; but ere he could again reach England to report its results, Glocester, hurried on by the rapidity of Jacqueline's reverses, and by the violence of his enmity to Philip, resolved at all hazards to send a supply of troops to his affianced, and not yet quite abandoned bride. Even had he not been stimulated by this latter motive it would have been impossible to resist the eloquent pleadings of her distress, when forsaken by almost all but her mother, Van Monfoort, her brother Lewis, and Benina Beyling, she poured out appeals to him, to whom she considered herself bound by ties of moral obligation which no sentiment of personal objection opposed. The best proofs of Jacqueline's attachment, and of its nature, are to be found in her letters, written at this period, which clearly show the unconsummated state of her connection with Glocester, (in opposition to what we think the hasty and established conclusions of most historians,) while they offer a good specimen of the epistolary style of those days. One of them is couched as follows:—

"My very redoubted Lord and Father,*

"In the most humble of manners in this world, I recommend myself to your goodness and favour. May it

* The translator of Monstrelet conjectures, that the word "*père*" may be taken in the signification of *peer*, rather than *father*, as on another occasion. But the signature of the letter disproves this, and shows that Jacqueline wrote to her affianced lord in terms of profound but quaint respect, which appear, no doubt, strange to modern notions of style.

please you to know that I am now writing to your glorious power, as the most doleful, most ruined, and most treacherously deceived woman that lives; for on Sunday the 13th of this month of June, the deputies of your town of Mons, brought back a treaty that had been agreed on between my cousins of Burgundy and Brabant, which treaty had been made without the knowledge of my mother, as she has certified to me by her chaplain. Nevertheless she has written me letters, confirming this treaty having been made, but that she could in no way advise me, not knowing herself what to do, only telling me to consult the good folks of this town, to see what aid and advice they could give me.

"Upon this, my sweet lord and father, I went on the morrow to the town-house, and remonstrated with them, that it was at their request and entreaties that it had pleased you to leave me under their safeguard, and how they had sworn on the holy sacrament and bible to be true and loyal subjects, to take good care, and give you good accounts of me on your return. To this they bluntly replied that they had not force enough to defend me; and instantly rose tumultuously, saying, that my people wanted to murder them; and in my despite they seized one of my subjects, Serjeant Macquart, and cut off his head, making prisoners many others who loved you best, to the amount of two hundred and fifty. They also thought to seize Sir Baldwin, the treasurer, and Sir Louis de Monfoort; but though they failed in that, I know what they intend doing if they can; for they plainly tell me, that if I decline to make peace, they will deliver me over to my cousin, John of Brabant. They only give me a week's respite, when I shall be forced to go into Flanders, the hardest and most painful thing that could happen to me, for I fear I never shall see you more, unless it pleases you to hasten to my aid.

"Alas! my redoubted lord and father, my whole hope is in your power, seeing that you are my only happiness, and that all my sufferings arise from my attachment to you. I therefore implore you, most humbly and for the love of God, that you would be pleased to take pity on me, and to hasten to the relief of your most doleful creature, if

you would not lose her for ever. I hope you will do so, for I have never done, and never will do aught which could displease you, but I am ready to die for attachment to your person and power. By my faith, my redoubted lord and prince, by the love of God and my lord St. George, I beg you to consider my melancholy situation, for it seems as if you had entirely forgotten me.

"Nothing more have I to say at present, but that I ought sooner to have sent Sir Louis de Monfoort to you; for he cannot longer remain here, though he kept close to me when I was abandoned by all the rest, and he will tell you more particularly all that has happened than I can do in a letter. I entreat, therefore, you will be a kind lord to him, and send me your good pleasure and command, which I will most heartily obey. This is well known to the blessed son of God, whom I pray to grant you a long and happy life, and that I may have the great joy of soon seeing you!

"Written in the false and traitorous town of Mons, with a doleful heart, the 6th day of July.

"Your sorrowful and well-beloved daughter, suffering great grief for your service.

"JACQUELINE."

It was impossible for Glocester to resist such appeals as these. On the receipt of this letter, delivered into his hands in London by the faithful Ludwick Van Monfoort, he gave himself no time for reflection or scruple. He at once made up his mind to accompany the bold Hollander to a proposed meeting with Jacqueline and the Bishop of Utrecht, which she did not venture to allude to in her written communication, but entrusted to Van Monfoort's verbal announcement, and which her secret departure from Mons with her mother enabled her to effect. The rough but honest eloquence of Van Monfoort made great impression on the lord protector; and the picture presented to him of Jacqueline's heroic endurance of all the ills that beset her, caused him keen pangs of remorse, that he could only hope to allay by a prompt measure of generosity towards her. He immediately summoned the Earl of Salis-

bury and Lord Fitz-walter to a secret council. The former of these, inflamed with jealousy against Philip of Burgundy, was anxiously longing for the protector's orders to set out with a powerful armament, some time in preparation for another invasion of Hainault. But it still required delay to make ready an expedition on so large a scale. All, therefore, that could for the moment be done, was to despatch the advanced guard of three thousand men, in itself an important reinforcement, under the command of Fitz-walter, to aid the efforts of Bishop Zweder and the Hoeks, in Holland or Zealand, as might appear best, and strike a grand blow before Philip's preparations for invasion were complete, or that Bedford could interfere in England to prevent this co-operation.

Fitz-walter's heart throbbed with a joy as strong, but less fierce, than Salisbury's; but it was much lessened by Glocester's intimation, as soon as Salisbury retired, that he meant himself to precede the expedition along with Fitz-walter, to meet Jacqueline and the bishop in the proposed rendezvous of the Zevenvolden, and frankly explain to her whom he had so much and so long neglected, the circumstances which prevented him from personally acting in her cause. This generous impulse he resolved, with his usual impetuosity, to carry into effect at once, and to set out without trusting himself to the dangers of a parting interview with Elinor, his courage being strong enough to make him separate from her, but not sufficient to let him meet her dissuasions, her reproaches, or her tears. For the influence she had by this time gained over him was almost boundless whenever she was in his presence; and even when absent, Glocester was in the worst species of slavery to this artful and impassioned enthusiast, for he firmly believed in her magical skill, and that she held him bound to her by some spell of sorcery, with Bolingbroke's aid, still stronger than the obligation of his oath, or the links of passion.

What private feelings influenced Fitz-walter's dissatisfaction at the protector's decision to accompany him may be seen hereafter; but whatever they were, he had now no time to brood over them, in the rapid bustle of depar-

ture. The troops, which had been for some days waiting ready in the ships, were in another day at sea; while Glocester, Fitz-walter, and Van Monfoort, in the fast sailing brigantine which had borne the latter to England, were already before the wind, in direct course for the Zuyder Zee.

Just before Glocester put his foot on board the brigantine, he despatched a missive to Elinor, telling her (for he dared not quite conceal plans which he believed she had power to divine) of his hasty voyage and its object, announcing that Van Monfoort's castle in the isle of Urk was his first point of destination, expressing his hope that Bolingbroke would arrive before his return with the pope's rescript, and winding up with vows of eternal love and fidelity. The missive despatched by a trusty messenger, and another sent to the chief counsellors of state, informing them of his absence for a few days, but without naming for what place, Glocester wrapped his cloak around him, and stepped on the vessel's deck, threw a glance at the receding shores of England, and entrusted himself to the winds and waves.

On the night of the day on which we left Glocester and Fitz-walter departing with Van Monfoort from the memorable meeting in the Zevenvolden, and before the first and last named had reached Urk, while Fitz-walter proceeded to the encounter of the English troops, three other persons had arrived at the island, in an English ship, which had followed as fast as it could sail the one that had carried Glocester. Two of the three persons were females, the third a man of dark and dismal mien, who being spokesman for the party, demanded of the rude household of Van Monfoort's castle refreshment and lodging, in the name of the Protector of England, for whom he announced himself as the bearer of important letters, and for whose return to the island with its chieftain he, as well as his companions, expressed great anxiety. But this strong claim on hospitality was not needed by Van Monfoort's seneschal, nor the rough band, half soldiers, half pirates, who held garrison in the absence of their lord. The name of stranger was enough in those rude times and latitudes to ensure the best cheer and warmest welcome of such a feudal den; and the sight of

woman was a still stronger warrant for the hospitality of those wild retainers of a spurred and belted knight, who felt themselves a consequent portion of the chivalry which he represented in his sea-girded fief.

The island of Urk, in the dreary waters of the Zuyder Zee, was little better than a refuge for its fierce chieftain when he found the continent too hot, for native smugglers and neutral pirates, and for the prodigious flights of water-fowl which hovered on its strand or floated on its little creeks and streamlets. The gloomy air of its low and dark-wooded shores was rendered still more so by the time-worn towers of the chieftain's castle which rose among the trees and the few scattered huts of his amphibious vassals. It seemed a place formed for the resort of mystery and guilt; and the scene which was quickly acted by the three strangers could nowhere have found a more fitting theatre than in the dank and dismal chamber where their coarse refreshments were served up.

Stretched on a rude couch and wrapped in a rich mantle of embroidered silk, her head supported by her hand, her attitude expressive of extreme languor, her face pale, her hair dishevelled, and her features showing painful efforts at recovery from the effects of her voyage, lay a young woman — such a one as we have described in the opening of this chapter, except that the vague longings of enthusiasm which distinguished her air when an inexperienced girl, were now changed for the marked expression of initiated guilt, and the bold mien of mingled triumph and remorse. Such was Elinor Cobham in the meridian hour of her criminal passion, and when making the most strenuous effort for that greatness which was the long-sought meed of its indulgence. That absorbing object was not, however, to be accomplished by the mere wishes or prayers of an exhausted victim of fatigue and sickness; neither did the appearance of her two associates promise a consummation more likely to be produced by courtly or kingly influence, or the workings of political intrigues.

Squatted on a low stool, at the foot of Elinor's couch, and close to a moveable brazier, which was filled with burning charcoal, was a woman, advanced in years, of haggard

and withered mien, and dressed in such a suit of dubious material and make as was appropriate to a person of the all but lower class, or Borel people as they were then called, who was nevertheless the admitted — and unhallowed — confidant of a prince's mistress. Her whole attire and manner spoke her for one of those convenient agents, always ready at the call of secret sin, to do the offices which wedded virtue shrinks not to confide to the male practitioners of science — one, in short, who could safely aid to bring an innocent pledge of guilty love into the world, and who would assist on occasion to remove to another the victim of some darker passion. There was, besides, about this beldam tokens that she acknowledged another calling, and that, so far from feeling it necessary to conceal, she was employed in some act which made it essential that she should avow it; for she bore the insignia of witchcraft — a red leather girdle, with unholy hieroglyphics, being buckled round the waist of her dark blue kirtle, and a leaden figure of St. Catherine (who was profanely forced into the patronage of the art) suspended by a black collar on her breast. Her eyes were fixed, with all the ardent intensity of feigned or fancied inspiration, on the antique brass skillet in which she stirred some posset-drink; while she muttered between her skinny lips words, inaudible even to the deluded creature who anxiously watched the process from her uneasy couch.

In a far corner of the apartment sat a man, whose dark countenance and sombre dress assorted well with the haze thrown round him by the smoke of a clumsy lamp suspended by a cord from the ceiling, and emitting an almost stifling effluvia and suffocating vapour from the villanous oil which fed its wick of twisted hemp. An oaken table, with legs rudely carved into shapes meant for the resemblance of dolphins, was before this murky individual, who occasionally stooped to pore over the parchment-scrolls that lay scattered on it, together with some old fashioned instruments and utensils of forbidden arts, or flung himself back at times into the recess of his ponderous wooden chair. The dress of this person announced him of the ecclesiastical order, but as one whose holy functions were for a while

suspended. His doublet and courtpie, a species of close mantle, were of sad-coloured cloth; but his hood was of the more clerical shade of black, and sloped over the brow diagonally in the fashion peculiar to churchmen. His beard fell on his breast, his lank hair lay on his shoulders, and a belt of leather, studded with strange and mystic figures in relief, proclaimed him as occupied in studies of astrology, alchymy, or medicine, for it was symbolic of any of those professions rather than that of divinity, to which, at first glance, the man might have been supposed exclusively to belong.

A profound silence was for a long time observed by the trio thus situated. The simmering bubble of the posset was the only sound within the room that broke this awful stillness, for Elinor stifled her sighs of impatient anxiety, and the throbbings of her heart were only audible to herself. The courts and corridors of the castle were quite noiseless, for the seneschal and his warders, who alone of the household had not retired to rest at sun-set, kept watch in an out-tower for the expected return of their lord and his guests, whose rank was unknown to all but the seneschal, that it might not become a matter of curiosity by any unusual preparations of ceremony. Without the walls of the castle, the low rustling of the wind among the trees, and the distant murmur of the tide, kept up a monotonous and dismal accompaniment to the silent scene within. Elinor Cobham had been long accustomed to stolen snatches of such unhallowed pursuits as that which was now going on. Bolingbroke had often practised his art before her, for her, and on her; and Margery Jourdain had many times assisted in the concoction of the spells over which he presided; but on every former occasion the scene of these doings had been England. Elinor had felt herself to be in the security of her father's house, or of that which the liberality of her royal paramour had subsequently made her own. She had heretofore rather considered herself as an enchantress served by her familiars; now she was as one possessed by demons, and subservient to the very fiends she had the power to raise—a slave to the terrible beings who seemed to do her service.

The bleak and desolate spot, the wild mansion, the desperate retainers who received and lodged her, the fact of being for the first time in her life in a strange land, her helpless and forlorn situation, if treachery indeed *were* meant her — for such misgivings had crossed her mind — all made her acutely sensible to the value of the home she had abandoned, and the enjoyments of her native land, the first of which she had forfeited for ever, and to none of which she might ever again return. Her distracted imagination, always actively tormenting, pictured to her a thousand probabilities of ill. Glocester's exhausted passion, his determination to make away with her, and leave himself free; the ready confederacy of those who seemed to be her agents, that might become her assassins; perpetual imprisonment in this lone castle; death in its agonizing variety of shapes; the dark mysteries of magic; the populous world of demons and devils, into whose secrets she had so longed, so striven, to plunge — all rose before her, and danced in a maze of feverish distraction.

The terrible silence maintained by the sorcerer and the hag was becoming at length too much for sufferance. Elinor felt a flush shoot now and then athwart her fair brow and breast, like meteor corruscations in a moon-lit sky. Her head began to throb with sudden pangs, her breath became short and thick, her hands tingled and burned; she felt convulsive spasms of nerve; her eyes seemed to swim in fire; she laboured, as it were, by the main force of her hands to keep herself collected and still; she doubled her fingers like the talons of a bird, as though they grasped some tangible support; she set her teeth together and sternly closed her eyes, from which, however, she could force no tear. She would have sprung up, and leaped at once from the agony of this endurance into the worst certainty of fate, had not anxiety in the all-important process on which her companions were avowedly employed, proved stronger than even the suffering which we have but faintly painted, and kept her in the forced stillness of intense ambition.

At length the old cracked bell, which hung in the damp belfry of the chapel, close to the castle walls, struck the

first toll of midnight. The sound, as any sound would have been, was an inexpressible relief to Elinor. "Oh God!" murmured she, in an under breath of infinite enjoyment, as if a load were heaved from her heart.

"Some other word, fair mistress, an' it please you," muttered the beldam, with a scowl; "had *that* been said aloud, our labour was marred for the moon's next quarter."

Elinor raised her head, cast a fearful glance towards Bolingbroke, to discover if he had caught her incautious apostrophe; but he gave no sign of consciousness, and she sank again on the couch.

CHAPTER II.

ELEVEN more hoarse and cheerless chimes spoke out the hour's completion.

"How works the charm, Dame Margery?" asked the hollow voice of the sorcerer. Elinor thrilled convulsively at its deep tone, while the beldam replied,

"The spell works well,
'Twas mixed in —"

Elinor's accustomed ear supplied the rhymed cadence, which the hag did not completely pronounce, but mumbled with an indistinct sound, between a chuckling laugh and a spiteful imprecation.

"Hast stirred it as ordered, gossip?"

"Thrice times three rounds, in inverted motion of the left hand, my master."

"'Tis well! shake in the mandrake apples' rind, preserved by the recipe of Ernestus Burgranius."

A bubbling noise in the mixture told that a new ingredient was added.

"Does it work, Mother Jourdain?" asked Bolingbroke.

"The yellow froth rises towards the edge," replied the hag.

"Excellent well! Now the curled hair of a wolf's tail, found good by the Sage Mizaldus. I hear it fizz, Dame Margery. Stir, stir it round the skillet. Now let a

swallow's liver feed the charm! The dust of a dove's heart! Scrapings from asses' hoof! 'tis learned Rebeus's remedy. Is all in, dame? does it work?"

"The posset is gluey and unctuous—it boils to the brim, good Master Bolingbroke."

"Then sparingly sprinkle the master-portion of the charm, the divine powder, the pulverized specific; three pinches, dame; now stir, quick, quick, ere the skillet o'erflows."

A black smoke rose up as this item was added, and the beldam laughed outright with joy, at seeing her work go on so bravely.

"Cover the skillet, Margery, and keep the posset to a gentle simmer; the philter is complete!" exclaimed the wizard, while Elinor again started up, and a fervent glow of hope for the success of this potent preparation flushed through her frame.

"Would that his grace were come," cried she, aloud. "Kind Bolingbroke, runs he no risk? Is he safe to-night?"

"If the stars spell aright, and I can rightly read them, gentle Elinor, Duke Humphrey runs no risk on flood or field; he is doomed to die in his bed."

"And *quietly*, Bolingbroke! oh, say so, for love of my good lord—or of me, Bolingbroke?"

"Elinor, I may not now dissert too deeply on his destiny. But his horoscope lies before me, and violence, heats, and contention, in life and death, are on its very face, like spots on the moon's disk. Ask me not more by those keen looks and moving gestures: I am not called to speak on signs of death to-night—'tis for love, sweet Elinor, and thine honour's rise that I watch and work."

"Yet Glocester is dear to me, Bolingbroke! Tell me, oh! tell me by the virtue of thine art, will his life run smoothly on? His fate is mine—and the fierce Duke Philip sharpens the hostile sword. What hangs o'er his grace's head—life or death?"

"Death!—nay, start not from the couch, too-anxious Elinor—all men must die—or soon or late; but Glocester runs no instant peril—so calm thee. Art comforted, sweet wench?"

"Thy voice has ever a strange power over me, Bolingbroke, and never so much as now. I believe I am more calm, but still not sure that I ought to be so. These promised honours may escape me after all. Is the duke surely safe? Say thy say boldly—I can bear the worst."

"Nay, press me not."

"Thy skill is mighty.—Speak out, for in his safety is mine own enwrapped—look to the horoscope again!"

"Well, since thou wilt be wiser than is wotting—what may I read to night? Let's see, let's see! What's now in the ascendant? who is lord of the conjunction? The meeting of Saturn and the moon in Scorpio argues ill, and when the black choler rises to the brain—humph! What says Jovianus? Mercury in any geniture, if he be found in Virgo or Pisces, his opposite sign, irradiated by those quartile aspects of Saturn or Mars, the man runs risk. Ha, ha! Again: he that hath Saturn and Mars, the one culminating, the other in the fourth house—Indeed! Pernicious humours amounting. So! Let's turn to Ranzovinus and Albubater, on this head? Patience, Elinor, patience awhile!"

Here Bolingbroke turned over and over the mystical leaves before him, while Elinor, restless and nervous, listened for the renewal of his jargon, and fixed her eyes on him with a fascinated gaze.

"Will my fair Lady Elinor, an' bless her! the duchess that will be soon, sip another taste of her cordial?" asked Dame Jourdain, carefully stirring the while the charmed philter.

"E'en as thou wilt, Margery—my blood burns, and I must drink again, though methinks the draught is over potent."

"Not so, not so, i' faith—'tis but mulled malvoisie, my lady, with the juice of a pomegranate squeezed therein, a taste of rose-water, and some drops of borage essence, the genuine draught to calm heroical love and its phantasies. 'Twas mixed by Master Bolingbroke's own hands, and on the recipe of the great Araby doctor."

"I know it, Margery," said Elinor; and added in a low tone, "and I too am in his hands, to be mixed and worked

on at his will. — Give me the tankard!" and Elinor drank again of the mixture, which she had freely partaken of before, whose effects were mounting already to her brain.

"Have you often felt his hand, Elinor?" asked Bolingbroke's deep, uncadenced voice.

"Have I? ah, Bolingbroke, thou knowest I have pressed it oft and oft in mine."

"It shall be thine own by wedded rites, Elinor!"

"Assure me of that, and the fattest abbot of England shall not be half so well provided for as thou, my deep-learned friend!"

"Hast thou marked closely, Elinor, whether the saturnine, epatick, and natural lines intersect each other, or make a gross triangle in his palm?"

"In sooth, good Bolingbroke, whenever Glocester's hand was in mine own, I never sought for tokens of chiromancy, but gave back the ardent pressure without any trick of art."

"If signs like these are there, the learned Corvinus lays it down such men are doomed for care, and disquietude, loss of honour, banishment, and forfeitures."

"What dismal noise was that?" cried Elinor, starting from the couch.

"'Twas but the screech-owl, flapping at the light that shines through the high casement."

"Again! how loud it flaps! I like not this — 'tis an ill omen, Bolingbroke — good cannot be in the breeze that sends out the night-birds to shriek over the charm thou hast been working. 'The ill-facte owl and leather-winged batte are death's messengers,' you know.

> "'The hoarse night-raven, trompe of doleful dreere,
> The ruefull strich still wayting on the beere,
> The whistler shrill, that whoso hears doth die,'

Are these the heralds of Glocester's safety? Oh, Bolingbroke, give me some comforting assurance that all will be well! Methinks a ducal coronet, diamond-gemmed, hangs over my brow, but fades away in the lamp's vapour. — Speak to me by the mystery of thy spells. — Canst thou not yet raise spirits, Bolingbroke? — 'Twould make me marvellous glad to hear words from the nether

world. — Begin the conjuration, gentle Bolingbroke! fair I cannot call thee, in sooth — though surely thou meanest me fair? — Call up a spirit for me, tutor mine! Oh, my brain!" An indistinct smile played across Elinor's lips as these somewhat incoherent words passed them; while Mother Jourdain turned towards the wizard with a longing leer, and exclaimed —

"Shall we begin, my master? Are your studies ripe? How runs the incantation? *Conjurate! Adzum,* and *Asmath!*"

"Peace, withered beldam! Darest *thou* sport with the dark words of fate? Not even *my* skill can yet summon up the people of the shades. I wear no enchanter's cap, like King Erricus, nor does elf or goblin yet acknowledge me for master. No, Elinor, not *yet,* my precious one, may I practice aught but what is learned from the stars and the mysteries of upper earth — but ere long thou shalt know more, when I know all a mortal may. Meantime, to ease thy troubled mood, Margery shall chant the night-spell. — Recite, Dame Jourdain! but let the philter simmer well the while — 'twill lose no force from the charmed words — Begin!"

The beldam made some mystic sign with her left hand, but not that which a pious catholic signifies as the type of salvation, and she chanted in a low but nasal twang —

"Who sains the house o' night?
They that sain it ilka night.
The new born bratte,
The dark spot catte,
The wizard's spere,
Keep this house from the weir!
From rennyng thief,
From brennyng thief,
From an ill rae
That by the gate can gae,
And from an ill wighte,
That by the house can lighte
Nine roods about, in dark or light,
Keep it all the night.
This is the spell
That shields us well;
This is the charm
That smothers harm!"

While Margery Jourdain snuffled slowly out this unchristian exorcism, Elinor's mind flew back, on the railroad grooves of memory, to those early days when her

ladye mother made her repeat at bed-time the rhyme of the white paternoster, or the litany verses —

" Mary, mother, wel thou be;
Mary, mother, think on me.
Swete ladye, mayden milde,
From al foemen thou me schilde.
Both by day, eke by nighte,
Helpe me, mayden, by thy mighte.
Swete ladye, for me pray to Heven's King,
To give me housel, shrifte, and gode bredinge."

and as those unbidden recollections of childhood and innocence rose up, the unhappy girl pressed her hands across her eyes, and felt the warm tears gushing out against her burning palms.

" Rest thee now satisfied, sweet Elinor," said Bolingbroke, as the old woman ended her chant. " Nothing of evil may now bring harm to the walls that shelter us, till the cock crows and the spirits of night are sunk in the bowels of the earth, or blended invisible with the morning vapours. We may not raise nor lay them, but we can keep them still."

" Lie quiet, my lady duchess. The comforting draught must do you marvellous service, and fit you well to meet his highness when he quaffs the philter. Lie quiet, fair paragon — my thumbs prick, he cannot be far off," said Dame Jourdain.

" Oh, Bolingbroke, what rushing sound is that?" cried Elinor, heedless of the beldam's words. " I hear them in the air — are the forbidden beings on the wing? Hast thou indeed called them to our aid, or do they come unasked — perhaps in wrath and for our punishment? — Hist! How awful the sound careers past the casement!"

" 'Tis nought but the gyral flight of the water-fowl, frightened from the castle's moat, too sensitive Elinor. Fear not, sweet heart, be calm and collected, for mayhap indeed 'its Glocester's coming that has roused the web-footed tribe to sound this needless alarm."

" Glocester coming! Heavens! how that sound thrills through me fearfully — and for the first time! It used to awake but joy and triumph."

" And why not now?" said Bolingbroke, in a tone meant to be re-assuring, but which was only harsh and grating to Elinor's consciousness of wrong; " now, when

thy power is on the point of full accomplishment? when thy royal, ay, Elinor, thine all but *regal* lover is about to be secured to thee for ever?"

"That thought is the cause of my heart's heaviness, Bolingbroke. Will he indeed be mine, or is he not even now false, perjured to his oaths, another's? Oh, my best counsellor, how my heart misgives me!"

"All will be well — all *is* well, Elinor. Thinkest thou these precious leaves, imbued with the spirit of wisdom, have cost me years of study for nought but thy undoing? Have I toiled at all the mystic arts, to be a plaything in Fate's fingers? Am I, who worked on even the proud pontiff's power as thou could'st play on thy lute, to be baffled by ill-fate, or made the sport of chance? No, daughter fair, no, precious one, thou'st nought to fear. Glocester is coming, and coming to be thine. — Hey, Margery Jourdain! asleep on thy post? — Dost nod over the skillet that holds the fate of an empire's lord? Art thou dreaming, mistress?"

"The foul fiend take thee before thy time for the dishonouring thought, black Bolingbroke!" exclaimed the choleric old crone, roused from her nodding attitude of incipient slumber by the sorcerer's harsh words, and violently resuming her task of care-taking to the charmed philter.

"Ha! gossip, dost thou curse?" cried he, in still harsher phrase. "Dost let thy foul tongue run truant, and 'gainst *me*? — Hast thou no fear of cramps? — do the pinching cholic and the night spasms hold no terrors for thee? What! muttering still, beldam? — thou provokest thy fate — then hear it!"

With these words Bolingbroke rose from his chair, and seizing a white wand, which lay by his side, he stalked forward, waving this rod of office over his head. Old Margery, terrified at the threatened burst of imprecation, and wholly subjected to a pretended power, which superstition and habit made her cling to in fear, even while conscious of its unreal nature, quickly rose from her stool, and threw herself on her knees before the tall figure which so awfully approached.

"Pardon, pardon, gentle master!" cried she. "May St. Colm and St. Bride ——"

"Name me no saints, insolent crone!" cried the sorcerer. "Wouldst have me crush thee?"

"Alas, master! I misthought me of your calling, and my mind turned back to early days, when I have seen you serve the altar and sing the saint's litany."

"Peace, thou perverse one, peace! or I'll rack thee. Dost talk to me of things like these?" vociferated Bolingbroke, a dark blush tinging his livid brow.

"Pardon, pardon!" said the old hag, covering her face with her hands, and bending her head to the earth.

"Oh, Bolingbroke, what would you do? How terrible your eyes gleam on poor Margery! Be appeased — remember what work you have in hand!" exclaimed Elinor, rising from the couch and throwing a dissuasive look on the angry wizard, while one of her snowy hands rested on his shoulder.

"How durst the old hag call me *black* Bolingbroke? or twit me with my by-gone days of altar-service? But thy bright eyes and melting tones, my Elinor, have mastered me, and dammed up the torrent of curses which I would have poured out."

"Mercy, mercy!" muttered the prostrate hag.

"Rise up, Margery, and learn discretion," said Bolingbroke, in a softened growl, turned by Elinor's seductive words and looks, even from the angry heat of wounded vanity and a stung conscience.

"List, list!" cried Elinor, clinging to the embodied type of darkness in renewed terror, on distinguishing the plaintive yet unmelodious tone of some instrument sounded from without the castle. "Bolingbroke, that is no earthly sound — 'tis not the scream of birds, nor is it mortal melody — Jesu Maria shield us!"

"Thou choosest most marvellously ill thy calls for aid to-night, even wert thou not secure from harm," said Bolingbroke, with a mortified and malicious air; "these adjurations would better suit some vesper chanting nun or cowled friar at lauds or complin, than one who ——"

"Oh, say not what I am, good Bolingbroke! Reproach

me not for what thou thyself hast made me — be merciful as thou art potent — these awful tones, this desolate place, a sense of my helplessness, and fear that I cannot master or define, overpower me quite. — Hark! again — louder and nearer!"

"'Tis the gong — the wild horn of the north — 'tis Van Monfoort sounding his own and Glocester's summons to the castle watch tower. — I hear it distinctly now, and know it well. — How now, good Elinor, thou tremblest!"

"It is not from fear, good Bolingbroke, though I do dread the duke's reproach for this perhaps too daring step — but hope, too, shakes my nerves — shall I be ——"

"Duchess? Ay, my girl, and fate might make thee ——"

"Queen!" chimed in the beldame parasite, who had recovered from her alarm, and taken her place again beside the brazier.

"Hush! they approach! list to the draw-bridge creaking on its rusty chains. To thy couch, Elinor. Be cautious, Margery; doff thy girdle and collar, old girl; look matronly, and speak not in the terms of art. And now, lie ye all by awhile, my treasures! safe covered from unbelieving eyes — my belt, too, I depose and hide with ye. Let Glocester meet me now, his humble messenger, and see who is the stronger of the twain!"

While Bolingbroke muttered this half-heard monologue he carefully spread his mantle over the manuscript and instruments that lay on the table. He then crossed the chamber, opened the door which he had secured by its massive bolt, and walked to encounter the duke and prepare him for his ulterior purpose. Elinor threw herself back on the couch, in a state of unwonted perturbation; and her eyes seemed to fix involuntarily on the mysterious skillet, the handle of which was again grasped by the witch, while the gentle bubble of its simmering contents was once more the only sound that broke the silence of the pacious and solemn-looking apartment.

CHAPTER III.

Glocester and Van Monfoort having put Fitz-walter ashore, and made some reconnoitring visits to several points of the mainland coast of Holland, turned the prow of their open boat towards Urk; and the six sturdy rowers who by turns pulled them through the waves, or managed the broad and clumsy sail of red canvass, obeying well the movements of the rudder, which was held by Ludwick himself, the island was safely made, but not till the moon had sunk, and midnight had spread its gloomy mantle on the world. It was indeed the rude horn of Gyles Postel that had announced the coming of his lord, by the blast which was appropriate to his feudal rights; and the due answer from the seneschal and warders completed the preliminary formalities which preceded the landing of the chief, and his entrance into the court of his strong hold.

"Welcome again, Lord Duke, into the lion's den!" said Van Monfoort, with a grim smile, as the flambeaux of the warders lighted them over the draw-bridge.

"Our Lady grant that I come well out once more, as Daniel did of old!"

"Why, how, my lord? You fear no guile across the threshold of a true knight?" abruptly exclaimed Ludwick, looking more angry than even his words or tone implied, and giving that peculiar jerk which was noticed on his first introduction to our readers, and which brought the hilt of his huge rapier into ready contact with his hand.

"Guile, good Sir Ludwick! no, by my troth, not from thee or thine, as knighthood and honour be my meed! But, beshrew my heart, good gossip, if I did not shake and shiver as I crossed the moat, in a way which makes me think some ill-grained genii guard this castle of thine."

"Ah! for that, your highness, I am not held accountable by any main canon or by-law of chivalry. Devils and demons may defy the votaries of belt and brand — but you, duke, are the first, friend or foe, who has given my father's hall a bad name."

"Nay, good Sir Ludwick ——"

"Nay, good my lord, but it is true. You have thrown a slur over the castle of the Monfoorts, duly dedicate to St. Willebrod, whose statue stands in a niche over the chapel door, blessed by the last but one bishop of Gueldres, and every three months visited by the holy canon Rudolf Van Diepenholt. But that I hold you, duke, the future liege lord of this my fief, in right of my sovereign countess, your affianced wife, I should not pass this slight so lightly — for let it be known to your highness that the descendant of Hendrick of Urk sprung from the eldest kings of Denmark, the inheritor of Dirk Van Zwieten, his mother's brother, the ally of blood as noble as Plantagenet's ——"

"Why, Sir Ludwick, what means all this? By my halidome there *is* something not aright that hovers over us, and has struck you with phrensy as well as me with doubt! What form is that?"

As Glocester started back, amazed and alarmed at the object which caused this exclamation, Van Monfoort turned his eyes in the same direction, and muttered a rapid sentence of exorcism, crossing himself at the same time with his clenched fist, and bowing devoutly in systematic reverence to the power he invoked, without having one fixed or tangible notion of its nature or extent. It was the dark figure of Bolingbroke stalking forward that caused this double alarm. As soon as Glocester recognised him, he whispered, just loud enough for Van Monfoort to hear ——

"In God's sooth, good Ludwick, I was not quite astray — but I must admit it was mine own evil genius of which I had warning, and not that of thee or thine. Hey! Bolingbroke," continued the duke, aloud, and in English, "what does this bode? Hast followed me so close and quick, for weal or for woe? How speeds my Elinor? 'Tis she has given you note of my movements, and sent you to my care-taking? And from Rome, what tidings? Open your wallet of news, or good or ill."

"If your gracious highness would vouchsafe to honour me with speech of you alone, that is to say, freed from the presence of this company," answered Bolingbroke, with a significant look cast round on Van Monfoort and his suite,

"I would then reveal the tidings of my mission, and show your grace the evidence of my noble Lady Elinor's well-doing. An' it please your highness, I beseech you to dismiss this rude attendance on your royal person, and let your poor servitor lead you to the apartment containing documents, and living proofs withal, of what most touches your interests and your honour."

"*Living* proofs, Master Bolingbroke! There is some meaning in that word that's deeper than my craft.—What would you lead me to?"

"Good, my lord, come this way—I pray you do, before this brigand-looking host of ours and his fierce retainers get scent of my errand, or he learns who is my gossip on this perilous voyage for your highness's good service."

Bolingbroke accompanied this urgent entreaty by supplicating gestures, and gradually moved towards the entrance of the building. Glocester felt irresistibly impelled to obey his entreaties, and by a few words of apology to Van Monfoort, excused himself for withdrawing with the stranger. The lion, for all his courage, was completely appalled by the presence of this walking mystery; and he gladly assented to Glocester's movement, which relieved him from the company of the being whom the duke had so freely admitted to be one of evil agency as well as aspect. As Glocester disappeared in one of the faintly-lighted passages leading from the hall, with Bolingbroke by his side pointing out the way, the chieftain could not but shudder at the analogy they formed to some dark spirit leading a sinner to the gloomy abyss. He stood still and mute while he heard their footsteps retiring along the flagged corridor, and thrilled as the loud sound of a closed door, and the shooting of the heavy bolts inside, told that Glocester was fastened in, with one who seemed but the foul fiend in mortal shape.

The old seneschal came to his master's relief, by quickly informing him that two women were the companions of the stranger, whose mysterious air had excited such general feelings of superstitious dread. Ludwick's misgivings on account of his guest rapidly shifted from supernatural to

human temptations, and an undefined doubt of Glocester's fidelity to his mistress, Jacqueline, took forcible possession of the chieftain's mind. To counteract in every way any possible perfidy was his first determination, and his next half-formed resolution was to break by force into the apartment, which might be dedicated to disgrace and dishonour. But a moment's reflection turned him from this notion. Hospitality, knightly courtesy, and the sacred halo thrown around royalty in the dense atmosphere of feudal feeling, all combined to prevent the outrageous intrusion; and Ludwick contented himself with resolving to obtain a full explanation on the morrow, of a proceeding which seemed so extraordinary and indecorous, to use the mildest epithets of his mind's vocabulary that could be adapted to the circumstances.

With this resolve he retired to the rude accommodations of his sleeping-place; first seeing that all was right in the chamber of honour appropriated to Glocester, placing his night-mixtus ready at hand, leaving the seneschal and Gyles Postel to the duties of attendance in his ante-room, but holding himself exempted from personal waiting, by the abruptness with which the duke retired, and for the purpose of collecting his own somewhat scattered ideas to meet the exigencies of the case.

We may not expect to describe the combined sensations that rushed on Glocester, when he entered the hall into which he was ushered by his dark conductor. Surprise and joy, at the presence of her who had so bound herself round his heart, were mixed with keen remorse at the sudden recollection of the forsaken Jacqueline, a pang of comparison between the two objects, so unfavourable to the one before him, and a superstitious alarm at the sight of her and her satellities, to which even his valiant heart was not invulnerable. His rapid glance seemed to take in at once the whole combinations of the scene, and he felt overpowered by the conviction of his enthralment in an united web of love and magic. Elinor gave him no time to recover his presence of mind; nor did the first impulse of her feelings allow her to act on her own. Forgetting totally the part she had to play, impelled only by her de-

light at seeing the object of her varied anxieties, she sprang forward, with a throb of united affection, security, and triumph; and in the wildness of sentiment — not uninfluenced by the draught so artfully prepared to aid its excitement — she flung herself with hysteric rapture into the arms of her royal paramour. At the same instant Bolingbroke slowly stole from the hall into an adjoining closet, while his beldame associate at his beckon hobbled out, with a grin of mingled malice, envy, and other as odious combinations — leaving the impassioned pair totally lost to a sense of all but their criminal joy. And never did guilty love enjoy a moment of more redeeming sincerity. The reciprocity of deep delight shrouded for an instant a long course of mutual guile. Deception was dead, except in its action on the heart of each self-deluded lover; and they stood for awhile locked in an embrace, which they might be at once pitied and pardoned for believing to be as pure as it was in reality profane.

Nor must the erring son of frail humanity shudder with pious horror at this picture of his fellow-sinner's abandonment to the exquisite delusion. Let him rather hope it was a merciful respite granted by offended Heaven, to soothe the fever of unholy passion. And, at any rate, the most obdurate moralist may be satisfied, on referring to the page of history, that Glocester and Elinor paid in after days of suffering an ample penalty for this and similar moments of self-forgetfulness.

"Nell! my precious Nell!" murmured Glocester after awhile, drawing back as if to gaze more intently on his mistress's flushed and animated features.

"What would my gracious lord?" replied Elinor in a subdued and softened tone.

"What would I? Nought, by Heaven! but to be for ever thus happy in thy arms."

"For ever, my good lord? Beware the sin of exaggeration. Ever is a long word!"

"No, Nell, time is but a span. Eternity itself were brief as the lightning's flash, could love and beauty fill man's grasp for ever."

"Ah, flattering prince! how many hours have flown

by since you proffered these same honied words to — Jacqueline?"

"Nell, sweet Nell! do, precious wench, but let me be happy awhile. — Dash not this sweet draught of bliss with gall — i'faith, I love thee — thee only!"

"Ah, my lord, forgive me! but your truant flight — this hurried voyage — which I, it may be, have too rashly dared to follow and pry into ——"

"No, no, my bellibone, thou hast done well — very well. I ask not why or wherefore thou hast come — I wish to believe it, as all things of thy doing, an act of pure affection — doubt not me then, more than I do thee."

"How could your highness doubt a poor and lowly creature, who has done all that woman may do to prove her heart's fealty? But you, my lord ——"

"Why how's this, Nell? Let me look on thee awhile! Thou art neither red-haired nor black-eyed; the sure signs of jealousy in woman. These smooth brown tresses and these full grey orbs speak loving tenderness and confiding faith. Nor art thou clad in weeds of doubtingness. This mantle of rose-coloured, inwoven silk, should not cover mistrust. Fitter would be a robe of disbelieving yellow or forsaken green — or a watchet velvet gown, pierced with oylet holes and stuck with needles, the true types of jealousy, such as my late brother King Henry, when madcap Prince of Wales, wore on a visit of reproach to our royal father for his suspicious temper. And wouldst thou, my own Nell, in this bright hour of joyance, poison my bliss, and crucify thy soul with like heartburnings?"

"Ah, good my lord, this mingled tone of seriousness and banter, leaves me more in doubt than before."

"Mark ye, my precious one, the words of the old adage: 'From heresie, frenzie and jealousie, good Lord save us?' or know ye the good old rhymes —

> 'Windes, weapons, flames, make not such hurle-burlie,
> As jealous women turn all topsie-turvie?'

Why did you ever love me, Nell, if love was but to breed suspicion?"

"In good sooth, my lord, I can but answer with Geoffrey Chaucer's Wife of Bath —

' I followed aye my inclination
By virtue of my constellation ; '

And again I may say with the rhymester, that she who loves as I do —

' May no while in confidence abide
Who is assaid on every side ; '

And oh ! knows not your highness that she who has Venus and Leo in her horoscope is, when the Moon and Virgo be mutually aspected ——"

" Hold, hold thee there, good Nell, in very mercy ! Oh, what a dolt I was to lead thee on to rhymes or star-learning ! "

As Glocester thus exclaimed, he loosed his embrace of Elinor, and giving way to his passionate temper he paced the room impatiently, volubly running on as follows —

" Thou art not just towards me, Nell. — Thou'st no co-rival in my love — I merit not this. Were I some lazy loiterer, some hedgecreeper, some dreaming dizard, who like a decrepit, gnarled old man with shaking joints, a continuous cough and sap dried up, stands aloof from her he loves — were I as a log or stone — had I a gourd for my head or a pepon for my heart — then indeed thou might'st assail my faith with doubts. But I, who have all given up and nought lamented for thy sake — I, who have eschewed temptations, braved reproaches — ay, Nell, and smothered conscience for thee, is it meet I should be doubted ? But what have we here ? — a silken-wrapped scroll to my address, with a broad seal. — Hey ! stamped with the pontiff's own sacred signet ! *Vertu Dieu !* I had quite forgotten Bolingbrooke and his missive. Ah, Nell, is this no sign of my love for thee ? I'll not yet open this rescript ; and here again lies a parchment leaf unclosed, — ' To Humphrey of Glocester ! ' Blunt enough ! This is private matter — rhyme again ! —

' Humphry who faine would rede,
Must fuste need to spel ;
Three B's would sting thee ded,
Thy balm lies in an L.
No death-knell, but a Nell for life —
One is the grave's deep voice, t'other says make me wife ! '

Ha ! here is no trick of tergitour, no necromantic spell — this speaks plain English. Three B's ? — Why, Bur-

gundy, Britanny, and Bedford are the three who would pierce me with their stings — and a 'Nell for life,' and 'make me wife,' needs no book-learning methinks to understand. Is this thy precious scribbling, Elinor? 'Tis an open asking of the banns, i'faith!"

While Glocester waited for a reply to this question, somewhat sternly put, all his softer emotions were revived by hearing loud sobs from Elinor's couch — the only answer she either could or would give. But we must not stop to analyse what portion of art mixed with the reality of her apparent distress. The lately-checked tenderness of the protector revived at this irresistible appeal of female distress, and he immediately flew to Elinor's side and stifled her sobs and sighs in amorous caresses.

It was then that he perceived, standing on a high-legged tripod, placed beside the reredosse or fire-place, a parcel-gilt goblet of rare workmanship, which he instantly recognised as one he himself had given to Elinor.

"Ah, Nell! but it was kind and like thyself," said he, "to bring this token of old times and happy hours to greet me in this wild spot! Well do I remember me the night when I tracked the snow-covered pathway across the meadows from Westminster to Charing, with this cup under my doublet, bought for thee at Pioli's, the Lombard, in Eastcheap. Oft have I drained it ere now from thine own filling, Nell, and I warrant me thou hast bethought thee of my drouthiness this chilly night. — Let's see!"

With these words he took up the goblet, and was going to quaff off the contents, when Elinor started forward and caught his arm, exclaiming —

"Not so, not so, my lord — I must give it you — 'tis from my hand alone you must take the draught."

"Good wench!" cried Glocester, with a glowing glance of gratitude at this new proof of his mistress's amiable solicitude; while she, holding out to him the goblet in her left hand, muttered the whilome set form of rude verses the charm required to give the philter full effect.

"What say'st thou, precious one?" asked the thirsty and love-sick duke.

"But a short respondel, good my gracious lord, and most

sweet lover," replied Elinor, at the same time handing the cup towards his longing lips. He took it eagerly, and never loosed his hold or drew his breath till he had swallowed the last drop of the potation.

Having never ourselves drank of a love-philter, we cannot undertake to tell precisely the effect internally produced on Glocester by this momentous draught. But its consequence on his conduct and bearing were of a nature most alarming to the terror-stricken girl who had administered the dose. It was not madness that suddenly developed the mind's disease — it was not idiotism that spoke its overthrow. Glocester neither raved or foamed at the mouth, nor exhibited any other sign of actual phrenzy; but there was an instant and undefinable evidence in his every look, word, and movement, that showed him utterly possessed by the influence of uncontroulable passion. The most secret and potent ingredients of those love-draughts of old are happily unknown in the times that be, so that there is no means of bringing to any living test the proof of what is recounted to us of their effects in the days of yore. That in the present instance they were such as to absolutely terrify Elinor is certain, but it was such terror as assails the over-anxious mind, appalled at the fulfilment of its too extravagant desires. Had Glocester owned the world at the moment, it had been laid a free gift at Elinor's feet; but being scarcely master of himself, the offering he made was one of comparative insignificance, and the transfer into Elinor's absolute possession was effected with a facility wonderful to her who set such value on the acquisition, but of no note to him who threw himself away without an effort of either reason or reflection.

The fact we believe to have been that poor Humphrey of Glocester was in the predicament of many an entrapped libertine of later days; and that the grand measure of ruin which he now so passively submitted to, was not produced by any means of magic beyond the blandishments of female beauty, or by any aid of liquid provocations but those common to the various modifications of drunkenness. Be that as it may, his political and moral degradation was consummated on that night. The crafty Bolingbroke was on

the watch to seize the fittest moment for re-appearance on the scene. Flinging aside, for a season and a purpose, all the trappings of his unholy callings, he next presented himself clad in the costume of undefiled priesthood. Glocester, bewildered and beset by irresistible persuasions, repeating by rote words which he could scarcely comprehend, and giving way to inducements which he had no power to combat, was almost, without either his knowledge or consent, married to the woman who had long been his mistress, and was in no possible point of view suited to be his mate. Bolingbroke was the fitting maker of such a match, and Margery Jourdain the worthy witness of its completion.

We wish to draw a veil over the scene so degrading to a gallant prince, and to the country whose honour was partially involved in the transaction, as well as to human nature itself, which can so little bear a too close scrutiny. We do not like to picture chivalry and manliness reeling in dishonouring orgies, or love and religion, two such holy impulses, choked in polluting fumes. We therefore close the scene, and hasten to end the chapter.

When Ludwick van Monfoort arose at dawn on the following morning, big with the intention of keenly questioning his royal guest, he repaired to the ante-room of the chamber of honour, to make inquiries as to the night proceedings of the castle's inmates, some of whom excited such strange suspicions. He was not a little surprised to find Gyles Postel and the seneschal in most unbefitting attitudes of repose. He awoke them with considerable difficulty; and finding no satisfaction in their drowsy confusion, he passed onwards to the bedroom, but found no Glocester there. His next visit was to the hall and the adjoining sleeping nooks, given up to the accommodation of Bolingbroke and his female companions. There a wide scene of vacancy was also presented to the shuddering chieftain, who was at very little loss to account for the disappearance of the duke, considering the nature of the being to whom he had entrusted himself. A renewed attempt at inquiry only increased his alarm, for he found the warders at the gate still more completely overcome with sleep than either the squire or the seneschal, while the very watch-

dogs at the outer porch snored in a chorus of most unusual contrast to their general ferocious activity. Ludwick could in fact obtain no satisfaction as to the extraordinary disappearance of his guests. But the over-sleepy guardians, whom he believed the victims of some spell, acknowledged to each other that the dark stranger had given them a generous portion each of mulled and richly spiced beverage; and a fisherman, who returned at daybreak to the island, asserted that he saw in the dim twilight a strange vessel tacking out to sea against the rough west wind, with a boldness and skill that appeared uncommon even to a daring adventurer of the Zuyder Zee.

Van Monfoort immediately repaired to his rendezvous with Jacqueline, to attend her to the jay-shooting at South Beveland; after which memorable meeting he never quitted her, as we have already seen, until the night of her adventure in the castle of Amersfort. It may be supposed that his accounts of what had passed at Urk were not given with any reserve for Gloucester's sake; and the doubtful conduct, so veraciously reported, may be well supposed to have sunk deep into Jacqueline's already mortified and wounded feelings.

CHAPTER IV.

The ancient but insignificant town of Hesdin, on the confines of Picardy (to which the progress of our story now requires us to repair), had presented for some weeks all the bustle, much of the idleness, and no small portion of the vice, without the industry or the intelligence of a capital city. The natives, turned from their usual laborious pursuits and simple habits by the influx of money and the example of expense, either looked with envy on the gay nobles and their followers, or aped, in their humble sphere, the dazzling extravagance of the court. Lounging at the doors of their little shops, or gaping from the windows of their wooden houses, they followed with wondering eyes

the groups of cavaliers and ladies, who were perpetually galloping through the narrow streets. The large profits they made on every object of their petty merchandise, and by the letting of lodgings, added to their pride in the presence of their sovereign, his splendid retinue and distinguished guests, had caused the inhabitants of Hesdin to rank among the happiest and laziest of Duke Philip's subjects. Every day almost was a holiday, and the evenings were passed in conversation on the sports and splendour of the morn.

Adventurers of all kinds crowded from all quarters to this scene of busy idleness. Mountebanks from Brussels, Dijon, and Paris, found a ready road to it. They were privileged visitors, independent of truce or warfare; and foreigners even, if their nominal pursuits were those of pleasure or martial exercise, passed freely through all quarters of states at open variance with each other. Among the motley crew of this itinerant population, there was a man who shrugged his shoulders and curled his lip with disdain, when the simple burghers and their but half-corrupted wives and daughters held forth in wonder on the magnificence of the equipages, the gallant air of the knights, the beauty of the ladies, and the greatness of their duke. He was a foreigner, who, among many other accomplishments, practised the profession of master-of-arms; for the modern title of fencing-master by no means expresses the variety of modes in which he taught men to cut, and hack, and stab their fellow creatures. The particular occupations of Duke Philip at this period, formerly alluded to, made Hesdin the resort of numerous professors of the noble art of defence and attack, who were sure to find favour, when they chose to seek it, in Philip's eyes. But among them all, none had gained so high a reputation for skill and address as Balthazar Spalatro; nor excited so much curiosity, by a line of conduct very unusual with his class. If he was to be believed, he had seen many a grander court, much finer troops, superior knights, and more beautiful women; while he vehemently swore that there was not a single noble of Burgundy, Flanders, or Artois, that knew how to handle a rapier, wield a battle-axe, or poise a lance.

"Then why don't you teach them, Master Balthazar?" asked, one evening, the old widow, in whose house he had been living on credit; for though he had shown public proof of his talents, he had constantly refused to give lessons in his art, yet seemed in the greatest straits for money. "Why don't you teach them? How often have I told you they would pay you well, and in ready coin? The followers of our noble duke have great gains, and generous hearts."

"*They* pay me!—Balthazar Spalatro touch their filthy coin! By St. Barnaby, Dame Madeline!" replied the Italian in very fluent French, but with a frown, and angrily pressing his threadbare black velvet *toque* on his brows, — "by St. Barnaby! you are as short of memory as I am of money! How often have I told you that I am from Milan, and an Orleanite?"

Most frequently the good woman dared not reply to these retorts; for Spalatro, cased in his buckram pourpoint with rusty steel buttons, huge hairy deer-skin gloves, broad leathern girdle stuck with a sheathless dagger, high starched Italian frill, and double-topped brown boots, gave the law like a feudal lord in Dame Madeline's humble dwelling. But emboldened on the present occasion by sheer necessity, that mother of hardihood as well as of invention, she ventured to raise her shrill voice as near as possible to a pitch with the key-major of her insolent lodger, and said sharply, —

"What a coil is this, Master Balthazar, on the score of my good advice!—May I not speak within my own walls? May I not give a hint? How are we to get on? Have you not consumed already the whole store I had laid in for winter? Is not the goodly half of Louis Benoit's Michaelmas hog already gone, that I meant not to touch till Christmas? Did you not use the flask of Florentine oil in three days, that would have lasted me from Martintide till Candlemas? Is not the three-galloned keg of Vernage drained to the very lees? Who picked the last leg of the old red cock for supper yesternight, and scooped the bottom of the horn of marmalade for breakfast this morning? And what have I seen of your money?

— two sequins, and four Spanish florins! A goodly sum forsooth, for six weeks' bed and board, and the use of my red-tiled floor, where you rant, and stamp, and cut capers, and flourish your weapons, in a way to throw an honest woman into fits! And now I must not speak — and why? Is it because Madame of Orleans was born in Milan like you, that we are to perish for want, while all Hesdin is in wealth and luxury? Master Balthazar, Master Balthazar!"

"Hark ye, good dame," said the Italian, twisting his moustachios, and with a supercilious air; "the tongue of a woman is hard to be parried. It gives both point and edge, pushes carte and tierce together, and is at once the passado, the staccato, and the punto!"

"I know not what means your gibberish," replied the dame, with increasing spirit in proportion to her lodger's tameness; "but this I know, that I am an honest widow, though lone withal, and care not for your punt, nor stickado or pico — not I! though while men like you have their rapiers and daggers, a poor woman like me has no weapon but her tongue."

"Which at least she never allows to grow rusty," retorted the Italian. The landlady was about to reply, and no doubt the conversation would have gone on in a way highly edifying for us and our readers, had it not been interrupted by a loud knocking with hard knuckles against the street-door, which shook at the unusual assault, while Balthazar placed hand on hilt, and stood in a posture of instinctive defence.

The old woman having opened the door, two men wrapped in large cloaks were seen standing close to it.

"Is this the lodging of the Italian master-of-arms?" asked one of the men, in a blunt, unceremonious tone, and an accent not of the purest; and unceremoniously poking in his face, of which only was visible a broad, misshapen nose, that seemed to have suffered from rude assault of mace or gauntlet, and a profusion of red and grey beard and moustachios.

"Yes, my masters, 'tis here that the renowned professor does honour by deigning to lodge. Step in, step in, good

sirs! — there stands his honourable excellency, Signor Spalatro himself; ready and willing, I'll warrant him, for a passage of arms with all comers.—A gentleman of proof, and condescending withal!"

While Dame Madeline grew thus eloquent, from the hope of relief, the man who had spoken threw a glance round the low-roofed apartment, the rafters of which were half concealed by the smoke from a turf fire, which only found a resting-place when it required a vent, and floated like drapery on the cooking utensils that hung against the walls. The stranger shook his head, and whispered some words only audible to his companion, who stood close behind. But the Italian, rather elated by even Dame Madeline's puffery, and comprehending that the poverty of the place had given a poor idea of the talent of the professor, drew himself up into a still more imposing attitude, cast a look which was all but insulting on the strangers, and with a haughty, and almost a menacing air, he waited till they again spoke.

"And have you then, most magnanimous Signor Spalatro," resumed the former speaker, as they both entered the house. "no better a place of arms than this? Nor other weapon than that two-handed axe, and that cut-and-thrust rapier in the corner?"

"A good workman requires few tools," replied Balthazar with disdain.

"And you have not then a short sword, a Saracen sabre, or a diamond-pointed or falcon-beaked battle-axe?" asked the other roughly.

"By St. Barnaby, my masters, it seems you think I was born in this paltry place, and that I had gathered up an armoury of hilts and blades! Let me tell you then, that when I turned my back on the Alps, I brought nothing with me but this poniard, do you see?—and as it was still red at the point, I had little care to look behind me! Perhaps the same thing happened when I set out from Toulouse, and as much at Paris; and if I travel without baggage, I might find you a reason if I chose. But the hand and the eye of Spalatro!—grace be to God, they travel with me!"

"And would you, bold signor, favor me with a trial of your skill in arms?" courteously asked the second stranger, who wore on his face the common concealment of a black velvet mask.

"With all my heart," said Balthazar; "a civil word and a nimble wrist are sure passports to my favour." And he looked with an air of mingled patronage and reproach on the first speaker, who retorted it with a coarse stare of defiance.

"But before I take weapon in hand," resumed Spalatro, "let me tell you, my masters, that I am Milan-born, and a follower of the house of Orleans."

At these words the unmasked stranger looked fierce, and put his right hand under his cloak; but a glance from his companion's piercing blue eyes, that shone brightly through the surrounding black velvet, arrested his arm; and the Italian continued —

"So you get no lesson, not so much as a salute from Spalatro, if you do not first pledge your honour that you are not in the service of Burgundy."

Old Madeline made a horrible grimace on hearing these words, for it was a thousand to one the new-comers were of the household, or at any rate of the train, of Duke Philip. She read as much in the boiling looks of the coarser stranger, who was a short, stout-built man, whose face bore marks of service; and she was about to interpose between the Italian and the customer he was so wantonly declining, when the man in the mask stepped with a bold air into the middle of the room, and with a strong emphasis exclaimed —

"Be satisfied, signor, I am neither the servitor nor vassal of Duke Philip."

"Enough said," cried the Italian. "Between men of honour a word is as good as an oath; and now, my brave sir, what essay would you like to make? Sword, battle-axe, or poniard?"

"They say you are good at all arms, signor," replied the stranger, with a somewhat haughty tone; "and perhaps you have ere now measured blades with a feebler arm than mine. I have no objection to cross rapiers or clash

daggers with you, for a trial of skill — but it is your fame in wielding the war-axe that has brought me to seek you now."

He here made a signal to his companion, who immediately threw open his cloak and produced a couple of light rapiers, such as were used in the exercise of arms, but not of the form employed in serious fight. Spalatro threw a look of contempt at them, and said with a sneer —

"Truly, good gentleman, if these are your weapons you might find worthy practice among the popinjays above at the castle, or with the pages who ride at the Quintin. I have nothing to teach of child's pastime. But if you wish for a lesson in matters of real moment, let's take to the battle-axes, and I'll show you a trick or two."

A nod from the stranger thus addressed produced a second unfolding of his companion's cloak; and two highly-polished battle-axes were discovered hooked to his girdle, one falcon-beaked, the other diamond-pointed at the extremity called the *maillet*, and the handle terminating in a three-cornered point called a tusk.

"Aha! these will do well, my master," said Spalatro, taking the weapons, weighing them in either hand, and admiring them in every part. "By St. Barnaby's beard, this likes me well! These are engines of proof! Woe wait the skull which from either of these might catch Spalatro's blow on the morion! On your guard, Signor — I'll teach you the stroke of fate!"

"Hark ye, Master Balthazar," said the stranger with an easy air of superiority, "this is the condition of our compact. If you teach me a single point of novelty that a fair-fighting man may use against his enemy — and I am on honour to confess if it be new to me — this purse shall be yours," and he pulled one from his girdle and placed it on the table. "But if your high vaunts lead to nothing that I know not already, why then ——"

"No more!" exclaimed the Italian, with an air quite as arrogant as before. "If I don't in five minutes earn the purse, I'll eat it and its contents."

"Heaven forbid! No, no, Master Balthazar, we want

the contents badly enough, the Virgin knows, not to think of ——" cried Dame Madeline, anxiously.

"Peace, beldame!" vociferated Spalatro, — "who gave you leave to speak of *my* wants? On your guard, signor, on your guard!"

The man in the mask now threw his cloak aside, and showed a tall and graceful figure modestly attired. He seized his weapon with both hands, holding the edge towards himself, the falcon-beaked *maillet* (somewhat resembling the claw of a hammer) levelled at the Italian's head, and having his wrists guarded by the *rondelle,* a round plate of steel attached to the handle of the battle-axe. He placed his left foot in advance, and stood firm, as if to meet the shock of an enemy.

"And is that what you call a posture of guard, bold sir?" asked Spalatro, with an ironical grin. "It may perhaps suffice in the north here, — but if you have to do with an Italian or Spaniard ——"

"Why," said the stranger, briskly, "do you hold that a northern is less to fear in mortal combat?"

"Not so fast, good signor! The double-hilted sword of a Fleming, a Dutchman's mace, or an Englishman's long-bow, are weapons unmatched in all other lands. But for the axe or dagger there are none to compare with those beyond the Alps and the Pyrenees. — So, how would you strike at your man?"

"With the *maillet* on the casque, and then give point with the handle in the visor."

"Yes, yes," said Spalatro, with a smile, "to stun his head or scratch his cheek; all that does well enough in the passing bustle of an onslaught, where you strike right and left, and have no time for finesse. You have seen such work as that, signor?"

"Perhaps I have," replied the stranger, haughtily.

"And shivered many a lance no doubt in the Tournay?"

"Well, and what then?"

"Why, this — I'll wager my dagger to the smallest coin in your purse, you have never fought in the lists, foot to foot, blood for blood, life for life, or you would never

talk of wielding your war-axe like a butcher. Now, mind you your lesson."

With these words, the Italian put himself in a showy posture of attack, and raised the battle-axe above his head.

"Now, signor, said he, "suppose you were a northern, a Dane, a Scot, or an Englishman — the Duke of Glocester, let's say; and I, as it might be, Philip of Burgundy; the fate of their coming duello depending upon such a turn as this. Not to waste time and expose my body to his blows, attempting, like a vulgar man-at-arms, to poke the tusk of my axe-handle into his visor, but by one adroit twist to loosen it; do ye hear?"

"By St. Andrew, ay!" answered the stranger, impatiently.

"A visor," resumed Spalatro, "and above all the new-modelled visor of the English casques, introduced by their late King Henry and now in high vogue, is infallibly loosened if we can jerk out one of the twisted pivots on which it is hung at either side. But the edge of the axe has no purchase from which the wrist may wrench it. You must, therefore, press with the tusk, between the rosette of the rivet and the ear-plate. Do you hear?"

"Go on, go on!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Then the visor, once undone, flies instantly aside from its new-fangled construction — each bar drops in the socket, the face is exposed from brow to chin, and you have only to choose where to push the tusk or the beak of handle or *maillet*. Not being nice, *I* always select the temple or the eye."

"But," said the stranger, in a less animated tone, "it is not so easy to hit the mark between the rosette and the ear-plate. God's my speed, good fellow, if there's the space there of a bodkin's point!"

Spalatro smiled. "A little address, signor! that's all!" said he. "Hold! your velvet mask there is tied within a hair's-breadth distance of the rosette of a visor — the knot touches the ear — very well — presto! away!"

And as he spoke, he struck aside the battle-axe from the stranger's hand — by a dexterous twist inserted the pointed handle or tusk of his own into the knot — and in a

moment jerked off the velvet mask from the stranger's face. Both Spalatro and Dame Madeline instantly recognised the aqueline nose, blue eyes, and other marked but not handsome features of Philip "the good." The old woman clasped her hands together and shook with sudden terror. Spalatro glowed with silent triumph. The duke's attendant clapped his hand on his sword, and stepped with a menacing attitude towards the Italian. But Philip interfered and exclaimed,

"'Tis well, 'tis well! I am satisfied."

The familiar, as all close attendants of the great were then called, pushed back his rapier into his sheath, picked up the mask, and muttering something unheard by the others, prepared to collect the various weapons.

"It is well, Spalatro, you have earned your purse, and proved your skill — yet I doubt me if I could serve Duke Humphrey's helmet such a turn as you showed my mask. But we shall have another bout ere long, and try you at other arms. Let me see you at the tilt-yard to-morrow morning at seven — you shall be fitly cared for: Joos Wooters here, my trusty armourer, will do you honour with true Flemish hospitality, and show you some pieces of rare device and workmanship. Good woman, look up and be happy. Take this coin for the use of your chamber and an earnest of my protection, and show yourself in the buttery at the castle. You shall find welcome and wherewithal to add to your store. No reply, Signor Balthazar! Not a word, good dame! I have had my frolic out — but every one knows I brook no comment. When my foot is across the threshold, and my back turned, let the events of this visit be forgotten — good evening!"

"Forgotten!" said Dame Madeline, as the duke and his attendant glided away, wrapped in their cloaks as before, — "Forgotten! Holy Mary forbid that ever it should be forgotten that my poor dwelling was honoured by the footing of the good duke! Oh! Signor Spalatro, didn't I tell you great luck was coming on us? Great glory is yours, and much honour have you brought me!"

"An hour gone, it was 'Master Balthazar,' reproach and abuse," said Spalatro, "and thus the world wags in

Artois as in Italy? Ah, Dame Madeline, you little guessed how an Italian master-of-arms could manage his fence with fortune. But all is now well. Go to Master Merlet, the taverner's, with this gold mouton, redeem my crimson velvet suit and silver tissue breeches — but you needn't tell how tarnished they are! — replenish the cask of vernage, get a double flask of Gascoigny, and let me have a supper fit for the playmate of Duke Philip!"

CHAPTER V.

The following morning the master-of-arms was punctual to the duke's hour of appointment. He took his way to the castle, gaudily equipped in the crimson suit which the good dame had taken out of pledge; his bonnet to match, with plume and tassel hanging on one side his head; and his cut-and-thrust rapier held under his arm when no one was near, or trailing ostentatiously on the ground as soon as any one was in sight. He soon passed the gate of the town, traversed the suburb, crossed the bridge over the little river Canche, and approached the precincts of the celebrated castle, where Duke Philip held at that epoch one of the most brilliant courts in Europe.

Spalatro had not an architectural or antiquarian eye, or he might have stopped to examine the antique edifice, which was built in the eleventh century, by Baldwin, Count of Artois, on the site of the ancient fort erected seven centuries previous to even that remote date, by a Roman Governor of Gaul. Our Italian passed by with equal indifference the original body of the building and the immense additions made by successive sovereigns; and scarcely noticed even the magnificent park, gardens, and pleasure-grounds that extended on all sides; his only object of inquiry being the tilt-yard. To this place he was directed with great courtesy, by the various porters and pursuivants who did duty at the several barriers, for he found that his name acted as a sufficient passport in

every quarter, and his self-importance did not lose any thing in consequence. The tilt-yard was a vast square enclosed with walls at a considerable distance from the castle, and in the midst of offices for the due accommodation of horses, hounds, hawks, and all the sporting appurtenances of the princely establishment. The Italian was received at the entrance by his gruff acquaintance of the preceding evening; and on inquiring for his highness, on whose invitation he had come, the Fleming pointed to a rising ground not far off, where Spalatro soon distinguished the duke, breasting a rapid hill, which he ascended at the rate of men who run for a wager. He was, in fact, at his usual task of training for his daily exercises, which he never by any chance omitted, being as it seemed determined that every advantage of physical condition should be added to the moral courage which urged him to the combat with Humphrey of Glocester.

This preliminary being finished, Philip mounted a horse, which was held ready saddled by a groom, and after taking several gallops in a ring specially devoted to such exercise, he rode towards the tilt-yard. He was now accompanied by a group of princes and nobles, with their and his own personal attendants, for almost all his guests followed his example, and either from courtesy or for pleasure took part in his pursuits. The Duke of Britanny, his brother Arthur of Richemont, Philip Count of St. Pol brother to John of Brabant, Anthony bastard of Burgundy, James de Lalain, Peton de Saintrailles, and numerous others of note, were of the party. But the Duke of Bedford, the chief of Philip's guests, was never present at these morning exercises, which were avowedly undertaken from hostility and hatred to his brother.

As Philip entered the tilt-yard, his keen eye soon caught the figure of the Italian master-of-arms, and he accosted him with that frank and ready condescension which had contributed so much to gain him the surname that should be bestowed only for deeds, not manners. Spalatro felt doubly proud in this distinction and in the cunning management by which he had first acquired the notice of the duke; for all his reserve as to giving lessons in the town

of Hesdin, and his apparent candour in avowing himself a partisan of the house of Orleans, were merely assumed for the purpose of exciting Philip's curiosity, which he knew well was more than ever alive to every subject and person connected with the feats of arms. He had speculated well; for his reputation for skill and his refusal to teach were soon bruited in town and castle, and Philip, as the Italian calculated, was unable to resist the desire to judge for himself. Several of the household had been for some days previous sounding Spalatro, and when the sovereign visitor himself at length came, the Italian knew him from the first moment and timed his conversation accordingly. Philip now accosted him with all the eagerness inspired by his last night's proof of address; and he soon put it farther to the test by various trials with sword and lance, which amply bore out the Italian's previous specimens of knowledge in his art.

While all this was going on, the various nobles and knights taking part in the exercises, riding at the quintin, practising with arbalettes, pitching quoits, or slinging the bar, a considerable uproar was heard approaching from the town; and several official personages, from the gate-keeper up to the chamberlain, came in due succession of grades to inform the duke of the cause of disturbance. It appeared that an inhabitant of the suburbs having just then killed another man, as he and his friends asserted in fair fight, he came with a posse of the townspeople, according to the privilege of their charter, to claim from the duke in person the right of freedom for the successful combatant. As this was an event of rare occurrence almost the whole population of Hesdin had poured forth, glad of an opportunity to lay claim to even the smallest portion of corporate rights, of which cities have naturally been at all times so tenacious. The duke and his friends, with their followers, were on their parts equally anxious to see this exhibition; and Philip, mounting his horse, took post in the centre of the tilt-yard, surrounded by the officers of his household, in a state of most unceremonious disorder. The word being given for the entrance of the crowd, a rush of men, women, and children took place, bearing the

newly-claimed freeman before them, high lifted on the shoulders of the foremost, besmeared with blood, and looking aghast and awe-stricken, from the memory of his recent exploit and amazement at his present honours.

"Long live Nicholas Mavot, free burgher of Hesdin!" shouted the crowd, and it was some time before their boisterous triumph subsided sufficiently to allow their official spokesman, the provost of the town, to take his place in front, and address his formal demand to the duke for the blood-stained ragamuffin's admission to the rights and privileges of citizenship. Philip, assuming all possible gravity, and preventing by his example any outburst of laughter or signs of mockery on the part of his numerous suite, asked if the fact on which these claims were made was not substantiated by proof?

"May it please your highness," answered the provost, "you will remember, that by article or item seventy-seven of the charter of our honourable Bourg of Hesdin, or *Hesdinum*, granted by the puissant Count Robert of Artois in 1288, and confirmed by his noble, potent, and princely brother and successor Othon, in 1330, of which article or item your highness, our liege lord and sovereign, has of course due cognizance ——"

"In the hurry of the moment, I cannot say that I quite, perfectly, absolutely recollect the particular clause," said Philip.

"Then I will cite it for your highness's satisfaction," replied the provost, proceeding to unfold a huge heap of black-letter parchments; "or if it seems well to your benignity, I can read the whole charter from beginning to end."

"No, no, no!" exclaimed the duke, hastily. "Pray, most worthy provost, spare yourself that trouble. Far be it from me, for my own gratification, to impose such a task on so honourable a functionary, or to inflict on our much beloved and highly-cherished people of Hesdin a causeless delay in the accordance of their rights! Cite the clause, if it so please you, but don't read it — I take it on your word."

"Long live the good Duke Philip for ever!" rung in a

hundred reverberations round the walls of the tilt-yard; while the provost, low-bowing, but somewhat disappointed withal at losing the opportunity of reciting a couple of hundred sheets of execrable Latin, seized the first moment of silence to resume.

"Thus, then, your highness, runs the aforesaid article — 'If any inhabitant or sojourner in the suburbs of the said free bourg of Hesdin, or *Hesdinum*, kill or have killed another outright, in single combat for fair cause his own body defending, he may come direct, with such burghers or followers as choose, and demand his rights of franchise of the sovereign count in person — the only proof required being the blood of his slain enemy, undried, on his right hand, the evidence of the lifeless body, and his declaration that he did the deed, with his readiness to maintain it, shield on arm and cudgel in hand, against the offered gage and challenge of all men.'"

"And hast thou, Nicholas Mavot, done thine enemy to death, in single combat, for fair cause?" asked the duke, turning to the blood-stained candidate.

"Ay, so it please your highness's majesty!" said the fellow, holding up his reeking right hand and a bloody knife, while several others dragged forward the corpse.

"And does no one challenge the franchise so demanded," said Philip aloud, turning away from these disgusting evidences.

"Yes, yes, your highness!" exclaimed a half-breathless man, plunging through the throng, and approaching the duke — "God grant I am not too late! I challenge the murderer's claim — I dare him to single fight, shield on arm and cudgel in hand — and I will prove the miscreant's crime on his false body, in open lists of battle, when and where your highness and the good burgesses may command."

"And who art thou, good fellow?" asked Philip, touched by the man's emotion.

"I am Jacotin Plouvier, your highness, freeman of Hesdin, and brother to the youth this wretch has murdered."

"He avers that he killed your brother in fair fight," said the duke.

"In fair fight!" exclaimed the other; "and who will believe him? Look on him as he stands — dwindled, shrivelled, and mis-shapen — mark his gnarled limbs, and say if he could overcome a man, much less such a man as Pierre Plouvier! Ah! there is my brother's body!" continued he, half frantic as he recognised the corpse, which he seized in his arms and held forward to view. "Look now on this that was erewhile a man! See the fine proportions of this form, the sinewy arms, the powerful breadth of chest and shoulders, and say if such a thing as *that* could cope with him! Oh, God! oh, God! and is this thy fate, my dear, dear brother! Look here, look here, where the villain's knife entered the back! See the gash — and the blood that gushes from it still! Is that fair fighting? Duke Philip! Duke Philip! I beg, I demand justice at your hands! Fellow burghers, will you let your franchise be polluted by the admission of this murderer? Oh, my brother, my brother, my brave, my beloved brother — you, strong, on the point of marriage, with hope and health for thy lot in life, is this thy fate?"

With these words he hugged the corpse in his arms, and wept like a child. Then dashing the body furiously down, he called out again —

"But what's the use of this? Is this the way to revenge his death? Let the body be flung into its bloody grave — but give me my revenge! Duke Philip, I call on you for justice and vengeance!"

"Ill-mannered man," cried the provost, pushing him aside, "is it thus you clamour to your sovereign? Is this the dutiful respect you owe to his highness? What will these nobles think of the people of Hesdin after such a specimen? Stand back! stand back, fellow!"

"No, no, this must not be," exclaimed Philip, pressing forward his horse. "By St. Michael, the man speaks well and fairly! And it shall never be said that Philip of Burgundy refused justice in a case like this — he who for years cried out, and still cries out for vengeance against his father's murderers! Let the gage of battle be granted — there is just cause! What say you, Nicholas Mavot, to this man's charge?"

"He trembles and cannot speak," said Plouvier. "Is not that guilt, your highness?"

"It may be innocence, good fellow," said Philip. "This presence and your accusation might agitate any man. Speak Mavot! how came this wound in your adversary's back?"

"I cannot say how, your highness," replied the accused, in a faltering voice, "but there are wounds on the face and breast as well."

As he said this, some of his friends held up the dead man's visage, which was scarred in several places, and faint marks of the knife were also on his breast.

"I can speak to those scars, if so it please your highness," said an old woman who stood by.

"Speak then, without fear or favour," said the duke, in an encouraging tone, and with a look of recognition.

"Well, then, under your highness's protection and God's mercy," said Spalatro's landlady, Dame Madeline, coming out from the crowd, "I saw from the river's side, where I was stooping low to gather cresses, Nicholas Mavot start from the copse close to St. Helen's well, and stab young Pierre Plouvier behind; and while the poor youth lay bleeding and gasping on the ground, turn round the body, and gash it on the face and breast with his knife."

At these words a burst of execration ran through the crowd, and respect for the duke and his company alone kept the people from tearing the culprit in pieces.

"'Tis false, 'tis false!" cried Mavot, with a glance of despair. "She is his mother's sister, and would swear away my life. I killed him fairly, and will stand by my act."

"Justice be done!" said the duke. "Let the lists be prepared for noon to-morrow, in the market place, the gibbet for the vanquished erected hard by, the weapons and other usual matters prepared, the accused and the accuser shaven and shriven; and, by God's grace, we will ourselves witness the combat, in which may Heaven favour the right and punish the wrong!"

Shouts of approval and delight ran through the crowd. The check given to the exercise of a corporate privilege, was amply repaid by the near prospect of a scene of legal

barbarism. The official attendants took the two champions into their keeping, to prepare them in due course of custom for the morrow's ordeal; and as soon as the throng dispersed the duke led the way to the castle, to meet his more elevated visitors at breakfast, having first given orders to Joos Wooters to conduct Spalatro to the armoury, to exhibit the new forge built on the duke's own plan and under his inspection, and consult on the formation of a newly constructed head-piece and hauberk, which had for some days past occupied Philip and his workmen, almost to the exclusion of all other matters.

CHAPTER VI.

Philip's attention was soon diverted from the scene just described, by the variety of objects, both of politics and pleasure, which at this time required and divided his cares. At the morning repast which waited his return to the castle were assembled the princely guests before enumerated, together with the Duchesses of Burgundy, Bedford, Guienne, and the celebrated Countess of Salisbury, whose beauty had totally captivated the good duke, by whom she was raised to the level of even his wife and royal visitors. She shared in the honours of his court more like its mistress than his guest; and her influence was not only tolerated, but sought for and turned to account, by every one of those whose interests were more or less at stake, in every public measure adopted or abandoned by Philip.

The most anxious of all the high personages at that time assembled was the Duke of Bedford, who saw that, notwithstanding the treaty of Amiens, sworn between him and the Dukes of Burgundy and Britanny, two years before, Philip was evidently wavering in his constancy, instigated on the one hand by the unceasing intrigues of Arthur de Richemont, who was married to his sister the Duchess of Guienne, and on the other by his personal enmity against the Duke of Glocester. Bedford conse-

quently devoted all his efforts to secure Philip to his cause by the influence of his wife, also Philip's sister, and of the Countess of Salisbury, his almost openly avowed mistress. Little cordiality therefore existed among the leading inmates of the castle of Hesdin ; and all the less distinguished persons followed the course of these high examples, to turn the ducal court into a scene of public dissimulation and secret intrigue.

" Lovely countess, my fair sisters, my wife, and noble princes all, I crave pardon for what may seem my uncourteous delay," said Philip, on entering the private eating-room, with that air of elegance for which he was distinguished, and which we may fairly suppose was, even in those remote times, formed on the same system of exterior observances which constitute good breeding at present ; for although fashion may have effected many modifications, still the essentials of manners among a polished people must be at all times nearly the same.

" I know not how it betides," continued the duke ; " but day after day some unforeseen occurrence keeps us later and later from our meals, and makes us wholly heedless of the old distich, the golden rule of life, which tells us,

' Rise at five,
Dine at nine,
Sup at five,
To bed at nine,
And you shall live to ninety-nine ! '

But we shall by and by reform, and return to the wholesome hours of our forefathers."

" Good my brother," said the Duchess of Bedford, " small chance there seems of that, while you give yourself up to those exercises which consume your mornings in a way more fitting to some young page, or unspurred 'squire, than to a sovereign prince and mellowed warrior."

" Verily, sister Anne," cried the proud Duchess of Guienne, while her husband, De Richemont, gave an approving look, " you rarely miss an occasion to twit our noble brother with these necessary trainings, which every knight has need for ere he combat his mortal foe. 'Twould almost seem, were it not unnatural quite, that you regretted the chances which he thus acquires for victory."

"Scarce more unnatural than that my sister should give utterance to such a surmise against my affection and my duty."

"Affection and duty when divided, my good Anne, weigh light in either balance, and 'tis doubtful which may kick the beam."

"Why, how is this, fair sister?" said Bedford, with his usual temperate and placid interposition in these bickerings. "Has an hour's unusual fasting made you sarcastical this morning?"

"No, Bedford!" exclaimed De Richemont; "but it seems to have made our sister Anne more splenetic than meet, when she takes to task in this way our brother Burgundy."

"Sure I am at least," replied Bedford, calmly, "that our noble brother needs not thy championship, De Richemont, to save him from his sister's kind solicitude."

"Solicitude!" said De Richemont, angrily, "methinks the word is misplaced, or at least the object it applies to. Thy duchess, Bedford, is too much English in her heart not to let Glocester largely share in her — solicitude."

"The Count de Richemont is a too ready interpreter of others' thoughts, and a far too indelicate utterer of names that, at least, might be left unspoken," retorted the Duchess of Bedford, with rising warmth.

"False delicacy is twin brother to foul play," said De Richemont. "I practise neither, I am prompt in speech, and open in deeds;—if I think of Glocester I mention him, and if I mention him it is in no guise of friendship."

"We need not that news, good brother," said Bedford, losing temper at this persevering rudeness. "We know that no Englishman is honoured with Arthur de Richemont's amity."

"Perhaps 'tis because I have tried them well," muttered De Richemont.

"Perhaps because you treated them ill," replied Bedford, in as low a tone.

Philip, who had listened to this conversation, saw lips quiver and cheeks grow pale, and he thought it full time to interpose, as he did not wish for an open breach be-

tween his brothers-in-law, though not sorry for these occasional skirmishes, which shewed him his own importance in the eyes of those who were so ready to quarrel on his account.

"Good brothers, and kind sisters," said he, "this is a bad way to blunt the edge of appetite. It is not beseeming this family party which we all form together. By the holy patron of my name and house, it grieves me to see ill blood between those so dear to me! And the reproach falls back on me — for I must be a sorry host to manage so ill my guests, as to give them time for disagreement. To table, ho! Squires, to your duty — let the trenchermen attend!"

While the various squires, of the wine-cellar and the pantry, with the squires *trenchant* (or the carvers), and various others who had waited for this signal, busied themselves with all the occupations of the substantial repast that was now served, Philip took every means to restore tranquillity among his relatives, and then turned his most gallant attentions to the beautiful Englishwoman, who almost presided as mistress of the feast, but still did not actually assume that place in a way so decisive as to shock the feelings of the Duchess of Burgundy by her side, or the temporising scruples of the other princesses. Conversation after a time became animated and general. The late ill-temper was either forgotten or hushed up, as the dissimulation of courtiers acting on the egotism of men told the rival brothers-in-law that mutual policy required them to wear a fair face. Philip recounted the scene of the tilt-yard to Bedford and the ladies; and the curiosity of all was deeply engaged for the result of the combat to take place on the morrow. Other subjects of immediate interest for the present day — the miracle play to be acted by the company of Paris mummers before dinner at noon, the hawking party in the plains close by the palace for the evening, and the ball at night, to be followed up by the most favourite pastime of all the *dance machabré*, or dance of death — were topics that gave ample occupation between the courses of the repast. It ended in due time; and the various persons broke off in groups or singly slipped away,

to the many pursuits of listless gallantry, or still more idle occupations which filled the hours of the uninformed, if not unintellectual, race of beings, who knew not the glorious impulses of improvement, given by the invention of printing and the revival of literature to the generation immediately succeeding.

When the ladies were escorted with due honour and chivalric care, as their various fancies led the way, Philip proposed an adjournment to his closet to his brothers of Bedford and De Richemont, with the Duke of Britanny and the Count of St. Pol (brother to John Duke of Brabant), regent of Hainault, and Jacqueline's most unflinching enemy. The four princes followed as Philip led the way through the files of pages, chamberlains and halberdiers who lined the galleries and corridors; and this council of sovereignty was soon in close debate, with closed doors, having given strict orders that their privacy might be undisturbed, except on the arrival of some pressing despatches.

We will not clog the march of our story, by detailing all the subjects debated in this domestic congress, in which its various members endeavoured to subvert and thwart the designs of each other, or render them subservient to their own particular interests. The Duke of Britanny, a prince of mean talents and wholly influenced by his brother De Richemont, left to the latter the task of counteracting Bedford's efforts to keep Philip steady in his alliance with England, and in his enmity against Charles the Seventh, and only gave him the negative support of his general silence, or occasional assents to the appeals which De Richemont made to his authority for his arguments or insinuations.

The Duke of Bedford, on the other hand, laboured in every possible way to strengthen his influence over Burgundy, by assurances that England should stand neuter in her quarrel with Jacqueline, let Humphrey of Glocester wish or think as he might. St. Pol, who personally hated the latter, from recollections of the war of Hainault, the preceding year, as well as in right of his championship for the cause of his brother, John of Brabant, whose honour was supposed to be violated by Glocester in the tenderest

point, threw all the weight of his support into the same scale with the brothers of Britanny, so that Bedford found himself alone opposed to the other three. But still relying on Philip's esteem for him, his hatred against his father's murderers, and his personal interest so much at stake in this Dutch question, he hoped to keep his ground in the unequal contest.

Philip, always actuated by his thirst for aggrandisement, and his want of money for his exorbitant expenditure, took this occasion to press on Bedford several demands which he knew the regent would not dare to refuse.

"Willingly, my brother," said Bedford, with diplomatic cleverness, putting the best face on Philip's avaricious claims, "it is but fair that I agree to what is so justly your due, in right of your predecessors. I cede to you, in the name of my nephew, King Henry, and these noble princes are my witnesses, the counties of Auxerre and Macon, with the lordship and castleward of Bar-sur-Seine, in full sovereignty, and in quittance for those unsettled accounts. And for my individual self, I freely waive my right to present payment of the balance of one hundred and twenty thousand gold crowns still due on the dowry of my beloved duchess, consenting to receive it in two years from this day, or to take in lieu an annual payment of four thousand livres, redeemable by quarters, at the choice of yourself or your heirs."

"Bedford, my good brother," said Philip, pressing the regent's hand, "this generous compliance with claims you might have withstood, and requests you might have refused, merits my gratitude, and adds to my esteem. And you engage to restrain your impetuous brother Glocester, who so little resembles you in prudence and discretion, from sending aid to that false woman whom I will not call my cousin."

"My brother Humphrey is dear to me, though I lament his rashness in this unhappy cause," replied Bedford, "and I vow to you to leave no means untried to make him abandon it, or at least to neutralise his opposition to your proceedings against Countess Jacqueline. He shall have neither men nor money, if my influence may keep

them back. Would that I might succeed as well in stopping this fatal quarrel between ye, and dissuade ye both from your projected combat."

"Name it not, Bedford! I swear by St. Andrew, that if the solemn council now assembled at Paris does not prohibit the fight, my body or Glocester's shall remain dead within the lists."

"Right, cousin!" exclaimed St. Pol. "Be it never said that you were persuaded to shrink from the duel you provoked — the blood of your race would run back sullied to its source!"

"Brother of Burgundy," said De Richemont, "in your place, I would forbid, on pain of a personal quarrel, any Englishman to speak on this question in my presence. It is a settled point, and it must be a false friend who would recommend a withdrawal on *your* part, which would brand your good name with infamy."

"So think I!" cried the Duke of Britanny, with a solemn shake of the head.

"Hear me, princes!" said Bedford; "but it is to you, De Richemont that I particularly speak. No man will venture, I hope, to throw a doubt on my word — it is beyond attaint; and Philip of Burgundy, when he named me as umpire in the unfortunate quarrel, even to the combat which is to decide it, between him and my own brother, became warrant for my impartial honour. As to you, Arthur de Richemont, I know you to be choleric; and he who has done doubtfully by the English nation may well be excused some petulance against its individual sons. I therefore let pass your unmeasured phrase."

"To gain more freedom to attack my honour?" cried De Richemont, in high ire,—"Is it so, Bedford? For if it be, Glocester and Burgundy shall not be alone in the lists! Do you mean to impute me wrong in the affair of my parole? Do you revive the question of my freedom from its obligation, as soon as your brother, King Henry, died?"

"I revive no question, for it never ceased to exist," said Bedford, coolly; "nor will I now discuss a point on which we might never agree; the case is a plain one.

You were a prisoner honourably taken in the fight of Agincourt. You obtained leave on parole after six years captivity, to come into Britanny for the especial purpose of freeing the duke, your brother, from the prison to which he was treacherously confined, by connivance of false Charles, the self-styled king of my late brother's and my present nephew's realm of France. When you arrived, your brother had gained his liberty by other means—our royal Henry sank into an untimely tomb. And you, the prisoner of the English nation, held yourself freed from your parole by the death of the English king. England could not send an army to hunt you down. You took your freedom, and you keep it. Such is my statement, and no more. I make no comment, and you will scarce offer a denial."

"Denial!" repeated De Richemont. "No: you might have spared yourself and me, and our brothers and cousin here, this long repetition of facts notorious, and which I am ready to maintain with my body against the lowest or the highest man in England—ay, or in France, good brother, all regent as you are!"

"Hold there, De Richemont; your cause will gain no strength from empty words. Let us cease these squabbles, which can end in no good result. Matter enough of moment presses on us. For you the question is, will you or will you not take manly quarrel with Britanny, your brother by blood, and with Burgundy and me, your brothers by marriage? Will you make another to the triple act which binds us in solemn ties of honour in one common cause? Or will you, instead, accept that mock staff of Constable of France, which usurping Charles dishonours you by offering."

"No man shall dare dishonour me—not even a king's son, English or French—either by act or implication," said De Richemont. "And to prove my straight-forward readiness to meet your questions, and to demean me as I ought at this crisis, hear my answer. If Burgundy and you, and my brother of Britanny here, with St. Pol to witness for the contract, agree and promise me the command of a sufficient army to take the field against Charles, I reject his offers of the staff of constable, which no hand

has grasped since Earl Buchan loosed his hold of it in death on the bloody field of Verneuil. I bind myself to your common cause; and I pledge myself to finish the war or die in the attempt. Answer me, now, all, freely, and without guile."

"I give my full consent," said the Duke of Britanny.

"Speak, Bedford!" said Duke Philip, with his usual caution; "you are the representative of a king, and have most at issue."

"Then, with all the candour required of me, I answer," said Bedford, deliberately. "In the first place, I offer to Arthur de Richemont, the county of Jersey, in full sovereignty, and a yearly pension charged on the joint revenues of France and England, to what amount may be fixed by arbiters chosen equally by himself and me, in proof of my desire to attach him firmly to our cause. But I cannot in conscience confide the leading of an army of thousands of men, to one who has never fought in battle-field since his early essay in arms on the plains of Agincourt, and who showed not even there the skill required for such a charge."

"Furies of hell! must I bear this?" cried De Richemont, starting violently up; "'tis said, 'tis done, the insult is graven in my heart! By Heaven and earth I swear this never shall be forgiven. England, I pledge you from this hour, eternal, desperate hatred, revenge, and ruin! Philip, farewell! St. Pol, bear with me! Brother, follow me! Bedford, the day will come when you and your detested nation shall rue this outrage!"

With these words De Richemont attempted to leave the room, followed by his brother; but Philip interposed, and was endeavouring to calm his fury, when a chamberlain, who had previously knocked at the private door of the closet, and was commanded by Philip to enter, came in, and handed a sealed packet to the duke, saying, that the knight who was its bearer had come post haste, without an hour of rest, from Zealand, by Flanders, and craved immediate admission.

"And who is the knight?" asked Philip, seizing the packet impatiently.

"Sir Francon de Borsele," replied the chamberlain.

"Ha!" exclaimed the duke, "give him instant admission! Brothers, friends, I implore ye stop awhile; let every personal thought be sacrificed to me one moment, then follow what impulses ye may."

The four princes resumed or kept their seats with as much apparent calm as they could command so soon after the rude explosion that had agitated all of them more or less. Philip began to tear open the seal, the envelope, and the silk bands that bound the packet, and at the same instant, Vrank Van Borselen entered the room.

"Welcome, Sir Francon," said Philip impatiently, as the young knight made his obeisance. "This packet is fastened with a minuteness that does honour to Zealand etiquette. It is from your noble father, no doubt, and you may perhaps save time by unceremoniously telling the contents. Speak, good Sir Francon — you are in confidential presence, and need have no reserve."

Vrank was certainly well enabled to obey this order, for it was himself that had written, folded, and sealed his father's despatch, with the forms used among the great in the most civilised parts of Europe, but which were totally unpractised in the rude regions whence he had arrived, except by the sovereign or those immediately attached to the court. He was tolerably prepared with the succinct account he had to render to the duke of the transaction at Tergoes, having well digested his father's recital, which he listened to attentively during the half-hour occupied in the tying up and sealing of the despatch. He knew well the personal appearance of the princes before whom he was to speak, and had learned from the chamberlain that they were closeted with the duke; so his air was quite unembarrassed, and he began his speech with a steadiness worthy an ambassador. But ere he advanced further than some courteous form of words by which he introduced his father's respectful message, Philip had succeeded in coming at the inmost fold of paper which contained the written document, and casting his eye on it for a moment he burst out laughing and exclaimed —

"By St. Andrew, this is a model for diplomatists!

Hear ye my friends, the despatch of my noble vassal Heer Borselen of Eversdyke — 'For saving of time and fear of risks, I commend your highness to my son Vrank, the bearer, who knows all I could communicate.' Before our lady, Sir Francon, your countrymen merit well their reputation for caution! But why give so much time to outward preparation if speed was so important?"

"To let none through whose hands the packet might chance to pass suppose we were in haste, which most often betokens indecision."

"And had you chanced to fall ill, to die even on the road, Sir Francon, of what use was your despatch?"

"Better your highness should have remained some days in ignorance of my news, than let it be known prematurely to your enemies."

"Heaven always grant me such prudent allies as your father, and such faithful servitors as you!" exclaimed Philip, "and now for your tidings, Sir Francon, which this preface does not announce for good!"

"They are not so, in truth, your highness, but you will pardon the messenger who would wish them better. In brief then, Countess Jacqueline, her brother Lewis, Rudolf Van Diepenholt, Ludwick Van Monfoort, and the whole force of their faction, are in close junction, and have the upper hand——"

"They shall soon be undermost, Sir Francon!" cried Philip.

"Hear me out, your highness — and a large fleet with some thousands of English troops——"

"Ha! what would you say?" exclaimed Philip; while Bedford, De Richemont, and St. Pol started suddenly up, the Duke of Britanny more slowly following their movement.

"— Were in our seas the moment I left South Beveland," continued Vrank, respectfully and firmly.

"Well, well!" cried Philip.

"— And ere I reached the coast of Flanders—"

"What then? Speak quick, Sir Francon! What then?"

" —— They must have landed in some of the islands of Zealand."

At this conclusion of Vrank's broken sentence Philip lost all his wonted command of temper and discretion. He stamped on the floor, and uttered imprecation after imprecation with astonishing volubility. De Richemont and St. Pol could not conceal their delight, and chimed in with every inflaming epithet to add to Philip's rage; while Bedford, overwhelmed with surprise and sorrow, stood silent and almost stupified.

" Let Punic faith be no longer the by-word for treachery —but English perfidy stand in its stead!" cried Philip.

" Let the house of Lancaster bow down its head in shame!" said St. Pol, in even a higher tone.

" May no Briton ever again meet confidence or trust!" exclaimed De Richemont, more loudly and fiercely than the others.

Bedford, the while, spoke not a word, and his unruffled air, proving him superior to all personal feelings under such injurious circumstances, did more towards calming Philip than even the violence of De Richemont and St. Pol, which had, however, made him already ashamed by showing him the deformity of his own intemperate bearing. Bedford's countenance of candid regret told him also how blameless he was in this affair. Philip, therefore, with one of those prompt exertions of self-command which few men possess, became instantly as calm as though nothing had occurred to discompose him; and while De Richemont and St. Pol gazed on him, as astonishment mingled with the respect which was due more to his power over himself than others, he offered his hand to Bedford, and exclaimed,

" Bedford, I heartily ask your pardon! As my brother, as my guest, as the noblest instance that lives of honour, wisdom, and valour, the atonement is triply due to you. I am ashamed to have forgotten my sense of decorum, and to have sunk in your esteem. Forgive me!"

Bedford pressed the proffered hand in his, and assured Philip that he blamed not the natural expression of passion so justly excited, but that he would prove his regret and

displeasure at its cause, by instantly setting out for England and interposing his whole authority between his brother and the madness of his proceedings. The witnesses of this prompt reconciliation were differently moved by it; Vrank Van Borselen felt the most generous emotion rising up, at the double display of magnanimity; the others looked on in sullen disappointment and displeasure.

"Ere noon, my friends, I shall communicate to ye all my views of this unlooked-for matter; but of this be assured, it shall change in nought my already concerted plans, nor shall it interrupt in one tittle the sports traced out for the six days which are to come. Let me impose implicitly on all, silence on these events, and beg as a boon, apparent forgetfulness, at least of all that has passed at this conference. At the end of this week's term my plans will be arranged, and each will then be free to follow all his own. In the meantime this frantic expedition from England gives me little concern. My faithful friends in Zealand and Holland will soon check the invasion, and my troops from Flanders under John Uterkin ——"

"Are already opposed to the enemy," said Vrank, who knew well how to interpose a well-timed interruption even to his sovereign.

"Good!" cried Philip, his blue eyes sparkling with joy at the ready intelligence, "and we shall soon ourselves confront the danger! — And now let us result to your Friesland mission, Sir Francon."

"All promises well, may it please your highness. Radbolt of Ils and Haron of Bolswart, the leading chiefs, have sworn fidelity and prompt succour to your cause."

"Enough then! Let Glocester stand on his guard! — you may retire, Sir Francon — we will give you private audience to-morrow, and hear minute details."

No sooner had Vrank obeyed this intimation, than Philip once more enjoined secrecy, and forbade all outward evidence of dissension between his brothers-in-law; and the princes soon separated to follow up the various amusements traced out for the day, with the smoothest looks, and the least agitated thoughts they could command.

Vrank took immediate measures for repose and refresh-

ment after his rapid journey, and did not make his public appearance until the night had fairly set in. Then, more from duty than from actual inclination — for recollection of the Zevenvolden had produced a magic change in the temperament which formerly urged him into the vortex of pleasure — he joined the dancers in the ball-room. A certain feeling of vanity also prompted him to show how little he valued the fatigues of three days and nights' travel. And he never excited more admiration than he did on this occasion, by the union of grace, elegance, and gallantry, with an air of solid sense that was pre-eminently his own.

CHAPTER VII.

The combat for life and death between Jacotin Plouvier and Nicholas Mavot was the subject of universal curiosity, and a species of wild interest to almost every individual in the town and castle of Hesdin. It was fixed for the hour of noon on the day following the scenes we have just described. Long before that hour the lists had been prepared in the market place of the town, fronting the site where the Hotel de Ville was subsequently erected, by Sebastian Oya, architect to the Emperor Charles V. The place where that edifice now stands was on this occasion occupied by a covered wooden pavilion hastily erected for the accommodation of Duke Philip and the princes his guests, with some others adjoining for the courtiers and officers of the household. These "stands," as we familiarly call such erections, were hung with cloth of various colours, filled up with as much care as could be given on such short preparation. But neither the time nor the occasion allowed or warranted any approach to such magnificence of decoration as was displayed in honour of the jousts and tournaments, on which the scene about to be enacted was a farce, and to modern notions a disgusting parody. But the immense crowds, collected from the

towns and villages for leagues around, who had heard of the affair during the night, now filled the wide area of the market place with a lively exhibition of human anxiety, in a matter that involved excitements a thousand times greater than the most elegant display of chivalry. And there was something desperately awful in the absence of every thing imposing, and the presence of all that was impressive, in the preparations for the deadly conflict. The coarsely constructed arena was thick strewn with sand; the palings that surrounded it were rough and rude; two chairs covered with black cloth were placed at either end; the huts outside the lists which contained the almost savage men were of the commonest materials, little better than sties for swine; while opposite the duke's pavilion was a high gibbet, from which a rope dangled down; and a dark visaged hangman stood beneath, holding the noose in his impatient hand.

Just as the clock of St. Mary's church struck out the deep-sounding notice of noon, the trumpets of Duke Philip announced his entrance into the tower; and in a few minutes he and his suite of friends and followers took the various places assigned for them. No parade of majesty beyond the official troop of attendants accompanied Philip on this occasion. He came in the mere character of a spectator, and the solemnity of his black suit and the stern calmness of his look, in which he seemed the model for all those around him, harmonised well with the awful feelings of the crowd. No ladies appeared in the pavilion. Their absence was occasioned, not by the ferocity but by the vulgarity of the expected exhibition. Had it been gentlemen who were to fight and noble blood that was to flow, the tender dames of the fifteenth century had not shrunk from, but would have anxiously thronged to the scene. But the total want of every thing softening or graceful left the spectators to the uncurbed exposure of man's natural fierceness.

The provost of the town, Mercio du Gardin, and Messire Gilles de Harchies, a gentleman appointed for the day to the same office on the part of the duke, acted as judges, and took their station in a balcony close to the lists. At a

signal from Philip that he was ready, a bell was rung, for the combatants were not honoured with a flourish of trumpets, and the doors of the huts were simultaneously opened and the men led to their respective chairs. Mavot looked wild and haggard, his adversary determined and fierce — but the countenances of both were stamped with the air of desperation natural to men on the point of a struggle which must end in the death of one or the other.

The whole appearance of these men had something frightfully ludicrous, and the crowd on seeing them could not resist a murmur of laughter, which rose above the exclamation of horror that mingled with it. For a tight dress of leather enveloped each, showing the form of limbs and body with the accuracy of complete nudity ; their feet were naked, their nails cut close, and their heads shaved. They stared on each other with an expression of mutual surprise and disgust ; and recollecting that each was a resemblance of the other they simultaneously started back, as if they would shrink from the reflection of their own disfigurement. They sat down on the chairs and waited the progress of the ceremony, while the provosts raised their truncheons and called out to the indecorous crowd with a loud voice,

" Guare le Ban !" a technical warning of magical effect, for it produced an instant silence among the people, who dreaded the punishment that was sure to follow an infraction of the order it implied.

Some of the corporate officers now entered, with attendants bearing various matters. . Two of them placed in the hand of each champion a bannerol of devotion emblematic of their respective saints ; and a functionary, holding a large illuminated mass-book with silver clasps, proposed the customary oaths, with true official indifference to the perjury which one or the other of necessity committed. Mavot swore that he killed his enemy fairly ; and Plouvier swore that he did the deed foully. The impatience of the spectators was quickly relieved by the more decisive tokens of the approaching combat. To each of the men was now handed a triangular wooden shield painted red, the apex of which they were obliged to hold upwards, instead of bearing it in the

more natural and efficient manner common to knights and soldiers. Then the bannerols were replaced by two maple sticks of equal length and weight, and each a most deadly weapon in the grasp of a desperate man. The chairs were removed outside the lists; and the final ceremony of preparation took place.

This was of a nature to call forth the exercise of all the provost's authority to repress the laughter of the crowd, and to put to a severe test the decorum of the better-mannered spectators. Close beside each champion was placed a copper vessel filled with grease; and a groom seizing each with one arm immediately fell to work to smear him over in every part with the slippery unction, so as to make it quite impossible that either could catch hold of his adversary with any chance of retaining him for an instant.

Next was brought forward two basins of ashes, in which each man carefully plunged his hands and rubbed them well, removing the grease and allowing a steady grasp of shields and cudgels. And then was put into the mouths of both, coarse sugar, to refresh them in the course of the combat, keep them in wind, and afford a supply of saliva — for such were the supposed qualities of the remedy.

The attendants now retired; and one of the provosts standing up in his balcony, flung down a glove into the arena and cried loudly —

"Let each man do his duty!"

A rush forward towards the paling, which bent inwards with the pressure of the throng, straining, jumping, pushing, and squeezing, and causing, consequently, a general disappointment to individual efforts, proved the anxiety of the people to witness the first assault. It instantly took place; Plouvier, who was strong and athletic, rushed forward with the vigour of a wild beast bounding on its prey. It seemed as if the next moment must have decided the fate of the short and crooked but still active being to whom he was opposed; and had Mavot waited the attack, such had no doubt been the result. But as Plouvier came close to him and raised his arm to strike, he shifted his cudgel into his left hand, held up his shield, and, stooping

down, seized a fistful of sand, which he dexterously flung full into his enemy's face. Shouts of applause and laughter burst from the people at this unheroic stratagem, and were loudly renewed as Plouvier strove to rub the sand from his eyes, while Mavot plied him with fresh showers of the subtle missive, and accompanied every discharge with a stroke on the legs, which made the other caper about in a double dance of pain and rage, alternately stooping his hand to rub his shins, or raising it to relieve his eyes.

Plouvier dealt round furious blows at random, but enough to keep aloof a bolder assailant than his; and by degrees he freed his eyes from the sand. Then measuring the distance between him and his prey, he darted forward and attempted to seize Mavot by the arm. But the greasy member slipped through his hold, and several similar efforts met the same result, the crooked man twisting and twining away with most ludicrous attitudes of active deformity. Plouvier gasped for breath, and dashed the foam from his mouth; while Mavot, seizing the opportunity of his exhaustion, aimed one blow at his stooping head, with such sure effect, that the blood spouted from his brow and streamed down his face, while he staggered back and fell to the earth apparently senseless.

To finish the victory he was thus rapidly gaining, Mavot limped after his victim, encouraged by the shouts of his friends. "Long live Nicholas Mavot, free burgess of Hesdin!" was the cry from all quarters; and the hitherto triumphant man flourished his cudgel for joy. He approached the prostrate enemy, and raising the weapon high, seemed to search the most vital part for its descent, when Plouvier, who had met trick with trick, and only feigned insensibility, sprung upwards with a galvanic bound, and before the deliberate homicide could elude his grasp, he seized him by the throat with both hands, squeezed and shook him with giant force, then flung him on the sand, and with half-a-dozen well-dealt blows left him a corpse.

He gazed at him for a while to mark that his struggles were over. Then, amidst a profound silence from the

astonished and horror-stricken crowd, he raised the body in his arms, and advancing to one side of the lists he flung it over the paling, at the hangman's feet, and under the gibbet from which it was so soon to dangle.

A loud shout of acclamation now burst from the crowd, who had recovered from their momentary feeling of horror. "Jacotin Plouvier for ever!" was now the cry; and amidst the boisterous greetings of the people, who rushed around from all sides, Duke Philip and his guests abruptly retired, disgusted at the scene, and somewhat ashamed to have been its witnesses.

To efface with all possible speed the unpleasant impression of this event, both from himself and others, Philip gave immediate orders for a justing match for the day but one following; and in the mean time had recourse to every possible variety of those occupations which then interested him and employed him most. A long closet conference with Vrank Borselen, on the details of his Friesland mission and the particulars of his Zealand news, protracted audiences to receive the nobles from Flanders, Hainault, and his other states, who came by invitation to share in the festivities of the week, employed several hours before evening. More than one deep consultation with Spalatro and Joos Wooters filled up some intervals, in a manner most congenial to Philip's preponderating mood; and the receipt of frequent letters from several quarters gave a variety of excitement to the busy day.

One of these despatches, hastily torn open during his reception of some new-comers, seemed to afford Philip a mixture of satisfaction. He was of too subtle a nature to be often hurried into any exposure of feelings which he wished to conceal. The observers, however, could not fail to remark the variety of emotion which seemed to affect him on the perusal of this communication. He hurried over the ceremony of the scene he was engaged in; turned his attention suddenly from his visitors to some of his official attendants; and for the remainder of the day wore at times an air of deep abstraction, as if he pondered in his own despite on some embarrassing dilemma. But still the

pleasures of the field, the table, or the bower, went on with undisturbed vigour; and the next morning opened with a renewed appetite for each.

Descriptions of tournaments have employed many a pen and filled many a page, and so much has been written on the subject that it has now become as trite as it is picturesque, as familiar as it is interesting; but let all that has ever been told of these gay scenes be combined in the memory or magnified in the imagination, and it will scarcely exceed the display of princely splendour that was exhibited in the tilt-yard of Hesdin Castle, on the day fixed on for the great justing matches that arose from the events just narrated.

We must omit the mention of many a feat of prowess, in which young knights made elder heroes jealous of their fame. Nor can we indulge in dazzling details of the beauty, the elegance and the coquetry which inspired, added grace to, or took advantage of the various passages of the day. Great injustice must we be guilty of to the noble Lord of Ternaut, in hastily glancing over his gallant mien and good conduct, "his bronzed skin, and bushy beard, and his countenance of warrior, not of maiden," as recorded by the honest chronicler of his deeds. And as much are we in default to the memory of his redoubted challenger, Galiot de Baltasini, who, armed at all points, sprang at one bound from his saddle, "as lightly," according to the same authority, "as though he bore on his body but a silken pourpoint." With lance, estoc, and battle-axe did these champions deal many a blow and thrust on each other's head-pieces and harness, and full bravely did they accomplish their feat of arms. But nought did Duke Philip's piercing eye discover in all this wherewith to add to his own skill, or which might by any other means rival the master-twist he had learned from Spalatro, who did not fail to return, with sundry consequential winks and nods, the condescending looks occasionally thrown towards him by his all but royal patron.

And as little space may we afford to aid in the well-merited immortality of the trusty English esquire, Thomas

Qué, who on this occasion gave and took full many a stroke for honour's sake, with the brave Boniface of Old Castile; each man sustaining the quarrel of another, with all the noble ferocity that chivalry could have exacted had it been their own. Philip of Burgundy and his duchess, and his sisters, and the lady-mistress of his illegal-love, and all the dignified personages before introduced to our readers, with the numerous and brilliant suite of dames and maidens of honour, of chamberlains, equerries, squires, and pages, partook to the utmost stretch in all the usual enjoyments afforded by the exciting scene. All wore an air of festive satisfaction. The fires of political resentment smouldered but did not blaze; and all the jealousies and envies of the court were decked in a motley masquerade of cordiality and candour.

There occurred, however, more than one circumstance that betrayed the under-current of ill-will, which checked this stream of politic suavity. During the justing between the Englishman and the Spaniard, frequent sarcastic remarks were thrown out by De Richemont and his wife, not pointed enough to call for retort on the part of the Duke and Duchess of Bedford, but sufficient to hurt the sensitiveness of the latter to the quick, and not a little galling to her calm and dignified husband.

When, in the heat of the assault, Thomas Qué displayed great agility and skill, the Duchess of Bedford, turning to those next her, exclaimed,

"I'faith, he bears him like a gallant gentleman!"

"As a kestrel has resemblance to a hawk, fair sister," said Richemont with a sneer.

"Nay, but he wields his estoc with a good grace, Richemont?"

"Rather as an Irish gallowglass might shake his stave, than as beseems one trained to chivalry."

"Hush, hush, good Anne," said Bedford, "thou see'st that Richemont does not brook the flourish of an English weapon." On this the fiery Breton was preparing a sharp retort, when he caught a look, darted from beneath Philip's bushy brows, which half commanded, half begged for-

bearance: De Richemont complied; but soon found occasion to return to his vexatious tone of sarcasm. Loud shouts, shaking of scarfs, and other marks of applause acknowledged the efforts of the champions in one peculiarly hard struggle. The Castilian returned these inspiring tokens by courteous gestures, and seemed animated to still greater exertion. The phlegmatic Qué took no notice whatever, but steadily met his adversary's new attack.

"By St. Andrew!" cried De Richemont, turning to Burgundy, "yon English churl seems to despise our praise, while the brave Spaniard grows braver still as we applaud him."

"The Spaniard's valour springs from the eyes of the beholders — the Englishman's lies about his heart," calmly remarked Bedford.

"I know not distinctions of valour," replied Richemont; and he was preparing to add something, when Philip interrupted him ——

"But I do," said the duke, "a valour of glory and a valour of natural courage are two things — and so are a tilt-yard, and a battle-field — so a merry meeting and an onslaught of war — and so," added he with loud emphasis, and throwing down the white truncheon which he carried as judge of the tournament, "this feat of arms is done! Much honour and praise be to these noble champions — each has well sustained his country's, and his absent compatriot's name. And now give entrance, Marshal, to my noble friend, James Lalain, the flower of Brabançon chivalry. He waits at the pavilion for the signal. Sound a flourish of trumpets! Go, good De Richemont, join with the lords of Ravenstein and Beauvais to lead the young champion to the lists!"

De Richemont moved off from the Duke's pavilion, in no gracious mood, to fulfil this invitation, muttering words of bitter reference to Bedford, who either did not hear, or seemed not to hear them. All eyes were now turned on the new champion, whose celebrity has found ample record in chronicle and tradition, both which pronounce him the model of chivalric perfection. He was tall, strong, hand-

some, brave, and generous, the cardinal virtues of those times, when intellectual endowments were of secondary value, and the talents of hitting hard and squandering profusely raised their possessors to the most envied heights of fame.

James Lalain soon sallied forth from his pavilion of green and white silk, above which was elevated his escutcheon, blazoned with the armorial bearings of his house, an embroidered stag with sixteen antlers, each carrying two banners, to mark in all the thirty-two coats of arms of the various branches of the family, of which the champion was chief. His bacinet was on his head, his visor up, his throat uncovered ; and, as was his wont in innumerable combats, he marched on foot into the lists with a proud and disdainful step, his magnificently caparisoned horse being led by pages, superbly dressed, for show rather than use, for the contest to which he had this day challenged all comers, was of the battle-axe alone, in compliance with the particular fancy for that weapon with which Duke Philip was just then notoriously inspired. He held on his left arm a shield of polished steel, which bore for device a female figure carrying a dart, and the motto, "Who loves fair lady let him watch her well." His right hand bore his weapon of prodigious weight, and he carried it in such a manner as gave the beholders to conjecture (as the worthy chronicler tells us) that he meant to make battle with the head of the axe.

The great reputation of this champion for the management of his weapon and his more than common strength, left him few competitors for such conflicts, though in tilts on horseback where personal force was of less moment, he always found ready rivals to contest, though very few to gain the prize. On the present occasion, no adversary at first presented himself at the lists. The trumpet of Lalain flourished and reflourished loud notes of defiance ; the champion himself stalked up and down in front of the ducal pavilion, where the Duchess of Bedford held in her fair hand the embroidered scarf, wherewith she was, in honour of her rank and in compliment to her as Philip's visitor, to crown the victor. Lalain was little pleased at

the negative homage paid to his prowess in the absence of a rival; and he looked as coldly proud on the occasion as a race-horse, who canters over the course without having his mettle roused or his speed put to the test.

The latest flourish had been sounded; and Philip, in his capacity of judge, was about to pronounce the valiant James Lalain entitled to the broidered trophy in default of opposition, when a cry for free passage accompanied by the chattering fanfare from a hostile trumpet, attracted all eyes to the entrance of the lists, opposite to that where Lalain's pavilion made so gaudy and glittering a show. A single knight, preceded by his herald, soon made his way into the enclosed space; and while the herald strode forward, to declare his acceptance of the challenger's defiance, the knight calmly touched Lalain's shield which hung by, and then stood with his arms crossed, in an attitude of steady expectation. All the spectators pressed forward in their various places to gain a sight of this new comer; and Lalain's cheeks glowed with pleasure. Curiosity was on the stretch, but it gained no information from the knight's appearance. He was close-covered with that species of light armour called a brigandine, formed of small plates of steel, falling one over the other like the scales of a serpent. His casque was quite unornamented either by plume or lambrequin; and his target of polished horn, was without gilding, motto, or device. The visor of his casque was down, and he presented altogether as perfect an incognito, as pride, guilt, or modesty, could for any possible purpose assume.

A thousand conjectures were afloat as to his identity; wagers laid, and opinions hazarded; while Duke Philip, with evident anxiety and some impatience, but still with a dignified self-command, watched the issue of the combat, which, after a few brief forms of ceremony, was ardently begun.

Scarcely had the stranger taken his posture of defence, which Spalatro, by a loudly-uttered "bravo!" pronounced to be good, than Lalain dealt a most dexterous blow at the visor with the handle of his axe, which he wielded so adroitly, in opposition to his apparent intention of using

the head only, that few could have parried such an unexpected stroke. His adversary, however, stopped it, to use a technical term from another science, with great address and skill; and he then followed up his successful parry with a shower of blows from both head and handle of his weapon, all directed at the uncovered face of his opponent, as if to punish the vain-gloriousness that disdained the protection of a visor. But James Lalain proved his hardihood in that respect to proceed from a just confidence in his own skill. He met each assault with undaunted courage, bounded and sprung from side to side, and warded every blow with such agility and effect, that the strange knight was foiled in each attempt; and while the latter paused to recover breath after several minutes' exertion, Lalain dealt him a stroke on his casque that made him stagger several paces backward. The air rang with applause, the trumpets flourished, and the name of James Lalain was shouted to the skies. Spalatro seemed to dance on thorns, in the impossibility of communicating to Duke Philip his opinion on the various passages of the assault. But loud exclamations of encomium burst from him from time to time; and it was evident that he thought Lalain's adversary to be fully entitled to one half of the praise bestowed.

The combatants were soon again in action, and Lalain returned the former vigour of the stranger by a succession of terrible attacks, which were met with an opposition of guard and counterguard, as deliberate as his former assaults had been fierce. Each man now threw open the outer fastenings of his hauberk, the heat becoming insupportable else; and Messire James (as the chronicler calls him), as if resolved to finish the combat, seized his battle-axe in both hands, and dealt one stroke at the stranger's head, which must, if it struck it at all, have cleft it open. But he, with a dexterity worthy of Spalatro himself, opposed the falcon-pointed helve of his weapon, so as to catch the joint of his adversary's right-hand gauntlet, and the sharp beak went clear through the sinewy arm close to the wrist, causing a stream of blood to spout out, while the lacerated limb dropped for a moment down, and the weapon fell to

the ground. The stranger then instantly flung away his, but Lalain, furious at this humiliating token of courtesy, sprang forward, threw his wounded arm round his adversary's neck, and with his left hand seized him by the throat. His grasp was as promptly and firmly met, and the combatants, brought to an equality of strength by Lalain's wound, entered on a desperate struggle.

Murmurs arose at the fierce and hostile turn the combat had taken, and all eyes glanced quick from the champions to the duke, in expectation that he would instantly throw down his truncheon. But to the surprise of all beholders, a surprise which fixed their whole attention on Philip, he, instead of preserving his usual cold air of judicial impartiality, now gave vent to a burst of party feeling, that had clearly some more vehement inspiration than mere regard to one of the champions, accompanied by indifference to the other. At first, when the arm-in-arm struggle commenced, and the strong grasp of Lalain tore open the steel clasp that fastened his adversary's breast-plate, Philip gave a start of astonishment. But this feeling soon changed to one of a furious cast; for he then sprang up, stamped on the footstool that had supported him, and involuntarily struck his truncheon against the velvet-covered balustrade before him, with a force which shivered the symbol of command into splinters.

"Sound trumpets! sound a cessation of the fight!" cried several of the official persons who supposed the duke had intended to give the signal. But he immediately exclaimed in a loud tone—

"No! let the fight go on! let the gallant champion of Burgundy tear the false heart from his hated body!"

A scene of astonishment and confusion succeeded this abrupt speech. Every one rose from his seat—ladies, lords, knights, courtiers pressed forward round the irritated duke, who with his eyes fixed on the conflict stood for some seconds in an attitude of fierce agitation. A hundred exclamations and questions assailed him from his surrounding relatives and guests. To reiterated demands of "What moves your highness thus?" "How now, Burgundy?" "Who is he?" and others of like impatient

import, Philip at last replied to Bedford, who, the calmest of the inquirers, had repeated this last question.

"Who is he, Bedford? What then, even *you* know him not? Think you to blind me so? Again, twice in one week? Go to, go to — Philip is not a child like Henry of England, nor a fool like Charles of France. You know him not indeed? Your false and fool-hardy brother — Humphrey of Glocester!"

"Humphrey of Glocester!" cried Bedford, echoed by many other voices. "Impossible! He is in England — he durst not brave such imminent peril so wantonly."

"'Tis he, by my halidome!" exclaimed Philip — "He, who has already appeared disguised and leagued with the traitress Jacqueline and her bravos in the forest-depths of Drent — who now, in defiance of danger and decency alike, comes hither to match himself against my bravest champion, as if to daunt me by his strength and skill. But he shall know his folly and my power. All bonds are broken between his honour and my vengeance. St. Pol, I name you my marshal in this crisis — Lay hands on perverse and insulting Glocester and bring him here before me. His own brother shall witness while I adjudge his punishment."

"St. George forfend that I should interfere in such a case!" said Bedford. "I am bewildered on the point. Can this be Humphrey, whom I firmly believed to be at Westminster? mail-clad as he is, I may not distinguish this knight, or know him for my brother. By what token dost thou recognise him, Burgundy?"

"By one which cannot deceive me — one known to me alone, the polluted type of a base cause — wait, wait awhile, and the issue of this affair will justify me in all things."

The combatants were separated even while this short colloquy took place. St. Pol had gladly sprang forward, to comply with the duty prescribed to him, and laid his hands on the concealed champion, who, panting from exertion, could make no resistance, as he was forcibly borne forward to the ducal pavilion, in the arms of the attendants by whom he was seized.

CHAPTER VIII.

As Philip stood up in the midst of his friends and subjects, to receive in his presence the man whom of all others on earth he most hated, he looked a breathing epitome of the whole spirit of his time and station, a living document of the chivalry and sovereignty of the fifteenth century. His countenance expressed all the vengeful passions of the age, curbed by the pride of feudal power. His tall figure and air of command looked well, in the sumptuous attire which he wore on this occasion. The various articles of his dress were of the richest velvet, satin, and cloth of gold, and of the brightest tints, though black was his usual colour. A belt, sparkling with diamonds, hung from his shoulder. His surcoat and mantle were trimmed with full fifty English yards of silver-worked ribbon, in knots and rosettes. His embroidered cap, in shape like a casque of war, was surmounted by a panache, the *aigrette* of which was composed of twenty-one heron, and the *cimier* of twenty-four ostrich, plumes; while seventeen peacock-feathers streamed down in the fasion of a lambrequin behind. The massive gold collar, studded with precious stones, from which hung the medal and effigy of the golden fleece that marked its owner chief of the order, was entwined with other chains and rosaries, ornaments with which Philip's person was at all times profusely decorated. He was beyond comparison the most richly attired of all the brilliant group; but all were more or less distinguished by the overabundant costliness of the prevalent taste. Among the courtiers twenty-four were seen in a splendid livery of vermilion silk, loaded with embroidery and stiff with jewels, being gifts from the duke to those who were chosen for the honour of justling with him on the occasion. The squires and pages of each of these wore brilliant suits, thick covered with flame-coloured embroidery; and in short the whole assembly presented a most magnificent and dazzling display. All persons stood in breathless expectation, their looks shifting alternately from Philip to the entrance of the

pavilion, where Glocester was every instant expected to appear, and their ears ready to catch the words of resentment and harsh dignity with which their duke was evidently preparing to assail his too rash arrival.

And very soon the Count of St. Pol was seen forcing his way through the crowd of guards and attendants, leading, with no courteous grasp, the prisoner knight, whose still unraised visor concealed his face from the gazing crowd. Every one marvelled that the imperious Humphrey of Glocester submitted to be thus brought forward without a struggle; but their astonishment was increased tenfold at seeing the object of their scrutiny, as soon as he reached the foot of the elevated platform where Philip stood, throw himself on one knee, and bow down before the duke as any of his own vassals or servitors might have done! Bedford, with the English lords in his suite, started in surprise and displeasure, while their cheeks glowed at the humiliating act. De Richemont, St. Pol, and the Burgundian and Brabançon nobles could not repress a smile of triumph. Philip's lip curled disdainfully, and he cast a look of proud contempt on the prostrate knight. He seemed for a moment thrown back from the high moral attitude of majesty to which he had been working himself up, and he paused as if he wanted words to address an humble suppliant, though he had been ready and fluent enough to reproach a fallen but daring foe.

During this momentary pause, the kneeling knight took advantage of the liberty afforded to his hands, and rapidly undid the fastening of his casque, which he raised and took from his head, showing to the astonished throng, the fine features, the wondering look, and the inquiring gaze of Vrank Van Borselen.

"Sir Francon de Borsele!" uttered the bystanders, in a chorus of amaze. Philip alone was silent. On discovering who the suspected knight really was, he started with surprise. Disappointment next thrilled his frame; and it seemed as if a convulsion passed through it, while, with compressed lips and frowning brows, a short and broken sigh involuntarily escaped him. The next variation of feeling was evident rage, but not of that kind which was

expected to have burst on his captive enemy in invective and reproach. It was deadly and silent; his cheek grew pale, and as he clenched the diamond-studded handle of his rapier, he sternly, but with assumed courtesy, spoke to those around him: —

"Princes, my cousins, and good friends, and ye noble dames, my wife and sisters, fair countess and the rest, bear with me awhile, I pray you. Let all seek the castle — the morning sports are over. I will rejoin my noble company ere long, when I have fitly dealt fairly with a bold base hypocrite — a deep and ungrateful traitor!"

The parties thus addressed silently hastened from the pavilion. The duke's eyes were piercingly fixed on Vrank, as he spoke the latter words just mentioned; the accused youth had sprung on his feet, and looked at once paralysed with wonder, and covered with a crimson flush of indignation.

"Traitor!" echoed he, in a half-choked tone of mingled astonishment and defiance; but the words by which he would have followed up this exclamation stuck in his throat.

"Traitor!" rejoined Philip, advancing to the suspected culprit, with his fist clenched, and his lips quivering. "Ay, most manifest and wicked traitor! Could I have believed even evidence so convincing? — So young! — so criminal! Can I trust my eyes that look on the badge of your infamy?"

And then, as if unable to keep his temper within any bounds, he snatched at the girdle of blue silk, which Vrank had so faithfully worn, and so unconsciously suffered to escape from his bosom, and dashing it on the floor, he trampled it under his feet, exclaiming —

"Thus perish every type of her, the wanton, and of him, her usurping paramour! Thus be them, and their cause and its upholders trodden down! As this patent for infamy is defaced and degraded, so may she who gave, and he who dared to carry it, be crushed beneath my vengeance!" Then turning to the officers, who remained in close attendance on his person, he added in a steady and deliberate tone, and with a countenance of perfectly recovered calmness, "Let my orders be now well looked to!

You, John Vilain, my trusty Fleming — you, who saved my life in the bloody Field of Mons, the first of my pitched battles — you, whom I dubbed knight on that desperate day, be now my guardian on *this*, not less dangerous. I name you captain of my body-guard, archers, lancers, and arquebusses all. Stand close by me, for I am beset and betrayed. My warning letter was not for nought; but I little dreamed this bosom-nourished serpent was one of those it pointed out. Watch this traitor well, good John; and let the Englishman Qué, and that wily Orleanite, Baltisini, be placed in close arrest with him they call Spalatro. The plot is deep and manifold — but I shall sift it! Let old William Le Begue be summoned to attend me in my closet — if cunning leads to safety, he is my best counsellor. To the donjon then with that ingrate!"

Another ireful glance thrown on Vrank accompanied these words, and before he could collect a phrase to oppose this torrent of accusation, the duke had left the pavilion, and he found himself seized still more rudely than before, by some of the coarse guardsmen who were to lead him to his prison. A whole volume of thought passed through the mind of the astonished captive, as he saw the gorgeously-dressed figure of the duke pass from the pavilion, and heard the clattering hoofs and the tingling of the rich caparisons, which told that his horse was brought forward to bear him away. Vrank was insensible to the indignities intended for him by the satellites of the despot, while his intense reverie went on.

"Good God!" thought he, "what is this world, and what am I? Do I deserve this? Innocent — honest — faithful to this prince — devoted to his service. To be treated like a felon slave at the very moment that I merited and reckoned on praise, honour, and distinction! Yet," continued he, for his keen sense of justice and his candid consideration for others, even then, was awake — "yet this is not perhaps all undeserved — it is clear I have brought it on myself. That fatal girdle! Who or what can *she* be — the Circe that threw around me what I thought would be a periapt against ill, but which seems, like the spell in which she has bound my mind, the bane

of well-being — the passport to ruin? The duke is not unjust — he will not punish without guilt; and this gust of rage subsided, I know he will hear me, ere he condemns."

These reflections had scarcely passed through his brain, when they found their best illustration in the reappearance of Duke Philip in the pavilion. This proud but clear-sighted despot had read at once in Vrank's looks, and in his indignant repetition of the word "traitor," a complete evidence of innocence. Prompt as he was violent, he was suddenly struck with the remorse which a high mind and a proud station may at all times act upon without fear of misconstruction, and he repented the outrage offered to his faithful and favourite follower in the very moment of its commission. He determined to repair the wrong on the spot — to wipe out the disgrace he had so hastily inflicted — to give at least an opportunity of explanation for what had appeared to him almost incredible, while all his better feelings told him it could not be intentionally base. He therefore quickly dismounted from his horse, ere even he had turned his head toward the castle; and ordering his followers to suspend the arrest he had erewhile commanded, and to remain outside the pavilion, he re-entered it alone, just as John Vilain, the redoubted warrior to whom he had confided the charge of Vrank, was, with the rough authority of Flemish notions, in the very act of preparing a scarf to bind the arms of his prisoner, his horror of treachery and treason telling him to hold no terms of delicacy with a culprit, denounced by his master's own lips. Philip, in his usual steady and decided tone, ordered Vilain and his assistant guardsmen to retire. Obedience was as prompt as the command was peremptory, and in a moment more, the Duke and Vrank Borselen stood together face to face, without any one to interrupt or observe them.

While the astonished youth recovered in that moment all his presence of mind and self-command, and as a rush of innate dignity gave an instant tone of force and elevation to his look and manner, Philip addressed him, with all the ease of despotism unbending in the double consciousness of power and condescension.

"Sir Francon, I have been hasty, and I hope I may add, unjust; for princely wrong may be atoned, but a vassal's treachery cannot. Take this ungloved hand — not to press to your lips in the etiquette of court favour, but to grasp within your own as the pledge of my regret and the gage of my esteem."

Vrank stood still and silent while the duke spoke, and ere the last phrase was finished he had deliberately folded his arms across his breast. Philip started back, and drew up his head haughtily, as if doubting the possibility of what he saw.

"What!" exclaimed he, "do my eyes indeed deceive me not? Does any man that lives hesitate to accept the proffered hand of Philip of Burgundy? Does my own servitor, my vassal's son, a pardoned ——" traitor, he would have added, in his returning anger, had not Vrank stopped him short.

"For your own sake, Duke Philip, for the sake of honour, truth, and chivalry, do not utter one injurious word, to overflow the full measure of the wrong you have done me, and close the gate against all possible atonement, Your follower, devoted and faithful, I am; but *pardoned* I am not, and will not be — for to accept forgiveness is to acknowledge guilt. Nor yet mistake me for a proud fool, insensible to the wide difference between us till you did me wrong, thereby reducing yourself to my level, though it could not raise me to your height. Hear me, my sovereign! hear me out — I appeal to your reason and your justice against wrath and rashness. I am innocent of all crime, not merely in commission but in thought. I never did ill to mortal man, much less to you, to whom I have sworn fealty and service, for whom I have shed my blood, well paid for by a glorious meed of confidence and honour. But you have outraged me — degrade me you could not — in the face of this whole court — my friends, my fellow soldiers, princes, lords and ladies, natives, and of foreign lands, to none of whom, I may say without a boast, was my untarnished name unknown. And what is the offered salve for the deep wound thus given so wantonly? Your hand, in privacy — as if insult and injury may be borne in

the world's full blazon, and their reparation doled out by stealth! that is not fitting for either of us, duke. No honour can be dealt me, if innocent, by the secret pressure of the hand that was erewhile raised in menace to my beard, while it would be sullied by my grasp if I am indeed a fair mark for its clenched violence, and for your but half-revoked suspicions! No, my noble prince," continued Vrank, rising in tone and emotion from the evident effect produced by his words on Philip, "no! wash out the stain of your reproaches by the broad stream of a public and ample retraction; or if I am still accused of aught unworthy knighthood and manliness, let me prove my honour in those yet open lists, with the best and boldest champion of your court."

Philip was doubly affected as this speech was uttered. He involuntarily admired, and inwardly acquitted, the brave youth, whose true dignity of mind threw that of rank into the shade; yet he winced painfully under the dishonour, which he felt done to his station by every word, look, and sentiment of his young lecturer. He could have overcome either feeling separately; but together they were too much even for his experienced haughtiness. He was completely at fault. Pride, power, and duplicity were all put for the time in abeyance; and Philip stood for awhile, if not actually abashed and humbled, at least in temporary confusion. His character never reached that pitch of true magnanimity, which would have prompted its possessor to throw his arms round the young knight's neck, and find honour instead of degradation in the act. Philip, on the contrary, drew back his lately outstretched hand; and not knowing exactly how to reply to what he had listened to, he took refuge in the ready resource for those who are at a loss for an answer—he proposed a question.

"Tell me, Sir Francon, without guile or sophistry, how came you by that girdle, the renewed sight of which transported me the readier beyond myself, inasmuch as my rage at seeing you bear the badge of treason was proportioned to the value which I placed on your fealty?"

Vrank, without noticing the compliment, met this inquiry by a plain and brief recital of his adventure in the

Zevenvolden, and minute descriptions of every actor in the scene. Philip listened with acute interest, having during Vrank's progress carelessly flung himself into his lately occupied chair of state. When Vrank concluded, the duke, having quite recovered his self-possession, said, in a tone rendered impressive by its sternness and by the penetrating look which accompanied it: —

"Sir Francon, you have by chance picked up the clew of as deep a mystery as ever was entangled in forest — your hunting party was no mean one, for its chief persons were Bishop Zweder of Utrecht, Humphrey of Glocester, and Jacqueline of Holland."

At the mention of this last name Vrank felt a sudden glow rush through him; his heart swelled, and his brain reeled in the drunkenness of ambitious joy. Such was the electric effect of a thousand condensed associations, all warm, bright, and glorious — a full draught from imagination's boiling fountain. "Jacqueline of Holland! the most noted woman in Europe, the affianced of princes, the equal of queens, the regal beauty, the heroine of her age! — *She* clasped in my arms — she the giver of the gage that cinctured her own lovely form — she whose lips thanked me, whose eyes looked into my heart's cells, and left a ray of love in their dark recess!" Sweet were the thoughts of that first impassioned moment, in which Vrank's soul seemed to burst its thrall and revel in immortal joy. But an icy pang as quickly succeeded to this, when reality laid its cold and heavy hand upon his mind, and he paid the tax imposed by nature on the faculty of prompt good sense, in finding an instant check to the careering flight of fancy.

"Jacqueline of Holland!" thought he again — "the thrice-mated wife, the self-divorced usurper, the firebrand of my country, the accused adulteress, the reputed poisoner, my parent's detestation, my prince's bane! Why, oh! why did I ever meet with her! Why did not the fierce monster gore me to death by her side, in the exquisite illusion that I felt for one as worthy as she is beautiful!"

In the fixedness of his reverie Vrank clasped his hands together, his head sank on his breast, and a faint sickness seemed to spread across his very mind.

"Well, Sir Francon!" exclaimed Duke Philip.

"Well!" echoed Vrank starting, in unconscious repetition of the word.

"Well, canst thou now find pardon for thy prince, if, seeing round thy neck the girdle clasped by my own hand as a gift of early affection, on her who *was* my cousin, when in the early days of girlhood she was affianced at Compiegne to John of France, I should for a brief space have believed the witnesses of my eyes, and held you too for a traitor, when all mankind turns recreant? I say, Sir Francon, canst thou in knighthood's candour forgive the wrong I did thee?"

The air of dignified remorse which accompanied these words completely overpowered Vrank. He saw in the question and the way in which it was put a host of excuses, and almost of justifications, for all that the Duke had done. No one ever possessed more fully than Vrank van Borselen that precious quality of candour which enables us to imagine ourselves in the situations of others, makes allowance for their conduct, and judges of them as we would be judged. He for a moment forgot his own emotions in picturing those which must have agitated Philip, in the false impression borne out by evidence so strong; and it was only a conservative instinct of self-dignity, so peculiarly his own, that prevented the ingenuous youth from throwing himself at his proud master's feet, and receiving as a boon the atonement which was his by right. This he did not do; and perhaps Philip did not esteem him the less for standing manfully up, while he gave utterance to sentiments at once generous and modest. But he most assuredly did not love him the more, for failing to display the cringing suppleness which gains favour in the sight of despotism, and on which the duke reckoned when he put on his mock air of proud humility. In fact, Philip "the Good" never forgave Vrank Borselen for the unjust indignity he had himself offered him, or for the noble manner in which the injured youth received the apology his temporary good feeling urged him to make. The man who would stand well with a tyrant must always stand below him. To reach his level creates his dislike;

to rise above it ensures his hatred. Vrank found out this lesson in the sequel.

But for the present there was a compromise between Philip's new-born enmity, of which he was yet unconscious, and his long regard, which could not all at once become extinct. He held a still further parley with Vrank, the result of which was, on the part of the latter, a solemn disavowal of all connexion with the cause of Jacqueline, an engagement to return to her the fatal pledge of her gratitude, (to give to her feelings no stronger epithet,) and a promise that he would immediately place on his arm the silver placquet, with the effigy of the rising sun, the badge that day adopted by St. Pol and some of his associates, to designate their conviction of the noon-day clearness of Philip's cause, against the as manifest usurpation of Jacqueline.

Philip, on his side, avowed his anxiety to render full justice to Vrank's honour and fidelity, in the most public and unhesitating way. He in consequence quitted the pavilion, and walked towards the castle, leaning on the arm of Vrank and conversing with him, with an air the most familiar and confidential.

At sight of this unexpected result of the late scene, the courtiers, guards, and attendants gazed in mute astonishment. The envious, a large majority, writhed with many a mental pang. The generous, a scanty band, glowed with pleasure. All prepared to congratulate the reinstated favourite; and those who, half an hour before, had ransacked their brains for reasons to justify the duke and renounce the disgraced knight, now laboured to discover arguments to uphold the integrity of the one, and defend the tergiversation of the other.

CHAPTER IX.

While the numerous inmates of Hesdin Castle prepared for the grand banquet which was to crown this busy day, and while Vrank Van Borselen with difficulty escaped from

the assiduities of his so suddenly converted friends and admirers, to make a visit of cordial inquiry to James Lalain, his wounded rival in the tournay, Duke Philip was closely closeted with old William le Begue, the most wily, crafty, and crooked statesman, who had up to that epoch figured in the field of politics.

This old man, furrowed by the heavy traces of time, and grey in a long course of guilt, had been from early youth employed in the service of the dukes of Brabant, and had reached the dignity of chief-governor to John, the nominal husband of Jacqueline, at the time of their ill assorted match. William le Begue was known to be the chief instigator of all the repulsive conduct of this imbecile boy to his high-minded spouse; and it was scarcely a secret that the minister was urged on in his hostility towards her by rewards from Philip, whose object was to force her to the escape which she had effected from her tyrant, who thus became completely the dupe and instrument of the "good duke," in his designs on the new duchy.

When Philip was appointed governor of Holland and Zealand by his cousin John, as before related, the crafty old statesman was attached to his person as the chief of his council; and his sinister and congenial advice was at all times regarded by Philip with more attention than that of all his other ministers put together. The conference which now took place between this well-met pair on the subject of Philip's armament against Jacqueline and her possessions, with all the entangled ramifications of injustice and fraud, would furnish an instructive picture of princely bad faith and statesman-like subserviency. But we cannot check the progress of our story by entering on minute details. Neither would it suit our present purpose, to lay before our readers some of the secret information which Philip confided to his creature. He displayed to him *one* particular instance of perfidy, but all turning to his own advantage, which by no means surprised, though it greatly pleased the old minister; for his bad opinion of mankind prepared him for acts of baseness, and he was delighted at every new proof that his own was borne out by general example.

Arguing on the instance in question, he used his best efforts, and successfully, to work on Philip's suspicion—the most prominent feature of despotism—and he readily persuaded him that nothing but treachery surrounded him where he at present was, or awaited him on the course he was about to pursue. The grand basis of all William le Begue's policy was contempt for mankind and unmitigated selfishness. By disbelief in the honesty of others he sought to justify his own dishonesty; and he never extended mercy or charity to his fellows, from the conviction that he deserved neither for himself. The aim of his present efforts with Philip, therefore, was to shake his reliance on the fidelity of all his allies, and to convince him that a complicated web of plot and counter-plot was woven, in which it was meant to involve and finally destroy him. He had already worked on him with great effect: no one escaped his sweeping imputations. Vrank van Borselen was, according to the minister, assuredly guilty with the rest, notwithstanding all his apparent candour; and Philip more readily acceded to this most monstrous of all conclusions, from his growing dislike, and his resolution to force up a justification for the feeling, which had no source but his hasty injustice and the self-humiliation it entailed.

Floris Van Borselen, too, the father, and all his Kabblejaw adherents, were pronounced unsound and treacherous, by the wide-grasping sentence of William le Begue. But for this last condemnation a clew is readily found, in his determination to obtain the whole government of Jacqueline's doomed dominions for himself, as minister to Philip, acting for John of Brabant, and his consequent resolution to remove every obstacle on fit opportunity, but more particularly Floris van Borselen, whose station politically as well as by rank and birth, marked him for the first places of honour and confidence, in the country on whose anticipated conquest Philip was now bent.

The result of the conference was a resolution that the duke should dissemble his suspicion, so as the more surely to catch the conspirators unawares; and that Baltasini and Spalatro, who were "pricked," as on the lists of the Roman

tyrants, should be most closely watched, no doubt being admitted by the colleagues in conscription of their being employed by the dowager Duchess of Orleans, who was a princess of Milan, from whence they avowedly came to execute some design against Philip's life. The English all present at Hesdin, from Bedford down to Thomas Qué, were also to be strictly guarded against, as implicated in the interest and revenge of Glocester. The nobles, generally, be their various provinces what they might, did not escape accusal. Vrank van Borselen was most particularly included, as the undoubted agent either of Jacqueline's hostile purposes, or of his father's ambitious projects—or both.

These points all settled and agreed on, old William le Begue prepared to take his seat at the banquet, in his accustomed decoration of deceitful smiles; while Philip the powerful, the brave, and the ambitious, submitted to the degrading yoke of his jealous fears, and took the place of honour in the feasting-hall, the only one who wore a coat of mail under his cloth of gold, or who dared not partake the delicacies of the board, without their being first tasted by the functionary whose duty it was to submit the fidelity of the household to so odious a test.

And now would be the moment to administer large doses of description, were it not our object to satisfy the thirst for knowledge of the human heart, and the numerous vicissitudes of individual adventure, rather than that which drains the fountain of mere antiquarian research. Were the latter alone to be the staple of our industry, we know nothing of the age which now occupies our pen that affords a livelier notion of its grotesque magnificence and preposterous bad taste, than the minute details of such an entertainment as the one given on the day in question, by Philip of Burgundy, to his princely and distinguished company.

Yet it is hard to resist the temptation of entering on so fertile a theme, and the strongest dissuasive, after all, is the fear that some other of the various pens which have been dipped in the same source, but whose productions are unknown to us, have already traced for the readers of his-

torical romance sketches of such a scene as that to which we wish to transport ours. At any rate, the pages of old Oliver de la Marche, that verbose detailer of chivalric record, are easy of access, and are most probably "done into English," for the benefit of those who cannot sift the original seed from the abounding chaff of the old language and the old style. To those pages the curious are referred for pins'-point details of dress and accoutrement, dishes and decorations, and all the wholesale extravagances of feast and tournament, during the sumptuous sway of the House of Burgundy.

It was in the midst of such a scene, but subsequent to the one now acted, that Duke Philip, and twenty of his most redoubted knights, conceived the insensate project, and consecrated their never-to-be-fulfilled intention, of a new crusade, by the solemn utterance of those impiously ludicrous *vows* which gave the title to the most renowned repast of those days, when Philip pledged himself, "by God his creator, the glorious Virgin Mary, the ladies, and the *pheasant*, that he would take the Cross, and expose his body for the defence of the christian faith, against the damnable emprise of the Grand Turk and the Infidels." But on the occasion we have now to deal with, "the good duke" had not reached that pitch of fanatical foolery, and only occupied his mind and put forth his energies for a crusade of spoliation against every principle of manly generosity or moral right.

And even while Philip sat in his state, throwing round broad glances of pride at the assembled chivalry, and lavishing his smiles and phrases of gallantry on the Countess of Salisbury at his side, a new pang of distrust was sent through him, by the discovery of another warning billet, ingeniously concealed in one of the offerings of fruit, served up to tempt his abstemious appetite.

"By Heavens, this is too bad!" cried the tortured despot, as he read the scribbled assurance that a poisoned dagger was destined for his bosom. "What! is my power for nought but to ensure me never-ceasing pain! Am I denied even one hour of relaxation! Are signs, and portents, and prophecies to hover over my head, while

blade and shaft are for ever aimed against my heart! Who dares to defile my pleasure and embitter this festive scene by such a foul device as this? Break up the feast! Let those throat-straining minstrels hush their noise! Close the doors to all, and let strict search go round—none may prove exemption from the test! Out on this pageantry —draw close the curtain—I am weary of the scene!" and he flung himself back in his seat, as if in incontrollable disgust.

Such was, as usual, the first sally of Philip's despotic temper, acting on the impulse of sudden emotion. But this was the vice of his station rather than of his character; for he was not constitutionally passionate, and had he been born a private man instead of an absolute prince, his general suavity had never probably been disfigured by outbursts so foreign to its nature. But it has been seen that he easily recovered from these angry moods; and that considerations of good manners, which so often pass for good feeling, quickly recalled him to a sense of what was due to others and becoming in himself. The whole company now rose, in astonishment and confusion, as the huge doors of the hall were shut in, and the active partisans of despotism prepared to busy themselves in obedience to its commands. Philip stamped his foot and raised his hand, and all the incipient tumult was hushed, as promptly as if some magician with his wand had stilled an elemental storm. Turning to the Countess of Salisbury, and showing her the scroll, which he had crumpled in his angry grasp, Philip smiled his most affable smile, and said, loud enough to be heard by all who sat at his own table—

"Can the loveliest of women forgive the weakest of mortals, if the sight of this ill-omened scrawl transported him beyond himself in one sense, while her charms at the same time did so in another? My first atonement is due *here*. Friends, all accept it; and let my punishment be found in your merciful oblivion of my self-forgetfulness! Resume your seats, that the festivities may go on! Let my impatient mood be forgotten—nor may the bold traitor who has put forth this threat, be gratified by its having caused more than a moment's disturbance."

A gracious smile from the English countess answered the appeal, and the good Duchess of Burgundy benevolently strove to soothe her truant spouse. The princesses, his sisters, and their lords, all uttered consoling words to the duke; and the buzz of agitation was fast subsiding, under the influence of his echoed expressions, which were passed successively along from one table to another, when St. Pol, who sat near to William le Begue, and had closely whispered with him and De Richemont during the bustle, rose from his seat and exclaimed—

"Noble Burgundy, my good and trusty cousin, I cannot sit silent, while I see you thus unjustly tried and harassed, by the consequences of your too generous confidence. You have proclaimed free welcome to all comers on these days of open hospitality, and it is clear to all but you, that your bounty is abused. Strangers and wayfarers fill your halls, unknown and unrecognised for what befits the guests of Burgundy. The broad behests of chivalry should be obeyed, no doubt, here in its very place of honour. But these are perilous times, and ripe with risk. I see not why any he that feasts at your board, should wear even negative disguise, as those who come unbadged and unpledged to your cause most surely do. I and some few good friends of mine, Richemont, Saintrailles, Isle d'Adam, Andrew d'Humières, John Vilain, Francon de Borselen, and other brave associates sprinkled through this noble company, bear boldly the token of the cause to which each good arm that shows the badge is pledged. Methinks that they who still withhold a like display should now in this distinguished presence tell for why; and I propose that all who may not justify dissent — which is indeed but treason to truth and right—will raise a brimming cup and drink the pledge I offer now to all — Philip the Good, and his good cause, against usurping Jacqueline and those who do her aid or wish her well!"

"Bravely said, St. Pol. I quaff my goblet cordially to the pledge!" cried Richemont, rising, and half emptying a flask of champagne into his drinking glass.

"Health, Burgundy, to thee and thy emprise! I have not yet affixed the placquet to my arm, but hatred to thy

foes, home-bred or foreign, revolted Hollanders or faithless Englishmen, is deep graven on my heart!"

While he gulped down the sparkling draught the Duke of Britanny was preparing some short and pithy sentence of adhesion to these sentiments; but Bedford, with an air of peculiar dignity, rose up, and forced him to denote his consent by the silence far more suitable to his oratorical deficiencies.

"Again, brother of Burgundy," said Bedford, "and in a scene like this, must these intemperate sallies be uttered and replied to? In sooth it doth seem as though myself, and my noble lords attendant, with those other knights and 'squires, who came here from our island at the call of chivalric summons, are marked for insult, and that Richemont is its chosen mouthpiece. For myself, so help me Heaven! I heed it not — it passeth by me like a murky cloud of night upon a traveller's path; but as my country's representant I cannot brook it, Burgundy, and will not, by St. George! What! is the realm of my fathers then so poor in place, so newly robbed of rank and honour, that every bravo who puts a placquet on his arm may run old England down, and rave and rant in the halls of Hesdin, like some swing-buckler in a brothel? Duke Philip, my worthy brother, my country's ally, my youthful sovereign's vassal, I call on thee, firmly and loudly to quash at once this spirit of mutinous outrage, or by my halidome, I quit the castle on the spot, in personal wrath and national enmity! I have spoken."

These spirited words, to which the regent's high and solemn air gave tenfold effect, struck forcibly on the haughty lords against whom they were addressed. Bedford talked of wrath, but not like an angry man; he threatened, but not like a bully; he swore, but not like a blasphemer; he uttered words of unusual force, but they did not seem as if strained up to answer a purpose. It was as though the essence of England's might had rushed through his mind, and given a sacred energy to words, which might be thought to come from the embodied spirit of his country, rather than from a mere mortal champion of her rights.

The confederates, who had erewhile talked so boldly, were struck dumb. The Duke of Britanny alternately played with his beard or twisted his thumbs; and even old William le Begue threw glances of uncertain cunning on Philip and the others, as though doubtful of what part to take, or what sentiments to acknowledge. The various effects on the rest of the assembly may be imagined, and Philip appeared as if mentally weighing all opinions during a pause of some few minutes, and amidst the murmured observations that rose up through the hall. He at length raised his head from the level of soliloquy to that of dictatorial speech, and said aloud, —

" My princely guests, brothers and friends, few words must settle this moot point. I am not enviously situated, as Heaven knows, and all will grant—let all then hold me in some kindness, while I hope to satisfy all. Let me be umpire in this wordy war, which well I could wish turned into silent peace. Richemont, I prithee, cease all sarcasms. 'Tis due to our good brother, the noble regent here, and his princely suite of followers and familiars; and for *his* part, I pray him to let my trusty friends bear what badge to them seems fitting, nor throw dishonour on my rights by disparaging it or them."

" Philip, I meant not that," said Bedford.

" Nay, hear me on," replied Burgundy, " I claim the privilege of host and umpire both — I ask no explanation nor exact excuse."

" Excuse! I believe thee well, good brother, nor do I offer such, in troth. I spoke not to thy dispraise or dishonour, Burgundy, but only claimed the courtesy that England is used to, and *must* have, if I sit by while she or her sons are named. This is no scene of mappery or closet-council, and Richemont must be told the difference if he knows it not. Bedford, in Philip's cabinet, is a private man—here, in this open hall, he is England's champion, the scion of her kings, her prop of honour, and as such he will uphold her to the stretch of doom."

" Well, well, it shall be as thou wilt, good Bedford," said Philip, soothingly; for he saw that the regent's blood was most unusually up, and he dreaded that De Richemont

and St. Pol might hurry on some premature breach that might mar all his plans, by forcing Bedford to join his brother Humphrey's quarrel, and throw the power of England into the scale against his own with Jacqueline. But this was a needless alarm, for Bedford was too deep a politician, and too much devoted to his country's interests to let him so risk them, notwithstanding the high tone which he felt called on by every sense of policy and pride to assume.

"Fair brother, it shall be as thou wilt — England and all her chivalry shall hold their titles unattainted."

"By sarcasm or surmise — nought else can dare assail them," said Bedford, in the same uncompromising tone.

"Big words, Bedford!" muttered De Richemont, with a bitter sneer.

"They are the echo of great deeds, Richemont," calmly, but with conscious pride in her husband's fame, replied the Duchess Anne; and the supper-hall was about to become, like the breakfast-room on a former occasion, the forum of family dispute, had not William le Begue and St. Pol, taking their cue from Philip's expressive glances, restrained De Richemont and implored him to suppress his ire. The better to keep him silent, St. Pol again rose up, and said with assumed good temper, but still in sinister design —

"Verily, good lords, this honours not over much my offered pledge. No glass, save Richemont's, is emptied yet. Burgundy, call a full cup — I claim the privilege of the board — and sure I am, no friend of mine or yours will baulk at the plain form in which my pledge was worded."

"St. Pol," said Bedford, "I must demur against covert insidiousness as well as open taunt. I wish all well to Burgundy, but cannot pledge confusion to my father's son, even in the mask wherewith you meant to disguise it. Health to thee, Philip, and success in each *good* cause, for there I hold it as mine own!"

The associates saw that Bedford was too wary to be caught in the snare, designed to commit him in the contest against Glocester and Jacqueline; and St. Pol, with suf-

ficient tact to turn from a point where he had met such firm repulses, exclaimed with assumed wonder —

"What more, good Bedford, could we ask of thee? The saints forbid that I should aim to implicate thee in a quarrel with thy own flesh and blood, even though it forms the shrine of such a heart as Glocester's! Up goblets to my pledge! Let English *friends* be neutrals if they will; but there are, please Heaven, none others here who will not drink success to good Duke Philip, and death to the usurper of his rights."

A hundred goblets were held up and quickly drained, while as many voices echoed the toast. The knights who wore the silver placquets were conspicuous for zeal, and not the least so was Vrank Borselen, whose fever of mind ever since the scene of the morning, kept him burning with a combination of emotions. But in the midst of these animated groups one strange exception was observed; and attention was quickly drawn upon this individual, whose badge of nobility told that he was entitled to his place at the board, while his bushy beard and brows, and the hood which, in the fashion of the day, he wore in a somewhat inelegant fancy on his head, completely screened him from recognition. While all around him stood up, doing boisterous honour to the toast, he sturdily kept his seat, nor deigned even to fill his goblet from the fresh flask placed beside him by an attendant varlet. Murmurs rose high; and St. Pol, whose keen eye watched all around, soon noticed so remarkable a defaulter to the general test.

"Beshrew me, princes and lords," cried he, "if we have not one among us, not English neither as I guess, whom the regent's qualms have converted from our common cause. Fair sir, may I in knightly courtesy ask if you are a Briton born?"

"Or a French slave on his English master's sufferance?" added De Richemont, with a spiteful emphasis.

"Neither a Briton nor a Brabanter, St. Pol — nor on a minion's errand, nor by right of forfeited parole, De Richemont," exclaimed the questioned knight, in a tone and accent that spoke a volume of Dutch harshness and daring.

"I know that voice, by Heavens!" cried St. Pol.

"You may never forget it, my good count, since the day it called you so loudly and so vainly before Soignies, in Hainault, to turn and face one who is little used to wait for his enemy's summons."

"Who, then, is this? Let some one answer me!" exclaimed the Duke of Burgundy, with an imperious tone.

"I best can answer the question, noble duke, and my much-honoured host; I am called Ludwick of Urk in my native land, and not quite unknown even here as Louis de Monfoort," said the bold Hollander, standing erect, throwing off his hood, and showing his shaggy visage and sturdy person, like an unabashed bear before a company of hunters taken by surprise.

The sensation produced by this avowal was prodigious; and all order of decorum or etiquette was violated, in the efforts of the company to get a good view of the redoubted leader of the rebel Hoeks, the most noted champion of Duke Philip's destined victim, and his deadliest foe. But so much was the high sense of knightly honour encouraged by this powerful sovereign, that not an individual present dreamt of violence or insult to this lone warrior, in the heart of his enemy's stronghold. After the first buzz of astonishment had subsided, Philip addressed the unbidden guest with all the courtesy of chivalry.

"The brave in arms are ever welcome to my halls," said he, "and you, Sir Louis de Monfoort, bear your title to noble treatment in your wide-spread renown; no pledge or promise repugnant to your feelings shall be exacted of you. You are thrice welcome to my board, let the motive of your coming be what it may; and if you have taken this measure, the more prized for the trust it implies in my good faith, for purposes of your own advantage, they are already gained as far as I have power to aid them. I know you for a banished man, by decree of my late uncle, Bishop John of Liege. Do you come to ask reversal of your sentence? If so, the boon is granted — I swear it by my knightly faith!"

"Duke Philip, I come not for boon or bounty. I have long scorned that false attaint, and I never yet sought

favour but with sword in hand. I came here to do you service, not to seek it. I took my place at your board, in right of your wide spread summons, and perhaps with a curious eye to mark this goodly pageantry. But having done my task as befits a good knight, and an honest man, I hoped to go as I came, unrecognised and unquestioned. My farther presence, now that I am known, may mar these revelries, so now I take my leave; glad if the easy ingress of one, who, though not your friend, Duke Philip, is still no spy, may teach you caution against others, unpledged by bond of chivalry to respect your princely confidence. I am free to depart in peace and honour. 'Tis so, duke?"

"Ay, by my troth, sir knight, and honoured much for this high bearing, which does not belie your fame. Farewell, Sir Louis! and the more in friendship, as our next meeting may not be of a par with this."

"As you will, noble duke. If you come to visit me at Urk in friendly guise, warm welcome shall be your meed. If you plant your foot on my native soil in hostile mood, I promise you a grasp fitting a freeman's hand on a despoiler's throat. Farewell!"

While the lion of Urk shook his mane, and was retiring from the hall, rolling a look of no tender meaning from his bloodshot eyes, St. Pol, who alone seemed to preserve his wits, at this rude speech, and that only from their being sharpened by personal enmity, called out aloud, —

"This must not be endured, good Burgundy! Are not my words confirmed? Is not thy gracious nature abused by rough intruders? Let this amphibious Hollander be told, and, through him, his false mistress, that Philip's friends will punish the outrage he scorns. Shall the slave of a branded adulteress ——"

"Ha! is it thus thy recreant tongue holds forth?" cried Ludwick Van Monfoort, flinging back his hood once more, and, with the heavy, and somewhat lubberly stride common to his countrymen, stalking towards St. Pol. The latter, in the prompt activity of a Brabanter, sprung from his seat, and, with hand on dagger, waited for whatever assault might come. But Bedford, Le Begue, and even

De Richemont (who had a great sense of good breeding when a quarrel was not his own), interposed between the angry men, while Philip turned all his attention to quiet the alarm of the Countess of Salisbury, and the ladies of his bed and blood. Several of the lords and knights at the lower table, where Van Monfoort had been sitting, stepped forward to stop his solemn march towards St. Pol; but he dashed through every impediment, until one young man opposed his progress, with a persuasive look, and gentle but firm voice, imploring him to proceed no further.

"Ha! brother of the woodland, is it here we meet? and dost thou, too, swell the ranks of my country's foe? No matter — give me thy gallant hand in mine! That grasp of fellowship has allayed my fury. By the blood of the orox! I am pleased with this rencounter, and glad to hold thee once again in friendly clasp, though grieved the while to see that placquet on thy arm, and know thee for an enemy."

While Van Monfoort, apparently forgetful, and certainly indifferent, to all else around him, cordially shook Vrank Van Borselen's hand, William le Begue took care to direct Duke's Philip's attention to the scene, by one of those wily movements of the eye and lips, that without being explicitly either wink or sneer, has all the malice of their mixed expression. Philip answered by a nod and frown, that shewed his consciousness and his displeasure at what was passing. In the meantime Van Monfoort asked bluntly who was his new-found friend? and several voices answered for the latter, with his full name and title.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ludwick, with a sad and solemn tone, dropping his own hand low, but without relinquishing that of Vrank, which, on the contrary, he almost crushed in his convulsive squeeze. "Indeed! and art *thou* a son of my worst foe — of him to whom I have sworn eternal hate — of him whose heart's blood must pay his debt of wrong and insult! Be it so! God has marked me for a lone and friendless man, and I must fulfil my doom. Vrank Van Borselen, I could have loved thee — I did, by

Heavens! Thy bravery, thy modesty, thy all-heroic bearing won my rough heart, and ere I knew thy name, I had vowed affection to thy nature. May I yield my death-gasp at my enemy's feet, but I had meant to seek thee through the world, and own thee for my more than son, my chosen friend — my adopted heir! Psha, psha! How's this!" continued the rude warrior, dashing Vrank's hand away, and thrusting, as it were, his own clenched fist into his eye, as a dyke-digger might strive to dam up the gushing tide. "This is indeed disgrace, worse than the vile insult of yon braggart count — and Ludwick of Urk must fly to save him from himself — young man, farewell! — And when we meet in the battle-field, forget this weakness, and hold thyself ready for the shower of my wrath, dealt doubly against a Borselen and a Kabble-jaw!"

With these words he rushed from the hall, enveloped in his hood, and before the observers could recover themselves, or that heartless raillery and insolent pride could stifle the better feelings which were roused by the scene, Ludwick was in the saddle of his ready steed, which stood, by his orders, waiting in the court, and his heavy hoofs struck fire from the flint-stones of Hesdin pavement, ere the feasting and jollity were recommenced in the castle. By the time the wassailers were again in their places, and before any new incident of excitement could cause any serious turn of thought, the Duke of Burgundy stood up in his place of state, and after a cheerful, and even a witty preface — which he held ready made for the occasion — he took from a page behind him an emblazoned roll of vellum, which for splendid ornament might have rivalled the celebrated illuminated copy of "The Golden Legend;" and he read aloud the following rescript, which he had received that very morning from the Sultan of Babylon, duplicates of which had been sent to almost every potentate and prince in Christendom.

"Baldadock, son of Aire, Constable of Jericho, Provost of the terrestrial Paradise, nephew of the Gods, King of Kings, Prince of Princes, Sultan of Babylon, Persia, Jerusalem, Chaldea, and Barbary, Lord of Africa, and Admiral

of Arcadia, Master Archipotel, Guardian of the Isles, Dean of the Abbeys, Commander of the Temples, splitter of shields, piercer of hauberks, breaker of armour, shiverer of spears, overthrower of war-horses, destroyer of castles, flower of chivalry, a wild boar for courage, an eagle for freedom, the fear of his foes, the joy of his friends, the raiser of the discomfited, the standard of Mahomet—the lord of all the world!

"To the kings of Germany, France, and England, and to all other Kings, Dukes, and Counts, and generally to all on whom our courtesy may condescend, greeting, and love in our grace!

"Whereas, it is very commendable for all who please to renounce error through wisdom—We send to you that you may hasten to us, to receive your fiefs and inheritance from our hands, by denying your God and the christian faith, and abandoning the errors in which you and your predecessors have been too long involved. Should you not instantly obey these our commands, our anger will be raised and our sword turned against you, with which we will have your heads as a penalty, without sparing your countries any more than yourselves!

"Given on the vigil of the ambassadiens, the tenth year from our coronation, and the second from our noble victory and destruction of the miserable country of Cyprus!"

Not even the allusion made in this last sentence to an event so unfortunate to the cause of christianity and chivalry, had power to stifle the roars of laughter which the reading of the sultan's letter excited. Duke Philip had calculated well in reckoning it a remedy against the wayward and angry moods of his many guests. It was by management like this he acquired his endearing surname. And never was he more popular in his court than on this night, which he had the address to convert from one of various disagreeable and untoward disputes, into one of broad merriment and general good humour.

CHAPTER X.

THE following day was the sixth of the festivities instituted by Philip in honour of his guests; and being by public notification the last, it was determined on all hands to make it one of super-extra enjoyment. The warlike movements that were to commence on the morrow left little chance of a speedy renewal of such scenes, in which many of those then present could never hope to partake; and though few men like to encourage presentiments of ill, all grasp eagerly at present pleasures, as if each was instinctively forewarned that he was to be fate's first victim.

The earliest business of the morning, after Philip's accustomed exercises and the despatch of breakfast, was a sporting party (in the heathy lands or wolds around the castle) of rather a mixed nature; for hawking and coney-shooting with the cross-bow, were to be diversified by bustard-hunting, with some greyhounds of a peculiar breed trained to that long-since exploded species of chace.

Nothing could be more brilliant than the opening burst of the cortége, as the gates of the castle park were thrown wide, and the whole cavalcade appeared to the dazzled eyes of the inhabitants of Hesdin. The long train of huntsmen, falconers, and dogs, the sounding horns, the glittering liveries, the soldier-guards, the goodly company of dames and cavaliers, each lady on her gaily caparisoned palfrey, each knight accoutred for the chace, and falcon on wrist, the sounding of rings and bells, the clatter of hoofs, the mirthful conversation, and the joyous laugh — all helped to hide full many a corrosive care, and combined to raise at once the admiration and the envy of the happily-ignorant and uninitiated lookers-on.

Duke Philip, with all his apparent devotion to the English countess, whose palfrey seemed to make one with his own, so closely did he ride beside her, had nevertheless an anxious, if not a timid glance for almost every one of the suspected individuals of his suite. With a perhaps wise policy, but at any rate with innate self-confidence, he had

resolved to have about him, and close to his person, all whose designs he thought he had most reason to fear. He felt, that under the surveillance of his own quick eye they were less likely to have opportunity for working him evil. He reckoned much on the imposing effect of his grandeur; and, like all actively courageous men, he felt more composure in drawing close to danger than in contemplating its distant chance. Besides these motives, or sensations, Duke Philip was too cautious to neglect giving notice of his suspicions to some of those followers whom he *knew* he could trust; for it is a mortifying reflection for virtuous greatness, that even the worst tyrants (and Philip certainly was not one of them) have had in all times attached and devoted followers. In this manner every individual "pricked" by William le Begue, was placed under the peculiar espionage of one of the duke's chosen confidants. The Milan knight, for instance, was entrusted to Hugo de Bourg, a Burgundian lord; Vrank Van Borselen to John Vilain, the captain of the guard; and Spalatro, the posture-master, to Joos Wouters, Philip's first armourer by trade, and his trustiest bravo on necessity.

The sports went merrily on. The day was bright and mild, the game plenty, the dogs fleet, the falcons keen. Many partridges were struck down by their talons at the very feet of the fair dames, who had no qualms for the cruel joys of sporting, any more than for the bloody contest of the tournay. Pheasants, too, the sacred birds of chivalry when smoking on the board, were held in no reverence in the open wood, even by the knights who worshipped them at the feast. It was in the short pause occasioned by the capture of one of those beautiful birds, half dead from fright before the merciless hawk transfixed him, that Bedford, Philip, and the other princes, were discussing with the noble ladies in a gallant group, the wonderous diversities offered by the feathered tribe to the admirers of nature. While the ladies chiefly dwelt on the bright-tinted plumage, the graceful forms, the delicious melody which render the winged tenants of air so interesting to sensitive minds, the male part of the company dilated on the strength, activity, and courage of the birds of prey. But few in that rough

age had given their minds to the observance of the more philosophical phenomena of character and construction, so marvellous to the deep observer of those buoyant mysteries of creation. The shapes of their bodies, so well adapted for flight, the fitness of their feathered coats for protection in high atmospheres and boisterous winds, the peculiar structure of their bones, made hollow to contain air, and unite lightness with strength, the anatomy of their lungs, limbs, and membranes so framed as to facilitate respiration in their volant passages, the amazing perfection of their sense of sight, their instincts of necessity in providing for their young — these and a thousand other minutiæ were little likely to form part of the disquisition. But be it what it might, profound or frivolous, it was suddenly interrupted by the discovery of a large flock of bustards, which scattering in various directions were immediately pursued by the greyhounds, as they rapidly fled on foot, or flown at by the hawks, while they slowly rose in heavy efforts to escape on the wing.

Nothing could exceed the interest of the promptly-followed sport. The hunted birds in some instances baffled and beat the dogs altogether, twisting and turning before them with the sagacity and almost the swiftness of hares, and escaping in the refuge of the furze-bushes and brushwood. Others, when hardly pressed and forced to trust themselves to flight, and even then assailed by the keen efforts of beak and talon, successfully availed themselves of the singular means of defence provided for them by nature; and spirted out from their convex bills whole quarts of water contained in the pouch which lines their throats, a reservoir for subsistence in the arid plains they frequent, or for assault when thus driven to a less congenial element than earth.

The company was quickly dispersed, in the heat and interest of this favourite sport of Duke Philip. He for a time forgot all else — his gallantries, suspicions and precautions. Sticking spurs into his horse, he rode at full speed after a couple of his first rate greyhounds, on whose fleetness, in rivalry with others, he had laid a heavy wager with St. Pol. The chace was every moment varied by the find-

ing of fresh game, a new bird from the numerous flock starting up almost as fast as the old one was run down or lost, or saving that which was hunted by turning off the attention of the dogs to another object. Philip was well mounted and a skilful horseman, being indeed distinguished at every manly exercise; and now, abandoning himself wholly to the ardour of his sport, he took sudden leave of the female part of the company, and soon outrode many of his companions, who either dropped behind with the ladies, or turned aside from the immediate points of the duke's pursuit, to follow some other which had attracted their attention. A few of the suite, however, contrived to keep close to him; and among them were Vrank Van Borselen, who rode well and boldly, and Spalatro, who was a perfect master of his animal, and not more expert in using the weapons of war, than in training a courser in the manège, the open wold, or contracted enclosures. John Vilain, whose province it was, as captain of the body guard, to be particularly near the duke's person, kept up as long as he could; but his great weight soon tired his heavy Flemish steed, and he reluctantly saw his master outstripping his stanch safeguards, and delivered as it were by Heaven into the hands of a suspected enemy. Hugo de Bourg was wholly occupied in watching Baltisini, in another part of the field; and the other men chosen by Philip for his protection were all thus variously occupied in several distant directions, with the exception of Wouters, who, long accustomed to his master's method of hunting, was never thrown out, and now, in all the vicissitudes of the chase, stuck even still closer to his side than either Spalatro or Vrank.

Above an hour had been thus consumed, during the greater part of which, Vrank, though a keen sportsman, had his attention completely turned from dogs and birds to the somewhat singular, though not quite uncommon, appearance of a cowled friar, who, mounted on a fast-going nag, had followed the varieties of the chace, or rather of the duke's movements, in the evident purpose of being near him. A sporting priest was not then — any more than a sporting parson now — a very remarkable object. Bishops, abbots, and priors, followed game of all kinds, as keenly

as lay nobles; and the inferior orders of the clergy often indulged in the example set by those whom the parlance of rank called their betters. But the churchman who now excited Vrank's observation was clearly no beneficed monk, or regular incumbent; but rather one of those mendicant friars who levied contributions on the rich, and wrung their hard earnings from the poor, during perpetual rounds of imposture and beggary. It was therefore natural enough that he should have marked the Duke of Burgundy for his prey on this occasion, hovering round till fatigue might make him languid and liberal; as a falcon hangs over a doomed bird, till the very lassitude of fear makes it resign itself to be plucked and bled, with scarce a resisting struggle.

At length, on a sudden cessation from the chace the birds being driven far and near, and their consequent scarcity throwing the dogs at fault, on the edge of a close coppice, Philip, parched with heat, reined in his horse, and looking round, he was surprised to find himself almost alone. Close attendance on all occasions was so much a matter of course that he had not earlier thought of ascertaining whether he possessed it now, for no want had reminded him that he was mortal; but the necessity of quenching his thirst brought him to a sense of his nature, and he looked about him for a stream of water and a drinking horn, in the humility of drouthy despotism.

Joos Wouters used to his master's wont, immediately prepared to supply him, adding from his flask a small portion of qualifying cordial to the pure liquid caught from a running brook hard by. Vrank Van Borselen pulled up his bridle, and uncovered his head in due etiquette; and Spalatro also doffed his cap, while he patted the neck of the fiery horse, which had been furnished him expressly, that his practised hand might tame its unruly temper.

"Wouters, how's this?" said Philip, in a subdued tone, and with an impatient glance to the right and left. "We are alone?"

"Would that we were, your highness!" answered the armourer, as he mixed the draught.

"Is no one near us but these two?" asked the duke,

feeling at the same moment, as if instinctively, for the dagger which hung inside his doublet.

"None other but yon begging friar within the copse, may it please your grace—and I like neither his looks nor his way of watching us."

"Who meanest thou? I see none but Sir Francon and the Italian."

"Look sharper in among the trees, your highness, and you'll see one who has followed you close and marked you well, for full an hour gone."

"A begging brother, say you? there's nought to apprehend from him, good Joos, but an attack on my purse. These fellows rob us in the name of God, and a couple of moutons d'or can send even a prince to Paradise, if the benison of a bare-legged monk may carry him so far. Come, Joos, hap what will, or bide what may, I must alight. Sir Florival is pressed to the utmost of his bearing; he shakes under me in his fore limbs. I was wrong to mount him to-day so soon after his fever. Aid me, fellow, to dismount!"

"The good beast trembles, sure enough, and the white foam oozes from his skin, my noble master," said Wouters, with an uneasy look. "Bad signs, too—it may be that he snuffs the scent of evil sooner than your princely eyes may spy out danger. I like not your red-bearded friar—do not dismount, good, your highness—put spurs to flank and follow me—I know this path through the forest."

"Tut, tut, Joos," replied the duke, ashamed to own to himself, much less to his follower, that a thrill of superstitious fear crept through him, and resolved to keep it down—"Tut, tut, thou art too scrupulous to-day. Hast seen St. Withold on the wold? Has the Elfin Shepherd crossed thee on the plains, or did the whistle-bird chirp the death-warning in thine ear? Give me the horn—I must repose here. We're two to two, man—and thy hunting blade is keen at point and edge.—Give me the horn!"

With these words Philip threw himself from his horse, but waved his hand with an authoritative air, as both Vrank Borselen and Spalatro made a movement of approach

to his assistance. Vrank's blood boiled at the affront, and he vowed that his services should not be a second time rejected by the haughty and capricious prince, who, after the scene of yesterday, could thus confound him with a scurvy master-at-arms. Had Vrank known what notions flashed across Philip's mind, at the moment that he repulsed his offered aid, he had pardoned him on the spot.

"This will refresh your grace, while a mouthful or two of the stream will give new courage to Sir Florival—may we then set off, I pray you, my lord?" said Wouters, presenting the drinking horn to the duke, who had sat down on a heath-covered bank, and taking with the other hand the bridle which Philip resigned to him. But as the latter raised the discoloured draught to his lips, a new pang of suspicion darted across his brain, the created heritage of despotism, as indelible as the branded mark placed on the brow of Cain.

"Joos!" exclaimed Philip, "hast thou kept the flask to thyself all day? Did no one drink from it? Didst not entrust it to the hands of yon Italian, by whose side thou hast ridden so long?"

"My noble lord," said Wouters, earnestly, "my long-tried prudence might save me from such a surmise—the flask has never quitted my pouch, nor been unstopped till now, since the 'squire of the buffet gave it to me full this morn at starting."

"Curse on this awkward arm!" cried Philip, even while the armourer was speaking, and letting fall the horn, as if by accident, to the ground. "But never heed it now—the cordial is spilt—no matter—no, no, good Joos—I'll none of it—it shakes the nerves—a draught of the plain brook is still more bracing than this fermented mixture—never heed, never heed!"

While he quickly uttered these words he picked up the empty horn, and carefully shaking out every drop that still drained from its bottom, he plunged it in the stream, rinsed it more than once, then quaffed a bumper of the pure water, happily unagonised by a doubt that the very weeds on the rivulet's brink might have conspired to poison him.

Ere the horn was again from his head, the begging friar, having tied his nag to the branch of a tree, advanced with bended body and humble mien towards the duke. One of his hands was held forth, with a leathern pouch for the receipt of contributions; the other was concealed under his cloak. As he came forward, the duke could not resist a throb of apprehension, for the infection of Wouter's alarm found him pre-disposed for its contagion. Treachery seemed to form the atmosphere of the wild scene around him, and fate seemed to have thrown him into its desolation, a sacrifice to his own fool-hardy imprudence. Wouters, still more startled than the duke, sprang immediately towards him, as if to intercept and accost the friar, and he loosened at the same moment his hold of Sir Florival's bridle. The horse feeling himself free, plunged across the little stream, and, starting forward in all the freshness of liberty, galloped wide over the plain.

"Heaven wills it so!" thought Philip, mistaking Wouter's conduct; "even this ingrate is leagued against me, and delivers me up to his fellow-conspirators. Now, then, Burgundy, to die with the dignity becoming thy race and station! Well, friend, what wouldst thou?" asked Philip, with his most imperious tone, his memory darting back at the instant to the scene, oft read, in which the glance of Marius' eye paralysed his intended murderer. But the man now addressed was of a different mould of mind from that faint-hearted slave and would-be villain.

"What would I, duke?" replied he; "the contribution of a mighty prince to the funds of my poor order."

"Thou comest too close, sirrah," said Philip, retreating a step or two, and putting a hand to his dagger, as the bold beggar strode nearer and nearer with every word he spoke.

"I have made a vow, Duke Philip, to close on you one day, and have watched long for time and place; your offering, good duke, in my pouch — your offering, duke, your offering — this, then, to thy tyrant heart!"

A hostile movement of arm accompanied each word, and Philip was not silent or inactive the while. He

hallooed out lustily, and parried each well-aimed blow, till at last the assassin's dagger struck against his breast, and broke short, while the duke stood unharmed, but was soon forced to grapple with his enemy.

"Help, Wouters, help!" cried he, as the baffled villain closed furiously on him with the broken blade, spite of his efforts to keep him at bay. The armourer had turned round from his pursuit of the horse, and was running to the call, while Spalatro, who saw what passed, shouted aloud and pressed forward his horse, and bounding over every obstacle was soon close to the duke. Vrank Van Borselen, who had been looking out in another direction from the moment of the duke's insulting gesture, now turned rapidly at the shout, and seeing Philip in a retreating combat of dagger to dagger with the friar, he dashed forward after Spalatro, drawing his short hunting-sword as his courser galloped on. Wouters was just placed between him and the duke, and seeing, as he thought, both cavaliers flying on to immolate his master, he boldly flung himself before the one next him, and seizing Vrank's bridle, he struck at him with his sword, vociferating Flemish imprecations in fierce fluency. Vrank, paying back the compliment he received, believed Wouters to be an accomplice in the plot against Philip's life, and he steadily gave point against the armourer's loose assault, wounded him in the neck, and forced him to relinquish his grasp of the bridle, as he shrunk back from pain. In another bound or two, Vrank was close beside the group; and as he raised his hand to smite Spalatro, certain that he too was an accomplice in the intended murder, he saw the Italian, to his astonishment and delight, come close up behind the assassin and plunge his poniard into his side as he was still grappling with Philip; while at the same moment he read in the villain's face the features of one of the actors in the scene of the Zevenvolden. We need scarcely say he gazed on Gyles Postel.

The rush of thought that filled Vrank's brain was one of those wonderful movements of the human mind, when it takes in at once a flood of light, every minute particle of which it can separate and examine in prompt micrography.

That this fellow was suborned by Jacqueline, an associate of Van Monfoort, and a crowd of other conclusions formed the sum of Vrank's instant conviction. The horror of the notion overpowered that of the attempted crime; and an impulse, even stronger than anxiety for Philip's safety, hurried him closer still to the gasping wretch, that he might snatch from his dying breath the secret of his real employer. Vrank panted with excessive emotion as he sprang from his horse, grasped the fellow in one arm, and held him up to save him from being suffocated by the blood which gushed profusely from his mouth and nostrils, as well as from his wounded side. As Spalatro coolly wiped the crimson stain from his poniard, Philip stood, breathing short and amazed at all that passed so rapidly, and to find that he was not killed on the spot by the two so lately suspected men, who now seemed only anxious to save him, and secure his assailant, while Wouters came forward towards his chief, in unflinching fidelity and coarse contempt of pain.

"Speak, wretched man; who art thou? why hast thou attempted this deed? who set thee on?" cried Vrank, close into the ear of the writhing villain in his arms. A fresh discharge of blood totally prevented a reply, and Postel seemed actually choking, as though Death had already seized him, unabsolved and unconfessed.

"Good God! He dies, he dies!" cried Vrank, at the same time raising him up, and striving to relieve him, as if it was some dear friend whose sufferings he would alleviate. Gyles Postel looked convulsively on him, as if to read the cause of such solicitude; and he immediately recognised the young stranger of the Zevenvolden, whom he had seen receiving the girdle from Jacqueline's hands. The diabolical temper of his mind gave an instant's respite to bodily pain. He gulped down the heart's blood which was mounting to his lungs, and grasping Vrank's hand, the following words gurgled incoherently in his throat:

"The countess—the girdle—the forest—the English lord —" all the connecting words were unintelligible.

"Is the dog yet alive?" said Spalatro, stalking close to him, and raising his poniard to complete his work; but

Vrank caught his arm, and hurriedly expressed the importance of hearing the villain's revelation. Philip, reassured of his own safety, and convinced that his suspicions had been misplaced, anxiously seconded Vrank's appeal, and interposed between Spalatro's dagger and Postel's body; at the same time holding back Wouters, who had now come up, and was blindly rushing against the group, still believing that his master was beset by three conspirators, and unable to distinguish the real condition of any.

"What said he, Sir Francon?" eagerly asked the duke. "Did he mention names? did he confess to his associates?"

"The countess!" muttered the wounded man, gasping in the new effort.

"Which! which, fellow?" asked Philip, straining down close to him. Postel attempted to answer, but could not utter a word. Failing in speech, he pointed to a ring, on the hand that was pressed against his heaving chest.

"Again, again!" cried Philip — "new damning proof of her infamy! Her father's signet ring, by Heavens!" and these words of condemnation found a too deep echo in Vrank Van Borselen's heart, for he at once recognised the sparkling gem, in its rich-wrought setting, which had particularly caught his attention among the others which ornamented the fair hand that he had pressed in his during the perilous contest in the Zevenvolden. He could speak no more. His mind was overpowered by the conviction of Jacqueline's guilt, and he gave no heed to Philip's continued but vain efforts to extract further information from Gyles Postel. At length, the latter seemed by some violent internal effort to regain at once strength, consciousness, and the power of free utterance.

"Ay," cried he, "I am now better—I knew it would pass over — it will take a deeper thrust to do Gyles Postel to death. Ah, Philip, you have escaped me! — I little thought you wore armour under your pourpoint, or I should have struck you in the throat, not the breast. But your day will come — my next blow shall ——"

Ere he could finish his ferocious sentence he sunk back, exhausted on the earth.

"Let the villain die," said Vrank, in ineffable disgust: "he has spoken too much."

"No, no," cried Philip, "let's raise him up again. Give him water, good Sir Francon. Here, Spalatro, loose the buttons of his doublet. He must not escape me thus — he has yet treasures to reveal. — See, he revives."

The distorted eyes did once more give a blood-shot stare of consciousness. They fixed first on Philip, then turned aside and rested on Vrank.

"You wear her favour — so does Glocester — Fitzwalter — so do — I — even I! — I saw her covered with Flemish blood on the field of Gouda — I clasped her close in the silent hall of Amersfort — I — Let Duke John look to himself. — The countess's collar is even now on his throat. It was *your* hand that dealt me this blow," continued he, suddenly fixing his stern look on Spalatro — "*you* — I have marked you — and may perdition seize me — may my soul —"

"He is gone!" exclaimed Philip, in an accent of deep regret, while a short convulsive struggle stopped the ruffian's words; and the upturned eyes and falling jaw gave to the accustomed witnesses of violent death the unerring tokens that all was over.

"He is gone — but he has said enough — she is condemned for ever. Tear open his garments, and let's see what secrets may lurk on his person. — Let's discover who he is."

Joos Wouters, who had recovered from the shock of his sudden but slight hurt, and who now began to see the real state of things, immediately busied himself in dragging off the monkish disguise from the corpse, and closely examined the articles of dress. But no clue was found of Postel's name or calling; and while the examination went on, the sounds of horns were heard approaching; and in a little more, St. Pol, John Vilain, and some others came riding up in anxious search for the duke, who gave to his cousin count a rapid sketch of what had passed. As soon as John Vilain saw the dead body, he exclaimed,

"By Heavens! that is Gyles Postel, Van Monfoort's squire!"

"Van Monfoort's!" cried Philip, St. Pol, and Vrank Van Borselen all together; and the two former required but an interchange of glances to read their mutual conviction that the knight was not guiltless of the criminal attempt of his squire. Their farther suspicions did not then find vent; but while the duke gave orders to Wouters to let the body be buried where it then lay, and graciously acknowledged Spalatro for the saviour of his life, Vrank remarked that Philip passed him silently by, with a look that spoke far more enmity than indifference. While the others of the now increasing cavalcade rode away, he remained behind with the corpse, not without a special object connected with its burial.

This adventure formed a fertile subject of discourse and conjecture for the rest of the day; and Philip, tired of the hollow or exaggerated congratulations of interested friends or cringing familiars, took refuge in the winding mazes of the dance, which closed the evening's entertainment, an amusement in which his excellence was equal to his delight.

The next morning saw a total change in the halls and courts of Hesdin castle. The whole of the numerous company had dispersed soon after dawn. Every individual had set off on his separate destination. Bedford, with his duchess and numerous suite, for London, to exert his influence with Glocester, and prevent his committing England in a quarrel with Philip; leaving the while to a commission of great lords at Paris the care of his nephew, Henry VI.'s possessions against the untiring attempts of Charles VII., and his enterprising, though at that time unlucky friends. St. Pol to Brabant, to look to the government of his dying brother's dominions. De Richemont and his brother the duke to their dominions in Britanny, to strain every nerve of hostility towards England; while the foreign knights, who had tilted at the jousts, feasted at the board, and danced in the hall, now wended on their various ways of errantry or war, loaded with proofs of Philip's profuseness.

The vassals of Burgundy, his ministers and followers,

all soon occupied their several posts of preparation for the expedition against Holland, the preliminary points of which had been long going forward, under all this apparent abandonment to pleasure and dissipation. Not a day was lost, and nothing was neglected that could tend to ensure success. Every moment which Philip could snatch from the council-room or camp was divided between dalliance in the company of his beloved countess, superintendence of his various suits of armour with Joos Wouters, and trials of skill and lessons of martial exercise with Spalatro.

Intelligence of a somewhat startling nature was, on one of the latest of those days of preparation, received from Brussels. It announced the seizure and execution of a young student, for an attempt to strangle Duke John with an iron collar. The dying words of Gyles Postel were remembered on this occasion, and not one individual in Hesdin Castle had a doubt of Jacqueline's complicity in John Chevalier's crime.

CHAPTER XI.

JACQUELINE'S friends, the faithful and victorious Hoeks, were indefatigible in obtaining information of the Duke of Burgundy's movements; and every possible preparation was made to meet the coming shock, by those whose courage or despair made them equal to the crisis. The English force, the main reliance of the common cause, was concentrated in the island of Schowen, which private information had pointed out as the intended point of attack, by the formidable army which now day by day approached from Picardy and Flanders. The contingents from the various towns of Holland and Zealand, which were faithful to Jacqueline, hastened to that rendezvous for the main division of her forces; but serious defection from her cause became evident as the danger approached; and though some volunteers from the chapter and city of Utrecht came frequently straggling up, the promised reinforcement of the bishop's men-at-arms and pikemen had

not yet made their appearance. Several letters, indeed, reached Jacqueline from her reverend ally, cheering her on with words of advice and frothy phrases of good-will—but Zweder Van Culemburg's name was not yet fairly committed, in such a way as to entitle it to be placed on the muster-roll of the just cause.

Jacqueline still held her little court at Amersfort, the strongest and most secure of all her towns. Her mother remained with her, upholding, in appearance, her spirits and courage, but in reality causing, by her presence, an effect almost sufficient to paralyse her native energy.

Fitz-walter had set off to take the command of his little army. The gay-hearted Lewis had also left his sister, and repaired to the post of active duty. Rudolf Van Diepenholt was following up his own interests, the better to enable him to serve Jacqueline with the chapter of Utrecht; so that with the exception of the rude and often unmanageable chiefs of the friendly faction, who formed her counsel, Jacqueline was left almost wholly dependent on the resources of her own powerful mind. But these did not fail her in this important crisis. She bore well and firmly her many mortifications and privations; and reposing solely on Benina Beyling's fidelity, she seemed straining herself to the utmost pitch of endurance against ill-fate.

The forebodings of coming ruin which she could not repress were not a little strengthened by Ludwick Van Monfoort, who now returned from his mission to Hesdin, and bluntly told to his anxious mistress all that befel him there. He detailed his having contrived, by bribing a servant, to slip a warning billet into Duke Philip's plate, even at his banquet board; and his having been obliged to leave the castle without otherwise being able to thwart Gyles Postel's diabolical designs. Whether they had succeeded or failed he knew not; but he took care to add fresh and acute pain to Jacqueline's uncertainty on that head, by informing her that the young Kabblejaw hunter, in whose praise he had so often in his own despite held forth, was no other than a minion of Burgundy, a vowed partisan of John of Brabant, and the son of the worst

enemy to Jacqueline, himself, and the party of the Hoeks in general.

This was an agonising winding up of Jacqueline's suffering on Vrank's account. She had clung to the hope that, though a Kabblejaw and a follower of Philip, he might have borne a name of no deep importance in the cause of faction, and might have been open to inducements to relinquish the service of tyranny. But to hear that he was the son and heir to the hereditary hate of the Borselens, and one of the pledged creatures of her odious husband and his infamous cause, was a climax of unlooked for despair.

"Well!" she cried, in the first moment of privacy, after the receipt of this afflicting news, — "Well! the vision is dissolved, the prism shattered for ever! He is lost to me, without a shadow of chance! Oh, pride, pride, where art thou sunk? Why dost thou not rouse up to strengthen me in this humiliated hour? Lost to me ere found — snatched away ere clasped — my bitter foe — hating my very name, perhaps, and vilifying the heart that would freely bleed to death were the author of its wounds but worthy. Rouse from this lethargy of love, my soul! for ever be forgotten this base episode in my life! Let me rush into the teeth of my foes — alone — hating and despising mankind, and shaming by my death the slanderers of my life! Alas! alas! this is all boast and bravado — I can no more oppose the torrent that assails me — this last blow bends me to the earth. Oh, pride, dignity, consciousness of right! where are ye now? How unavailing all to stem the tide of luckless love!" and the tears of the high-minded woman gushed out, a bitter tribute to the inherent tyranny of that passion which conquers the best and bravest spirits.

A few days following this, direct intelligence came from England that Duke Humphrey had publicly avowed his marriage with Elinor Cobham, who, as Duchess of Glocester and wife of England's protector, had at once stepped to a height only short of the throne, and found many a too ready apologist for the arts which procured her misplaced elevation. Jacqueline heard this intelligence in the

midst of her little council. All around her were inflamed with indignation at this base betrayal of every tie of honour and every claim of duty. Countess Marguerite vowed deep and bitter vengeance on the perjured Glocester. Van Monfoort cursed him with all his heart and soul, at the same time admitting that he believed him to have been the sport of a fiend in human form.

Jacqueline alone maintained a calm and cold demeanour, which she did not mistake for dignity, nor shall we represent it as such. It was in fact indifference, which so often passes for self-command — total indifference. Had she heard the news some days earlier, her proud blood might have stirred more rapidly, and anger have repelled, or at least rebuked the wrong. But now the defection of Glocester, which she had long made up her mind to expect, came as an event the most common-place; nor did she even feel a throb of triumph at the avowed degradation in which he was overwhelmed.

Apparently dead to all private feelings, she seemed to concentrate all her powers for one grand public struggle; and it was only in the solitude of her chamber, and with the communings of her heart that she gave way to even one voluntary betrayal of her wretchedness. In the mean time the preparations for war went on. The enemy approached; and Jacqueline was resolved to put herself, as usual, at the head of her troops, and stifle in the throng of action, the intolerable torment of her mind.

The year was now advancing to its close. Long files of water-fowl were seen stretching across the sky in inland flight. The foliage was swept from the trees, and the bare branches creaked responsive to the wintry blasts, while the crisped leaves crackled beneath the feet of the traveller. The sunbeams or the breezes formed alike free passage through the forest depths; and the skeleton forms of nature called up the reflections of the moralist, or warned the mere sensual observer of the wants which come in the train of the world's annual decay. Jacqueline, of all beings existing, sympathised the most keenly with the coming dreariness and desolation. She felt that the early winter of her life was setting in; and her withered hopes, and

the frozen sources of joy seemed to say, that for her there would be no spring.

Indulging this sad mood, she used to sit for hours, whenever she could snatch time from the labours of the council-room or the forms of her little court, in her private chamber, watching the red sun as it sunk behind the frosty haze of a Dutch twilight, or the moon struggling up through the dense vapour, in colours of darkness and blood, and growing gradually clear and bright as it arose, like the disembodied soul escaping from the stained atmosphere of mortality. A solemn strain of thought seemed at such times to flow, like mental music, through the high-strung chords of Jacqueline's feelings. Contempt of the world and its wasting wishes was settling into a profound principle within her mind; and she seemed to have reached as near as possible to that unimpassioned tone of high philosophy for which she had hitherto vainly longed, when a circumstance took place that hurled her at once from this pedestal of unnatural pride, and brought her down once more to the level of mortal suffering and sympathy.

On such an evening as we have described, in the month of December, 1425, our heroine (who was then beyond all rivalry the heroine of her age) retired early from the afternoon meeting of the council, as was her wont, and sat at her high and narrow casement, which opened out directly into, and was on a level with a terrace in the spacious but gloomy gardens of the palace. She had given orders that she should not be disturbed. Her scanty suite had withdrawn. Benina Beyling was occupied, inditing, by her orders, a private despatch to Lord Fitz-walter, in reply to a letter expressive of his continued devotion to her cause, and of Glocester's orders that he should uphold it to the last extremity. Countess Marguerite was busily employed, with Van Monfoort, one of the Hemsteds, and other leaders of the Hoeks, in her own cabinet, on some point of immediate importance; so that Jacqueline reckoned on an hour or more of that complete solitude in which her mother was so little disposed to indulge her, from dread of its aiding the growth of that morbid melancholy which she perceived to be fast sapping her health and peace of mind. The

plain oaken chair on which Jacqueline sat, during that and many another such hour of sad reflection, is still preserved* ; and its high-seated, low-backed, and altogether inconvenient construction, seems (to a fanciful mind at least) to give force to the picture of harsh suffering of which its nearly-forsaken and persecuted occupant was then the victim. A table was before her, and on it lay an illuminated manuscript of the story of Sir Lanval, who was carried off by the fairy Tryamour. The vellum pages were from time to time turned over by Jacqueline's mechanical fingers ; but while her eyes wandered over the grotesque embellishments, they took in nothing of the quaintly told story, which at another epoch might have so much interested and amused her. A lute lay by her side, but it was untouched, save when in a moment of listlessness she now and then swept her hand across the strings, without method or object, producing such wild and unformed melody as though it was the wind that sighed wantonly over the instrument, and made it discourse the music of a dream. As she gazed out into the garden, her eyes, which had for some time been fixed on what is commonly called vacancy, (a phrase that expresses but the void within,) were suddenly filled with the observation of a figure, that caused her an instant pang of astonishment, doubt, and terror. There was something in the motion of the figure, which was that of a cloak-enveloped man, as it glided stealthily through the twilight shade, that proved it, as she thought, to be not of the earth on which it trod. But before she had time to follow up her train of doubt on that point, the approach of the object, and her discovery of its features convinced her, without any force of logical deduction or proof of argument. She plainly recognised the pale sad countenance of him who had so long, irresistibly and uncalled for, filled her mental vision, in the bloom and animation of the inspiring moments passed in the heart-stirring excitement of the Zevenvolden.

There are certain moods of mind in which conviction on any point brings a whole host of reasoning into immediate play, accompanying the effect which in the regular sequence

* In the Museum of the Hague.

of thought it might be supposed to precede. Such was at this moment the frame of Jacqueline's mind, prepared for the reception of the mystery that presented itself, and weighing the evidences at the same instant that it admitted the fact.

"He is dead!" faintly uttered she; and the tremulous movement of her lips continued, from the effect of the thrill that shook her whole frame, for many seconds after the words had ceased to leave their whispered impress on the vibrating circles of air.

"He is dead!" repeated the inward echoes of thought, and the sound of the sentiment seemed to fall heavily upon her heart. "No living man of his party or opinions could have found entrance here, or have dared to brave the perils of such an intrusion. He is dead, and his spirit is come to warn me that *my* hour is near at hand."

"Countess Jacqueline!" said the figure, in slow, solemn, and somewhat stern accents, which thrilled through our heroine in sepulchral murmurings; and as the words were uttered, the speaker stood full before her, on the elevated steps which led to the parterre, and with an attitude at once respectful and dignified, he removed the cap, the dark plume of which had served to cast his features into deeper shade.

"I come," continued he, "to fulfil a sacred mission:" and as he spoke, with eyes firmly fixed on her he addressed, a glow of real living crimson rushed to his cheek and brow. What it was that Vrank Van Borselen perceived in the expression of the face before him to cause this sudden emotion, may be imagined by the lively fancy that can picture, though it has never known, the prompt intelligence which darts a meaning to the lover's keen-searching eye. The secret volume of thought opened to him by Jacqueline's electrical glance might well have caused a rush of blood from his heart. He read at once the whole history of her feelings towards him. But had any repelling doubt checked this rushing flood of conviction, her tongue and her whole person gave instant evidence, to ratify the terms in which her looks had signed the absolute surrender of her heart.

"Thank Heaven, thank Heaven, he lives!" cried Jacqueline, in the impassioned tone of overwhelming joy; "it is he, he himself! oh, God, this is too much!"

And as she spoke, she sprang from her chair and flung herself towards Vrank. But the inspiration that urged the exclamation and the movement, acting on her over-wrought frame of mind and too highly excited state of nerve, a throb of intense pain darted at the same moment through both her head and heart, and she was falling utterly helpless to the ground, when Vrank caught her in his arms, and became instantly almost as much deprived of strength or perception as she.

Every transition of such a scene is electrical. The mind's lightning flashes quick through the storm-gusts of passion.

"Come in, come in!" cried Jacqueline, in almost frantic tones, recovering her whole strength and self-command. "You are lost, if we are seen!" and, without breaking from the embrace in which she was still clasped, she inclined her form inwards from the platform, so that a step or two (which Vrank to his life's end persisted in believing to have been made by her alone) brought the almost unconscious pair clear inside the casemented doorway; and the next moment that allowed either of them a certain perception of what passed, found Jacqueline reclining once more in her oaken arm-chair; and Vrank on his knees before her, pressing her cold hand to his bosom, and imprinting it with kisses that might have warmed a marble statue.

"Rash man!" said Jacqueline, at length, but not in accents of reproach or anger, "how could you have ventured this step? Is it thus you would serve me, by dooming yourself to ruin?"

"To ruin!" repeated Vrank, in a tone of terrified reality, that made Jacqueline shudder again. "To ruin! Oh, God, what oracle is it that thus speaks my doom! This is indeed ruin!"

Yet while he spoke, and felt the whole depth of the sentiment, he made not the slightest effort to escape from the peril so avowed and felt; but remained fixed in his

attitude of devotion, at the shrine which all his sense of sight pronounced to be that of an idol which it was little short of infamy to worship.

"You are too truly risking your own destruction, if discovered here," returned Jacqueline, taking a view widely different of Vrank's situation than the one which overwhelmed him, and marvelling not a little at the contradiction between his words, which spoke so keen a sense of danger, and his actions which seemed to defy it. But there was nothing in this that was not flattering to her; and even at such a moment she was not displeased at so powerful a tribute to her influence. She felt instantly convinced that Vrank had abandoned every thing for her; but her swimming head and throbbing heart were not in unison with any profound plan of self-examination.

"But fear not," continued she, in soothing and reassuring accents, and in the first impulse of her generous gratitude — "fear not, for your risk is mine; the peril that assails you shall strike me as well. *I* care nothing for consequences now — you have made your cause mine — happen what may, we stand or fall together."

Nothing could exceed the mental agony that agitated Vrank while these words were spoken. He knew not what to do or say. He felt rivetted to the floor, on which his knee was still bent. A spell of ruin seemed indeed upon him; and he felt as if he only wanted strength to put himself at once to death, and escape from the terrible situation into which his weakness had plunged him. It was bad enough to know that he had violated every one of his own well-digested intentions, sacrificed his reason, committed his principles — but there was still a keener pang, in the reproach of having misled a deceived and confiding woman into the avowal of a passion which he dared not suffer himself to return, and which, be her errors or crimes what they might, bore the stamp of genuine and intense devotion to him. And perhaps self-love came in for its share in his feeling as well as in her's, to aid in the bewildering maze of sensations in which he seemed lost. Be it as it might, he felt a sudden throng of excuses and arguments in Jacqueline's favour all at once rushing on his mind.

Some internal conviction seemed to tell him, "she is innocent" — but he heard not the still small whisper of unconscious vanity, which added, "how could the being who loves me thus be criminal?"

The current of Vrank's reflections was now rapidly turning, and it would soon have set all one way, but for that righting principle of stern duty which on many an occasion had preserved him from excess, and which now suddenly shifted the whole machinery of his mind, displaying, as though by the touch of a magic wand, the direct reverse of the reasoning by which he was suffering himself to be carried along. Action and thought were equally prompt. He dropped the fair hand from his heretofore convulsive grasp, rose quickly from his kneeling posture, and, once more standing upright and firm, he felt the force of independence new-nerving his mind and body.

"Countess Jacqueline," said he, at length, with infinitely more tenderness, but not less firmness, than at first, "this has been a trying moment for us both. God knows it took me by surprise — that is my sole excuse, before Heaven or my own conscience — let it be so as well with you. I am overwhelmed at the scene that has passed — I should deserve to be struck dead if I had contemplated or planned it. I sought your presence, not with one view ungenerous or presumptuous, and bitterly do I lament the error into which my coming has led you."

Jacqueline listened to this solemnly spoken preface with breathless interest, and she gazed on him intently as he went on.

"If the hurry of the event, the memory of a former scene, or the over-keen sense of my danger, has forced you into the betrayal of a too acute sensibility, think not that I could avail myself of it unworthily. Regain your dignity as I have recovered my place."

"Away with dignity and false distinctions from this hour!" exclaimed Jacqueline, seeing only in Vrank's demeanour a slavish veneration for her rank, and urged by her native sense of station to take the lead in the conference, and set right the timid youth as to her feelings, both for his sake and her own.

"No," continued she, "this is not the season for cold forms — the full heart spurns them now. Your place is found, nor is my pride debased. I know you to be noble, equal in birth to any, as something tells me you are superior in soul to most. The barrier between us is broken down — I forget all, but the sympathy that tells — that *commands* me to esteem and honour you."

Vrank's brain seemed to reel again. He could not bear the brilliant glance of the full eyes that beamed on him, but he let his own drop their looks upon the ground.

"Speak, then, freely, valiant and noble knight," said Jacqueline; "tell me what my heart anticipates, yet yearns to have confirmed, that you have given up the cause of tyranny and wrong, and are come to make mine invincible."

"Countess, you drive me mad!" cried Vrank, with great emotion, throwing aside his cloak, and tearing open the breast of his pourpoint, as he spoke. "I can no longer bear the torture of your misplaced confidence. Alas! I am not your friend or partisan, though I do feel the path of duty is leading me to utter misery. Look here, and here!"

Jacqueline, in her turn, became almost speechless and stupified, at marking the red cross of Burgundy still on his breast, and the placquet, which had been so minutely described by Van Monfoort, fastened to his arm.

"How, then, came you here?" murmured she, after a pause; "and wherefore?"

"I made no display of these badges, which a solemn vow forces me to bear; and this token procured me free passage through your gates."

Jacqueline covered her face with her hand, on discovering the ring she had given to Gyles Postel.

"Let me hide out my shame!" exclaimed she. "I ask not how or where you obtained that fatal gem; but why, in mercy tell me why, thus badged, thus decked — to wound me to the heart's core — why art thou here?"

"I am here, Countess Jacqueline, at the behest of honour and chivalry. God pity me, if less high inducements helped to urge me on! I meant not, St. Andrew be my

witness, to outrage one feeling of your heart, by wantonly displaying those badges of my service and my faith. But, mark ye, noble lady, this still more precious gage. It was given me in high and generous confidence — I could not return it but by mine own hand, direct into that which had placed it here."

With these words Vrank deliberately unfastened the girdle from round his neck, and drew it from his bosom.

"*Return* it!" exclaimed Jacqueline, in a voice that was the true type of her sinking heart. "And why return it? — why not wear it still? — the feeling that prompted the gift is still active in my heart."

Insensible to all arguments of upholding pride, Jacqueline felt her own voice fail, and her heart beat wildly; and without a thought of humiliation or shame, she was conscious that the warm tears ran streaming down her cheeks. Vrank saw this unerring proof of anguish. He felt that his knee bent involuntarily, and that his heart again did homage; and perhaps, had a single other word escaped from Jacqueline's lips, he had fallen once more at her feet, and vowed himself to her for ever. But she spoke not, for, in that hour of sad sincerity, she was not capable of forming an artifical thought, or uttering a word for effect; and Vrank was able to preserve the utmost force of his mind, all needed in so trying and touching a case.

He was too much affected by her distress, and we may confess, too painfully gratified by it, to admit a notion of its being unreal; but he recalled in his own despite, like some desperate resource of a drowning man, every thing that, by telling against her, might aid in saving him from the snare that sensibility had prepared for him. If he encouraged these thoughts, as they flashed across him, it was less in the spirit of accusation than in right of self-defence. The broken, but damning revelations of Gyles Postel — the long believed charges relative to her poisoned uncle — her misrepresented connexion with Glocester — Duke Philip's diatribes — the hate of his own parents — the fury of his party, all rose at once before Vrank; and as yet, he had not heard one word of justification from Jacqueline's lips, except, indeed, their avowal of her feelings towards him-

self. With many men, that had proved sufficient to absolve her from all, and heavier charges than Vrank's memory had recorded against her. But, be it a merit or a defect, his mind was of a different mould; for, though intensely gratified by and grateful for her evident attachment, and though thoroughly surprised by the discovery, he preserved the balance between reason and feeling; and his self-respect preserved him from being overpowered by the mere force of sighs or tears.

All that we have endeavoured briefly to trace, passed with infinitely greater rapidity in our hero's mind; but the words and actions consequent on his thoughts were less abrupt than their written description can be. He summoned up his utmost fortitude, and held forward the girdle in his outstretched hand. Jacqueline mechanically accepted it. He felt relieved from an oppressive burden — she seemed as though the link which bound her to her last hope was severed.

"Heaven be praised!" said Vrank, "I have fulfilled the duty of a true and honourable knight. Countess, I have worn your favour worthily, and had I never known it for yours, so may I rest in Heaven, no mortal man should have ever wrenched it from me, or carried it attaint, but with the sacrifice of my life or at the price of his. But being yours, 'twas not for me to bear a badge that belied my every principle of duty and of reason. You have a right to further explanation, but I cannot voluntarily wound where I have already done unmeant mischief. I must be silent, and let your candour supply my want of words."

"Speak on! oh, speak on! you can say nothing now to do me deeper harm!"

"These words and looks afflict me, Madam, to my heart's depths. Better that I retire, and leave you to forget you ever knew me, or honoured me with a thought."

"Oh, stay awhile, even in this atmosphere of terrible danger. Explain this conduct, as cruel as it is perhaps just."

"Let me then speak in my own justification. I urge not my fealty to my lawful prince, my fidelity to my

family creed, all stamping me your political opponent; but God, who reads my heart, knows I am not your foe. But as a gentleman, a soldier, an unpledged and true knight, could I wear the favour of her, all princess, all enchantress as she be, whose badge is also worn by Glocester and Fitz-walter? whose troth is bound to one man, and whose heart is in the keeping of another; ay, ay, mayhap shared with two or *more*; whose fair fame bears attaint, and oh! with deep pain is the reproach drawn from my reluctant bosom, whose creatures carry murder into the palace of her husband, and against her cousin's breast; and one of whom, the lowest and vilest of mankind, bore the stamp of his terrible commission in that very signet-ring which I dragged from his death-stiffened finger, where her hand had placed it. Oh, pardon me if I speak too bluntly; 'tis the open heart that prompts the candid phrase. I see how my words move you; silence my tongue for ever, and lift a load off my mind, by one sentence of denial, one word of justification!"

During this speech, in which Vrank had gone much farther than he had intended, Jacqueline felt all the rapid transition from submission to resistance, all that revival of fiery pride and indignation which outraged virtue and hurt dignity could feel. The blood of twenty-four sovereign princes, her predecessors and ancestors, seemed to glow in her veins and swell her heart. Every throb of tenderness was hushed. Her tears dried suddenly up. The lassitude of suffering which had before unnerved her was replaced by a prompt tension of mind and frame. She was all at once a heroine, ready to repel a wrong, able to sacrifice happiness, or lay down life in support of her injured honour, but scorning to pronounce one syllable of denial, or urge one plea of defence, against assertions which ought, as she felt, to be annihilated by their very utterance; like the noxious insect which dies from the impurity of its own breath.

Rising up in her chair erect, as though she sat on her sovereign throne —

"Denial!" said she, "justification! What then, is it to come to this? Is Jacqueline of Holland to be so

accused and so summoned? Is the whole noble line of Bavaria to be dragged to judgment in my person, like some peasant hind, on such charges as these? Oh, God! what have I done to earn this? And you, Sir, who have taught me this bitter lesson — how have I mistaken you — how forgot myself! How could you dare to harbour such thoughts of me, or having them, how venture to form them into speech? If the dignity of a long line of princes could not exempt, might not the privilege of my sex protect me from your outraging words? But I forgive you — it is the prejudice of your birth, and the degradation of your service that are to blame. What could I look for else from a Borselen, a traitorous Kabblejaw, and a hireling of Burgundy?"

While Jacqueline was thus urged on by her impetuous scorn to say much more than in sober resentment she would have done, Vrank was affected in the same tender point in which she had been so deeply hurt. Her galling reproaches goaded his pride, which turned like a wounded deer upon its assailant — and he asked himself, "Is this like innocence? Is it not rather the boisterous tone of conscious guilt?" but his usual clear-sightedness was obscured by his rising irritation, and he did not reflect that symptoms which in a common person, would have justified his conclusion, were not at all inconsistent with the ire of high station, carried beyond itself at being accused, and disdaining the notion of defence.

"Madam," said Vrank, with all the calm he could assume, "I must not shrink from these opprobrious epithets, nor do I wince under them. A clear conscience can disprove even worse accusal, as does mine even now."

"A high mind scorns to refute a base charge, as mine does — and so you may tell your tyrant master, at whose bidding mayhap you have offered me this outrage."

"Madam, I see you know me not," replied Vrank, "and for both our sakes I grieve that ever chance has thrown me in the way of your misconception."

"For your own sake, Sir, but for mine, spare your regret. A chance meeting may be forgotten with as much ease as it occurred. — It can cost me little to efface so slight a stain on my memory."

"I should not have thought so erewhile," said Vrank, with a bitter smile, finding it impossible to repress the proud consciousness of the influence which she had so palpably acknowledged.

"That smile of too ready triumph may turn to mortifying bitterness yet, Heer Borselen, when you find that the weakness of the woman is merged in the contempt of the princess. And now, Sir, you are free to retire — your mission of insult being accomplished — making your passage out as best you may."

Vrank swelled with offended pride. He never had been so thoroughly angry either with another or himself. He would have given worlds that it was a man who had thus treated him. All his usual powers of reasoning were whelmed in the angry flood; and he did not at the moment perceive that the source of his emotion was not in the expressions of Jacqueline's contempt, but in the deep-felt passion which had just created the sensitiveness that those expressions so painfully irritated.

"I obey you, countess," exclaimed he; "I leave you, and my good sword shall carve its way through the dangers which, as your words imply, are to oppose my retreat."

"Dangers!" cried Jacqueline, the idea of those that might assail him bursting on her like a painful ray of light. "I threatened none — I wished you none, Heaven be my pledge! Go, since you think so basely of me — but go safely. — Wrap well your cloak over those hateful tokens — a hundred deaths await their discovery in these walls!"

"I neither court nor shun death," replied Vrank, moved by her generous anxiety for his safety, "though life gains no new value from this scene."

While he replaced his cap on his head, and flung his cloak across his breast and shoulders, retiring towards the garden the while, Jacqueline felt a new flood of gentle feelings rush within her breast. The fine countenance of the young man, which the dim twilight showed with a softened effect, spoke a volume of deep feelings. His magnanimity of character seemed all at once revealed without an effort on his part, and acknowledged without one

qualifying doubt on hers. The effect was irresistible. Hurt pride, wounded dignity, offended virtue, all gave way to the powerful influence of unbounded love; and Jacqueline was on the point of following the impulse that once more urged her towards him, who was in every true essential her lover, when she was interrupted and shocked by the sudden inburst of several armed men, who rushed from the garden; and before Vrank could even throw aside his cloak to grasp his weapon's hilt, he was forcibly seized and violently held captive, in the grasp of half-a-dozen sinewy hands.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

THE THIRD VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

It was Adrian Van Hemsted and some of his brother Hoeks, who, true to the unceremonious fidelity of the times, had burst into their sovereign's presence, arms in their hands and fury in their hearts, on hearing that a suspicious-looking man had passed the guards by favour of the countess's well-known signet ring, and having their worst fears for her safety confirmed, by discovering through the casement the hated badge of Burgundy on his breast. Countess Marguerite, hurrying from her own apartment, came close on their heels; and Benina Beyling soon made one in the court-retinue which thronged the scene of alarm.

In the confusion of the first moments Jacqueline could only interpose for Vrank's safety, by throwing herself among the group of furious partisans who had seized on him, and mingling commands and supplications for his being held harmless, with the loud vociferations of their rage.

"A Burgundian! A Kabblejaw! A Borselen!" were their first exclamations, as Vrank's person was recognised by those who had witnessed his brief appearance at the jay-shooting of Tergoes.

"Death! death! To the torture, to the torture!" were the next most distinguishable sounds.

"Bury him alive, as we did the traitor Beyling!" cried one.

"Let him be rolled through the streets in a spiked barrel," exclaimed another.

"Torture, torture! death, death! away with him!" chorused the whole party; while the harsh voice and harsher looks of Countess Marguerite sanctioned each and all of those ferocious proposals, and Jacqueline, supported

by Benina, continued her strenuous efforts to interpose between the intended victim and his ready-made destroyers, and postpone, though she had faint hope of finally averting, his fate.

Vrank Van Borselen, though an extremely brave man, the common quality of the age, did not possess that fiery kind of valour which plunges and struggles with danger, sometimes succeeding to shake it off, but more commonly sinking under the violence it provokes. His courage was more reflective than impetuous; and instead now of wasting his strength in vain efforts to escape, or hurrying on his doom by word or action, he silently listened to the abuse, and passively submitted to the outrage of his assailants. But he all the while prepared both mind and body for a concentrated effort at escape, if a possible opportunity presented itself, or for a dignified resignation to his fate, whatever it might be. That the latter was to be promptly decided and dreadful in its nature there seemed now little doubt!

"Away with him from this presence!" cried Countess Marguerite. "Let him die outside! Despatch him at once!"

A yell of fury answered this demoniac order; and Vrank was dragged out through the casement, despite the convulsive resistance to which he was urged by the horror of immediate death. He was conscious that his cheeks were blanched, for he felt the blood curdling round his heart. But, though he lost his colour, he did not lose his presence of mind, the true distinction between natural dread of death, and the power by which it is mastered. His last look, as he was hurried away, was thrown back on Jacqueline, held forcibly in her mother's arms; and in the agonised expression of her pallid face, lit by the glare of torches which were now lavishly brought in, he read a farewell of consoling sympathy, that softened, if it could not reverse, the terrible sentence of destruction. As soon as he was dragged clear of the threshold, and the glass-door furiously closed by the last of the party, several swords were raised, and he saw them gleam as they clashed together to pierce him. But at this moment — the very hair-line verge between life and death — Ludwick Van

Monfoort arriving on the spot, on hearing of the general disturbance, burst through the group, flung his broad bulk before the intended victim, whom he instantly recognised, and actually received on his armour-covered breast the points of more than one blade, which but for him had laid Vrank low for ever.

"What's this?" cried the intrepid Lord of Urk, "Murder on the threshold of the princess! Hear ye not her shrieks for mercy? Stand back, stand back! See how she rushes forth to save him!" and at the instant Jacqueline did indeed appear, loudly crying to the murderers, and breaking away from her mother's feeble efforts at detention, while Benina Beyling aided her merciful intentions by throwing aside the casement door, and giving her free egress to the garden. The baffled, but still furious Hoeks, turned for a moment at the piercing sound of their mistress's voice, and Vrank was not the man to let such a critical period pass without one desperate attempt for safety. His eye fixed on one of the long but light-handled halberds, used by the guards on duty in the palace, and which lay against the wall. Springing from the grasp of one man, who held by the collar of his cloak, the others having loosened their hold when preparing to put him to death, he bounded towards the weapon, which he relied on more as a means of aiding his escape than of successful defence; and seizing it in both his hands, he swept it round and round with his utmost force, striking down more than one of his foes, and making a complete circle among the rest, that quite guaranteed him from their rapiers' reach. Profiting by the confusion and the space, he suddenly turned from the palace-walls, bounded away with the agility of youth running for life, and was soon far down one of the principal avenues of the garden.

But he was as quickly pursued by several of his enemies, and ere he could gain much ground he heard the loud tramp of hostile feet close behind. Measuring the intervening distance with a keen eye, he wheeled suddenly round, stopped short, and received the first of his pursuers on the presented point of the halberd. Just extricating the blade from the body of the falling man, Vrank turned

again and resumed his flight, having gained breath by the sudden check. As he ran along, two or three bullets, discharged from heavy arquebuses with little chance of hitting their mark, cut through the fruit-tree branches beside his path, or ploughed up the ground close to his feet. But a more imminent peril awaited him at a cross avenue high shaded with fantastic holly-bushes, the end of which he was obliged to pass in his way towards the gate, where he dimly saw a sentinel standing in an attitude of defence, in obedience to the loud cries of the chief, who warned him that the detected Kabblejaw was flying towards him. That danger Vrank quickly made up his mind to brave, thinking little of standing a flying shot from the clumsy weapon of an agitated arquebusier; but a chill struck through him, on finding that several of his pursuers, headed by Van Hemsted, had cut him short by the holly-bush walk just mentioned, and now darted out on him with drawn rapiers and looks of vengeance.

Away sprang Vrank once more, in an oblique direction from his former line of flight, and directly towards a wall full ten feet high, bounding the alley down which he ran, with more desperate speed than before, for he saw the figures of his pursuers glancing in various directions through the shrubs, and he felt himself so closely pressed that he heard the loud panting of a man almost in his very ear, and fancied that the warm breath blew upon his neck. A thrust of a sword's blade from behind and across his shoulder, which it just grazed, was the next hint of this terribly close neighbour; and a more frightful proof was in another instant given by Vrank's cloak being seized by a powerful grasp, which checked back the wearer so suddenly that his head came violently in contact with his captor's face. This was Vrank's only chance for safety. Van Hemsted, for it was he whose young limbs, nerved by deadly hatred, had outstripped the fugitive, was for an instant stunned, and unable from the shock to gain immediate command of his weapon. Vrank felt his advantage, but would not risk it by pushing it too far. He therefore made no attempt to strike his captor, but unclasping his cloak, still held in Van Hemsted's tenacious grasp, he

burst from it with such force that the latter stumbled backwards some paces, and could not recover his equilibrium till Vrank had gained full twenty yards in advance; and ere another chance of seizure was given to his pursuers he reached the foot of the wall. A shout of triumph burst from the Hoeks, who fancied him now at the term of his flight, unknowing what he did in the bereavement of fear, and utterly in their power. But he, well trained in the active sports of the court of Burgundy, planted in the earth the blade of the halberd, which he had seized on for the purpose of aiding his escape in that way, and by a flying bound, borne upwards on the strong and supple pole, he completely cleared the wall, loosened his hold of the weapon as he disappeared over the top; and an immediate splashing sound beyond told that he had fallen, safely and softly, into the deep moat that flanked the garden outside.

The discomfited Hoeks, almost all heavy Hollanders, unused to this kind of exercise, gazed in open-mouthed astonishment, as a group of pantomime mummers fixes its marvelling eyes on a harlequin leap. But the bloodthirstiness of their nature soon awoke them from their surprise, and they hurried out, by every sortie of the place, to endeavour to recapture him, whom they hoped to find half-drowned at the other side. In this, however, they were again disappointed. Vrank had safely swam across the moat, and swiftly resuming his flight, favoured by the dusk, had already gained a hiding-place of perfect security.

We must not stop in faint efforts to picture Jacqueline's delight at hearing the details of this escape; nor Van Monfoort's self-satisfaction at having been the means of saving him who was his natural enemy, but the chosen friend of his reason; nor Countess Marguerite's rage; nor the fury of Van Hemsted and his associates. The effects of all the various passions excited by the event were, with one exception, soon set aside by the more absorbing circumstance of Philip of Burgundy's near approach to Amersfort, with a large, and it was believed, an irresistible invading force. While the consequent agitation made every minor consideration forgotten, the exception alluded to was furnished by Jacqueline, whose mind seemed susceptible of no new

impression after that which had so lately shaken its very frame-work. Day after day immediately following Vrank's memorable visit, the fever which she fought against gained new ground, till she sunk at last upon a sick-bed, mortified at the degrading connexion between moral and physical feeling, and loathing the weakness of nature which bows down the strongest mind under the influence of the bodily excitement, originally caused by its own. During two or three weeks, consumed in the warlike operations now immediately acting before the walls of Amersfort, Jacqueline lay under the retarding influence of such medical ignorance as the place afforded; sometimes insensible to what passed, at others acutely alive to events, of which she at times panted to be a sharer, and not unfrequently longed that she might become the victim.

But though Jacqueline could take no personal share in these events, her influence was the grand mover of all. The command of the place was vested in Van Monfoort, Van Hemsted having set out with reinforcements to join his brother, who was the leader of the Hoeks already in junction with the English troops in Zealand. The brave Ludwick of Urk did not belie his reputation in the trying circumstances of his command. Devotion to his mistress was his main inspiration, and was aided well by inveterate hatred to Philip and his Kabblejaw allies. No attack was at first expected against Amersfort, which it was supposed the duke would have passed by; but his hope of seizing the place by a *coup de main*, and thus obtaining possession of Jacqueline's person, made him resolve on an attempt, which his better judgment ought to have made him avoid.

Europe had not learned in those days the grand secret of defence, which teaches that torn-up and loosely-piled paving stones are better than ramparts of either brick or clay; that garret and cellar windows are as good as embrasures and casements; and that the best mode of forcing assailants to quit a town is, in the first place, to throw wide the gates for their free entry, when the people know so well how to make every house a citadel, and every street a place of victory. But though the inhabitants of Amersfort in the fifteenth century did not know the inspiration of the

barricades, they had all the valour which, on so many a subsequent occasion, proved Holland to be the classic land of fortified defence, against the most desperate efforts of assault. Leyden, or Haarlem, in the following century, gave no more glorious example of resistance to Spanish tyranny, than Amersfort, on the occasion we treat of, when opposed to the despotic injustice of Philip "the Good."

The grand principle of popular right now stood opposed to the pretensions of sovereign wrong; and this effective effort of the Hoeks, under Jacqueline, their chosen sovereign, is a successful instance in the long struggle between the towns of Holland and Flanders against the dukes, counts, and earls, successively invading them from the Gallic territory, a struggle which may be considered as the most perfect type of the contest between freedom and feudality. We have anticipated in saying that Amersfort was successful. We had not done so, did the interest of our story hinge on the result, but would have gratified the excited curiosity of readers who love to linger on the details of a doubtful event. But our heroine was no actor in the stirring scene; and we must hasten over its description, to reach others in which her fate was still more deeply implicated.

Philip expected that Amersfort would have fallen easily under his attack, and it was made with all the vigour which characterised his warlike operations. The resistance was worthy of the cause defended, and the enemies opposed. No instance on record gives a higher notion of obstinate bravery. The Hollanders of those remote days were on all occasions as prone to die in defence of their domestic privileges, as they were prompt, at later epochs, to prove the value they placed on liberty, lost for a while, but gloriously reconquered, and, in all the after fluctuations of their history, the mainspring of the national mind. Philip was opposed not only by the common means of resistance in all sieges, and assaults, but by every unusual effort to which determination could resort. The women of Amersfort fought on the walls, invoking the name of their idolised countess, and mingling prayers for her recovery, with imprecations on her enemies. While soldiers

were combating, the clergy were supplicating; and while incense was profusely thrown up before the altars, burning oil, heated pitch, and scalding water were showered from the ramparts; so that heaven and earth were equally impressed into the service of the besieged.

The result of their efforts was complete triumph. Philip, after repeated attempts, and being frequently himself exposed to imminent peril in personal conflicts in the very ditches of the place, was forced to give up the attempt with considerable loss, and to retire from before the walls with his whole army. Having a greater object in view, he probably abandoned this one the more readily; but he was in no instance a man so headstrong as obstinately to sacrifice his soldiers, and risk his sovereignty; far superior in that respect to his celebrated son, Charles the Rash, who was not born at the epoch of our story, but whose mad career offers a most striking contrast to Philip's long course of success, to which this unimportant check was almost a solitary exception.

This repulse raised the hopes of the Hoeks to an extravagantly sanguine pitch; but they did not measure by a just standard Philip's capability of rising against reverse. He was resolved to wipe away his recent disgrace by an exertion of all his energies; and with skilful enterprise he immediately pushed on his army, to seek a recompence for defeat in the chance of a redeeming victory.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW year had opened, and the morning of St. Poncien's day, the 13th of January, 1426, dawned on the world. The snow now lay thickly on the low shores of Zealand, and every river was frozen from its source to its mouth. Winter had set in severely; and the English troops, cantoned in the island of Schowen, were exposed to all the rigours of an inclement season, and anxiously wait-

ing the approach of the promised enemy, which was to end their suspense, the worst of all evils to soldiers. The cottages and fisher-huts of the coast all round the little town of Brouwershaven were occupied by Lord Fitz-walter's army. He himself had his head quarters in one of the principal houses of this insular capital; and as the scanty habitation of the neighbourhood could contain but a small portion of his followers, rude constructions of wood, cloth, and canvass, were thrown up in the most sheltered vicinity of the sea-shore, offering but imperfect accommodations to the poor fellows who had to brave the privations of winter, as well as the perils of war.

The most advanced post of the usual nightly bivouac, on the north-easternmost head-land of Brouwershaven, had passed a wretched fourteen hours of cold and darkness in their guard-tent. They consisted of a serjeant, two corporals, and a dozen privates, sturdy Englishmen of Fitz-walter's own regiment of archers. They had passed the night as best they could, relieving by turns every half hour the one sentry, who stood on the outmost point of land; and in spite of their most active efforts to keep themselves warm, each in his tour of duty was almost benumbed and frozen. Those who occupied the tent were little better off than he who paced the path of beaten snow on the beach; for although huddled together round the brass chafing-pan of burning sea-coal, which stood in the middle of the tent, or occasionally rolling their cloak-wrapped forms in the straw which lay thick on the ground, still the wind pierced sharply through the canvass in every part, and the earth-damps were forced up, in defiance of even the rush mat which lay beneath the straw.

Of all the party, Serjeant Thorlsby was the individual who had least repose; for the responsibility of command required his being constantly on the alert, and the veteran who had learned the perils of neglect, in several campaigns under Henry V. in France, was not satisfied with the mere slovenly discharge of his own duty, but saw closely into the performance of that of the rest. His nose was in consequence very nearly frost-bitten, and his eyes in a perpetual flood of tears, from the nipping air which pinched

the one and made the other blink, as the serjeant held his face to the open slit of the tent, with short intervals of retreat during many hours of the night.

"Up, corporal, for the relief!" exclaimed he, as the half-hour's chime from Brouwershaven church-steeple rang sharply through the rarified atmosphere.

"Rouse thee, Ralph Grimston!" cried the corporal; "don thy sallet, take up thy arms, and march!"

"A plague on all frosty nights and ill-stitched canvass!" muttered the soldier, as he rose from the straw, "my limbs are as cramped and gnarled with the cold as though I had sat an hour i' th' stocks at St. Magnus' Corner."

"Ah, Ralph, that had done small harm to thy accustomed limbs — they are well used to the measure of the wooden anklet-holes," observed another of the men, whose wit was keenly relished by the rest of the party, as was evinced by a loud laugh that went far through the walls of the tent.

"Out on thee for a scapegrace borel," retorted Ralph, nimbly adjusting his head-piece, and making ready his bow and baldrick. "The mark of the beadle's whip on thy back is blushing redder than ever this cold night, to hear thee speak ill of thy betters."

The laugh, ready for either side of a coarse jest, now went round at the expense of the first speaker.

"Come, my lads, come!" said the authoritative voice of Serjeant Thorlsby, "'tis no time now for jibes and jeers, when Burgundy is off the coast, and every Briton should keep ill words and hard blows for the common foe. Out with the relief; the sentry strikes his dagger on his brigandine to mark the end of his time of watch."

"Ralph Grimston, out for the relief!" repeated the corporal, and then left the tent with the soldier who was next for duty.

"What chime has just tolled?" asked another, rubbing his drowsy eyes, which had been long ineffectually striving to close in sleep.

"'Tis seven o'clock, and the morn is breaking over the sea yonder," replied the second corporal, who had stood the last two-hours' watch.

"Let us all up, then, and prepare for the sunrise muster," said Serjeant Thorlsby.

"Up, then, up with the sun, brave boys! as the old catch has it," exclaimed one of the soldiers, a young fellow, who actively rose from the log on which he had laboured for an uneasy doze, and immediately began to sort and choose among the accoutrements of the whole guard those which belonged to himself.

"Ay, this is my hufkyn and mawle," said he; "but here, Robert Moggs, is thy pike; and harkye! Stephen Bracton, thy dagger hangs with Paul Hetherstone's burgonet. Make clear my masters, and each man his own!"

"Thou'rt a brisk and a deft lad, Walter Bassett. I'll warrant thou'lt bear a serjeant's short staff ere the war be over;" exclaimed old Thorlsby in an encouraging tone.

"I bid for a pair of gilt spurs, serjeant, and will not stop for less," said the young man.

"Well done, Walter," shouted one of his comrades with a sneer, "proud words, for a raw boy, who has never seen the flight of shaft or bolt, or heard the sound of saker or falconet, in anger."

"Why, what would'st thou mean by that mouth-twisting grin, thou particular fellow?" retorted Walter; "may not ambition speak in a boy, because it is dumb in thy beard-covered jaws? Were every archer as dull as thee, slow Sefton, Duke Philip's billmen might snatch the bows from our hands and the horns from our belts, ere we could shoot a shaft for the sake of merry England."

"Remember, Walter," said another of the men, "that Sefton began his service in the cross-bow company; and they are all slowgoers in virtue of their base weapon."

"I'll tell ye, comrades, "said Sefton, "for all ye may say against the cross-bow, it is a noble instrument of war, and it will hold its place in old England's ranks long after these long bows of ours are cast into disuse. Show me the best among them that can carry a shaft point-blank to its mark, like a Latch or a Prod, either of steel, horn, or wood, whether pulled by goat's foot or moulinet? What signifies the arrow which we shoot shuffling by chance through the wing, compared to an iron quarrel, a flint-

stone, or leaden bullet, sent point-blank from a good cross-bow at an object sixty yards off? No, no, my lads; give me brave Coeur de Lion's good old weapon, and beshrew the day that saw me drafted into the archers' guard!"

"That's a sorry compliment to thy comrades, Sefton," exclaimed a new speaker; "and if thou hadst nothing worse to confess at thy yule-tide shrift, Sir Anthony the curate had an easy job on it."

"Nay, I meant not my comrades, but my craft," replied Sefton. "I have stood too many a tough pull by thy side, good friend, to cast a reflection of unkindness on thee or thy like."

"Good will, good will and fair words, brothers," exclaimed the serjeant, always on the watch to keep up a cordial tone among his men. "We must not lean hard on Sefton, though he has wielded the weapon which we justly despise, and which caused King Richard the death he so well deserved for so devilish an invention. But, let no man decry the long-bow, which can send three goose-quilled arrows faster and farther than the other can discharge one quarrel, though it be feathered with wood or brass. But if the long-bow beats all other weapons, as grace be to God! we have proved at Agincourt and elsewhere, yet remember, lads, that the cross-bow is all to nought before the arquebuss for speed or surety."

"Ay, serjeant, you say well," cried Sefton, elated at this tribute paid to his favourite weapon; "I knew a man of our corps, Ralph Mugglesford by name, whose widow now keeps the Cup and Tun anent the White Friar's hospital in Fleet Street, that in the skirmishes before Rouen killed and hurt more Frenchmen with his cross-bow than any six harquebusiers during the whole siege. And true it is as that I'm a breathing man, our noble King Henry, whom God pardon, whose like we may never look on ——"

The forced listeners to this preamble were terrified at the prospect of one of "slow Sefton's" oft-told stories; and young Bassett, tipping the wink to the others of the group, said in his usual pert way ——

"I'll tell you what it is, Sefton, as sure as my father's a mercer in East-cheap, and may dog's-wain or hopharlot

be my coarse covering for ever, but I know that long story of thine about the kith and kin of the Mugglesfords, as well as my dagger knows my baldrick. Canst not tell us something new, old boy? or give us a trick of the Italian tergitour's mummery, or a morris-dancer's feat in the frosty air? Or shall I give thee in Master Chaucer's rhymes a true picture of a gallant archer? What say ye, comrades? you know, I learned reading at Gaffer Bumford's grammar-school!"

"Thou'rt a pert cockerel, the whole archer's company knows that," said Sefton, mortified at being cut short in his story, and more so at the merriment excited by the speech of his interrupter.

"Recite, recite!" exclaimed all the others of the party. "The long bows for ever! Hurra for the jolly archers!" and Bassett thus called on, put himself into a theatrical attitude, and slapping Sefton familiarly on the shoulder, he spouted forth ——

"And he was cladde, in cote and hode of grene,
A shefe of peacocke's arwes, bryghte and clene,
Under his belt he bore ful thriftily:
Wel couthe he dresse his takel yewmanly:
His arwes drouped not with fetheres lowe,
And in his hond he bore a mighty bowe.
A not-hed hadde he, with broune visage,
Of wood-craft couth he wel al the usage.
Upon his arme he had a gai bracer,
And by his side a sworde and a bokelir.
And on the other side a gai daggere,
Harneised wel and sharpe as point of spere.
A Christofere on his breste of silken shene,
An horne he bare, the baudrike was of grene."

"And there, my brave lads, is the picture of a right joyous and jolly gentleman archer, like my worthy gossip Sefton here, or his true friend Walter Bassett. Come, give me thy hand, old boy — we're brother-bowmen and true Britons together, in a strange land, and an ugly quarrel — give me thy hand, old Surefoot!"

"Ay, ay, Sefton! no malice!" said Serjeant Thorlsby. "Let's all join hands in a round of brotherhood. Who knows how soon the mounseers and mynheers will come to break our peace!"

"Ay, and our pates," said Bassett with a laugh; and the whole group joined hands and danced round the fire,

in a burst of that gloomy gaiety which is, on like occasions, so awful a forerunner to suffering and slaughter.

"Halloa, halloa! Hast seen a ghost?" cried one of the party to the corporal, now returned to the tent with the sentry he had relieved, as they put their frost-blown faces in and stared at the mad-cap circle, capering round, while their harness and various weapons clanked an accompaniment to their hoarse voices.

A ghost!" said the corporal, shivering as he came in; "no, i'troth, but I've seen a signal of what may make ghosts of some of us!"

There was an air of seriousness in these words which struck with a solemn effect on the lately giddy-seeming group. The rude gambols ceased, and each man listened for the sequel of the corporal's announcement.

"Ay, comrades, ye may stop dancing and take to praying, for the tar barrel at Splashwater head is just a blaze, to tell that the enemy's fleet's coming up the channel!"

"Ha, ha!" cried the serjeant, cheering up at the news of the enemy's approach, like an old charger at the trumpet's sound, "now then to business, gallant hearts! Turn out to the morning muster — the sun will soon shine forth to see your array. But first let me read you the noble Lord Fitz-walter's orders, which, though each man knows by heart, it is nathless my duty to repeat each morning."

The serjeant, after some preparations, read in sonorous accents the following regimental standing orders ——

"Let captain and standing officers of the archers or Longbows' company, see that their soldiers, according to their draught and strength, have good bows, wel rocked, wel strynged, every strynge whippe in their rocke, and in the myddes rubbed with wax, braser, and shuting glove; sum spare strynges trymed as aforesaid; everie man one shefe of arrows, with a leather case, gode against rayne, and in the same fower and twentie arrows, whereof eight should be lighte to galle and astryne the enemie with the hailshot of light arrows, before they shall cum within the range of harquebuss shot. Let everie man have a brigandine or cote of plate, a skul or hufkyn, a mawle of led, five foot in length, a pike, the same hangynge by his girdle

with a hooke and a dagger. Being thus furnished, let them, by musters, marche, shoote and retyre — keeping their faces upon the enemie. Sum tyme putte them into great nowmbers as to battell apperteyneth, and thus use them often tymes practised till they be perfecte, for those men in battell ne skirmish can not be spared. And so none other weapon may be compaired with the same noble weapon."

"Bear that in mind, Sefton, 'tis the general's own word," said Serjeant Thorlsby, closing his parchment-covered book, in which this order was written as we have given it to our readers, only altered here and there by somewhat modernising the spelling and omitting a few words now quite obsolete. The well disciplined archers had listened with the most profound attention to the reading of this document, though they could repeat every word of it like their pater-noster. When the serjeant had finished, however, the clatter of their preparations for parade instantly recommenced; but one of them called out: ——

"Good serjeant, the sun is not yet above the sea. Let's not put out our noses till we can warm them at his red hot furnace. And meantime, as we have neither sack nor ale on this comfortless beach to make our blood stir quicker, let's have a bout of a chorus to keep out the cold air. What say ye, gallants?"

"A song, a song!" cried several.

"Come, Bassett," said one, "thou art pitchpipe to the company — up with a stave. Thy clear voice is inherited from thy old uncle, the snuffling sub-chanter of St. Mary's Axe. Give us somewhat appropriate, 'Summer is y comynge,' 'Blows the red rose in the brae,' 'Nay my nay, nay my nay,' or some such soft ditty, as thou wert accustomed to warble to little Cicely of the White Hart in Southwark, when ye wandered together in Lord Cobham's park at Charing. Come, lad, chime it up, chime it up! Thou'rt able to sing it from prick song."

"That may be, Hetherston," replied Bassett, "but ratsbane be my portion if I am able to sing a stance now, that I ever sung to Cicely. No, no, I must not think of

her! But we must not be faint-hearted neither, brave boys! By the bones of King Sebba, this is no time for sad thoughts! so I'll give ye a goodly Hunt's up, or Wassail roundel, to mind ye of dear England, and put new life into your frost-nipped nerves."

"Hearken, hearken! cease clattering and clinking! Hist for the roundel!" said several voices together, each helping to keep up the clamour that all wanted to stop.

"But, I say, bully Bassett," exclaimed the serjeant, "canst thou not, brave boy, give us one of thy off-hand roundels? something apt and pat — wherewithal to make us laugh in the wind's teeth this chattering morn? Try thy hand at an extempore — rouse up thy ready rhymes!"

"Well, well, I'll do my best," said Bassett, "though i'fegs, comrades, when the heart's full of home and old times the tongue can scarce run glibly in the frolic of extempore verse. But I'll give something, for better or worse, to the tune of—let's see—'The hounds are in the brake, boys,'—'Tis a three-man's song—some of ye know the air and must join me as I go on!"

"I know it," said one.

"Ay, ay, lad, we'll chime in," cried another.

"Very well, very well! and now mind, ye gossips, let no one be angry with a joke this morn, which may hear the bell toll for many of us—and now, boys, repeat after me—I'll begin with a chorus."

The young and not over-refined improvisator, after a short pause and with little hesitation, then sang the following stanzas, duly accompanied by his comrades, who formed the subject of his rude rhymes, their loud bursts of laughter telling at every strophe how resolved they were (and how easy) to be pleased.

"Heigh for a nonny, ho for a nonny!
Madge is in the dale;
And the crispy snow, as her footsteps go
To gather a branch of the misletoe,
Might tell, if it would, a tale!

"The serjeant's nose look'd blue, boys,
Ere chanticleer had crew, boys;
Or the belfry's chime
Had warned old time
How cold the north wind blew, boys.
CHORUS.—Heigh for a nonny, &c.

" Jack Sefton's slow and slack, boys,
Bob Moggs is awry in the back, boys,
And Bracton's lips,
When his ale he sips,
Like true lover's kisses smack, boys.
CHORUS.— Heigh for a nonny, &c.

" Paul Hetherston throws his friends, boys,
Like his arms at odds and ends, boys,
And Corporal Crump,
With his head all a-lump,
Has his hose and his ways to mend, boys.
CHORUS.— Heigh for a nonny, &c.

" Ralph Grimstone, who walks the watch, boys,
On his cheek has a frost-bitten blotch, boys,
And, alack's the day!
When I've said my say,
Wat Bassett's at best a botch, boys,

" Heigh for a nonny, ho for a nonny!
Madge is in the dale,
And the crispy snow, as her footsteps go
To gather a branch of the misletoe,
Might tell, if it would, a tale."

" Enough, enough, comrades! by St. George I'm sick of my own foolery! God speed it with poor Cicely this cold morning! mayhap she saw a winding sheet in the candle last night, or dreams of a bloody field this minute. Serjeant, I can sing no more,— I had rather make ready for fighting."

" Out then, lads! out on the beach for parade! the sun is up, and 'fore Heaven! there sounds the morning falconet."

At these words the party hurried from the tent. Young Bassett stopped for a moment or two beside slow Sefton, who was sure to linger after the rest.

" Tell me, Sefton," said the former, " what is your periapt made of?"

" Why of what, if there's truth in wizard, refreshes the heart and corroborates the whole body, as well as keeps off harms either of steel or lead. It's made of pounded Bezoar's stone and the confection of Alkermes."

" And mine," said Bassett, " is pure St. John's-wort, picked by Cicely's own fingers, on a Friday, in full moon last July, that was in the hour of Jupiter, when it came into effectual operation. Mother Maxton of St. George's Fields vouched that of all amulets it most drives away fantastical spirits. Yet I don't know how it is, but something hangs on my heart, Sefton!"

"Tut, tut! the trumpet's flourish and the cannon's roar will drive that away, Walter!"

"I hope so! But at any rate I'll keep up a good countenance," said Bassett, leaving the tent with his comrade.

CHAPTER III.

Before the sun had fairly shown his blood-red disk through the thick haze that hung over the horizon, not only the little circle of the advanced postguard but Lord Fitz-walter himself and great part of his army were out of their quarters, and mustering in all speed to oppose the enemy, whose coming was announced by a chain of watch-fires, now blazing along the coast. Drums and trumpets sounded the gay reveillé through the narrow streets of Brouwershaven, and down the lines of cantonment occupied by the English and their ready allies the Hoeks. Nobody was taken by surprise. The approach of the Burgundian forces had been long expected and longed for, by troops tired of inaction and impatient to follow up the glorious example set by the people of Amersfort. Within an hour, therefore, of the first alarm, full ten thousand warriors, well prepared and ardent for the shock, were formed in battle-array in the raw mists of this memorable morning.

The picture presented by the troops, as they occupied their various stations in the field, where every platoon knew its place and every squadron had already practised its manœuvres, was composed of many animating yet melancholy combinations. The frosty and snow-covered earth does not offer the natural complexion of a battle-field. Winter is not the fitting season for war. The green-sward on a spring day seems the appropriate stage for the conflicts of armies. The mind sympathises freely in the stirring excitement of a contest in such a scene, when valour rises gaily in the young heart, as the lark mounts singing to Heaven's vault. But a chill creeps over the mind, which imagines the crash of battalions on a cold and cheer-

less plain, where the hard earth repulses the tread of men and the tramp of horses, and the snow lies in ready heaps, to form winding sheets for the gallant victims whose blood is to discolour its wreaths. A fight on such a stage tells that ambition has no repose, and that tyranny refuses a respite even to the decaying elements of nature. All is out of place, forced and disfiguring; and the heart sickens at the scene.

But the generous Fitz-walter and his followers had no room for notions like this. Battle was their element, and it never came out of place. They now felt themselves standing up, the champions of suffering right, in the person of a brave and beautiful woman; and all seasons were alike which allowed them to quench their hot valour in the troubled waters of war. The Hoeks, on their parts, would, if possible, have reversed the whole order of nature, and have turned winter to summer and night to day and found all good if they could be so brought into closer and more frequent contact with their detested enemies. The spirit of the little allied army may be therefore understood.

The order of battle was, according to the well-considered plan of the experienced Fitz-walter, formed in lines. The first being arranged close to the beach, was composed of the English troops; a post which they have always been sure to occupy in every continental contest, whether in north or south, in the swamps of Holland, or on the hills of Spain, from the battle of Brouwershaven, to that of Waterloo. The appearance of the English battalions stretching along the sea-shore was infinitely more striking than could be imagined now, from the observance of a modern brigade, in its more regular but far less picturesque attire and equipment. The most remarkable were the archers' companies, in all about one thousand men, part of the very *élite* of the English military force. Geoffry Chaucer's lines, quoted in the last chapter, give a lively picture of an individual soldier of this celebrated corps. Several hundreds so accoutred, such parts of their body as were not covered by their shirt of mail decked in a close fitting suit of green, with shining arms and marshal air, must have formed a most imposing spectacle. The archers were not only picked men for good

conduct and fine appearance, but were of a better order of beings than those composing the ordinary bulk of the army. They were none of the depraved class of "masterlesse menne," or "roystering swash-bucklers," but chiefly citizens of London, sons of people of substance and good connexions, for it required both money and interest to procure admission into a branch of the service forming so capital a provision for a soldier.

The privates of this corps were indeed apparently overpaid. They had sixpence a day, besides rations when on service, a sum fully equal to five shillings at the present times. And it may be supposed that this high rate of income ensured a correspondent tone and spirit, which rendered the English archers a body of the finest troops in Europe.

Besides these, there were now drawn out for action, billmen, pike-men, and lancers, or men-at-arms, which last were fenced in complete steel from head to foot, and being of the strongest and largest men were considered the most important portion of the army. Several pieces of cannon were attached to Lord Fitz-walter's force, of various denominations; some of the unwieldy size common to those early days of artillery service, others of more moderate proportions; from such large pieces as that Flemish gun described by Froissart, and those of later date by Monstrelet, the first of which made such a noise on being discharged, "that one would have thought that all the devils in hell had a share in it," down to the light culverins, each carried by two men and fired off from a rest planted in the ground, a kind of diminutive field-piece, or overgrown blunderbuss.

Fitz-walter had little or no cavalry with him on this occasion. The Hoeks, of whom Van Hemsted had the chief command, were not quite deficient in this important army, some squadrons of which flanked the second line of the army composed of the good men of Holland and Zealand. The reserve did not consist of the best troops, as a different system of tactics would prudently point out, (for Fitz-walter's wish to follow such was frustrated by the forward emulation of the combatants,) but of fishermen and

peasants quite undisciplined and indifferently armed. But altogether, the mass skilfully drawn up and anxious to engage, with their various standards unfurled and their warlike instruments sounding, showed a formidable array to receive the far more numerous foe, who now prepared to make a long day's work of havoc.

The squadrons of various kinds of craft, containing Duke Philip's army, came rapidly in sight, each ship or boat successively anchoring in a close offing, and soon disgorging its living cargo of fighting men. The advanced guard consisted of the Dutch and Zealand contingents of United Kabblejaws, led on by Floris Van Borselen. The flat-bottomed open boats in which they were embarked were pulled by the sturdy rowers close up towards the shore, indifferent to the heavy stone bullets discharged at them from the hostile pieces of ordnance planted on the flanks of the British line. As the assailants took to the smaller boats attached to the transport vessels, and came paddling on in the shallow water, a shower, or, (in the words of Lord Fitz-walter's order of the day,) "hail-shot of light arrows" was poured upon them from a thousand strings, that twanged at the given word in simultaneous discharge.

The attacking party was not slack in returning this and the succeeding volleys, from arquebuss, cross-bow, and long-bow, while the large vessels, moored behind to cover the landing, sent their missiles from the huge Flemish pieces before alluded to, in as rapid succession as was compatible with the then imperfect state of the science of gunnery.

In the very foremost of the Kabblejaw boats two figures were remarkable, the one for manly and youthful beauty with an air of intrepid decision; the other for a wildly terrible appearance, in dress, gesture, and accoutrement. The first was clad in the light blue costume of the Eversdyke fiefs, with a silver placquet bound on the arm, the red cross of St. Andrew embroidered on his breast, a drawn rapier in his right hand, and the green banner of the Borselens in his left. The second, whose wolf-skin short mantle concealed neither limbs nor body, was armed

with the tremendous weapon, which had made the Zevenvolden ring with the sound of the orox's death-blow. We need scarcely specify the names of Vrank and Oost to the reader, whose memory can go back to that early scene.

Lord Fitz-walter, who rode along the English line, encouraging his men by all the inducements dear to soldiers, soon distinguished Vrank, as he came closer in towards land and sprang from his boat knee-deep in the sea, forming his father's vassals into order of attack.

"Brave followers!" cried the English general, "as ye value my fame and honour, spare that knight in the silver-trimmed blue mandilon, who carries the green flag. I have marked him for my own prey — he bears my glove in his cap!"

This appeal to their keen sense of chivalry was a sacred panoply for Vrank's safety. Volley after volley was discharged by the English archers, and many a barb found a sheath in Kabblejaw hearts; but all seemed to fly wide of the young warrior who stood first and foremost in the fight. Floris Van Borselen was not far behind his son. He jumped into the sea with all the energy if not quite the activity of youth, as soon as his boat touched the ground, and he hurried forwards as near as possible to the front of the line.

"On, Kabblejaws! On men of Eversdyck!" shouted he, and successive words of encouragement burst from him, scarcely audible amid the roar of the cannon, the splash of the mailed-men in the surf, and the various war-cries of the different communes composing the Kabblejaw contingents. An irregular line, two or three deep, was soon formed, and a charge ere long took place at Van Borselen's command, the assailants driving before them a froth-crested wave, which rolled far up the strand, and into the very lines of the English archers. These, as soon as the hostile movement commenced, practised the manœuvre then so peculiarly their own, of letting the front rank drop down on one knee behind the high stakes, as a rest for better aim-taking; and the instant flight of peacock-feathered shafts formed a cloud of winged weapons, and threw a deep shadow on the sea as it went whizzingly along.

Many a bold Kabblejaw sunk into the waves from the effect of this terrible discharge, which was repeated again and again before the advancing line of pikemen could gain the dry land. They were galled, stunned, and almost stupified by these reiterated assaults. But the unflinching valour of the Borselens, and the other leading Kabblejaws who escaped unhurt, preserved their followers from faltering, and the Flemish lancers, who formed the second line of attack, now taking to their boats, gave new courage to the advanced guard, which might well have wavered without any imputation, under the fearful effects of such a reception.

"They fly, they fly!" halloed Floris Van Borselen, already hoarse from vociferating to his troops; "those proud English, those famous archers fly before us!"

A loud cheer answered the fallacious information of the deceived chieftain; and he and his men rushed on to the fatal space left clear by the retreating English, who purposely fell back, taking good care, however, according to the commands already quoted, to "marche, shoote, and retyre — keepynge their faces on the enemie." As soon as the Kabblejaws came on shore, in all the confusion of delusive success, the flanks of the English line fell back at right angles with the centre of the line which stood still, and at that moment the cavalry of the Hoeks, which had already practised the manœuvre, charged fiercely on each side of their disorderly foes, while the archers contrived to pour in unsparingly their cloth-yard shafts. But far from causing a panic among the Kabblejaws, the sight of their hated countrymen inflamed them to desperation.

"Grace to St. Poncien, this blessed day! St. Peter and St. Paul be praised!" cried old Borselen; "they come, they come! Now, brave Kabblejaws, as you love your native land, as ye hate the Hoeks, be firm and bold! Up lances! ready cross-bows!—steady gunsmen!—face right and left; — form two squares back to back! — Leave the English unharmed, and turn every eye, every hand, and every weapon against the odious Hoeks!"

These orders were quickly obeyed, with an attention to discipline not common in the conflicts of civil war. The

two Borselens stood together in the centre of the right hand square. Uterken commanded the other. The hostile squadrons which galloped on to the attack, were respectively headed by the Van Hemsted brothers. Zegher, the eldest, and the chief in command, soon broke the square, scarcely formed in time to resist his impetuous charge. The ill-fated Kabblejaws composing it were cut down without mercy, or driven back into the sea, where some few were rescued by the advancing Flemish line. The assailants of the right-hand square were not so fortunate. At the very first onset, young Hemsted, who rode furiously forward on recognising Vrank Van Borselen, was slain by a random shot from an arquebuss before he could reach the object that so particularly inflamed his fury. His squadron seeing their leader fall, hesitated, which is tantamount in such a case to repulse; and being fired on skilfully from some of the boats, which covered the landing of the Kabblejaws, they broke and fled. Floris Van Borselen promptly took advantage of this circumstance, and advancing his troops in a close column, he gained possession of a rudely entrenched church-yard close to Brouwershaven, before any effectual opposition could be made by the English, who were now fully engaged with the Flemish reinforcements.

The infantry of the Hoeks, however, began an almost immediate movement, in order to surround Van Borselen in his position; and just then one of those instances occurred, so unheard of in modern conflicts, but common to the wars of chivalry. Lord Fitz-walter, who had marked every movement that had taken place from the commencement of the action, now quitted the station which seemed peculiarly his own, and leaving the English troops under the command of the knight next in rank to himself, he rode towards Van Borselen's position, accompanied only by one of his squires, and a soldier who held a white flag at the end of his lance.

At this signal of truce the Kabblejaws stood firm, but ceased every hostile discharge; while old Floris grimly smiled at those around him, and mocked at the notion of the English general coming forward with a summons for surrender. But Vrank took a keener and more correct

view of Fitz-walter's motives; and he requested his father's leave to advance and enter on the parley. The permission granted, Vrank stepped forward, and was quickly accosted by the haughty lord.

"Sir Knight," said he, "we know each other; and having a private quarrel to settle, I propose for awhile a truce on this isolated part of the battle-field, to allow of its adjustment."

"What does he say?" asked Floris, who did not understand the French language, in which Fitz-walter spoke.

"He proposed that he and I should fight in single combat, hand to hand," said Vrank.

"So, so! By St. Peter and St. Paul, then, thou shalt do it! A Borselen never yet received a challenge that was not accepted, nor often fought a battle that was not won. Thou must teach this insolent Englishman, Vrank, of what stuff a Zealander and a Kabblejaw is made!"

"What are the words of the old knight?" demanded Fitz-walter, who was totally unacquainted with Dutch.

"My father says," replied Vrank, "that he is proud to see a Zealand gentleman measure weapons with an English lord."

"Sir Knight, I honour you for your courtesy," exclaimed the Englishman, bowing to Heer Borselen.

"What does the cringing Saxon mutter about, and mean by saluting me?" inquired the latter of his son.

"Nothing, nothing, sir! but the usual forms of civilised chivalry," said Vrank, dissatisfied at his father's coarseness.

"So! so! and 'tis such popinjay tricks that I despise and hate," returned Floris; but Vrank put an end to all ill-timed sarcasms, by advancing close to Fitz-walter, and fixing himself in an attitude of defence. His antagonist lost no time in dismounting from his horse, which he gave to the keeping of his attendant, and in a moment more the hostile rapiers were crossed; while the anxious, but tired Kabblejaws, who looked on, were not sorry to gain this respite from their fatigues.

"One question, my Lord Fitz-walter," said Vrank, "for I know you now as well by name as person. I ask you, on the faith and by the courtesy of knighthood, whose

favour is that you bear in your casque, and which I have sworn to dye in your heart's blood?"

"In courtesy I answer, it is that of your liege sovereign, the Countess Jacqueline of Holland and Hainault, whose cause I am here in arms to maintain, against you and all other false traitors to her right and virtues."

"What does he say now?" anxiously asked old Floris, who stood close to his son. But Vrank would not repeat the real phrase, and had no heart to invent another. "God! am I then opposed to her chosen knight — to her lover? He could not violate the truth of chivalry and tell a lie — and she, in default and defiance of honour, has done so! Why is not my arm strengthened instead of palsied? I cannot fight against her champion here, any more than against herself at Amersfort," thought Vrank, while he stood for a moment inactive. But the rapid cut and thrust movements of Fitz-walter rousing his natural courage, drove all sentimental subtleties from his mind, and he soon recovered the consciousness of the part he played, and of the observers before whom he acted. Few men understood the management of his weapons better than Vrank; none had more self-command. So that Fitz-walter, with all his valour and skill and inspiration of a glorious cause, had nevertheless now found his match. It was indeed evident even to himself that had Vrank been vindictively inclined, he might more than once have taken him at advantage; and Fitz-walter's fury was considerably appeased by the conviction. The contest, therefore, after the few opening passages, became less a passionate struggle than a brisk display of science. Yet a couple of slight wounds were exchanged. Fitz-walter being hurt in the cheek, and Vrank having received his adversary's point in the thigh. Both bled; and the natural taint of savagery which lurks below the best disposition, was rising high in both the champions at sight of their own blood, and symptoms were shown by each of increasing violence, which would infallibly have given a more desperate character to their contest. But just then an English officer came galloping at full speed across the plain that intervened

between the church-yard and the beach, where the battle was now raging more fiercely than before.

"Lord Fitz-walter! General! cease fighting. Sheathe your rapier, and retire!" cried he; and while the fiery combatants turned round at the sound of this unwelcome summons, these disappointed words fell on his ear.

"Cease fighting, in recordance with your knightly pledge. Duke Philip himself is in sight, and about to take the field."

"Cursed and ill-starred duke!" exclaimed Fitz-walter, dashing his weapon on the earth; "ever a moment too soon to rob me of my revenge and thwart my glory! 'Twas thus in the battle of Bauge he made me captive, and wrung as the hard condition of my freedom the pledge that I should never fight again where he was in person in the field. Let this explanation suffice, Sir Francon, for my abandonment of this contest, which, with the grace of my Lord St. George, I shall be on the first opportunity proud and happy to renew."

"Why, what is all this, Vrank? — explain it — and quick, my boy — your wound bleeds freely," said the father, who was well pleased at the short explanation given him in reply, and at seeing his son's dangerous antagonist mount his horse. After an exchange of some courteous words on the subject of their mutual hurt, Fitz-walter rode slowly from the scene of action, accompanied by his squire, until he reached a rather elevated portion of the ground, whence he could witness, without mixing in, the continuance of the fight. He despatched the officer back to Van Hemsted with information of his having abandoned the command, which now devolved on that brave but inexperienced Zealander, who was thus left to cope against the military talent of Philip and his generals, forming a phalanx of fearful odds against the cause of Jacqueline, and the devoted thousands now doomed to participate in its fate.

The low-decked carrack which bore the Duke of Burgundy and his splendid suite had now been rowed close in towards the shore; and the duke was in the act of proclaiming to those around him his resolution to disembark, when a somewhat appalling apparition presented itself,

clambering up the side of the vessel. It was Oost the dyke-digger, who, accustomed to the rough waves of the Friesland coasts, and indifferent to peril or hardship whether by land or water, had volunteered to swim to Philip's vessel, with a pressing request for assistance from Floris Van Borselen, who, on Fitz-walter's retreat, was threatened with imminent risk from the whole second line of the allied army composed of the Zealand Hocks, advancing against him in overwhelming numbers, and threatening to cut him off from all chance of escape.

Oost had come on his mission entirely unarmed but with his hunting-knife, which was stuck in his girdle; but when he rose from the sea, his wolf-skin mantle dripping and his huge limbs and body drenched, he looked an awful specimen of amphibious ferocity. The very sailors who had marked him as he swam towards the vessel, and to whom he shouted his name and business as he neared it, shrank back as he gained the decks and made way for his approach to the official personages of the duke's suite. His demand to speak with Philip in person was peremptory; and there was something not to be resisted in the wild singularity of the ambassador, which would have secured him an audience even at a time and station of more formality.

As Oost advanced, his lynx-eyed glance soon selected him who was the sovereign, amid the numerous band of courtiers by whom he was encircled. But the free Frison at the same time distinguished another person, whom he at once recollected, although clad in a different guise from that in which he had once before seen him. This was a rather corpulent individual, looking painfully nervous and very blue, from the united effect of the frost and the firing, in a curious mixture of clerical and warlike habiliment, a cuirass on his breast, casque on head, yet a richly worked mantle of purple silk over his shoulders of the pattern of a priest's vestment, a crosier in one hand, and a beautifully ornamented and gold-clasped breviary in the other. Oost at once recognised this type of the church militant as the person who had wheedled and overpersuaded him to resign his orox-horn in the Zevenvolden, and whom our readers

will not refuse to acknowledge as Bishop Zweder Van Culemburg, although the chapter of Utrecht had some weeks before despoiled him of that title, and driven him out to deprecate the wrath and implore the forgiveness of the Duke of Burgundy.

We must not now pause to trace the windings of selfishness, meanness, and poltroonery, which had for some weeks previously influenced Zweder Van Culemburg. Pressed by his own fears and doubts on the one hand, and by the hostility of Rudolf Van Diepenholt's friends in the chapter and city of Utrecht on the other, he had been, from the very first day we introduced him to our readers, playing the double game so natural to such a mind. It has been seen how he stood neutral even during the successes of Jacqueline and the Hoeks; his influence thrown boldly into the scale might have produced decisive results in their favour and in his own. But the temporising cunning of his nature would never allow of his making up his mind. When, however, his domestic disputes took a direct tendency unfavourable to himself, he did not hesitate to abandon others; and it was then he wrote to Philip the letter which told him the secrets of the Zevenvolden conference, as far as Jacqueline and Glocester were implicated, but threw the excuse of double perfidy on the part he had himself acted, representing it as assumed for the purpose of ensnaring his associates, and handing them over to Philip's vengeance. Even after this he strictly allowed himself the reservation of actually joining Philip only in case of his evident preponderance of power; and it was not finally until he heard of Glocester's marriage and his abandonment of Jacqueline, and that the people of Utrecht drove him from his archiepiscopal seat, that he sought the head-quarters of the invading, and as something whispered him, the invincible usurper. The rarely-failing acuteness of the sordid was in this instance unfortunately confirmed. The battle now fighting was desperately decisive of the conflict; and we hasten to tell its lamentable result.

When Oost, admitted close to Philip, uttered in brief phrase some sentences expressive of Van Borselen's peril-

ous situation, and his demand for succour, the duke, not versed in the low German idiom in which the envoy spoke, turned for information to Zweder Van Culemburg; and when the latter translated the message, his teeth chattering the while under the double influence before alluded to, Philip cast a look full of meaning on another person who stood as close to him on one side, as Zweder did on the other. This individual was William le Begue, whose cool and calculating head furnished him with reasoning sufficient to supply any constitutional defect in courage. He had therefore stood unflinchingly close to Philip in more than one perilous situation during the short campaign; and he was beside him now, to take advantage of whatever might turn up for his own purposes, while ostensibly the disinterested counsellor of his sovereign. Bishops and ministers of our times have happily a dispensation from such hazardous service, not being called on to pray for or confer with their liege lord in the very battle field. But such was the habit of the days of yore.

To the expressive look cast by Philip on William le Begue, the latter replied by a shrug of the shoulders and a negative shake of the head, which spoke, unfortunately for him, a plain refusal to Borselen's demand. Philip in his turn looked a remonstrance; and after a few words of consultation with his minister he hastened to the vessel's landward side, and left the latter to explain, through Zweder's interpretation, the reply which Oost was to carry back. Zweder accordingly translated it to him, as literally as his state of feeling allowed, but its import was plain — that there were no reinforcements to spare, and that the Borselens were to defend their position to the last.

"And this is the answer to my chieftain, Floris of Eversdyke — to the husband of Bona of Bolstock, the fair flower of Friesland nobleness! and so he and his son, the bright-haired youth of the valley of Ulst, who was suckled by the dam of my own child, they are both — father and son — doomed to perish, sacrificed by the lordly wielder of ten thousand spears!"

"My very good and most considerably gentle friend, my worthy Oost, allow me to go down below to pray for

the bodies of the warriors who still fight, and the souls of those who have fallen or may fall; these stone bullets which sing so unmelodiously through the air are marvellously discomforting. Do, worthy, amiable Oost, loosen thy hold of my mantle, and betake thee once more to the waters!"

As Zweder thus imploringly addressed the dyke-digger, he vainly strove to disengage himself from his grasp. When he ceased speaking, the latter looked at him with a savage scowl, but which was a glance of pure kindness compared to what Oost *could* dart from his terrible eyes.

"As for thee, poor frightened wretch," said he, "who tremblest in my grasp as the leveret under the paw of the hound, or the sheep in the eagle's fangs, thou hast nought to fear from my revenge. Thou art the mere tongue that speaks the word of doom to the brave."

"Thank you, thank you, kind fellow — pray let me retire!" muttered Zweder, with wriggling efforts to escape towards the descent to the ship-cabin; but Oost gave his arm a squeeze, which told him his time of escape was not yet come.

"Silence thy babbling voice, and speak only in answer at my bidding," growled he, close into Zweder's ear; "and tell me, in short phrase, who is he, yon white-headed, pale-cheeked, cold-hearted old man, who has sounded like the raven's voice the death sentence of the brave."

"Oh! that my sweet friend, is William le Begue, Lord of Ligny, chief governor to John Duke of Brabant, and Prime Minister to his Highness, the Puissant Philip Duke of Burgundy — may I now retire to prayer, good Oost?"

"Away with ye!" said Oost, disdainfully loosening his hold. "Thou art safe — but by the gods of Friesland and the saints of her altars, you, William Le Begue, and your master, Philip, shall pay dear for the harm that falls on him you have forsaken!"

With these words the dyke-digger strode along the deck, no one having had leisure to observe the *tête-à-tête* between him and the ex-bishop. As he passed by William le Begue, he stopped for a moment full before him, and gazed just long enough to take the full measure of his

figure and features, so as that time or change could never deface their impress stamped deep on his memory. He whom he observed was too wily and practised to show any sign of discomposure at this scrutiny, but he felt its meaning in his very heart. In a moment more Oost had swung down from a rope at the ship's prow; and by swimming and wading soon reached the shore, where a communication was still kept open with the churchyard. William le Begue watched him awhile, with silent hopes that some chance shot might catch him between wind and water; while Zweder Van Culemburg, peeping from the cabin window, put up audible prayers that some hungry wave might swallow this very disagreeable addition to his acquaintance. But Oost safely reached the churchyard, just in time to deliver his discouraging answer to Floris Van Borselen, and to bear his share in a desperate shock which instantly took place, by the concentrated body of the Hoeks, advancing to the charge on the Kabblejaw position.

CHAPTER IV.

"No, by St. Andrew! nothing shall prevent me," said Duke Philip, to the group of courtiers, who would have dissuaded him from quitting the vessel, some from anxiety for his safety, others from the adulatory pretence of that feeling, and a few, perhaps, from regard to their own. "Let Sir Florival be lowered into the sea! What!—does any one counsel me to hang back at such a time as this? Such a one can be no friend to the glory of my house and name. Shall I suffer audacious Glocester to triumph in the persons of yonder warriors? or shall they be destroyed but under the chastisement of mine own hand? Shall I not efface the shame of Amersfort, and crush at once both invading English and revolted Dutch? Let no man oppose me more—who loves me follows me!"

With these words he grasped the standard of Burgundy,

which stood prominent on the deck; and descending the vessel's side, he mounted the favourite horse, already known to our readers, which stood girth-deep in the water, docile from fright at the unusual scene, but seemingly re-assured as soon as his princely rider assumed his accustomed seat, and took the bridle into his hand. The horses belonging to the various knights, as well as to the whole body of cavalry composing the expedition, were disembarked from the transports with the greatest possible speed; and several hundred cavaliers were shortly in their saddles and ready for the charge.

Philip, in the mean time, had advanced with a group of chosen knights, somewhat indiscreetly to the beach; and rallying the broken Kabblejaws, chiefly the men of Delft and Dordrecht, he attacked Van Hemsted, while the Flemings, in large numbers, were busily employed with the English archers, and the other troops of that nation. These now fought purely on the defensive, being greatly outnumbered by their enemies, and somewhat disheartened by Lord Fitz-walter's retreat from the field. Philip soon cleared the passage through the opposing Hoeks, but not without the loss of a Montmorency, a Lalain, a De Brimeau, and other officers of name and note. He soon reached the English line, hurried impetuously on, and had there nearly terminated his mortal career, for a skilful manœuvre on the part of Fitz-walter's successor completely led Philip and his chosen followers into the same scrape through which the Van Borselens had previously cut their way. The duke found himself suddenly surrounded, and nothing seemed left him but to sell his life as dearly as he could.

In this extremity, the man who some years before had saved him from a similar danger at the battle of Mons now hastened to his rescue at the head of a body of men-at-arms, mixed of all the combined provinces, Burgundy, Artois, Picardy, Flanders, Brabant, and Holland. Each vied with the other in following up the example of their redoubted leader, John Vilain, the brave man of Ghent, to whom Philip had proved his special confidence at Hesdin, as will be remembered. This champion broke irresistibly

through the English line. At every blow of his battle axe he struck down an enemy, and his terrible words, following every blow, are recorded by abundant chroniclers and historians of this celebrated fight.

"Kill, kill them!" cried John Vilain, as the English archers, whose arrows being all expended were now reduced to their pikes and swords, fell right and left about him. "Kill them, ye who follow me, I will strike down enough to employ ye all!"

Among those who were particularly active in following up this ferocious order was observed Spalatro, the master-at-arms, who had closely attended his patron, Duke Philip, to the war, and who now showed particular skill in poniarding and cutting the throats of the stunned and wounded English. But this bravo's career was ended at this very climax of his glory. A dying man, sinking under his butchery, convulsively gave him a mortal wound, while himself in the very gasp of death, and both were trampled into eternity, under the undistinguishing hoofs of John Vilain's victorious followers.

The English never recovered this shock. The duke, when once extricated from his perilous situation, soon brought all his science to bear upon the various features of the battle; but it was still hard-fought and doubtful, until an unlooked-for co-operation from another quarter ensured the victory to the bad cause, and by the instrumentality of perhaps the best man, whose destiny led him to give it his aid.

The combined attack of the Hoeks on Floris Van Borselen's division, was long continued and unflinchingly withstood. The old chieftain, rendered desperate by Oost's communication, exerted himself beyond all example to keep the fury of his men at the highest pitch; but he never suffered them or himself to be so far led away as to advance out of the strong position which was their great security against the numbers that assailed them. Every gravestone and mound of the little enclosure formed a rampart of defence, and many a Kabblejaw fell on the spot under which his father's bones lay mouldering.

The men of Eversdyke were conspicuous for their valour,

under the command of their two chieftains; but at length they had but one to fight for, and the other to revenge. Floris Van Borselen fell pierced with wounds, and as Oost stood over his body, a rude shield held before it while his own was uncovered, and the huge turquois raised in menace to the foe, the dying chieftain had just time and strength to seize his son's hand, and to utter a few broken sentences of farewell.

"So! so!" cried he convulsively, "I have caught it at last! Vrank, my boy, I am going to join our ancestors in Heaven's glory — praise to St. Peter and St. Paul. Thy mother, Vrank, tell the good Vrowe I died like a Zealand gentleman, and a brave Kabblejaw — make the best of your way to Eversdyke, my boy — put the castle in order — scour the guns — tell Duke Philip I never flinched; even when he forsook me — and the Hoeks, Vrank! Oh! the damned Hoeks! never forgive them, Vrank — never, as you hope for pardon in Heaven — never! and as for Jacqueline — Jezebel let me call her — as for her Vrank, if you value my dying blessing — if you dread my curse — as for her, never — never — oh, oh! — Ha! So! so! ——"

"Thank Heaven he has not finished the sentence!" was the first thought that found utterance from Vrank Van Borselen, as his father's ghastly corpse sank on his supporting arm. We know not if this was filial etiquette, but we believe it to have been true to nature. It was, however, as brief in its duration as quick in its coming. The first fearful shudder over, lest the sacred words of the dying man had been a terrible command never to think of her whom he had quite resolved never to see, Vrank's whole mind fixed on the loss he had sustained.

"Oh, my noble sire!" exclaimed he, bitterly wringing his hands, "and are you gone indeed for ever? Pattern of high feeling and heroic courage, what must I do to prove myself your son? Revenge, revenge your death! Ay, revenge! revenge!"

The terrible word, thus terribly spoken, found echoes from every throat. Oost stooped to the earth and raised the bloody body in his arms. The Kabblejaws who gazed on it were nearly maddened by the sight. Frantic for

vengeance, they called on Vrank to lead them on. He, inflamed like the rest, forgot his stiffened limbs and his weakened state from loss of blood, and casting one look more on the corpse, he put himself at the head of his men, and the whole line was in a few minutes clear beyond the churchyard dyke, and charging full upon the astonished enemy. As they hurried irresistibly on nothing could effectually oppose the torrent. Van Hemsted, the general of the Hoeks, sunk to the earth, and was trampled over by those who had not time to stop and end the pains of the wounded. The routed Hoeks fell back confusedly on the English line. This alone was wanting to complete the ruin of the latter. Philip, aided by Vilain and the other chiefs, now pressed on them at every other side of their position; and the militia of Veere and Zirikzee, which had as yet taken no share in the action, abandoned their neutrality to aid the winning cause.

A perfect butchery finished the horrors of the day. The Hoeks, seeing every chance lost, and knowing they had no mercy to expect, fled towards the sea, and many escaped to the neighbouring islands. The English scorned to yield or fly, and were almost to a man destroyed. Only two hundred remained alive at night, of the gallant little army of the morning, and these being nearly all wounded were all made prisoners.

Lord Fitz-walter, seeing the fate of the day, and conscious that his own forced abandonment of his troops was the main cause of their defeat, cursed in his heart the tyrant sense of honour that made him withdraw from his command. He was, more than once, on the point of rushing into the mêlée, unarmed as he was, and dying a victim to the creed of chivalry. But his faithful squire restrained him from this step, by representing that were his body found among the slain, nothing could ever clear his memory from the reproach of having broken his knightly vow. This reasoning alone prevailed; and he suffered himself to be passively led to a boat that waited on the beach, in which he and his confident put out to sea; and they were soon lost to sight, in the haze of floating smoke and atmospheric mist that hung on it close to shore.

It was not till he had penetrated deep among the Hoeks, and saw them utterly defeated, that Vrank, or, as he is now entitled to be called, Heer Borselen, had time or thought to pause and look round for his devoted follower, foster-father, and friend, poor Oost, whom he had not seen since the moment he burst, at the head of his furious followers, from the precincts of the fatal burying ground.

"And he too has fallen!" exclaimed Vrank, "true to the vow I have a hundred times heard him utter, to perish either in saving or revenging the head of the house of Eversdyke. Well, well! Peace to thee, rough and faithful vassal, intrepid warrior, and incorruptible man! Many a peer and prince might envy thy half savage nobleness of mind. — Peace to thee!"

The natural association of thought turned Vrank's eyes towards the church-yard, where his father's unburied body yet lay; and as he looked, he felt a throb of joy at observing his prematurely mourned foster-father, standing in an attitude of respectful sorrow over the corpse of his fallen chieftain. His shield and turquois lay on the ground; and, with hands clasped and head bent, he gave a picture of as solemn anguish as uncivilised man may be supposed to writhe under. But after a short time thus spent, as if in some deep mental prayer, he knelt down, suddenly raised the body in his arms and hugged it with terrible fervour, then laid it down again, sprang on his feet, seized his club and shield, danced, jumped, and with most frantic gestures of mingled grief and rage, performed some long-since forgotten rite of his country, in which pagan antics were blended with the imperfect forms of Christian usage. There was something so fiercely agonising in Oost's bearing as to overcome the effect of its preposterous absurdity. Not a man that gazed on him laughed or felt inclined to laugh. All, on the contrary, shuddered at the savage exhibition; and they turned away gladly from its painful observance, to resume the work of slaughter which had for a few minutes been suspended.

As soon as Vrank formed a junction with Philip and the troops whom he headed, and the victory was decided, the duke acknowledged, in presence of all the leaders, and in

terms of unbounded praise, his obligations to the young chieftain of Eversdyke, to whose gallant and decisive movement he attributed the signal success of the day. His better feelings were all up. He deplored sincerely the death of Floris Van Borselen, although he had nothing with which to reproach himself on that score, for he had distinctly intimated to William le Begue, and strictly meant to fulfil his intention of flying to his aid as soon as he could free himself a passage through the opponents to his landing. The turn given by the minister to the duke's message was dictated entirely by his own base object, one of the principal evils of despotism, which speaks through the channel of non-responsible corruption. Philip, however, fully proved to Vrank the impossibility of his giving the required succour, which the imminent peril of his own position left him in want of for himself; and in the impulse of excited and lofty feelings, of which he was very often susceptible, he promised to the son all the honours, confidence, and influence, which would have been expected by the father, had he survived the triumphant crisis.

Many other officers shared in the like applause, and in substantial marks of his favour. He despoiled his person of rings, chains, and other ornaments, which he distributed to those who had fought nearest to him, or who had lost brothers or kinsmen in the battle. Among the latter were those who had to mourn for the redoubted knights De Beaufremont, De Mailli, De Bossuet, and several others. But he who stood most conspicuous in both points of view was John Vilain, whose brother Adrien was among the killed, and who had himself been the principal author of Philip's rescue.

"For thee, heroic and unfortunate Fleming," said the grateful duke, "for thee, twice the saviour of thy sovereign's life, I have nought to give worthy of thy desert or of my gratitude. But wear this collar, knight of the golden fleece, from this moment — noble that shall be as soon as thy patent of promotion, with that of other gallant knights, can be made out; and here, on the spot, appointed governor of our strong fort of Rupelmonde, on which command thou art fully authorised to enter into

prompt and well deserved possession. At this proud and hurried instant I cannot choose more marked means of doing thee honour."

Philip scarcely heard the bold Fleming's short but well-turned answer, in the din of victorious shouts which now burst out around him; French, Dutch, and Flemish all mixed in joyous confusion. The low groans of the wounded, or the deep curses of the few prisoners were unheard in the clamour. Among the latter class was Van Hemsted, Philip's unfortunate rival commander on this disastrous day. His life was spared at the intercession of Vrank Borselen, by whose division he had been recovered from among heaps of slain, and into whose keeping he was specially entrusted. Few other Hoeks of any note fell into the victor's power. The flower of their fierce chivalry lay dead on the plains of Brouwershaven.

Imagination might find ample occupation in picturing the sequel of this terrible scene, — the boisterous rejoicings of the conquerors, the wild congratulations of surviving friends, the lamentations of the fallen, the noisy attentions given to the wounded, the expedients for the gratification of hunger, the efforts to obtain repose. Discipline had reached but very imperfect limits in those times, and after so complete a victory, which left nothing to apprehend on the score of a surprise, a scene of uproarious disorder and petty pillage was the natural result. But still one sad task gave occupation to many hands. This was the burial of the slain, the painful duty which keeps alive the excitement of the soldier's mind, even after all the fatigues of action, under which worn-out nature might be supposed to sink. Several groups were already thus employed over the whole surface of the field, as soon as the sun had gone down, while the early moonbeams shone through a light shower of snow, whose transparent flakes seemed sent from Heaven to shroud the scene so disfiguring the earth.

Among the men thus occupied with the dead were the few remaining of the English prisoners, who had miraculously escaped unhurt. These poor fellows felt it a sacred duty to look out among the slaughtered heaps, each

for his own particular friends or chosen comrades, to render their bodies the rude rites of sepulture, or take from them some tokens for their relatives in England, that might keep green the memory of those who died on the broad bed of honour in a foreign land.

Silence and melancholy were the natural features of the scene, and the actors in it performed their office, with the dreary air of men tired of the world in which they seemed to have lived a day too long. But of all, who, in small groups or singly isolated from others, laboured in this sad vocation, one was prominent for his lingering, listless manner as he leant on his spade and seemed to moralise deeply, or sat down on a dead body, or made lazy efforts to clothe it in a light covering of mould. This individual was slow Sefton, the soldier of the archers' company who formed one of the guard-tent party on that fatal morning. He looked around him often with a longing eye, to recognise some living face of old companionship, but he found none such; and could any of his late comrades have seen through the deep glaze of death, they could scarcely have known their old associate in his present altered state of mien and dress.

He was completely shorn of all the decorations of soldiery. His gabardine and burgonet were flung away, as well as the several weapons formerly mentioned as composing the equipment of an archer. A coarse buckram doublet covered his body, in place of the mailed shirt: the steel plates of which had been wont to shine so gaily in the sun, and instead of the brilliant skull-piece decked with a tuft of bright red feathers, his close-cropped, shock head was powdered thick with those falling flakes, which, as in Sylvester's winter description,

> "Perriwig with snow the bald-pate woods;"

and his face was thickly clotted with perspiration, gunpowder, and blood.

"Well, here's a weary world, my masters," murmured Sefton, as he looked down on the bleached and stiffened heap of carcasses beside him, and seemed to address them. "Here are stabs and gashes enow in one day to satisfy

grim death for a good year to come. Oh, England, England, is it at this pass with thee! thy glorious and gallant soldiers hacked, hewed, and trampled on after the fashion of mere mercenaries in a scrambling mêlée! Now suppose the ghost of our great lion-hearted King Richard was to come up from purgatory this cold evening, and sit fornent me there astride yon slaughtered man-at-arms — what would the royal spectre say? Would he not say — knowing me at once, as well as any ghost knows every living man — 'Here's a coil, honest Jock Sefton, and all agone of these damned long-bows! Here's murder done on the merry men of old England, which if your advice and mine went for aught, they had all escaped! Here's the fruit of tilly-fally changes in the good old weapon which I introduced, and you practised on! Ah, Jock, if thy left hand had grasped, as of old, a good steel latch or a horn prodd, and thy right hand pulled a stout stiff moulinet from arm's length up to thy ear's tip, thy three-cornered quarrel had entered Duke Philip's brow, as sure as the spike of that damned yellow-visaged Frenchman's shaft pierced my shoulder, then the battle had been won, and old England's honour saved, and many a one of those fine lads been blithe and buxom still, instead of weltering in gore and snow-water, with never a spadeful of soft churchyard mould to lie lightly on their poor disfigured bodies!' 'Tis true enow for your majesty's worshipful ghost,' would I say in return, 'true enow, and sad as true! But what could Jock Sefton do, may it please your spectreship? As sure as I'm a flesh-and-blood Christian — no disrespect to your highness's shade — I aimed that wabbling arrow, at only five roods' distance, as straight as eye could aim, and as steady as arm could pull, at Duke Philip's face. But what could be looked for from a goose-feathered shaft, which, compared to a cross-bow quarrel, is like a kestrel ruffling a pigeon's plumes to a hawk-royal piercing a partridge's breast. No, no! no good more for England, well may she go to the fiend, since the brunt of her battles depends on the long-bows.' But let me," continued Sefton, giving up the fancied colloquy, "meantime, do my duty to these poor dumb corpses," and he again turned over and examined

body after body, leaving without any attempt at burial those who had not belonged to his own company. At length he came to another pause, on the spot where that company had braved the last desperate charge of the enemy; and he stood gazing intently on an upturned face, on which the moon's light flung a still more ghastly hue.

"And can this in truth be thee, Robert Moggs, old comrade of many a campaign, straight-forward soldier, though somewhat twisted and warped in thy righthand epaulment, like a gabion or earth-bag thrown up before a redout? And so it's all over with thee, and down thou hast sunk suddenly like the sun at midsummer! Well, lad, here's a frozen clod or two to cover thy crooked shoulder, any how, and peace be to thee, Amen!"

Sefton passed on in this way over several that were bodies of friends and foes, either unknown to him, or so disfigured by wounds and death as to be doubtful in the imperfect light. Again he paused, stooped down closely to a new object, and then exclaimed, "What! Eh! can it be? by the rood it is! Ah, brave Serjeant, thy promotion is cut short! Poor Thorlsby! dead and gone, and thy blue nose already bleaching white in the north-east breeze! A veteran of judgment and candour! Well and wisely didst thou speak this morning of the cross-bow, and here has the bullet from an envious arquebuss gone through thy breast! A double portion of covering shalt thou have, old boy, in honour of thy rank and thy keen knowledge of arms."

As he struck his spade into the hard earth, a low moan close beside him told him that life was not yet extinct in some body hard by. This was a common sound, and he had already heard a hundred similar ones without suffering his attention to be arrested. He therefore went on with the imperfect burial of his old friend, but, at every stroke of the spade, a renewed moan and a murmured word of invocation came from one among the heap of bodies.

"How odd this is!" exclaimed he, "at every stroke on the earth a voice seems to come from it, as though it groaned from pain. Who can it be that thus murmurs, like the ghost of the grave?"

"Jock Sefton!" faintly uttered the voice.

"The Lord pardon me!" cried he who was thus apostrophised; "the saints pray for me! the angels be my speed! Is King Richard's ghost indeed raised up to punish my having called on him?"

His knees knocked together, his teeth chattered, the spade almost dropped from his hand, and he sat down on the nearest heap of carcasses, crossing himself the while.

"Jesu Maria, save me!" exclaimed he instantly, on being thrown fairly over on his face, by a sudden heaving of the heap. "Holy St. Jude! is the dead beginning to rise?"

"Jock Sefton, Jock Sefton, pull me out of this horrid place — I hear your voice," murmured a faint sound.

"Aha! why, there's some reason in that," said Sefton, reassured, and following the suggestion of his good-nature; "now that ye talk like a christian man, be ye who ye may, I'll lend a hand for your relief. Where are you?"

No answer followed.

"Why don't ye speak, comrade? Hast died outright, in that last struggle, which flung me face to face with old Serjeant Thorlsby? What's thy name?"

Still no answer was given, though groans of every degree of agonised utterance filled the air in various directions.

"God preserve me, this is awful work!" exclaimed Sefton, looking round, and seeing no living thing, but the few dim-looking grave-makers, an occasional horse wildly ranging about, or some straggling crows and ravens, already attracted by the anticipated banquet.

"Awful work indeed! how horrid it is to stand intrenched in corpses, and to feel one's feet dabbling in cold blood! There's no use in staying here longer to-night, my own limbs are stiffening now, and my jaws feel hard-set as if I were one of the dead. I'll e'en leave this cursed spot, where, one by one, every comrade of mine has fallen. St. Jude! 'tis a terrible thing to think that all but myself of the dozen hale men, serjeant, corporal, and privates, who danced a mad round this morning in the guard-tent, are gone to their last account, unshrived, and with all their

sins, like a crammed full canvass knapsack, on their back. Holy Mary see them safe to Heaven!"

"Jock Sefton!" faintly murmured the same voice as before.

"Hey! again! Living still, whosoever ye be? Then with God's blessing, I'll rescue ye, though I be forced to turn over a hundred carcasses. Ah, this must be Corporal Crump's own big head; such another does not wag on any pair of shoulders dead or living. Jesu! 'tis the head, sure enow, but what a gash across the throat! Ah, there was the blade of a Flemish knife! Well do I remember, it was even thus with honest Ralph Mugglesford, when he fell on the breach."

"Jock, Jock, for mercy's sake pull me out," said the voice; and at the same instant a convulsive grasp caught hold of Sefton's leg.

"Ah! the devil, the devil!" cried he, striving to burst away. "Let me go! Loosen your hold! Treachery! Treachery! Help, help! Let me go, or by the rood, I'll cut thy wrist sinews across with my spade, be thou Burgundian, Hollander, or Fleming!"

"Jock, Jock! Dostn't thou know thy friend, poor Wat Bassett?"

"What! is't thou bully Bassett, that still lives and gripes my anklet so fast! Odd's my life, if I didn't see that overgrown Flemish knight gi' thee such a thwack o' his hatchet as must ha' laid any skull open that warn't made o' granite or iron-wood ——"

"Quickly, good Jock!"

"And that southron-looking stabber, that followed at his heels, struck a thrust of his poniard under the flap of thy gabardine, that might have gone through the ribs of an ox. An' thou'rt still alive, an' it isn't thy ghost, good lad, I'll have thee up and well for little Cicely yet; so, let go thy grip, Walter, an' keep up thy spirits, sweet heart!"

In a little more, Bassett was fairly extricated from the heap of dead under which he had lain for hours, his life having been so long preserved by one of the miraculous instances of the battle-field. Sefton placed him sitting on the earth, and propped him up with three or four of his

slaughtered comrades. He then did all in his power to revive him, chafed his hands, and forced some snow into his open mouth.

"With Heaven's mercy, poor lad, thou may'st yet do well," said the compassionate soldier. "Cheer thee, cheer thee, Walter! Sit up straight man — why dost fall thus on one side? Thou hast a bold stomach, and a good courage — so, let thy head rise from thy breast. Holy Mary! how pale thou art! and what a frightful gash! Why, it has laid thy head and face open the whole length of the battle-axe blade! and, eh, what a stream of blood pours from thy side! Why, Walter! revive, good youth, and speak to your friend, Jock Sefton — odds, my life an' I don't believe he's now dead in earnest! This burst of sharp air on his lungs, this quick motion from his prostrate posture, or God wot what it is — for I'm dull in leech-craft — has out an' out killed him in the moment I thought him saved."

And it was even so. Honest Sefton's pains were all for nought. Poor Bassett's career, his ambitious aspirations, his hopes of love, were for ever set at rest.

"Body o' me, wert thou my own brother, I had not been more shocked!" exclaimed Sefton, looking mournfully in the dead man's face. "Well, Walter, this much I swear, that if life be spared me, and I get my liberty again from these damned Burgundians, and escape from these unlucky swamps, and ever see old England and noble London city once more, my first visit shall be to Southwark to the sign of the White Hart. And there, if little Cicely still serves at the bar as of old, in her red kirtle and green boddice, with her sparkling black eye, her rosy cheek, and come-kiss-me lips, there will I give her a true account of these woeful doings, — and, let me see, what token shall I bring her of the lad that loved her so truly? His hair's all too clotted with blood, not to set her mad outright with grief — but here hangs the amulet, the herb-stuff of which was gathered by her own pretty fingers. I'faith, there's blood on it too — but then it comes from poor Walter's very heart, and that was the same as her own. Lie there, deceiving bauble of false security, there, in my doublet-

pouch. It is for thee, little Cicely — and I vow to the holy St. Jude, in this awful hour, to place it in thy hands, as a pilgrim from the holy land might offer a relic to our lady of grace. Eh, saints of Heaven! what a gash it was! That was the true double-stroke of fate — for while it split poor Walter's head, much I fear me 'twill break poor Cicely's heart!"

Sefton soliloquised no more, but walked slowly away in search of some refuge from cold, hunger, and sorrow.

CHAPTER V.

In proportion as the success at Amersfort had raised the Hoeks to extravagance, the disastrous day of Brouwershaven plunged them in despair. They made many protracted struggles for political existence during full half a century later than that time, but no marked effort worthy of their former notoriety, either as a faction, or in their better aspect, as champions of popular right opposed to aristocratic oppression.

But the battle on which we have endeavoured to fix the reader's attention was an event of infinitely higher importance, as it regarded Europe in general and more particularly England, than in relation to its influence on the domestic interests of Holland and Zealand. Duke Philip of Burgundy had for the first time dyed his sword in British blood. His private hatred to Glocester had overpowered his repugnance to hostility against the nation with whom he had hitherto acted in ardent alliance. His long-cherished vengeance against Charles VII. of France seemed to fade before this new development of passion, in proportion as personal enmity is stronger than filial resentment or national dislike. The bond of union between Burgundy and Britain was completely rent asunder, and never in Philip's person renewed. He abandoned the common cause and went over to the common enemy — but not at once, or with the startling inconsistency of a more impetuous mind.

His Dutch affairs gave him ample occupation for some time to come; and every excuse for a junction with France was allowed to acquire plausibility and force, until the gradual ruin of English domination in that country justified the policy that abandoned a falling cause.

Humphrey of Glocester was assuredly the proximate provocation of all this. His contract with Jacqueline, upheld for awhile with such headlong imprudence, but violated so basely and so soon, was the true source of all the losses and disgrace of England. Whatever illusions may have been carried down to posterity respecting him, founded on the too-loosely lavished epithet attached to his name, he must stand convicted in true history as the author of irreparable injury to his country, and with one deep and indelible stain on his character; and having brought him to the term of public disgrace, we must now leave him to pursue his career of domestic indignity.

The Duke of Bedford, that true specimen of the best qualities of the age he ornamented, was in England at the present period of our tale, counteracting his brother's violent struggles to reinforce Fitz-walter's army, and obtaining the positive refusal of the parliament to sanction a plan too sure to hasten the natural catastrophe of a breach with Philip. That point obtained, Bedford returned to France, to resume the duties of his regency, and oppose his wonted vigour to the combined efforts of the Dauphin (or the King of Bourg, as he was still called in the disparaging parlance of England), and of De Richemont, who had begun in Britanny that open hostility which he made, in his subsequent capacity of constable of France, so fatal to English interests.

But all these individuals, though prominent in the great movements of the time, are minor personages, in comparison with her whose private happiness and political existence all hinged on the passing events. To her we must now return; and having painted her apathy when successful and her indifference when forsaken, endeavour to portray the still deeper and more sublime traits of her character, in total abandonment and all but utter ruin. The natural strength of Jacqueline's constitution and her

innate force of mind had shaken off, without any effort, the illness so strictly derivable from a moral cause. Vulgar observers attributed her recovery to joy at the successful resistance of the town in which she was cooped up, the fall of which must have compromised her liberty, or put even her life in risk. Van Monfoort, in his coarse delight, overpowered her with details of heroic exploits, which all fell dead upon her mind that would erewhile have thrilled with sympathy. Her mother endeavoured to arouse her with hopes of ultimate triumph and incitements to vengeance, the first of which wearied while the latter disgusted her. Benina Beyling strove to cheer her by well-meant but weak arguments, drawn from the fountain of her own delusions, which shone in bright but unreal colouring, like the iris formed by sunshine playing upon froth. But all was in vain. Jacqueline seemed to endure life only as a burden sufficient to fatigue, but not weighty enough to bear her down. Such were the feelings of the principal group contained in the strong place of Amersfort, when Jacqueline's brother, Lewis, arrived from Zealand with the discouraging news, that the Vetkoopers, with their leader, Syarda, had nearly succumbed under their and Jacqueline's enemies, the Schieringers, and that no co-operation was to be expected from that quarter. The base submission of Zweder Van Culemburg to the Duke of Burgundy, was confirmed about the same time. And as a last drop to brim the cup of ill-fate, the news from Brouwershaven did not long linger behind, proving the truth of the proverb which gives a gregarious impulse to misfortunes.

The intelligence was like a thunderbolt to the excited and over-sanguine Hoeks. The actual effect on the chief individuals whom we have named, may be best judged from the hurried and irregular council, which they held together on receiving the afflicting news.

Jacqueline sat one day in the private apartment where we last pictured her to our readers, and her thoughts were, in all likelihood, turned back to the most impressive and important incident of her whole life, of which it was a few weeks before the scene; for though events of more public

importance had been ripe during her chequered career, nothing like that interview with Vrank Borselen had so affected her heart or so compromised her happiness. Having ascertained through Van Monfoort (to whom the grateful youth had communicated the news), that Vrank had escaped the dangers of that evening, and subsequently that he had found means, by the aid of gold, the master-key to human sympathy, to evade all pursuit and join Duke Philip's army, she had no longer to endure the agony of fear which had for awhile oppressed her; and as she recovered from that and its consequence on her health, she gradually settled down into the hopeless composure we have described. She imposed a positive order on Benina never in the remotest way to allude to Van Borselen, and she inflicted on herself the penance of never mentioning his name. But when she would have put an interdict on thought she found the utter fruitlessness of the attempt; and, in despair of banishing the one beloved object from her mind, she let it reign paramount there in unresisted despotism.

On the day at which we have now arrived, she sat in her accustomed manner, looking out on the cheerless aspect of the garden. Benina Beyling occupied a stool at the other side of the flaming brazier. Both were employed in that apparently listless way which relieves the anxious mind—the one in tracing fancied likenesses to shrubs and flowers in the snow-flakes that clothed the branches without; and the other finding the semblance of animal monsters in the burning coal that warmed the room within.

"Prithee, Benina," at length said Jacqueline, "tune the rebeck, and sing me a stanza from Alain Chartier's 'Book of the Four Ladies.' It is, in sooth, a pleasant strain of mingled sweet and sad; its pastoral opening savours of nature's own odours; and the laments of the four hapless damsels go each and all to my very heart."

"My kind mistress," replied Benina, "I must not now turn to melancholic strains, but will rest on those sweet preludes, which are more suiting to sick minds;" and taking up the rebeck which lay on the table close by, she ran over a few chords, and then sang, in a murmuring

recitative, and with a slight accompaniment, the following opening verses of the poem alluded to by Jacqueline.

" To banish care and sweeten life,
One morning mild I sought the fields;
'Twas one of those young days that yields
Respite from sorrow and from strife—
When heart with heart its soft nest builds,
And love, and hope, and joy are rife.

" The birds around were fluttering,
And each one, with the other vying,
Sang, as it rose on ardent wing,
So very sweet, it made my heart
Flutter as though 'twould bear a part
In the gay music of the spring.

" No cloud defaced the joyous day,
The blue heavens shone in the mild ray,
The violets sprang beneath my feet,
And all things looked and smelled so sweet,
'Twas plain that Nature's own hand made them,
And they did just what nature bade them.

" The feathered tribes were in the grove;
Some sang, while others swelling throats
In doubled warblings echoing strove
To send back nature's thrilling notes.
All looked alike, yet none the same,
As, beyond count, they went and came;
And I, reclined within the brake,
Marvelled aloud that heaven should make
Things like them, in a way so strange,
So novel, yet so free from change.
But still more wondrous 'twas to see
That each with new-born love elate,
Whether in air, on earth, or tree,
Was coupled with one chosen mate!

" The coney and the timid hare
Ran through the leaves and flow'rets fair,
Spring held all nature in its thrall,
And love seemed lording it o'er all;
While nought could there grow old or die,
Though time changed to eternity.

" The grass sent out so sweet a balm
That fragrant filled the loaded air,
While murmuring through the valley calm
A gurgling streamlet wandered there;
And thirsty trees, that bent and drank,
With green leaves fringed the flowery bank.

" And there wild fowls in flocks resorted,
Ducks, herons, ring-doves, pheasants came,
While some the leafy arbour courted,
Others within the bright wave sported;
But if they flew, or if they swam,
All were as happy in the glade
As uncaged birds could hope to be.
The wild deer stopped to mark their glee—
But heaven, whose bright eye pierced the shade,
Knows what a chattering noise they made!

" Yet then it was my heavy heart
Most mourned in that most pleasant place,
Where all seemed fashioned to impart
Joyaunce, delight, repose, and peace—

Where nothing but some bright-winged bird
The drowsy calm of nature stirred,
Save a soft breezelet sighing on,
So still I only knew 'twas there,
By the fresh scents that filled the air
From the wild flowers it breathed upon.

" And yet — though this blest spot was full
Of all that nature's hands could form
Of bright, and pure, and beautiful,
Of rich and soft, and bland and warm, —
Yet was I sad while all was gay,
And gloom seemed mantling the bright day,
For she I love was far away!"*

* I had meant to have inserted here only the original lines, above freely imitated; but reflecting that very few English readers were likely to be familiar with the French language as written 400 years ago, I thought it better to accompany the verses with the best translation I could effect, though that was still very imperfect. Those who take the trouble to read the one may probably be induced to study the other; and finally led to consult the pages of some of those early French poets, who abound in the graceful naïveté which constitutes the great charm of the present specimen. Alain Chartier flourished at the epoch of my story. He was in high favour, subsequently, at the court of Charles VII., and it may not be amiss to repeat an oft-told anecdote, as an instance of deep feeling for literary merit. While Chartier one day slept on a bench, in an ante-room of the palace, the dauphiness happened to pass, with some ladies of her train. She stopped, stooped, and kissed the poet, all ugly as he was; and on one of her attendants expressing surprise, she said, " she kissed the mouth for the sake of the sweet strains that issued from it." This fact, more than my imitation, may bespeak some favour for the following extract from the " Livre des Quatre Dames." —

Pour oublier melancholie,
Et pour faire chiere plus lie,
Ung doulx matin aux champs issy,
Du premier jour qu'amours ralie
Les cueurs en la saison jolie,
Fait cesser ennuy et soucy,
Si allay tout seulet ainsi.

Tout autour oiseaulx voletoient,
Et si tres-doulcement chantoient,
Qu'il n'est cueur qui n'en fust joyeulx,
Et en chantant en l'air montoient,
Et puis l'un l'autre surmontoient
A l'estriuve à qui mieulx mieulx.
Le temps n'estoit mie mieux,
De bleu estoient vestuz les cieux,
Et le beau soleil cler luisoit,
Violettes croissoient par lieux,
Et tout faisoit ses deuoirs tieux,
Comme Nature le duisoit.

En buissons oyseaux s'assembloient,
L'ung chantoit, les autres doubloient
Leurs gorgettes, qui verboioient
Le chant que Nature a apris,
Et puis l'ung, de l'autre sembloient,
Et point ne s'entre ressembloient:
Tant en y eut que ilz sembloient
Fors à estre en nombre compris.
Si m'arrestay en ung pourpris
D'arbres, en pensant en hault pris
De nature, qui entrepris
A les faire or ainsi harper.
Mais de joie lez viz surpris,

"Enough, enough, dear Benina!" exclaimed Jacqueline, when her friend and confidant had gone so far; "these sweet and thrilling pictures of pastoral joy make my heart ache with envy. Pass on, prithee, to the grievous laments of the four ladies, and choose me her's, Benina, which seems to thee most sad — the first, whose lover was killed at Agincourt; the third, whose dear friend went to the battle and was heard of no more, or she, who had to deplore the cowardice of him who fled from the foe, and was dishonoured for ever."

"Or the second lady's chant, my sweet mistress — she whose young lover, only twenty years of age, was taken by the English and kept prisoner?" asked Benina, influenced by her sympathy with English renown, and in hopes of

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Et d'amour nouvelle entrepris
Et ung chascun avoit iapris
Et choisy ung seul loyal per.
Les arbres regarday flourir,
Et lieures et connins courir.
Du printemps tout s'esionyssoit.
La sembloient amour seignourir.
Nul n'y peult vieillir ne mourir,
Ce me semble, tant qu'il y soit.
Des erbes ung flair doulx issoit,
Que l'air sery adoulcissoit,
Et en bruiant par la valee
Ung petit ruissellet passoit,
Qui les pays amoitissoit.
Dont l'eaue n'estoit pas salée.
Tout au plus pres sur le pendant
De la montaigne en descendant
Fut assiz ung joyeaux bocage
Qui au ruissel s'alloit pendant,
Et vertes courtines tendant
De ses branches sur le rivage.

Là haute maint oysel sauvage,
L'ung vole, l'autre au ruissel nage,
Canes, ramiers, herons, faisans;
Et les cerfz passoient par l'ombrage
De ces oissillons hors de cage.
Dièu scet s'ilz y estoient taisans!
Alors non cueur se guermentoit
De la grant douleur qu'il portoit,
En ce plaisant lieu solitaire,
Vu ung doulx ventelet ventoit,
Si sery qu'on ne le sentoit,
Fors que violette mieulx flaire.

La fust le graciaux repaire
De ce que nature a peu faire,
De bel et joyeulx en esté.
La n'avoit il riens a reffaire
De tout ce qu'il me pourroit plaire,
Mais que ma dame y eust esté.

reviving Jacqueline's affection, even at the risk of pain to her feelings by this home allusion, without actually breaking her commands.

"No, Benina, pass by that—I need not such a memento of my folly, or my grief."

Benina started at this direct admission and mention of the subject, heretofore so cautiously abstained from. A deep blush on Jacqueline's cheek showed she had been taken by surprise, and was angry either with herself or the cause of her indiscreet exclamation. But, before she could recover from, or plunge deeper into her confusion, an interruption took place, which involved her in a thousandfold greater suffering connected with its object.

Countess Marguerite abruptly entered the room, pale with agitation; and forgetting all her usual attention to Jacqueline's delicate state, she exclaimed,—

"Daughter, ill news comes thick on us. Bear up now for the worst that could befal—for total ruin. Your tyrant cousin, my hated nephew Philip, whom may God in his mercy keep from hence, or *take!* has cut the English and the Hoeks to pieces in Schowen."

"Alas! poor Benina!" said Jacqueline, perceiving the shock which this sudden announcement caused her friend, who, on the old countess's entrance, had with courtly respect stood up, but who sunk on her seat again as the fatal sentence was uttered.

"Why, daughter! Jacqueline! Is it thus you receive the news of your undoing? Is it by lavishing attentions on a sensitive maid of honour that the Countess of Holland and Hainault should meet this blow of fate! Have you no sense of your own, of mine, of your country's ruin?"

"Heaven knows, mother, my heart bleeds for its losses and for yours—for myself I care not, but I deeply feel for my poor Benina."

"I know not how she is concerned in this, or why she should claim a thought in such a crisis. I tell thee, daughter, thy cause is irreparably lost."

"Praise to the Virgin! I am then without fear as without hope."

"Oh, God, I could burst with spite and rage!" cried Countess Marguerite. "Is it thus the blood of Bavaria and Burgundy sinks down? Ah, here comes Van Monfoort with the very herald of our doom."

And at this instant the fierce chieftain entered the chamber, accompanied by one of those fear-stricken messengers of defeat, who magnify even the worst on such occasions, to justify their panic and palliate their flight.

"Noble ladies, my very good mistresses," cried Van Monfoort, yet almost unable to articulate from passion — "ye have heard the brief tidings of ruin — here is the witness reeking from his course by field and flood — all is lost — all! What is now to be done?"

"Tell me, good fellow," said Countess Marguerite, sternly, "what is the truth of this? Thy ill-omened look speaks a frightful amount of evil — what is the sum of our loss?"

"Every thing, noble dame! nought has escaped captivity, deroute, or death," replied the downcast Hoek.

"A fearful reckoning, in sooth! And now, raven-voiced fatalist, for thy details! — What men of note — what leaders have fallen?"

"A long list, Madam — both the Hemsteds — I saw their bodies trampled over by ——"

"Both!" exclaimed Van Monfoort — and a deep groan, accompanied by a thump with doubled fist on his breast-plate, spoke his affliction.

"Besides these," continued the messenger; but the chieftain fiercely stopped him, and starting forwards and seizing him by the shoulder exclaimed: —

"Hold there, — give no other name — at least lest thou tally an enemy for every friend. What Kabblejaws have been killed? out with the muster-roll of death, and let it be long and bloody!"

"First then, is Van Borselen ——"

"What! art sure, comrade? Didst speak truly? Van Borselen?"

"I saw his corpse borne off in the arms of a huge Frison, long ere the fight was ended."

"Woe, woe to me for ever!" exclaimed old Ludwick,

with the harsh energy of hate, that turns inward and breaks its baffled vengeance on self, but which neither his brother Hoek, nor the Countess Marguerite, both of whom watched him closely, could comprehend.

"Woe, woe! my best friends killed by the enemy, and my deadliest foe fallen by another hand than mine! The first I could have borne — but the latter! oh misery! Have I outlived Van Borselen, and yet not had the strangling of him in this grasp!"

While Van Monfoort clenched with both hands his rapier in savage force and muttered this fierce soliloquy, Countess Marguerite's attention was turned to Jacqueline, by an exclamation from Benina Beyling, who was roused from her own fears by the more evident and severer anguish of her mistress. As Van Monfoort, in hearing the name of Borselen, could suppose no one but his old enemy, so could Jacqueline imagine in the same sound no one but her young lover. While the rude chieftain throbbed with smothered vengeance, the gentle countess thrilled with despair; and Benina's eyes being fixed on her alone, the death-like pallor of her cheek was noticed just in time to allow this faithful friend catching her in her arms, ere exhausted feeling caused her to sink back insensible. Countess Marguerite joined her efforts with Benina's to revive the beautiful sufferer; but even in this occupation, which would have absorbed the feelings of a more tender mother, she found time for other questions touching the fatal battle.

"And where," continued she, in broken phrase, while she looked alternately on Jacqueline, or towards the messenger, "where were those braggart islanders — those vaunted English? Did they nought for the common cause?"

"Madam, they fought like lions, and fell like heroes, each man in his rank, where he stood; and they all died with honour, save one who abandoned the rest and fled."

"And he — who is the recreant?"

"The general Fitz-walter!"

"Beggar! thou liest — basely, odiously liest! 'tis false — 'tis impossible!" exclaimed the hitherto timid and yielding Benina, roused far beyond her general tone of feeling or manner, by this aspersion on him whom she

considered as the very flower of chivalry. The old countess and Van Monfoort stood absorbed in wonder at this display of unusual energy, and each irresistibly marvelled at the secret it betrayed.

Benina never for a moment abandoned her anxious care of Jacqueline; but while applying every possible means to revive her, her eye was fixed with an indignant expression on the soldier. He in his turn got warm, and raising his dagger to his mouth he kissed its hilt, and exclaimed,

"Lady! I pardon your young heart, which haply urges this unmeasured language. But, by the holy cross, I swear, I saw Fitz-walter fly from the combat, and stand aloof, while his soldiers fell in slaughtered heaps!"

"Fly!" echoed Benina, "'tis false! 'tis false!"

"It matters not, one recreant more or less," said Countess Marguerite.

"With your good leave, noble dame, it does," exclaimed Van Monfoort, "when there is a question of the honour of such a knight. Tell me, brother soldier and fellow sufferer in this cause, did the English general quit the field ere Philip entered it?"

"No, my noble knight. In truth he only fled as if in terror at sight of the tyrant."

"Patience, damsel!" said Van Monfoort, preventing a renewed explosion of Benina's indignation. "One word reconciles all this, and redeems Fitz-walter's fame. I know he is bound by knightly pledge never to stand up in fight where Philip shows his person. A fatal pledge, I fear me, to us all!"

"Heaven be praised! if his honour be clear from stain," cried Benina; "and you, brave soldier, pardon me, and say, oh, say is Fitz-walter safe?"

"I know not, in sooth, fair mistress; he is most likely captive," replied the man.

Farther words were prevented, first by Jacqueline's recovery from her temporary unconsciousness, and her evident anxiety to discover whether any imprudent confession had escaped her. Satisfied by Benina's re-assuring expressions, she, like the rest, had time to turn her attention to the presence of her brother Lewis, who hastily entered from the garden.

"Oh, my dear Jacqueline," said the ardent and affectionate young man, embracing his sister, "oh, most persecuted and first of women, how my heart grieves for thy fate. Thy whole possessions, thy every chance are lost! For, besides this frightful news, a messenger this moment comes breathless and spent from Brussels, to say, that John of Brabant lies at the point of death."

"That he may sink!" muttered Countess Marguerite, in a tone which left none of her unspoken meaning to the imagination of her hearers.

"And has sent to thee, Jacqueline, his last request that you will fly to him, to receive his expiring breath and assure him of your forgiveness. Say, my sister, what wilt thou resolve on, in so strange, so awful a crisis as this?"

"Resolve on? why to let the base tyrant die in shame and guilt, to be sure — to stay here, firmly entrenched in this victorious town, and if needs must be, buried in its ruins! 'Tis thus I venture to speak for my gracious mistress, in trust that she will bear out my words," cried Ludwick Van Monfoort. But a far different notion had taken possession of Jacqueline's mind, suddenly but irrevocably, at the very moment that her brother announced the important message, and while her heart still throbbed with the anguish of her recent shock.

We do not wish to paint Jacqueline as more than woman, but, as she really was, of the first order of female minds. The decision she now formed was well in keeping with that mingled humanity and courage which we love to see in her character. She saw no object before her but the dying wretch who had been in form her husband, whose fate she had once vowed to share, and from whose presence she had been driven solely by his own brutality and consummate incapacity in all ways that could reconcile a beautiful and spirited young woman to such a mate. Now she forgot at once all his former vileness; or if remembered, it was only with that blessed balm of forgiveness which none but a woman's heart can pour over the memory of wrong. She at once made up her mind to accept her nominal husband's summons, and to fly to the side of his death-bed.

"Lewis," said she, in a tone tremulous, but unbroken, of firmness, yet of feeling, and with no accent of reproach towards Van Monfoort, "I am resolved and ready to repair to Brussels. Heaven and the saints forbid that I should refuse the boon asked by a dying man. Thou shalt accompany me. Get horses ready for me and Benina. We have not a moment to lose."

The air which accompanied these words struck the lion of Urk quite dumb. He turned aside, abashed at his bold interference with her movements and his misconception of her motives; and he as speedily and implicitly submitted to her dictates as when she was in all the triumph of victory and apparent stability of power. Countess Marguerite silently pondered the question for a while, but she soon ceased to reflect on a decision which she was resolved to abet. She must not be suspected of any sympathy with that womanly generosity or Christian benevolence which actuated her daughter. As far as her feelings were affected, her wretched nephew and son-in-law might have gone down into the grave or *farther*, without one effort to soothe his remorse. But she saw in the present circumstances a most fortunate opportunity of recovery from the ruin which seemed, a few minutes before, quite overwhelming. She remembered Jacqueline's great popularity in Brabant and Hainault, and particularly in Brussels, where her residence had encouraged gaiety and luxury in the nobles, and consequent prosperity among the citizens at large. The former interference of the people in her favour, when their remonstrances saved her from the duke's outraging tyranny, returned to Countess Marguerite's mind, although it was at the moment quite forgotten by her own. Hatred to St. Pol, who, in case of his brother's death, would be sure to advance immediate claims to the dukedom, was not without its influence on the old countess. Altogether, she saw that the moment was arrived for one new struggle in her daughter's favour, and consequently for her own importance; and she cogitated for a few minutes how best to disavow the divorce pronounced by Benedict XIII. and declare Jacqueline's adhesion to the bull of Martin V. which confirmed her marriage with the Duke of Brabant, and would, in the event of his death,

be her best title to his succession. Her mind, however, being made up on the principle — or want of principle — she did not at such a moment lose time by reflecting on the details; but with a few assenting words to Jacqueline's decision, not, however, touching on her own private motives, she hastily quitted the scene of this brief and accidental council. Jacqueline with Benina also left the room at the same instant. Lewis of Hainault was already out in the court, making immediate preparation for departure; and Ludwick Van Monfort, when he recovered from his bewilderment at the rapid close of the conference, found himself standing in the middle of the chamber, accompanied solely by the run-away soldier, who gazed on the chieftain, as the latter did on him, as if neither had yet formed an exact estimate of his relative positions. Ludwick was the first to recover his self-command. He looked round, and saw that the more important personages had retired, and that in the present aspect of things, each individual was left to follow his own sense of right or wrong. He could not resist a feeling of mortification and pique at the disregard of his opinion so unceremoniously shown by Jacqueline. He resolved not to be a partner in a scheme which, as it was opposed to his own views, he was resolved to see pregnant with evil. He decided on not volunteering to accompany the expedition on which the countesses were about to start, and which he was not invited to join. Like a good soldier and an unflinching Hoek, he gave his whole thoughts to the preservation of such of his followers as might choose to share his fortunes, and he resolved on evacuating the town which no point of honour called on him to devote to ruin, when once his sovereign countess had withdrawn her person from it. His future course he left to fate, or to chance we should rather say, for such, with a deep dash of ferocious courage, was the great impulse of such commanders as he.

"Well, comrade!" exclaimed he, as he roused up from his short reverie, with a violence of voice and gesture that made his companion start, "well, brave brother, for brave I know thee to be, though perhaps thou hadst better have died in Schowen than told its sad story here, thou seest

how the world wags and how fortune drives. We have nought for it now but dauntless hearts and daring deeds. Our noble mistress, as thou seest, spurns my advice that she should stand steady here in the certainty of glorious destruction, and goes off at the summons of a whining hypocrite, whose fear of hell tells him he was a sinner, and makes him fancy he repents. Dead or alive, John of Brabant can claim nothing from his wife, nor do her aught but evil. But mark my words, she is going into the pitfall of deceit and danger, when trusting herself into contact with Philip de St. Pol; but if an evil star light the path, where is the use of picking one's steps? What say'st thou, friend, wilt follow me? Wilt share my fate?"

"Will I, noble Ludwick? Will the hounds follow the huntsman, or the hawk come at the falconer's call, and shall not I track the steps of the boldest prop of chivalry and the bravest Hoek in Holland? I am yours, brave knight, for life and death, so as you but lead me to vengeance on the Kabblejaws—I ask no more."

"Thy hand, good friend!" responded Ludwick; and having grasped the hard fist, freely thrown forth on his summons, he gave and took such a reciprocity of squeeze as would have cramped the muscles and crushed the bones of a modern hero; and ending the manual accolade with a mystic pressure of thumb—the token of true Hoekery, (but which no babbling brother has betrayed to the listening ear of history,) the Lion of Urk strided off with his follower, to do such deeds as vengeance might warrant or desperation dictate.

Ere Jacqueline and her companions had completed their scanty preparations, or that the palfreys could be caparisoned under the care of Lewis of Hainault, the scouts of the victor's advanced guard were close to the walls of Amersfort. We may well imagine, but could not easily depict, the consternation and confusion of such a moment. The unfortunate heroine of the scene, borne up on the springs of excited sentiment, wore an air of almost unearthly energy throughout. Her promptness, her decision, her tone of command, not imperiously harsh, but as though the genius of female heroism was embodied in her person, almost overcame the sensitive delicacy of Benina's weaker mind. While

she gazed on her mistress in astonishment, or wildly reverted to her own anxieties, Jacqueline seemed to have no look, nor thought, but for the high and holy object on which her heart was bent. There was a religious fervour on her bearing, which awed even those who did not know her purpose; while those who did, regarded her as a victim self-devoted to the certainty of dangers, tenfold greater than those which threatened her on the spot she was about to quit.

Among the latter were Van Monfoort and those of the household to whom he hastily announced the destination towards which Jacqueline was hurrying. At one moment he resolved to make known to the citizens, what he was determined to believe an insane rushing upon ruin, in hopes that he might rouse them for their own, as well as their sovereign's sake, to arrest her progress. But Ludwick was a moment too late. Jacqueline and her suite, consisting of Lewis, Benina, and some half-dozen mounted attendants, with the Brussels messenger, had quickly trotted through the portal, ere the bewildered burghers clearly caught the general's meaning; and history was thus robbed of another instance of those out-bursts of affectionate violation, to what, in less popular governments than existed then, would be looked on as treason against "the right divine."

Countess Marguerite could neither prepare for so quickly, nor contemplate with such ease, a two days' journey on horseback, no more than she could reconcile herself to form one on a visit of peace and mercy to the wretched object against whose life she had so lately plotted. She therefore resolved to place herself in the protection and throw herself on the chivalry that bloomed under the rough covering of Van Monfoort's courage. Her acuteness told her, what his impetuosity had overlooked, that the safest and most propitious route was that of Utrecht, where Rudolf Van Diepenholt had been chosen bishop by the chapter, in defiance of Philip's opposing mandate, and where he was notoriously collecting all his strength to aid the efforts of Jacqueline and her friends: thence to the Zuyder Zee, on which William de Brederode's fleet rode proudly with Jacqueline's flag unfurled,

was the wily countess's promptly traced route of flight. Van Monfoort saw its propriety; and he fixed on Friesland as the term of his projected retreat, till some general rally might be made of the scattered partisans of freedom.

Thousands of the inhabitants of Amersfort accompanied the old countess, as she left the place in her horse-litter, escorted by the whole of Van Monfoort's brave garrison. She moved away like the sovereign lady of the land, leading her hapless tribes into the exile that was to save them from slavery, while it insured them ruin; and as the wildly picturesque procession straggled on in one direction, Jacqueline, the real mistress of all, who reigned not only by the rules of succession but by the right of the people's love, stole away, as it were, in another, without even the appearance of retinue or power, so soothing to ruined greatness, even when it is a mockery and a jest.

CHAPTER VI.

Our readers remember the castle of Eversdyke? If so, we shall not do them the unkindness to repeat its description. If they have forgotten the former sketch of that marked feature on the face of South-Beveland scenery, we must beg them to turn back to one of those early chapters in which it is noticed; and we now entreat their company to a second visit to the sadly altered scene. How animated, how joyous was the day, when Vrank Van Borselen, after years of absence, returned to fill with surprised delight the whole circle of family connexions and home-feelings! What groups of pleasure were lightened by the golden sun, that glowed in its rich setting of crimson and purple clouds! How the rude accessories of feudality were imbued with a softness, caught from the sympathy of social bliss! A very few brief months had wholly effaced these impressions. Joy, hope, and sunshine had vanished from the scene. The warm beams of autumn no longer gave a flush to the outer walls, or glowed in the mellow tints of the scant foliage around. And the discomfort that congealed each source of joy within, was in unison

with the frozen brooks and snow-covered plains, and the chill that penetrated the heart of external nature.

In the very chamber, and in the same position in which our readers first saw Vrouwe Bona Van Borselen, she sat on the morning following the battle of Brouwershaven. She looked out towards the sea, which was no more gemmed with the diamond sparks of a September sunset, but which now roughly dashed over the pier at the castle's base, each wave rising like a rampant sea-horse, shaking fiercely its froth-crested mane. This was the sole symptom of the ocean visible through the thick fog which hung, as was most usual, on the shore. There was no possibility of discovering a boat a cable's length from the strand. Yet Vrouwe Bona long continued to look out, and the expression of her eyes seemed to pierce beyond the verge of visual bounds. Her head was frequently protruded from the narrow casement, in anxious solicitude; and when the sharp air forced her, from time to time, to draw back, it was only for so long as was required to re-adjust her mantle and hood, of crimson camlet lined with martin skins, a present from her kinsman Siccon Syarda, the chief of the Friesland Schieringers.

The cause of Vrouwe Bona's inquietude needs not to be told. A faithful wife and fond mother, whose husband and son were at the wars, could scarcely feel less, or prove her feelings more strongly. It was not that she talked loudly. Her thoughts were too much concentrated for speech; but her self-communings had all the eloquence of the heart's best affections, mingled with a mysterious forewarning of ill, and the growing strength of a character which had never known its own power. That some calamity was to fall on the house of Borselen had become a fixed conviction of her mind, ever since the hour of Vrank's sudden departure from Eversdyke. The rapture caused by his short visit was, to her superstition, like the lightning before death — the expiring gleam of that lamp of domestic happiness, which she had watched as intently as some vestal priestess of old, whose vigils were inspired by fanaticism mixed with fear.

Sternness was not the natural feature of Vrouwe Bona's

disposition; but she had caught enough of it from the reflection of her husband's character and the habit of the times to cause her commands, during Heer Borselen's absence, to be implicitly observed. To be left undisturbed was the amount of her orders for several days past. The household, now reduced to the old seneschal, the children's duenna, and a few serving-maids, had rigidly observed her wishes. The usual discipline of the family prevailed more particularly at this period, and a deep and unsocial gloom pervaded the castle. The very children caught its influence, and not a laugh, nor a whisper of merriment broke the solitude in which Vrouwe Bona's dignity awaited the confirmation of her evil bodings.

While she still gazed out, in rigid preparation for some sight or sound of ill, the splash of oars was distinctly borne to her ear, in the interval between the bounding of the waves, as before described, in sad-sounding breakers over the pier. The anxious woman's heart throbbed high in her breast; her breath was, for a moment, suspended; and while her eyes strained more strongly still towards the beach, she dimly saw a figure breaking through the mist, like some apparition floating in the vague imagining of a dream. A moment more brought forth its terrible reality. It was Oost, the dyke-digger, in the same wild habiliments which he had worn during the conflict of the preceding day, his dress still disfigured with the bloody marks, which he had but imperfectly washed from his hands and his furrowed face. The hoar-frost had settled on his frouzed and matted hair. His weather-beaten features wore a more desperate expression than ever. There was an awful energy in his air, as he stalked towards the castle gate, with eyes keenly darting towards the open casement, while one hand grasped his rarely abandoned weapon, and the other held firmly the folds of a mantle, which covered some heavy object, borne on his left shoulder.

The woman who acted as porter at the gate — for every man, capable of marching and wielding arms, was gone to battle — shrunk back with dread into her nook at sight of Oost's appalling form and look. The bandogs in the fosse, with whom his own was chained up, sent forth a plaintive

howl, in tune with the whine of recognition uttered by the latter, as the free Frison crossed the draw-bridge, and cast a passing glance at his shaggy favourite below. But even that object of his deep regard could not arrest his step, nor draw forth one word from his compressed lips. As he mounted the upper corridor, having passed the untenanted hall, he met the old and unwieldy seneschal, who putting aside the grey locks that shaded his brows, placed himself right in the middle of the passage, to know by whom and on what authority, the strict order of etiquette was violated.

"Ah! Mynheer Oost, the dyke-digger!" said he, as he recognised the unceremonious visitor — "the most welcome of new comers to the hall of Eversdyke! The heart of the good Vrouwe, our noble and gracious mistress, will rejoice at thy presence, for she waits for the news thou bringest. But softly, softly, friend Oost, whither goest thou so fast? Halt, I prithee, old hunter of the woods! Thou must not pass farther, till I duly announce thee to my Vrouwe. — Stand fast! Thou must not force thy way."

As the old functionary spoke these words, he placed himself athwart the corridor, with open arms; and his bulky person very nearly filled the narrow pass, in a manner to force Oost to the alternative of overthrowing him on the floor, or of stopping to hold a parley. He chose the latter measure.

"Grey-headed servitor of the house of Borselen, faithful follower of its fate, sit thee down at rest, and oppose me not!" said Oost, in a tone of harsh solemnity, that filled the seneschal with unwonted awe. Yet he was not to be so easily turned out of the long-followed channel of official form.

"Good Oost, thy looks are formidable, and thy speech imposing — but thou canst not pass till the pleasure of my Vrouwe is spoken.

"Her *pleasure*, old man! I carry my warrant to enter her most holy sanctuary. — Stand by, and let me pass!"

"I tell thee no warrant of living man — nought but that of the chieftain's own hand can break through Vrouwe Bona's orders for privacy from all intrusion — so rest thee,

rest thee awhile, good Oost, till I speak thy name into her ear, and learn if she find thy visit fitting."

Oost placed his tourquois against the wall, and, with giant gentleness, grasped the seneschal's arm, which he raised on a level with his own breast, and placed it under the mantle that covered his burden.

"No warrant of living man — the chieftain's own hand, saidst thou?" exclaimed he, in a deep thrilling whisper. — "Here, then, is my passport!"

"The saints be my speed! what horror is that!" cried the seneschal, recoiling from the object he had involuntarily touched.

"I may now pass on?" said Oost, in a tone of gloomy depth. The old man waved his hand in silent assent, for not a word could pass his chattering teeth, as he sunk on his oaken stool, with fixed eye and shuddering frame, as though palsy or convulsion had suddenly seised him. Oost said no more, but held on his course till he reached the door of the well-known chamber, from the casement of which he had seen Vrouwe Bona's anxious and care-worn countenance.

He undid the clumsy fastening, pushed open the door, and entered. Vrouwe Bona was standing in the middle of the room, her strained looks fixed on the fearful object, whose approach she advanced so far to meet. She thought not, as of old, of the dignity of position, nor arrangement of dress. She stood up to meet a heavy blow; and the naked grandeur of natural feeling scorned the false drapery of artificial forms.

"Come forward, faithful friend — speak! I am prepared for the worst — thy tidings are already told in that fearful look! What bearest thou there?" said she, in the boldly expressive idiom of her native land.

Oost hesitated as he strove to speak, and faltered as he would have advanced. His rough nature was overpowered by her tone and look of marble despair.

"On thy fealty, and thy love for me and mine, I conjure, I command thee to tell me all! The bow is bent to the utmost — 'twill snap in twain if held longer on the stretch!"

With these words the suffering woman placed her hands upon her heart, as if to repress some more than common pang.

"Need I tell the fiat of fate?" exclaimed Oost, with unwonted pathos of tone. "Does not the dead speak with the tongueless voice? Is not the stiffened corpse more eloquent than words?" and as he pronounced the fearful confirmation of every superstitious forewarning, he laid his mantle-covered load on the stone-table that occupied the middle of the room. He then stood, like some priest or augur at a sacrifice, with his hand on the concealed object, as though he muttered some prayer or incantation, before he unveiled the mystery of the reeking victim which lay beneath his grasp.

The glazed eyes of the wife and mother followed every movement of his hand and lip, seeming to read the meaning of each gesture and inspoken phrase.

After a pause of some moments, he said — "The benison for the slain — the ban for the destroyer — the withering curse for the betrayer, are gone up to my father's Gods! Bona of Ilst, art thou ready? shall I uncover the body?"

An upward motion of Vrouwe Bona's hand gave the signal of assent; but as Oost prepared to obey, and while he held a fold of the mantle in his hand, she felt a rush of the heart's sickness in her bosom's depth, and with an imploring look for delay, she nervously grasped his arm. He paused awhile, and the muscles of her face writhed with emotion, while she exclaimed in a scarce articulate voice —

"Is it my son?"

"Vrank Van Borselen, Lord of Eversdyke, St. Martyn's-dyke, and Ilst, lives yet in honour and victory," was the firmly-spoken reply.

These words acted like a spell. The bound-up floods of feeling were let loose — the tight-strained chords of sensibility unstrung. Heart, limbs, and senses recovered their power alike, and the rush of the mother's transport — the first of womanly emotions — overpowered all others for awhile. Vrouwe Bona sunk on her knees beside the table on which the husband's stiffened corpse lay clotted with frozen blood, and ere she ventured to lift the covering,

she offered a deep outpouring of thanks to Heaven for the safety of her beloved son.

"Praise to the saints!" exclaimed she, in impassioned energy, and in language that seemed to rise as her nature was elevated by the force of deep feeling; "my boy is safe! — my glorious boy — my best beloved Vrank — my pride, my blessing! Long, long may he live in virtue and fame — the honour of his race, the upholder of their renown! Oh, my heart, my heart, what a weight is removed from off thee now. Thou hadst broken quite, had the shaft of death fallen there. — What woe is to be compared — what anguish is not as bliss to that of the parents who outlive their child! Oh, these warm tears are tears of joy and gratitude, which gush forth unbidden and resistless! He is safe! Praise be to God! — And now!" and at these words she rose up, her tall figure growing more erect with every preceding phrase, "now be for ever dashed aside the mother's weakness, and suppressed the mother's joy! Now let my heart grow stern, and my griefs be congealed, and my vengeance gain strength! Deep sorrow and high deeds befit the widow of the noble, the brave Van Borselen. Oost, raise the mantle, that I may gaze on the face of the dead!"

This order was obeyed. The disfigured body of Floris Van Borselen, in the same state in which it was borne from the battle-field, lay exposed to the stern gaze of the widowed dame. As Oost held the cloak like a canopy above it, she looked long and minutely on the convulsed features, and seemed to sound the depths of expiring hatred so terribly marked in the dead man's lip and brow, and to measure the length of the vengeance, which was now the foremost feeling of her own mind. A mixture of womanly tenderness no doubt blended with this, and qualified its violence. The husband of her youth, the father of her children, could not lie gashed and lifeless before her, without inspiring a deep degree of emotion. But she could scarcely be said ever to have loved her lord, for there was that in him with which love could not coalesce. She had considered him more as a master than a mate. She had married him quite in girlhood, when he was no

longer a youth, at the commands of parents, not by the dictates of young affection. She had wept on her wedding day, not tears of nervous delight, whose sources lie in the heart's sympathies, but of bitter grief, at the tyranny which joined her to one in common with whom her heart had no throb. The unbending of his passion for her person had contained no charms for her; while the harshness with which he repressed her fits of girlish gaiety, and frowned down the laugh that at times burst from her surcharged breast, seemed to smother the kindly weakness which she yearned to cultivate. He was always, in short, an object of fear and of reverence. She considered herself an appendage to, rather than a part of him. He never deigned to consult her, and had not even the tact to soothe her self-love by a feigned respect. But with all this she ripened into womanhood by his side as he sank into age. She caught his tone of thought and expression; his habits and his prejudices grew hers by degrees; and she found her thoughts and feelings insensibly in light or shade, warmed or chilled, verdant or withering, in his influence, as a satellite is affected by the varying phases of the planet round which it revolves.

"Oost!" said she, after having contemplated the corpse till a shudder of awe crept through her, "I must now do all that becomes a lorn matron towards her slaughtered lord. And first tell me who did this noble knight to death?"

"Truly, my gracious lady, that were hard to tell. These several wounds were dealt in the battle's heat. The hands which sped the shaft or sprung the match-lock are unknown to me."

"And must Floris Van Borselen sink to the grave unavenged?"

"The gods of Friesland forefend! already his fall is paid for by rich and noble blood. The Hoeks are almost to a man destroyed. Zegher Van Hemsted is no more."

"Thanks be to Heaven! the warrior's ghost may rest in peace!"

"Rest!" cried Oost in a voice of reproach and fury— "no, no! Bona of Ilst — no rest nor peace can the shade

of the warrior know, till vengeance deep and deadly is done on his betrayer. The red hand of the foe is cramped in death — the hot blood of those who struck his life is spilled on the plain and mingled with his own — but the pale dastard who held back relief, whose blighting treachery led to this sacrifice, yet lives — lives for thy lord's atonement, and for our revenge!"

"Son of Radbold, thy words thrill through me, like the storm-gust that shakes the forest. Name the recreant."

"William le Begue."

"It seems as though I have heard that name ere now —who is he?"

"A minion of Duke Philip — the foul channel through which the current of his princely command is made to run. 'Twas he who doomed your husband, your son, the vassals of Eversdyke, the flower of Kabblejaw chivalry to one sweeping ruin, to which the noble Floris was the first and greatest victim."

"Oost, we must seek out the traitor and deal him his reward!"

"Lady, that imploring glance, that look of fire is needless to spur me on. The wretch is already dogged to his retreat — I tracked him as a hunter tracks the quarry's steps — through snow and frost, the moon-lit mist and midnight gloom — he is within reach — he lives at our *mercy!*"

A curl of vindictive mockery was on the dyke-digger's lip as he pronounced the last word. Vrouwe Bona's responding smile was scarce less terrible.

"'Tis enough!" cried she, "even as I have in childhood's frolics followed thy faithful guiding through the rocky shores and wood-paths of my native land — even as my son has trusted to thee in the forest depths of Drent — so do I now yield myself to the leading which will bring me to the goal of my vengeance."

"Come, then, lady, quickly, silently, and alone."

"What! even now? — Art sure of thy means? Wantest thou no aid?"

"If I did, 'tis not to be found here — but no, lady —

this right arm is sufficient for the deed, which you must witness, and I alone may do."

"Lead me, then, as thou wilt! But first let Heaven hear my vow in this most awful hour. By this body, on which I thus place my open palm—by the soul of him who is no more—by his unappeased ghost I swear, that never food shall enter my lips, that never sleep shall close my eyes, that hunger shall gnaw and thirst parch up my worn-out frame, till he that has proved traitor to my lord lies dead before me! nor shall this body rest in the cold tomb—but rather rot above earth till legioned worms swarm in the putrid air, and the time-worn walls grow rank in its unburied odour—before the corpse of the betrayer is as fit for the grave as that of him who was betrayed! Cover the body now, and away!"

The bloody cloak, fit pall for a dead warrior, was once more spread upon the outstretched body. And the excited widow left the mortal remains of her lord, unwatched and unwailed, while she hurried to perform the sacrifice harsh to woman's nature, and only forced on her by a barbarian sense of duty. She made Oost quit the chamber first. She closed the door herself, and held in her own keeping the huge key which was not made for lady's hands. Oost, having recovered his tourquois, led the way from the castle's gates. Vrouwe Bona followed close, wrapped in her furred mantle, and scorning other preparation for her expedition. As the old seneschal saw her approach the hall he bowed down his hoary head with respect, and a horrid misgiving of the worst, of which he had, however, no positive evidence. His mistress whispered one sentence of command in his ear.

"No one, so may the saints and martyrs be the saving of my soul!" was his solemn reply.

"'Tis good!" said Vrouwe Bona; and quickly and silently passing by the portress, she soon disappeared with her gigantic conductor, in the mist which thickened as the day grew old, as if to wrap their object in a secrecy as profound as it was desperate.

The seneschal and the portress looked around and listened long. But they saw nor heard no sign or sound

of the departed pair. How Oost had come, or whither he had conveyed their mistress, they did not dare to conjecture. Supernatural terror paralysed their faculties of intellect as well as sense. At length driven by the cold to their respective places of shelter, the portress sought her nook; and the seneschal retired to the broken repose of his watching stool, which he removed, with the portable hearth that held his turf fire, close to the door of the room in which the dead body lay. Why his mistress had ordered him to watch at that post, and to let no living thing presume to approach it till her return, he did not venture to guess. But the icy chill that curled his blood when Oost placed his hand under the cloak, was a hint that might have solved the mystery, had not fear impelled him to suppress every thought that led to further speculation.

The day went dismally and heavily on. The evening came in dim succession; but just as night set in, the moon standing high above the sea, the whole atmosphere became bright and clear, by one of those sudden shiftings of the capricious climate, and the seneschal and the portress looked out in renewed expectation of their mistress's return, but in vain. No boat appeared in the sea, no horse approached by land; and the old man resumed his awful post and watch, at the door which he knew to enclose a mystery, the nature of which he strove to shut out from his terror-stricken mind. It was the depth of the dark night ere he was really disturbed from the broken snatches of sleep, from which, however, he had over and over started in ideal interruptions.

Vrouwe Bona had fearlessly trusted herself and her fortunes to the little skiff in which Oost had reached the shore of South Beveland. This daughter of a hardy race of amphibious freebooters, such as were the nobles of Friesland in those remote days, made light of her sufferings, from cold and damp in the unsheltered boat. She occupied the stern, and held the helm, while her half-savage pilot, equally at home on wave or woodland, mariner and hunter alike, sat midships on the fragile skiff, and trimmed his sail or plied his oar as occasion required, with a skill and activity that would have inspired confidence in

a weaker mind than Vrouwe Bona's, and in greater danger than she ran. Yet these were not slight. The thick fog prevented all possibility of Oost's seeing his way through the shallows, which he navigated solely from his knowledge of the currents of these narrow seas. Had his boat struck on a sand-bank, or, by a very probable chance, fallen into the hands of some roving squadron of the enemy, destruction had been certain, for the waves had not been more merciless towards sex or age than the enraged remnants of the defeated Hoeks. But revenge was the unerring compass which guided the free Frison through the pathless waters, and the evil star of William le Begue threw its light on his destroyer's track.

Immediately after the victory of the preceding day, Duke Philip, with considerate care, had paid prompt attention to the wants and wishes of all whom he commanded. The warriors who had fought were not alone provided for with all possible despatch, but the ministers who counselled and the priests who prayed were scrupulously attended to. Among the two latter classes, William le Begue and Zweder Van Culemburg held a high place. The infirmities of the one and the sensuality of the other, required shelter and refreshment; but these enjoyments were not easily procured in the close vicinity of the battle field, which was overrun by the ill-disciplined and hungry survivors. The only unoccupied place within a moderate distance, combining the requisite accommodations, was a lone house on the southern point of the isle of Schowen, which had been abandoned by its master, a Hoek, who fell in the battle. This retreat was suggested as the fittest for the two friends, where they might quietly wait for a few days, till the conqueror's movements told them how to regulate their own.

The preparations for departure were few. A boat was procured, as the easiest and quickest mode of conveyance, and two stout fishermen undertook its safe guiding, coast-ways, along the island. The minister and the bishop embarked, with a couple of attendants and some provisions, and they blindly rejoiced in the apparent good fortune

that allowed of their escape from the turmoils of military confusion.

"A good supper, my Lord Governor, a night's rest, and a couple of days' comfort in the snug quarters of this defunct rebel, will repay us for all past privations," said the selfish and sensual Van Culemburg, with his peculiar chuckle, as he and his companion settled themselves as much as possible at their ease in the fishing-boat, and while their attendants wrapped their furred mantles around them. Whether it was from an incipient ague, the natural consequence of long exposure to cold and wet, or instinctive terror, we must be left to conjecture, but sure it is that the chattering of William le Begue's few remaining teeth was the only reply to the ex-bishop's comforting speech. His eyes were the while fixedly slantingly under his cunning brow at the figure of Oost, the dyke-digger, who stood close by on the strand.

This indefatigable friend and untiring enemy had not for one moment lost sight of his double purpose — to secure the dead body of his lord and leader, and to watch the movements of him to whom he attributed his fall. He had obtained Vrank's consent to convey his father's remains to the paternal mansion, for the young chief, fully occupied with his soldiers, and disabled by his wound, knew that the sacred duty could to no one be so safely confided. Oost had accordingly secured a little boat; and as soon as those whom he resolved to follow had set sail, he too embarked, and kept close in their wake, sufficiently behind to be undiscovered, and only guided by the frothy track of their keel, or the voices of the sailors or servants, loudly conversing on the fluctuations of the bloody fight.

The first boat's destination was reached ere the moon had sunk. Oost heard the passengers disembark, and the boatmen preparing for their return to Brouwershaven. He stood out a little from shore till the coast was quite clear. Then approaching, he accurately marked the spot, and took due note of the lonely house, which was the refuge of him he had doomed to destruction. By the time his observation was complete the moon was down, and he then resumed his voyage in the stillness and gloom of night and sea, with

the awful freight of death, and nought to soothe and nourish him the while but the fierce broodings of a mind bent on a savage deed. His arrival at Eversdyke, in spite of all impediments of wind and fog, we have described; and we now return to him and the widowed Vrouwe Bona, in the solitude of the mist and the pursuance of their moody purpose.

The live-long day did the voyagers sail on, following the course of currents and counter-currents, as suited the perilous circumstances of their passage. There were many points of land and shoal to avoid and stand clear of; and even when the coast of Schowen was neared, as Oost was aware of from unerring signs, they dared not at once draw near and land, lest suspicions might arise among those with whom they were in alliance and seeming amity. During this dismal day but little was spoken between the two confederates. Some questions, briefly put and answered, on the particulars of the battle, of Van Borselen's death, Le Begue's treachery, and Vrank's safety, were the sole materials of the unsocial colloquy. During almost the whole period Vrouwe Bona kept her eyes fixed on the waves, as though she were intent on the examination of marine phenomena, of whose nature she was nevertheless unconscious, while she but fathomed in reality the depths of her own mind. Oost meantime kept his looks divided between the heavens and the sea, watching in the first for some glimpse of sunshine by which he might direct his course more surely, and in the other for those objects of avoidance on which his own and his companion's safety depended.

When night had fairly set in, and the moon, still overcast with vapours, favoured their design, they quitted the little boat which lay moored on the strand, and with silent steps betook themselves to their purpose. They approached the house, from one casement of which a light glimmered down, and another was discovered through the crevices of the door beaming within the entrance hall. Every thing seemed framed by fate for the success of the plot. It was a night for murder; without gloom enough to excite suspicion, or brightness to lead to detection — but sufficiently

calm and clear to lull the victim in security, and allow the executioner to escape.

Oost and Vrouwe Bona reached the enclosed court in front of the house, and they found the door open. They did not stop with the cautious alarm of common assassins, lest their coming might be prepared for, but boldly entered the house. A lamp stood on a table which was spread with provisions and wine; and beside a blazing fire sat a serving-man, fast asleep, and with ample evidence of excess in his bloated features, and the dislocated air of neck and limb peculiar to the slumber of drunkenness. Oost cast a quick glance round the hall, then stepped quickly close to the helpless wretch, raised his club in both hands, and was about to let fall the crushing stroke of death, when the sound of a low-chuckling laugh from above stairs caused him to pause, still holding his fearful weapon high over the head of the sleeper. The lapse of a moment was sufficient to bring a flow of mercy to Vrouwe Bona's heart. She whispered a command to her terrible companion to spare the wretch; and he, promptly calculating the advantages of an instant ascent to the chamber, from which he heard Bishop Zweder's well-remembered voice, turned instantly away, and followed by the Vrouwe, he strode up the short and narrow staircase which led to a gallery above.

A door lay half-open just opposite the landing-place. Oost saw by its position that it was that of the room whence the light beamed out on the court-yard. He was convinced that it contained the object of his search. During the short pause to give his companion time to reach the gallery, she heard the following phrases in the only language spoken by Le Begue, and of which she just knew enough to comprehend imperfectly its meaning.

"Would that Jacques were come back with the boat or litter! I like not this lonely place — phantoms seem to dance before me — that Kabblejaw chieftain, that savage Frison, are always present to my sight."

"Hut, tut, governor!" replied Zweder with a reassuring chuckle, which did not, however, sound quite natural. "Fancy, pure fancy. One is certainly dead,

and perhaps the other. All is safe here, and we may every minute expect back the varlet with means of removal."

"Oost!" whispered the Vrouwe, "there is no time to lose. Be quick — do the deed!"

A desperate plunge into the room was the echo to this command; and a feeble shriek of terror told the effect produced by the horrid apparition on the nerves of the sick man. Zweder was struck dumb with terror, and seemed as though apoplexy had smote him, for he fell back in the chair which he occupied beside the bed containing his ill-starred companion. A table covered with the materials of a good repast was close by, and the lamp which burned on it, gleamed on the ghastly figure of Le Begue, as he raised his skinny arms and open hands, and sent forth desperate supplications for mercy. Oost neither understood his words nor heeded his gestures. He once more uplifted his tourquois and prepared to strike, when Vrouwe Bona again interposed between him and his destined victim — but not now for mercy's sake!

"Son of Radbold!" exclaimed she, "woulds't thou stain a warrior's weapon in the blood of a thing like that?"

Oost felt the appeal, and throwing the club aside, he darted furiously on the prostrate man, while the relentless widow stood by unmoved, and the paralysed churchman lay half senseless in his chair; the pillows and coverings of the bed became, in the hands of the giant Frison, terribly effective instruments of the bloodless murder. Not a word was spoken — not a struggle evident — the smothered wretch was dead, ere the spirit might have been thought warned for its eternal flight.

Never was so deep a tragedy so quickly or so coolly perpetrated. There was no action, no declamation, no passion. It had none of the imposing extravagance of romance, but all the cold reality of business. In less time than might seem meet for the arrangement of its plot, the whole was over. Vrouwe Bona and Oost retired from the chamber, descended the stairs, passed through the hall and from the outer door, regained their boat, and set sail with a propitious breeze and a bright beam of moonlight, which darted through the mist, as if Heaven had smiled on their

savage act. They had scarcely cleared the shore when the expected servant returned with a reinforcement of men and a litter, which served to bear back the lifeless body to the head-quarters of the duke and the army.

The horror and surprise occasioned by the spectacle above stairs may be imagined. The drunken servant roused from his sleep, vehemently swore that no living being had entered the hall, and Zweder Van Culemburg recovering from his fit, believed he had been the sport of some horrid dream. The corpse showed no marks of violence. Belief was puzzled; truth confused, tradition left to tell what tale it best might imagine; and history most probably made, as it is too often, the vehicle of fable, while assuming the character of fact.

CHAPTER VII.

The progress of Jacqueline and her convoy from Amersfort to Antwerp afforded no circumstances of adventure of equal interest to the motives and object of the enterprise. She hurried on so rapidly, that no time was given for more than mere flying conjecture; and she travelled in such strict incognito, and even in such personal concealment, that none of her own loyal subjects at the several stopping-places knew to whom they furnished lodgings and refreshment; and when she reached the territories she had been wont to look on as jointly hers, she used still greater precautions against discovery. The dangerous illness and hourly expected demise of Duke John was the topic of conversation and conjecture with all whom they came in contact with; and the subject was too engrossing to allow time for suspicion as to who the travellers might be. Lewis of Hainault managed all the arrangements of the journey; and nought occurred to interrupt his unfortunate sister's solemn tone of preparation for the future, or the strain of melancholy thought into which her mind at times so irresistibly relapsed.

We must, however, guard our readers against imagining Jacqueline to have then resembled those heart-broken heroines, of either fiction or real life, whose anguish is uncontrolled by any assuaging power. That she loved Vrank Van Borselen was true, and she deeply deplored his supposed death. But she had known him too little, and under circumstances too painful to all her proud and impassioned feelings, to have become altogether bound up in his destiny, or wholly dependent on his fate. We must even admit that in the midst of her sorrow there was a counteracting sentiment of consolation, that she had not absolutely disgraced her name and station, by any irrecoverable advance towards one who had avowed his repugnance to her cause, and all but condemned her character. She rather rejoiced — but as the chastened spirit rejoiceth in penance and pain — that she had escaped the temptation which threatened such degrading, yet delicious ruin. Viewing Van Borselen in his true light of a political enemy, her junior in years, and inferior in rank, she at times felt that she owed gratitude to Heaven for having saved her from so unsuiting a connexion, and she strove to put up thanksgiving, but the pious fraud was detected and suppressed in her heart, even before her lips could utter it.

"No," thought she, "I cannot thank Heaven for this suffering, but I will bear it without complaint. I cannot believe it to be for the best — but I will make the best of it!" a short sentence, which perhaps combines all that may be expected, by either religion or philosophy.

The travellers reached Mechlin without impediment, and Jacqueline thus found herself once more in the territory of which she had for years been the acknowledged mistress. But now she seemed everywhere a stranger; exiled from Holland by an invading usurper, she could but view herself as an alien and intruder in Brabant. Ere her chagrin at this double indignity had time to ripen into indignation — the natural sequel in a proud mind — a still worse degradation awaited her. The village of Vilvorde was in sight; the two outriders of the little cavalcade had almost reached its nearest extremity; and Jacqueline and Benina had readjusted their hoods for the purpose of per-

fect concealment, when a mounted officer approached, reined up his steed, and addressed the courier who had been the bearer of the summons, on which the countess had so promptly — perhaps so inconsiderately acted. The latter of those men, after some suppressed exclamations of surprise at what was whispered him, quickly explained to her the purport of the new message, which was that the Duke of Brabant anxiously expected her arrival in the castle of Vilvorde, (the turrets of which were close in view,) having come thus far for the purpose of meeting her.

At this news Jacqueline involuntarily stopped her palfrey. A pang of suspicion seized her. She felt not for herself; but an instant dread overpowered her, lest she had committed in some way — how, she could not stop to consider — her brother and her friend, both of them peculiarly obnoxious to the hatred of Duke John. Lewis and Benina seemed at the same moment to see the sudden light of the danger, to which they had hitherto been blind, the first from a sanguine indifference to risks, the latter from the stupor of sorrow, and both from that absorbing attachment to her they followed, which made them insensible to any peril, shared in common with her.

"Meet me at Vilvorde! why, how is this, sir?" exclaimed Jacqueline. "Can your dying master, my unhappy cousin, be so suddenly revived, as to allow of this removal? You gave note, methinks, that he lay at death's door in Brussels?"

"Noble lady," replied the first messenger, "I told my bidding like a trusty envoy, in strict duty to him who sent me."

"Meet me at Vilvorde! This is passing strange! What then is the duke's present state, sir?" said Jacqueline, addressing the last comer.

"In sooth, Madam, 'tis of a mixed and hard-to-be defined nature. Some sorrow, much rejoicing, gratitude for the goods in hand, hope for the future, and, above all things, infinite pleasure that your gracious highness is so near to his brotherly embrace."

"Brotherly embrace!" said Jacqueline; then, turning to Lewis, she added, "What think you of this? Are we betrayed?"

"Fair sister," replied he, "it is now too late for thought. If betrayed, may God's curse and mine light on the betrayer! But whether or no, we have now only to bear bravely whatever befals. Look yonder!"

The objects to which he pointed were nothing less than a troop of armed cavaliers, who now appeared on the high road, coming from two narrow lanes which flanked the chateau.

"Here comes his highness' body-guard to do honour to you, gracious Madam," said the officer with an ill-repressed smile, its malignant expression being insolently reflected by the other messenger.

"On, on to the castle!" exclaimed Jacqueline, in her natural tone of prompt authority. "Let what may be meant me, I shall never be marched a prisoner to the halls where I have been wont to command and be obeyed."

With these words she pressed her palfrey to a gallop, and passed so rapidly up the nearest lane that the astonished cavaliers composing the guard were thrown into confusion, and could hardly imagine in the intrepid mien and haughtly look of the princess, aught else than the triumph of victory and conquest. While they recovered from their surprise and disorder, and followed the little cavalcade that had swept past, endeavouring to understand the real facts of Jacqueline's situation from the messenger who had accompanied her from Amersfort, she and her attendants had reached the great entrance of the castle court. The porters who stood by, threw back the broad gates, in the usual style of obsequious humility with which they had been accustomed to receive their duchess, but it was now the effect of her commanding air, rather than of their spontaneous welcoming.

Jacqueline, assisted by her brother, quickly dismounted from her palfrey, and addressing the first of several armed officers of the ducal household who stood under the entrance-porch, she proudly desired to be conducted to the duke. An interchange of astonished looks passed between the courtiers; but on the command being repeated in a still more determined tone, one stammeringly replied,—

"Madam—certainly—I am in attendance to conduct

you — but — permit me, Madam — your imperious bearing, so different ——"

"Quick, Sir Chamberlain, if you value your rod of office — lead me at once to his highness's presence — or answer the delay at your peril!"

The chamberlain attempted no further obstacle, but led the way in low-bent courtesy towards the state-chamber. Jacqueline took her brother's arm, and followed with a firm step, (Benina close behind, and her two varlets bringing up the procession,) through files of halberdiers and serving-men, who all seemed lost in wonder at the unexpected scene. Lewis of Hainault, naturally careless of consequences, relying on his sister's superior mind, took in this instance his tone from her. He bore onward, with a look of contemptuous defiance, closely clasping Jacqueline's arm under one of his, and the other supporting his sword, which he was ever ready to draw without calculation as to its chances. Benina, in all things the devoted dependent on her mistress, followed now in this movement of her fast-declining greatness, as shadows follow the form which move towards the setting-sun.

At the door of the state-chamber, which was guarded by two men at arms, the chamberlain seemed again disposed to hesitate, but Jacqueline, in her highest tone and air, exclaimed,—

"Open wide those doors and show me to the presence of the duke!"

The courtier obeyed electrically — the door flew back — and his confused voice muttered imperfectly the announcement of the visitor.

"Her highness the duchess — the countess, I should say, Madame Jacqueline of Bavaria, Holland, Hainault, —and Brabant," was on the verge of his lips, but a glance from the eye of the chief personage within the chamber, reproved his first slip, and sternly looked a prohibition of a second.

"Let the Countess of Holland and Hainault advance!" said Philip de St. Pol, for it was he that filled the chair of honour, on the high-raised platform that supported the throne. He was surrounded by many of the usual officers

of state, and the trappings of feudal sovereignty. He wore a frown of imperious despotism on his brow; and a black scarf was slung across his richly-clad body. A misgiving fluttered Jacqueline's proud heart, and she was conscious of the chill upon her fading cheek. But she was not cast down, nor did her spirit sink one note below the pitch to which she had, within the last quarter of an hour, wound it up.

"What mockery of state is this?" exclaimed she, with a haughty glance round the chamber. "Philip de St. Pol in the chair of government? Where, then, is the Duke of Brabant?"

"Here, most meek and gentle dame, at your good service, and to execute justice on all usurpers and adulterers — no matter of which sex, or of what condition!" answered St. Pol, at the same moment taking the ducal crown from an attendant noble, and placing it on his head.

"Is this indeed so? Is then John of Brabant no more?" asked Jacqueline, with a voice faintly faltering, and eyes filling up, but from far different emotions than any merely personal, the grossness of St. Pol even having failed to affect her.

"My unfortunate brother, more unfortunate in having been your husband, is gone at length to his heavenly reward, victim to your cruel abandonment, and his too great sensibility."

"By Heavens, Philip!" said young Lewis, "if it were not too indecorous in such a case, I could laugh outright at your mummery, as I hold your hypocrisy in scorn, and long to chastise your insolence."

"Hold, gentlemen, on your allegiance!"—

"Forbear, forbear, Lewis, as thou lovest me!"—

Were the simultaneous entreaties of St. Pol and Jacqueline, the one addressing his surrounding satellites; the other, her rashly impetuous brother. The angry nobles were appeased by the orders of their chief, and Lewis of Hainault obeyed the voice that was for him that of an oracle.

"Lewis!" resumed St. Pol; "but that thy blood owns one branch of the source from which mine flows, I

would not save it now from the blades that thy treasonous words call from their scabbards. Thy youth, too, pleads pardon for the folly which dubs thee the champion of that woman's crimes."

"Alas! how the heats of power ripen the fruit of a bad heart!" said Jacqueline. "Such was not thy language, Philip, ere that coronet came within thy reach, when thy misguided brother drove me to throw myself on thy championship, and I was by thee proclaimed as innocent as I was injured."

"Madam, I am not here to bandy words, nor can the dignity of the Duke of Brabant stoop to retrace the false compassion of the Count of St. Pol. No matter what I once believed you — 'tis enough that I know you now. And that you may know yourself and your true place, I tell you you are here my prisoner, in trust for my well-beloved cousin, Philip of Burgundy, the recent conqueror, by Heaven's grace, as this morning brings me the news, of your usurped possessions, as well as the true heritor of the Earldoms of Holland and Hainault, in the double right of successor to our late uncle, the Bishop of Liege, and of my some hours since deceased brother John, who has to him bequeathed the title acquired by his unlucky marriage with you."

Jacqueline heard this sentence of despotic wrong with a composed dignity of demeanour that filled all present with uncontrollable sentiments of admiration, and caused a lively feeling of uneasiness even in him who had uttered the flagrant decree. After some minutes' pause, during which she looked steadily, not only at St. Pol himself but at the individuals who surrounded him, and having thus read the feelings which affected each, she said with a firm tone —

"Duke Philip — since you are indeed a duke — I have listened to your iniquitous speech, and I see the blush of shame on your cheeks. Nobles of more than one province — for I mark the men of Hainault mixed with those of Brabant — I read your remorse in being the tools of this tyranny. I make ye no reproach. I submit to the will of Heaven. I will not utter a murmur that might raise one sword in a hopeless cause. I am, for a season,

crushed! — I know how to bend to my fate — but its final result is in the keeping of Providence, and I do not despair! No, so help me, Heaven, and the blessed saints, I am too truly innocent to doubt that my righteous cause will triumph still! 'Tis guilt alone that weeps and wails and gnashes teeth, for it has no hope to hold by, either from man or God. But I am still strong in virtuous confidence; and so being, I neither curse yon hypocrite duke, who has meanly and basely thus led me into his toils, nor do I upbraid you, the tools of his usurping treachery. But solemnly protesting in the face of Heaven and this assembly against the injustice of my doom, and proclaiming aloud my inviolable rights to my dominions of Holland and Hainault, of which I am now forcibly despoiled, as well as of my personal freedom, I resign myself to captivity, and only demand to be at once led to my prison."

Before the solemn sincerity of this appeal could produce the effect he dreaded on those nobles whose fealty he was not quite sure of, St. Pol replied —

"Few criminals, Madame Jacqueline, fail to proclaim their innocence and protest against the judgment that condemns and the justice that punishes them. The world knows the value of such futile efforts at imposture. I therefore scorn to answer that part of your appeal. But from one imputation I must free myself, calling witness the noble and loyal men who now surround me. I led you hither by no trick — I have not entrapped you — 'tis Heaven's own hand that has hurried on your destiny. My poor brother, in the last weakness of decay, sent a messenger to call you to him — but this morning nature sunk, and he expired ere your tardy repentance could reach him."

"God pardon him his faults — and you this impious duplicity!" exclaimed Jacqueline.

"And now one word from me, Philip," said Lewis of Hainault, — "how comes it, if you were not privy to this plot to entrap my noble sister, that you are here? Why not at Brussels by the still warm corpse of him whose honours you inherit, and whose faults you feign to justify? Your minion who stopped our way said you came here to *meet* Jacqueline?"

"I am no more bound by the gossip of a subaltern messenger than the prattle of a hotheaded boy. I am here at Vilvorde, in fulfilment of my first duty as chief of the States of Brabant, to take the oaths of installation in my title and sovereignty, and be here proclaimed at the same time that my predecessor's death is publicly made known, pursuant to the immemorial custom of the country, and of a long untainted line, which God grant I may continue."

"Stained now, by St. Paul! in your person, too deep for washing out by all who may succeed you," retorted the passionate youth.

"Treason! treason!" exclaimed several voices — but the new duke rose from his seat and loudly commanded the peace.

"Let the base-born boy rail on!" said he, "he cannot touch my honour more than the foul breath of a stagnant pool may taint the wild flowers on its banks. But to save us all from the scandal of a slanderous tongue, I here pronounce Lewis, Bastard of Hainault, banished from our court and presence to his own castle of Scandœuvre, during our good will and pleasure, from this moment — so be our ordinance obeyed. And for Madame Jacqueline of Bavaria, here present, widow of our late brother and liege Lord John, whose soul Heaven pardon! we now give her up to the due care and custody of our marshal and his familiars, to be removed at once, with her attendant, beyond the bounds of our duchy of Brabant, and handed over to the safe keeping of our well-beloved cousin, Philip Duke of Burgundy and Earl of Flanders, in his good town of Ghent — so be our ordinance obeyed. And now let trumpets sound, and the heralds speak aloud to the people. We are ready for the ceremony of installation, and the proclamation of our title and rights!"

The duke, having uttered these commands, descended the throne, and hurried from the chamber, followed by almost the whole of the assembled nobles, and leaving Jacqueline, Lewis, and Benina, all more or less bewildered by the rapid sentence that had severally condemned them. Benina was quite depressed: Lewis's buoyant temperament and overboiling rage kept him in a state of wild ex-

citement: Jacqueline alone was calm and collected; but her heart sank at the idea of an imprisonment in Flanders, a fate which she had ever considered as the consummation of ill-luck.

"'Tis God's will, brother," said she to Lewis.

"'Tis man's wickedness," replied he, "and, with Heaven's blessing, my strong hold of Scandœuvre shall be once more a furnace, to heat the missiles of unsparing war against this incarnate villainy!"

"Madam, with your good leave, a close litter and an escort is ready to convey you across the frontier," said the marshal.

"Across the frontier!" exclaimed Jacqueline, her blood rushing in a flood of indignation to her face — "What! am I then a banished felon from the territory I have ruled; and durst thou, base traitor, address me as such? Is there no sword to avenge this outrage?"

"Is there *not!*" cried young Lewis, drawing his weapon, which would, in a moment more, have infallibly drank the marshal's life-blood, had not Jacqueline thrown herself on her brother's breast and held back his arm.

"Oh, God, what have I said!" cried she; "what madness urged me to risk this! Lewis, my dear brother, forbear, forbear; I knew not what I said! 'Tis all right and just — let us bow to Heaven's judgment! Down, down, insatiate demon of pride — will nothing ever humble thee? be still, hot blood of royal ancestry — throb not within these bursting veins! 'tis well, 'tis well! come, tyranny, and wrong, and misery — pour all your phials on my devoted head — the pure soul you cannot attaint! to thy sentence, Lewis — to thy banishment, my brother! And we, Benina, to our prison! Marshal, I wait your bidding — lead on!"

A fast embrace, prolonged convulsively on either side, was the signal of separation between brother and sister. She could have spoken, but would not — for she saw his almost suffocating emotion, and was resolved to spare him the disgrace of those tears, which only wanted the utterance of a word to rush in a hot flood from his brimming eyes.

In a very brief space more, Jacqueline and Benina were led away by a by-road towards Alost, in a closely covered litter, impervious to the gaze of the curious; while Lewis of Hainault was conducted to his place of exile, ere it was known beyond the circle of the castle that he was in the country at all. Duke Philip's installation and proclamation went regularly on, without a dissentient voice; and ere night he was established in the palace of his ancestors at Brussels, a sovereign prince — while Jacqueline was lodged in the ancient tower of that of Ghent, a despoiled and destitute prisoner.

CHAPTER VIII.

During two months of dignified disgrace, Jacqueline remained a state prisoner in the old palace of the Earl of Flanders at Ghent. She was tended with all the honour due to her rank, and all the watchfulness called for by the importance attached to her safe-keeping. Her well-known intrepidity and spirit of enterprise made her jailers at first apprehensive of some attempt on her part to elude their vigilance; but the lapse of week after week, without the slightest discovery of such a design, lulled them into security. And so they might have safely remained until death came to relieve her from durance, had an effort at evasion never taken place till it might originate in her own wishes. She had no longer an object to beckon her towards freedom. All beyond the prison walls was a blank. Her world was alone within them, her only possessions, purity and strength of mind; her only wealth, the treasures of deep thought; her best enjoyments the reflections of a clear conscience. Her days and nights were passed in a monotony, that would have been intolerable to a being of her temperament had any stimulus existed in the world from which she was shut out to lead her mind abroad. But Jacqueline, in her youthful prime, freed from all shackles and restraint by the death of one man, and the abandonment of another, and relieved of all cares of government

by the loss of her dominions, felt nothing now of that springy relief, which might be supposed to follow such moral enfranchisement. The fact was, that she had not a particle of selfishness in her disposition, and was consequently dead to all enjoyments that flow from solitude and insulation. Her's was rather a mind that yearned for companionship, even though it brought dependence with it. She made light of the labours of government, which tended to the interests of others associated with her own; and she could have borne cheerfully the cares of life, if borne with a yoke-fellow. But joy was no longer such if it came to her alone, and the wings of pleasure had no brilliancy while fluttering above her single head. She had now sunk into a morbid indifference to the evils, as well as to the enjoyments of life; and, while in that mood, she would have considered it no blessing had her prison gates flown open, and an angel's brightness lighted the path for her escape.

Benina Beyling understood too well this state of feeling to attempt to disturb it by any proposal for evasion, though all her own longings after liberty were excited to the highest degree in a very few days after she and her mistress — for such she still acknowledged her — had entered their splendid place of durance. Jacqueline still had friends, desperately faithful to her cause, and solemnly sworn to effect her freedom or perish in redoubled efforts. The reader who throws a thought back on the various personages of our tale may enumerate several, we think, likely to become prominent in a cause, which to the heroism of chivalry joined the holiness of sentiment. Jacqueline's imprisonment was widely known throughout Europe; and while knighthood execrated the tyranny that caused, enterprise was not idle in plans that might end it.

But of all those who pledged their vows and devoted their being to the accomplishment of Jacqueline's deliverance, there was one who took the lead in those active efforts by which it was to be obtained. He, imbued with the spirit of that attachment which, nourished in secrecy and fed by hopelessness, becomes as desperate in its designs as in its chances, had staked every thing upon one

attempt; and, when all was ripe, he contrived to make known to Benina the extent of his plan, the names of his accomplices, and the means of her own and Jacqueline's performance of their several parts. But for his own identity he afforded no clue. He sufficiently expressed his zeal in the cause, and proved that it was allied with courage and prudence; but in the written communication which conveyed all this, Benina could only read the devotions of an ardent partisan, without any evidence that might denote any one in particular of the several on whom she strove to affix it.

The notion of recovered liberty was dear to Benina. She had youth, friends, and hopes — all that could give strength to so natural a desire; but such was her devotedness to the mistress she so faithfully followed, that she suppressed every one of her own most cherished motives, and submitted to all the privations of lonely confinement, without even the satisfaction of gaining sympathy for the sacrifice. For she did not make known to Jacqueline, even by a repining look or a significant word, the pain she endured in imprisonment or the offers held out for escape. She knew that Jacqueline would have rejected all, in the belief that Vrank Van Borselen was no more. A chance conversation, however, with their keeper's daughter, convinced Benina that the young lord of Eversdyke still survived, and that the teller of the sad story of Brouwershaven had alluded only to the father, but intended no intimation of the fate of the son. Had the latter been Benina's own favoured lover, instead of the object of such vague and mingled sentiments of pain and pleasure to another, she could scarcely have felt more joy than in the assurance of his preservation. But while wishing to give the warm-hearted girl full credit for as much disinterestedness as belongs to the best stamp of human nature, we may surmise that, mixed with her delight on Jacqueline's account, there was a gleam of hope connected with her own. She knew her mistress's secret feelings better than Jacqueline herself, whose forced reserve and resignation had been insufficient to conceal the workings of the secret passion, that had agitated while it was fed by hope, and

now consumed her while linked with despair. Benina was therefore convinced, that when informed of the fact of Van Borselen's existence Jacqueline would acquire a decided relish for her own; and that her consent to a well-devised plan for escape would not be so difficult, when such an object to give value to liberty was discovered, in ever such doubtful or distant perspective.

In these calculations Benina acted on the unerring instinct of female sympathy, and she proved her sex's tact in tracing the windings of the heart that loves. We must not pause to describe the delicate and dexterous management with which she first prepared Jacqueline for the intelligence, and finally broke it to her. There was no abrupt disclosure which might shock her feelings or revolt her pride. She was not subjected to a burst of undignified delight, nor to the risk of a betrayal, which might have thrown back her anger at self-weakness upon the unconscious cause of its display. What Jacqueline *did* feel at the heart-reviving news we choose to leave to our reader's fancy, but there was one point on which she and Benina were thoroughly agreed, namely, the conviction that Vrank Van Borselen was the active champion who so laboured for their escape; and they avoided with mutual reserve all expression of this belief. And on one other point they differed totally. Benina was aware that to the conviction just stated, and to that alone, was to be attributed Jacqueline's consent to the bold plan of freedom. But Jacqueline, with a delusion common to the strongest minds, persisted in the belief that she could conceal from herself a fact, which every one of her most secret sensations betrayed.

Benina's feelings, however, offered a parallel weakness, which Jacqueline could (as all can in another's case) very easily see through. It was nothing else but the mysterious and shadowy hope of some time or another meeting again with Lord Fitz-walter that gave the self-cheated girl the buoyant energy which she displayed throughout the adventure; while she fancied herself worked up to a most philosophically unnatural resignation to the fate of having lost him for ever.

The reader must not now look for the minute details of a successful escape from prison, one of those inspiring instances of courage, sagacity, and good luck, which sparkle in the pages of history, amid the mournful catalogue of battle, murder, and every taint of crime, that make the records of human deeds but little more than registers of human weakness and infamy. The chronicles have handed down to us the names of the stanch associates who took the open part in this interesting enterprise, under the guidance of him who was its secret mover and main support.

These were Theodoric Van Merwede, a Hoek of fortune and influence, with two gentlemen named Spiering and Dalberg. These latter boldly ventured into the stronghold where Jacqueline was confined, and found means to provide her and her faithful Benina with men's suits, in which they safely passed from their palace-prison, while their guards caroused in the false security of supper-time. They traversed the hostile city, not with paltry evasions but in daring defiance, and did so undiscovered, proving by anticipation the axiom of Irish philosophy, put forward some centuries later, that "the best way of avoiding danger is to meet it plump."* Horses waited at a village close beyond the gates of Ghent; and ere their enemies had time to discover their escape, or they themselves to be astonished at it, Jacqueline, Benina, and her two deliverers had reached the banks of the Scheldt just opposite to the town of Antwerp.

It was lucky that active habits of horsemanship were so familiar to our heroine, and to the faithful friend and companion who should be in justice associated with almost every word of admiration bestowed on her. Less capable equestrians might have fallen into the hands of those pursuers whom they now happily laughed to scorn; for a boat waited their arrival, floating close to the bank, with the highest level of the tide, which just began to turn in favouring readiness to waft them to safety. Jacqueline embarked without any inquiries as to her final destination, or questionings on the one grand object which she never-

* Sir Boyle Roche, the *beau idéal* of Irish-bullism.

theless burned with impatience to be informed of. Matters of mere worldly import may excite an irritating curiosity, difficult of expression, and even when repressed most painful. But secrets of the heart may remain for a whole season unsolved, yet the mind be able to endure, ay, and even like the suspense, which it has not the courage to exchange for explanation, even though almost sure that it will be one of happiness. So it was now with Jacqueline. All the convictions of reason and feeling told her that Van Borselen was at hand, and only waiting a safe occasion, on her own suggestion, to become revealed to her. Yet she could not resolve to summon him to her presence, and she felt an undefinable dread at every hour's approach towards the probability of his self-avowal. She knew that his appearance, as her champion, was quite impossible without the certainty of his ruin, on the territories of Philip of Burgundy, or his congenial ally and namesake, the new Duke of Brabant. While, therefore, she was within the limits of her enemies' possessions, she felt secure against a violation of that spell of morbid anxiety in which she loved to feel herself bound; and as she approached the district of Holland, where her cause was still unsubdued and her banner yet afloat, she sank into a state of tremulous delight, like a maiden who longs for, yet dreads, an avowal of the passion which she is prepared to acknowledge and return.

The boat, at length, having safely pursued the track of the river's navigation, arrived at a place on the Dutch bank, in a district the aspect of which was soon after wholly changed by one of those watery convulsions to which the soil was so subject in those times. The spot was wild and cheerless; no indication of social life existed, but a rude hamlet of three or four huts which dotted the plain, where the river's banks were dammed out from spreading desolation over the dreary district. It was the evening of the second day when the boat reached this distant rendezvous for the appearance of him, who was all along alluded to by the two gentlemen as the main contriver of the plan which they had so well carried into effect. Jacqueline and Benina lay reclined in the loosely-constructed wooden crib, which occupied a portion of the

deck, and where cushions and covering had been provided for their accommodation, and protection against the keen March wind, (which ruffled the temper of old Father Scheldt,) together with habits more suited to their sex than those used during their escape. Our heroine, whose state of feeling we have before essayed to describe, was absorbed in one of those imperfect reveries so common to such a state, in which reflections on the past are so blended with present sensations and vague imaginings of what is to come, that we can with difficulty affix our moral identity to either of the three tenses, which seem not to divide but equally to possess it. Benina's feelings had still less of the positive than this — for she did not possess any certainty as to him who formed the ruling topic of her heart; and she was rather the shade of the past, or the fiction of the future, than the being of actual and present impulses.

In this state of feeling few words were exchanged between the lovely friends; and thus they lay apparently listless, though immersed in mental occupation, when one of their deliverers respectfully opened the door of their retreat, and announced their arrival at the place of rendezvous with their unknown champion.

Jacqueline experienced a nervous thrill of agitation, such as she had never before known. The recollection of her two only interviews with Van Borselen rushed together upon her, and as they had both been sudden and unlooked-for, she now knew, for the first time, the exquisite and intoxicating pain of premeditatedly coming to a meeting with those one loves. All the conflicts she had endured between feeling and pride for his sake and her own safety seemed present before her. The part she had now to act became a point of most embarrassing, yet essential consideration; but it was too late. She could not prepare for the coming scene. On occasions of cold ceremony and formal grandeur, Jacqueline had ever been like other sovereigns, used to rehearse her part, and no one went better through the masquerade of state; but in affairs of the heart she could not assume a character, and impulse was alone her guide. She now, however, strove to summon all her scattered thoughts to their allegiance, and her natural

tone of dignity was beginning to bring back her presence of mind, when one of the gentlemen said, in a half whisper, as though he feared the echoes of the river's bank,

"Madam, he waits to lay himself at your highness's feet."

"He waits! where, sir, oh! where is he? lead me at once to his presence!" was the hurried reply, in which all incipient up-risings of personal consequence were overpowered by the unrestrained effusions of personal feeling.

"He is in yonder hut, madam," said the gentleman, making way for Jacqueline's prompt movement out upon the open deck. Benina followed close; but the gentleman again said, —

"So it suits with your gracious pleasure, Madam, he would wish your first interview to be without witnesses."

"Oh, talk not of witnesses, or delay one minute for courtly forms of speech or action! lead me to him, alone — as he likes — his pleasure is henceforth my law — let me but see my preserver! — Benina! my best friend, thou shalt rejoin me anon."

With these words Jacqueline pressed on to the side of the boat, and stepping lightly along the plank which joined it to the shore, she was in a moment within the little abandoned hut, to which her guide conducted her. He closed the door and remained outside, while she entered; and she had no sooner crossed the threshold and cast her eyes within than she saw rush towards her, and throw himself on his knee at her feet, the fine figure of Lord Fitz-walter.

She looked on him for one moment of gaping astonishment. Her quick eyes next ran through the small apartment's space — then fell back again on the agitated and glowing countenance of the prostrate nobleman — and finally upturned towards Heaven, and closed in an involuntary pang of anguished disappointment.

"Oh God, it is not he!" was the deep-felt thought of sorrow, which spoke only in the sigh heaved from her bosom's inmost depth.

Fitz-walter still kept his eyes fixed on her, as her face was turned from him and covered with her hands — that

dubious attitude, so natural to so many widely-varied emotions. Fitz-walter could not read its present meaning; and he may be pardoned, if, in the warmth of his own feelings, he somewhat mistook it. He caught Jacqueline's robe in his trembling grasp, and with an air of suppliant and insinuating humility, exclaimed,

"Ah, Madam! may I then read in this silence — this emotion — this surprise, pardon for my boldness in daring to become the means of saving you from harm, of restoring you to the world and your country? will an angel's voice deign to pour on mortal ear the blessed sounds?"

Low and broken sobs — the unconscious vibrations of a deeply-wounded heart — were Jacqueline's only reply. Her hands slightly shook as she pressed them to her face — but her body moved not — it neither sank down nor grew rigidly fixed, it appeared quite insensible and unaffected by the shock. — The whole suffering seemed of the soul, and that was agitated to its depths.

And what was Fitz-walter's infatuation; was it that, blinded by his passion, cherished so long and so secretly, and in circumstances so wildly romantic, he was really deceived into the belief that Jacqueline's agitation was the result of tenderness taken by surprise? Such was indeed his self-engendered deception! And he who had been for years the humble, the hopeless worshipper of an idol, adored in a secrecy which he would not venture to violate even to himself, became now, in the crisis which was enough to daunt the most impetuous lover, gradually bold, ardent, and for a moment almost confident.

"Oh, most noble, most enchanting of women!" exclaimed he, catching the hand that had dropped listless by Jacqueline's side — "In what words may I pour out my soul before thee! How give utterance to my boundless adoration?"

There was no mistaking language like this. Had Jacqueline hovered on the grave's verge, instead of being merely plunged in mental stupor, this would have awoke her to new life. She read in one moment the whole truth of Fitz-walter's feeling for years past, and saw, with a regret far outweighing any feelings of vanity, the delusion which

had so blinded Benina Beyling to them. She drew back her hand as though from infection's touch; and her astonished looks fell down on the face, which so eloquently sent up the pleadings of devoted admiration. Fitz-walter neither felt her movement, nor saw her looks in their true light. His mind was filled with the ideal divinity of hers, so as to rob him for awhile of the less pure though more keen-sighted perception of sense; and he continued to pour forth the overflowings of his heart, in language more suited to such a worship, than to the actual avowal of flesh-and-blood passion. And it was for this reason, perhaps, that Jacqueline heard him out with patience, and without emotion. Had he pressed on her with the burning fervour of such a passion as carries bliss to the bosom which returns it, and disgust to that which does not, Jacqueline had assuredly stopped him short, revolting from what would in such a case have shocked her. But all he now said and looked fell as chaste and vapoury on her mind, as a lecture on metaphysics to a blooming girl, or a mathematical treatise to an overboiling boy. The particulars of his speech may be known from Jacqueline's reply.

"I have heard you, my lord," says she, "God knows with gratitude — but not with even as much of that calm sentiment which you merit at my hands. More I cannot give, and will not assume. Let me then answer you decisively and briefly, nor blame a conciseness which springs not from insensibility, but from the apathy of a too acutely-feeling and half-broken heart. You implore me to pardon you — you talk of presumption, while you give me the deepest proof of generosity, and far too flattering tokens of attachment. I cannot forgive when you could not have offended — you cannot be presumptuous, where, alas! fate has levelled all distinctions! Despoiled, destitute, and abandoned, on whom may Jacqueline of Bavaria — no more of Holland, Hainault, and the rest, look down? Who is more poor, more lowly in the scale of the cold world's calculations? No, Lord Fitz-walter, I am but your equal in those distinctions which justify alliances — I am free from all ties which might throw a bar between such an union as you offer, and which I might without

dishonour accept. But cogent reasons exist to render it impossible. In the first place, my marriage with a foreigner below the rank of royalty, would so outrage the feelings of my Dutch and Zealand subjects — my subjects! alas! alas! when shall I learn my real position — when clip the wings of those eagle pinioned thoughts that were wont to bear me towards the sun's blazing front!"

A pause of some moments followed this outburst of unperishing ambition. Jacqueline struggled, strongly and successfully, to calm her perturbed feelings; but they left their glow on her cheek, and her eyes beamed with the flickering fire of unquenched pride. Fitz-walter, who had risen from his kneeling posture, and stood before her, (catching every word that fell, as a culprit might watch the sentence that dooms to life or death,) durst not interrupt her eloquent silence or the energy of her words. The effect of both was already working in his breast. The warm flood of sentiment, in which it erewhile felt as if afloat, was becoming gradually congealed, as though a cold air blew by magic on the surface of some sunny lake, and froze it in the very prime of summer.

Jacqueline resumed.

"No, my lord! my ruined partisans, my native friends, my former servitors, would feel themselves degraded in what they would consider my humiliation; and no personal wish for peace, protection, or even happiness, could justify or make me consent to give one faithful Hollander a moment's pain. And how could I accept your next alternative, a residence in England, the mistress of your wide domains? Dare she, who has lived an equal in your late sovereign's court, who held your present infant monarch at the font, and answered to holy church his god-mother in baptism, appear in the proud realm of England as a private person? Would it either be just to you, that your wife should skulk in privacy and do dishonour to your rank? But these objections aside, could I condescend ever to press again the land that holds *him* who rejected my alliance for an ignoble wanton, and who forsook the cause he swore to die for, leaving you and his other gallant countrymen to pay the sacrifices of his baseness? These reasons were enough,

methinks, to show you the impossibility of my consent. But still one more exists, greater than all the rest. For, such as I am now, there is but a single motive which could make a union with me of worth to any honourable man — my heart. That is no more in my command — 'tis for ever lost to me, but not, alas! to enrich another — squandered in hopeless rashness — with nought acquired in return! I have spoken; yet no flush mantles to my brow — my bosom does not throb — my eye is not full. I make not this spontaneous confession at the shrine of pride, nor do I speak for shame's sake; but to show you in the calm expression of my looks and voice, that all is desperate for me as it is hopeless for you!"

Fitz-walter heard patiently every word of this harangue; but the conclusion struck to his heart. He had seen during its progress, with sensitive conviction, that Jacqueline's affections were not for him, but he had no previous notion that they were really given to another. He had hitherto feared no rival but Glocester; who, once removed by his own perfidious weakness, left Fitz-walter in the belief that he acted in an open field. But there was now in Jacqueline's manner a decision that spoke stronger than a volume of reasoning, against the hope he had derived from her misfortunes, and her widowhood; and he at once saw and submitted to the truth, with the conviction, which strikes one waking in the broad blaze of day, from some delicious dream of moonlit-phantasy.

The composure with which he acknowledged his conviction was the effect of the reality of feelings which he had completely mistaken, but which we shall soon explain. His only difficulty in comprehending the sentence just pronounced was that of reconciling his notions of Jacqueline's high character with her having given him so lightly the favour, which he had so long and faithfully worn, and her having so loosely alluded to it on several subsequent occasions. It was true that a token of tournament gallantry was not considered a binding pledge of affection for ever and aye; but it acquired solemnity from the long lapse which had intervened; and his constant wearing of it was, at least, enough, he thought, to have prevented any truly

candid mind from feigning amazement at an avowal of love from one who had so proved his constant admiration. Thus embarrassed, he took the faded kerchief from his bosom, and said,

"Countess, you have roused me from a vision of mistaken hopes — I bow to your decree, and place at your feet the token which I have so long considered sanctified, as having come from you. I give back your favour, pure and unsullied,"

This circumstance too strongly reminded Jacqueline of another, so similar as to revive an anguish she had been endeavouring to keep out of sight. But seeing the fact of Fitz-walter's error, she made, for Benina's sake, an effort at composure that she could not have accomplished for her own.

"This, Lord Fitz-walter," said she, "is but error heaped on error — that favour was never mine!"

"Not yours! It came from your pavilion at the tournay of Windsor. It is your colour. Not yours?" exclaimed Fitz-walter, in accents of incredulity.

"It was my dear Benina who bestowed it, and with it the proudest meed to a brave man, the heart of a beautiful and virtuous woman!"

"Her *heart?*" said Fitz-walter, betraying by tone and look his involuntary satisfaction at the idea of so proud a recompense for his disappointment, so soothing a salve for his disgrace.

"Ay, verily, my Lord, her heart, whole, innocent, and better worth than that you dreamt of erewhile. Ah! did you but feel the value of that treasure, yours all unknown to you, you would see nought to be compared to it, nor cast it aside in the vain pursuit of a phantom, which fled as you followed! Yes, my lord," continued Jacqueline, following up in successive attacks the impressions which she saw working in his silent agitation, "'twas, indeed, the favour of Benina Beyling which graced your helm in many a tilt and mêlée of war; and well might the type of a heart like her's inspire such prowess as was ever yours. Benina, my lord, is one of a race of old and proud nobility — artless, yet high-minded — and passionately, while

purely, attached to him who has taught her to love without offering a single lesson! What a triumphant conquest have you made, Lord Fitz-walter! How flattering to your best feelings! And where could you find so lovely, so devoted a mistress? What gratitude do you not owe for such an attachment — what dishonour to disavow the flame you have, even though unwillingly, fanned and fostered! Bethink you, my Lord, of all the complicated causes to honour and cherish this charming girl!"

"Countess," exclaimed the Englishman, with much emotion, "you touch my tenderest feelings — you probe my heart — you raise my self-love, you soothe my wounded pride! Oh! how angel-like you beam upon me in that new aspect of perfection! How, oh! how can I give one thought to aught but thy amazing excellence? How ever replaced with another thy image, so long throned in my breast?"

"My Lord, my Lord, this must not be; 'tis based on fiction — 'tis as unreal, as Benina's feelings and your duty towards her are full of life and truth. Me, Lord Fitz-walter, you never loved! Nay, start not, nor raise your hands and eyes in bootless appeal to Heaven — you never *loved* me! Ingrate I were, and worthless of your esteem, did I doubt the attachment which you have proved so long and so well. Chivalric and noble it has been — but 'twas not love. Dazzled by my rank, my adventures so marvellous, perhaps by qualities which bounteous Heaven has given me for its wise purposes, but woe is me! not yet for my own happiness, you fancied that you loved, while you but admired, compassionated, it may be said revered me. This is not love, my Lord. Ah, no! Love is no solitary passion, that broods in a lone breast. It is gendered in two bosoms, which throb alike in woe or weal, and sink or rise in common. To love, we must be beloved. An idol may be adored, human or mortal, in reverence and without return; but that absorbing passion of the soul, worthy the name of love, exists not till heart combines with heart, and both are linked by a bifold chain of sympathy, which joins them through all time and the

utmost bounds of space. This was not our case my good Lord — therefore you loved me not!"

Fitz-walter showed strong impatience to combat Jacqueline's theory; but she barred all reply by hurrying to another section of her thesis, ere the listener had quite recovered from the effect of her touching, and almost solemn delivery of that she had just finished.

"But if, in your heart's error you mistook one sentiment for another, believe me, Lord Fitz-walter, a deep tendency was working unawares, to lead your mind to that true tone of co-existing passion. Albeit unknown to you, your affections were running on with those you deemed yourself to have no share in. The hours you have passed with Benina were not without fruit. You thought it was my interests you watched over, my projects you discussed. Ah, 'twas that nameless attraction that love alone creates, which brought you so often, and kept you so long beside her. Her young affection all untold, and to herself almost unknown, was the cynosure that guided that occult and mystic course, my Lord, which every mortal heart must own, even in its own despite. Lord Fitz-walter, nature and fate have destined you to love Benina Beyling!"

Here Jacqueline resolved to complete the effect of these oracular sophistries by a dramatic stroke of living argument; and with this view she turned towards the little casement, and by pointing out, attracted Fitz-walter's observation to the figure of Benina, standing on the deck, and looking with keen solicitude towards the hut; and while his eyes rested on the blooming face and graceful figure, Jacqueline resumed —

"See there, my Lord! — Look at her where she stands! Is not that beauty, grace, and innocence enough to make you happy? And could you, in the pride of manly conquest, doom such a being as that to pine in hopeless suffering under your abandonment? Ah, Lord Fitz-walter, how enviable to have won without pain such a trophy as that, which might do honour to a monarch's throne! Take her, my Lord — she is yours for ever and ever. I give her to you in all her charms — wear her in your heart, and may Heaven crown you both with unfading joy!"

Before the half-bewildered and wholly-gratified Fitz-walter could utter a reply, or interfere either to aid or prevent the movement, Jacqueline had thrown open the door, and beckoned Benina towards her. She, at the summons, flew along the plank, to the shore, and was in a moment at the hut's entrance, where Jacqueline stood to receive her. But when stepping aside, she revealed Lord Fitz-walter, standing and gazing, as if fixed unresisting under a magic spell, a shriek of overpowering joy burst from the astonished girl. Sight, hearing, and all the subordinate faculties of sense were for a moment paralysed. Fitz-walter could not — as but few men could — resist the too-eloquent appeal of one of nature's masterpieces, thus paying homage to his influence. He caught her to his breast, and strained her to him in a tender violence, that owed its impulse to one of the strangest moods in which man ever bound himself for life and death, for better for worse, soul, body, and substance, to a doating — and must we add, a deceived — woman? But if this was betrayal, who could wish for truth? If this was not happiness, who would not pant for misery? The delighted victim, so deliciously deceived, never knew that she was so. Neither as Benina Beyling, nor as Baroness Fitz-walter, — during her few days' delay of smiling celibacy in Holland, nor for long years of wedded enjoyment in England, did she once suspect that her lord had been ever less her lover than she now believed him, or that she owed her long career of bliss to the generous advocacy of her dearly-loved mistress.

And Fitz-walter himself, recovering to the true delight of such a lot, could scarcely believe in the ambitious vision of earlier days, or bring himself to doubt that he had not all through, with fervour and faith, been the impassioned lover of her to whom he made so fond, so faithful, and so happy a husband.

CHAPTER IX.

No sooner had Jacqueline accomplished the object so near her heart, of compromising Fitz-walter in the fact of his own and Benina's happiness, and of having them indissolubly united, by means of the nearest priest, than she turned her whole attention to the design for her personal conduct, which she hastened to execute as quickly as it was conceived.

Jacqueline saw that she had now no rational ground of hope, on the only point which made even hope — the day-star of the heart — worth having. Stunned rather than wounded in her recently exalted feelings, a moral trance seemed gradually to gain on her faculties of thought. She dreaded a total atrophy of mind, and she hurried her project, ere the power of action might be finally destroyed. Theodoric de Merwede had not been tardy in joining her and Fitz-walter at the appointed place of rendezvous; and these two bold counsellors — the latter inspired by a new principle of devotion to her cause — did not fail to urge a daring effort on her part, to rally the scattered Hoeks, who still held their ground under Van Monfoort in Friesland, and make one desperate struggle for recovery of what, as they courageously argued, was not all lost. But this advice, so consonant to Jacqueline's former character and conduct, now made her sicken with disgust. Power had no longer any charms to captivate her ambition; her mind was bent on the abandonment of every dream of greatness, and a close retirement into the seclusion of private life; but not in the expectation of finding happiness even there. He who could have made a peasant's hut a paradise, no longer lived for her — and thoughts even of *him* were now intolerable. Her only hope was in forgetfulness of what she was, or might have been.

Examples in abundance were not wanting to teach our ill-fated heroine the philosophy of a submission to partial, in time to save the infliction of complete ruin. But it was a deeper-seated impulse than the mere exercise of reason,

that now ruled the destiny which Jacqueline courted, rather than obeyed. She hurried on Benina's marriage, which was effected ere the latter could believe in the reality of its approach; while Fitz-walter had scarcely time to repose from the tumult of his late excitement, in the new-found happiness which became his without an effort, and as he almost confessed without a title. No sooner was the nuptial knot tied, and Benina had become a bride, safe beyond the prevention of man's caprice or mortal accident, than Jacqueline insisted on the newly-joined couple repairing direct to England, leaving her to her inevitable lot.

We need not dwell on the mutual pain of such a separation between friends so reciprocally tried and proved. But the power of endurance, which kind Heaven bestows in every stage of mortal suffering, was now balanced between both, fairly in point of its effect on the mere pang of parting, but most sadly unequal in relation to the healing compensation which it brought to either mind. For while Benina's individual happiness softened the blow, Jacqueline's apathy made her less susceptible to it. But who would value the exemption from pain purchased at the price of insensibility to joy? Those who would, cannot justly understand the desolate suffering of Jacqueline.

Philip of Burgundy was at this period with part of his army before Gouda, the only town of any importance in Holland which still kept Jacqueline's banner flying on its towers. Thither she repaired, in spite of all the entreaties to the contrary of her few faithful followers; and there, to the amazement of her inveterate despoiler, she presented herself before him, unattended as she was unexpected, and voluntarily offered terms of submission to his tyranny, which he could scarcely have obtained by the utmost success of a protracted struggle. In the readiness with which she entered on this treaty and submitted to his exactions, his wily mind could see nothing but treachery and trick, and it was not till all was concluded that he could believe in the sincerity of motives, which he could not feel, and even, if believing, could not comprehend, like some of the mysteries of the faith he professed, without practising.

We have passed over details of the hopeless contest, which was awhile maintained in several districts, where obstinate fidelity to Jacqueline was punished with all the force of irritated tyranny. The towns of West Friesland, Waterland, and other districts, not only paid enormous contributions to the coffers of the rapacious conqueror, but they lost their banners and privileges; and his general treatment of the whole of Holland at this epoch was so arbitrary, as to lay the foundation of the yoke which it bore for above a century under the house of Burgundy, and then only finally escaped from by a general revolution and forty years of war.

The negociation entered into by Jacqueline with Philip under the walls of Gouda, followed by a treaty signed at Delft, recognised him as all but absolute master of her former states. He certainly allowed her to retain her titles of Countess of Holland, Hainault, Zealand, and Friesland. But she appointed him her ruward, or lieutenant, named him her heir, and consented that the nobles and the corporations of the towns should do him homage, and swear allegiance to him in those capacities. These and the other necessary articles of the treaty were, however, of slight importance, in comparison to the main one, by which Jacqueline pledged herself to the hard and humiliating condition that she would never marry without Philip's full consent, a condition considered by herself and her friends, as well as he who framed it, as tantamount to a sentence of perpetual celibacy.

A tour of forced and melancholy partnership was now undertaken by the sovereign countess and the lieutenant who was to reign over her. They visited together all the principal towns of Holland, accompanied by a numerous train of courtiers and attendants, not one of whom was of Jacqueline's choice or in her confidence. Fetes and rejoicings went on with all their usual brilliant hypocrisy; and town after town was illuminated, merely that the people might be kept in the dark. But the mass were not on this occasion to be deceived, either by the ostentatious condescension of Philip, or the forced cheerfulness of Jacqueline. Deep and bitter heart-burning gnawed her

discomfited friends. Hands were grasped and shaken, and embraces exchanged with mock cordiality, which told the keen observer that the parties only thus signed a manual treaty of everlasting hatred.

But Jacqueline had done her duty towards her country, and having done so, she hastened to complete her self-sacrifice. To give her an excuse for the solitude to which she had doomed the remainder of her days, she chose to have herself named, by her own and Philip's joint authority, grand-master* of the forests (violating the distinction of genders), not only in her own nominal territories, but in those districts to which he had still unsettled claims. To this place was attached a salary of seventy nobles a year†; and historians who have not reflected on Jacqueline's character, or her peculiar motives at this period, are astonished that she could have voluntarily courted such a humiliation, which few of her former vassals of any rank would have condescended to submit to. Our readers, however, will easily comprehend, and sympathise with, her ardent longing for retirement, and that desire of an uncontrolled right in the wide range of the woods, which at this period covered the face of whole districts, that are now so many miracles of culture reclaimed from their savage state.

Jacqueline hastened to take possession of the old castle of her ancestors at the Hague, which had at this time grown from a mere hunting-lodge, built by the early Counts of Holland, into a splendid residence suited to princes, who held their rank with royalty, and ruled over an independent realm.

No motives of latent pride, no heavings of lulled ambition, betraying by its convulsive swell the storm which had raged in its victim's breast, induced Jacqueline to choose the residence of her former state. Far from at-

* Jacqueline was extremely masculine in her acts of state. Her great seal bore the name of *Jaques*, not *Jacoba*, on the legend; but in this defiance of genders she was not singular in history. Mary, the eldest daughter of Louis, King of Hungary, in the fifteenth century, was declared *king*, that warlike nation despising the notion of being governed by a *queen*; and Isabella, daughter of Philip II. of Spain, long governed Belgium with her husband, Albert, by the joint title of Arch-*dukes*, nor did she exchange hers to the feminine even in her widowhood.

† About 24*l.* sterling.

tempting any imitation of what that had been, she retired into the strictest privacy. She retained not one of the crowd of functionaries which had heretofore swarmed in her household. Almost all the great offices were suppressed, and the necessary instruments of government, who still kept their employments, were removed to other towns. Jacqueline, in short, buried in the depths of her palace, deprived of her suite, and inaccessible to visitors, was rarely seen beyond the precincts of the magnificent wood which adorned the neighbourhood, and on the verge of which the outbuildings of the castle commenced.

There, indeed, she might be often observed walking alone, in the mechanical impulse of an active constitution, seeking the mind's relief in the body's exercise; or seated beneath the branches of some proudly-spreading member of the forest's aristocracy*, moralising on the analogies between human and inanimate nature, the factitious gradations of rank, the mysteries of bloom and decay; or profoundly examining the workings of her own heart, and retracing the passages of her chequered and most unfortunate career. She occasionally wandered beyond the extremities of the wood out into the open plains, and in the pastoral scenes beyond; but she never felt her brow or heart contracted with envy at the aspect of the world's loveliness, or the peaceful joys of the ignorant and innocent beings with whom Heaven had peopled it. She was known even more than once to have been led away by the natural bias of her social and benevolent temper, to join with some rustic groups of villagers whom she thus fell in with by chance, in the practice of the arbalette, at which we have shown her to have been a distinguished adept. It is even recorded that on one of those occasions she carried away the prize, and while she submitted to be crowned with a garland of May-flowers and proclaimed the queen of the sports, and held forth her hands to receive the floral presents showered on her by the village maids, the tears she involuntarily shed were not bitter from the memory of a day of prouder, yet more fallacious triumph; but they sprung rather from

* A large and venerable tree in this wood still bears the name of Jacqueline's tree.

one of those deep sources of delight which overflow in the virtuous breast at the sight of others' joy. Jacqueline was used on some occasions to mount a favourite palfrey, and quite unattended but by one old and tried domestic, named Gobelin, instead of the troop of pages, chamberlains, and grooms, who formerly composed her train, she used to give a loose rein and urge forward to the downs that stretch to the sea-shore, where for hours she might be seen by the straggling-woodcutters who lingered on the forest's skirts, galloping in long courses or wide circles over those desolate wilds, unconsciously rousing the timid hare, or driving the fox and coney to their earths, or breaking on the hawk's glutton-feast, and rescuing some fluttering victim from his talons. And then, when her steed required breathing-time, or she was fatigued with this mockery of by-gone sports, the lazy fishermen stretched on the sand-hills of the beach, or those who returned in their little skiffs from hours of seaward labour, might see her as she sat unmoving in the saddle, or stood on the shore, her eyes fixed on the waves, while the fresh breeze sent her long hair streaming away behind, and painted her cheeks with a temporary bloom, which thought and sorrow as quickly caused to fade.

There is not, in short, a spot in the environs of the Hague, where the wild and beautiful of field and wood is close joined with the sublime of ocean, that is not consecrated for the enthusiast in the cause of suffering woman, by some traditionary token, or by imagined associations still more strong and more delightful.

Month after month passed in this way, and Jacqueline was gradually sinking into the worst consequences of entire seclusion from the world. She insensibly lost all those tastes and habits of thought and action which form the brilliant advantage of social life. She saw no one from abroad; received no letters but from her mother, who had retired to Germany, and Lady Fitz-walter, who now constantly lived in England; and strictly prohibited the mention of all topics of a public or external nature, wholly confining herself to acts of charity in the surrounding districts. In this respect alone her expenditure knew no

retrenchment; all applicants were profusely supplied. Wherever poverty or age asked alms, relief was granted, without any of those scrupulous qualms of the over-righteous, who draw their purse-strings closer from fear of giving to an unworthy object. She was no doubt often and often imposed on, but the pleasure of relieving one real object repays the mortification of being deceived by a dozen impostors. The old domestic before named, who was now the distributor of her bounty, knew not the extent of his beloved mistress's privations, nor imagined the possibility of her means being circumscribed. It was not, therefore, wonderful, the mistress being generous to excess, and the man improvident without bounds, that the scanty means at the disposal of both should be soon utterly exhausted. Jacqueline was confounded with surprise, when this was beyond doubt evident. It seemed the very excess of disgrace. She felt as though at length hunted down by the merciless assaults of fate. She could fly from it no further. Her haughty and harassed spirit stood at bay.

In this crisis, Jacqueline would have lain down in utter despair sooner than have recourse to any undignified or undeserving means of relief. Her arrears of stipulated income would in some measure have met her wants, but she scorned to ask them of the harsh usurper, who was only niggard on the occasions when profusion would have been a virtue. The faithful Gobelin was not so delicate as his mistress, but made anxious, although vain applications for the accumulated arrears. Baffled in the search for justice, he next tried what generosity might produce; but of all the nobles who had been, in Jacqueline's prosperity, her devoted vassals and partisans, there was not one to whom he applied for aid that did not by some plea of poverty refuse compliance. Our heroine was, in short, at the expiration of a year, and notwithstanding all her sacrifices and the shifts of her faithful follower, reduced to the extremity of inconvenience, if not of personal want.

One resource remained to her—an appeal to the people, whose friend she had ever been, and who were ever ready to lavish their treasure and their blood for still less holy purposes than those which Jacqueline was now debarred

from effecting. But she would not condescend to let her wants be publicly known, nor consent to wring from the hard hands of industry and toil a single contribution; a claim for which might be misconstrued or defamed.

In utter despair of any succour from either his own or his mistress's resources, old Gobelin determined to summon the advice, at least, of him whom he knew to be the very stanchest and most unswerving of all Jacqueline's former friends — one who, while others had left her to her fate and flocked in swarms to court the favour of Philip, scorned every abandonment of her whom he could no longer serve, and whom he was debarred from ever seeing, and who, sooner than bow the knee to usurpation, had remained self-banished in his lonely isle, feeding his fierce regret, and brooding over plans of unformed and perhaps impracticable vengeance.

A safe messenger found his way to Urk with Gobelin's summons; and, in as short a time as could be sufficient for the journey, Ludwick Van Monfoort was in the halls of Jacqueline's gorgeous but most desolate palace at the Hague.

The interview which immediately followed was abrupt on the part of him who sought, deeply painful to her who granted it, and little likely to produce the result so desired by the one, and so necessary to the other. Van Monfoort was reduced to straits still narrower than Jacqueline, and was quite unable to give her any assistance beyond a species of advice, which in the first instance she rejected with a thrill of wounded pride. This was simply that she would allow him to repair on the spot to the castle of Teylingen, at four leagues' distance from the Hague, and one beyond the town of Leyden, to make an application for her arrears of promised income, to the Count of Ostervent, the lately appointed stadtholder or governor of Holland, in virtue of the powers assumed by Philip of naming a deputy lieutenant under himself, independent of her from whom he derived his own title.

"Never, Van Monfoort!" exclaimed Jacqueline, with a deep glow of shame, and somewhat of resentment. "No! let me perish rather than submit to this lowest

depth of humiliation! Can I, who scorn to demand my right from Philip of Burgundy, stoop lower still, and ask a favour from his upstart minion? And who is this insolent stadtholder that dares to come so near my residence, and fix in the very heart of the forests, over which my recognised title of grand-master gives me sole right of range? The Count of Ostervent! What new-sprung pretender to nobility is he? I know of no such title."

"Madam, he is one of those Kabblejaw chiefs promoted in the ranks of Dutch nobility, in right of service done to the tyrant during these luckless wars. But little, methinks, it boots us now to trace his pedigree. He is the newly-named sub-governor of this unhappy country; your highness's oppressed dominion, Philip's usurped spoils. That is enough. He is the fit-existing source from which to draw your stipend. 'Tis said he is honest, and not disinclined to render you all honourable service suiting his notions of right. I am, as your highness knows, a blunt man; and I think you ought to sanction my demanding what is your due, from him who is your debtor's agent. Such is the plain counsel of Ludwick Van Monfoort."

Jacqueline remained for some minutes without replying to this speech. It had started a whole host of hidden and half-buried feelings, which now ran riot through her brain, or strove to hide still deeper in her heart, like the wild tenants of the wolds which her horse's hoofs roused to flight, or frightened into concealment. The word Kabblejaw had left its print deep in Jacqueline's memory, but had not, for more than a year, been mentioned to her ear. Gobelin and the two or three women who were alone suffered to approach her had never dared to utter the forbidden sound. But the plain-speaking sincerity of Van Monfoort made light of the prohibition, which he saw good cause for disregarding.

"Ludwick Van Monfoort," said Jacqueline, at length, "it was not well done of thee to rouse the recollection of days which it were well for me had never dawned, and of persons, who, had Heaven been kind to me, had never been born. Thou knowest not, perhaps, that I have forbidden those topics for ever. Dead to the world, I must

restrain all mention, if I cannot smother all memory, of the past, as I cherish no phantom hopes for the future."

"Heaven and the Saints forfend! By the bones of your buried ancestors, Madam — by the glory of your race, I swear you shall revive and flourish still! What! think you, then, that I and some few stanch friends are yet above earth for nought? — that the burning spirit of Hoekism is laid at rest? — that usurping tyranny shall walk the land, and trample for ever on the good old cause?"

"No more, no more, I command thee!" cried Jacqueline, interrupting the fierce chieftain. "As you value my peace, or honour my privacy, no more of this! Oh, God! when will this blood run cold, when will this heart lie still! Van Monfoort! you have done me great harm — I tremble and throb with feelings I had believed dead!"

"But which cannot, which shall not die, till the race you spring from is extinct! And is it to expire with *you*, Madam? Is the blood of twenty-five sovereigns to be frozen for ever in such veins as yours? Is the heroic race to stop with her, whom nature has formed in all ways fitting to prolong it to the latest time? Not so, not so, my gracious and honoured lady — you will revive from this torpid state to new life and long enjoyment. Nay, Madam, interrupt not your old vassal and best friend — God's grace be on us! Is it to be thought of that one so young, so beautiful, so full of life, and so formed to be loved and loving, should pine away, matchless and heirless as an old sap-dried thing like me? Are you, blooming and beautiful as you are, to have been three times spoused, and yet not once? — Forgive me, I beseech you, my mistress; but I am roused to fury at the thought of your disappointments, and the sight of your wrongs!"

Ere Jacqueline could collect the thoughts so loosely scattered by this honest outburst, and before Ludwick had time to finish the intended harangue of which this was but the proem, an interruption took place, that led to his purpose more effectually than any possible prologue he could have uttered. Old Gobelin entered the room, with more than his usual briskness, and even less than his usual want of ceremony. He carried a letter in his hand, which he held out to Jacqueline.

"From your lady mother, Madam," said he, "and the Saints be good to us, but her highness has accompanied her letter by a brave present. Look, Madam — look, Heer Van Monfoort, from the casement down on the court! Is not that a sight to glad the eyes of the most subtle cavalier that ever curbed steed, or rode in tournay? Look, look!"

While Jacqueline tore open the missive, with the impatience natural to those feelings of filial affection, which rise above all consciousness of a parent's errors, or even crimes, Van Monfoort looked down, as desired, upon the courtyard, called the Binnenhoff. He there observed a young horse, of most surprising beauty, in the graceful appearance of untrimmed wildness, which nature — under favour of man's superior taste — intended those beautiful animals to wear for ever. Two grooms, who bore marks of a long journey, stood at each side of the spirited animal, insidiously exciting the curvets and caperings they intended to restrain, and which drew forth bursts of admiration from the straggling observers, who had followed them across the bridge into the court-yard, or come out of the offices of the palace.

An exclamation of rough applause from Van Monfoort at the gallant present, called Jacqueline herself to look out, ere she had completely perused her mother's description of the valuable animal. She gazed with great delight at this noble accession to her now most scanty stud; and in her boundless love for horse exercise, she longed to descend to the court-yard at once, and mount this bounding palfrey, which she felt her capability of managing. After some minutes' indulgence in her admiration, she resumed the reading of the letter; and when she read the concluding words, she exclaimed, with an air of deeply mortified regret: —

"Oh, Van Monfoort, this is too bad — this will kill me quite! Hark to my mother's words — 'Receive my present with a cheerful heart — let it carry you one day to victory — and for my love, less than its value, reward nobly the bearer of the scroll and the care-takers of the animal, which is a gift only worthy of thy acceptance, as a type of thy untameable spirit, and, I hope, thy unfading

beauty.' — Reward them nobly, Ludwick! I have not the means at hand of offering the meanest largesse — what, oh! what can I do to save my mother's honour and my own?"

"The remedy is near, Madam, — say but one word, and in a moment I mount my steed and am on the road to Teylingen — the stadtholder waits but your orders for relief to any amount — I know it!"

"Away, away, then! Go! lest my pride break out again, to consume me quite!"

So saying, she rushed from the chamber into her private cabinet; and just as she had, after a lapse of some minutes, repented her words, and rose for the purpose of retracting them, she heard the tramp of hoofs below, and, looking out, she saw the heavy figure of Van Monfoort borne across the draw-bridge with all the speed of which his heavy destrere was capable.

CHAPTER X.

In an almost incredibly short space of time, considering the nature of his mission and the negociation which Jacqueline authorised him to enter on, Ludwick Van Monfoort came galloping again across the drawbridge, and his horse's feet sounded once more on the pavement of the court-yard. But the tramp of others came at the same time upon Jacqueline's ear as she lay on the couch, which she had not quitted for the whole period of her ambassador's absence. She started up, and looking out, she saw the lion of Urk reach the door of entrance to the turret where she lay, and which is still pointed out to the curious, among the clustering buildings of the Binnenhoff, as that from the windows of which Maurice of Nassau is believed (may we hope falsely?) to have gazed two centuries later on the butchery of Barnevelt, the most virtuous politician of his age, and a model for patriots.

Jacqueline observed that Monfoort no longer rode his

own clumsy and not over elegantly harnessed steed, but one of fine shape, high mettle, and superbly caparisoned. Two mounted attendants, in the handsome liveries of military service, followed close, and round the body of each she remarked a broad leathern girdle for the purpose of carrying specie, ere civilisation taught men that the value of a paper medium is just proportioned to its convenience to society, which happily can stamp a worth on mashed-up rags quite equal to that, as fictitious as its own, of a thousand times its weight in metal. The carriers of the treasure on this occasion were soon disembarrassed of their load, which Van Monfoort briskly transferred to his own shoulders, and leaving the stadtholder's horse to the care of the soldier-grooms, he entered the turret, and mounted its narrow stairs with long and heavy strides.

"Van Monfoort, can I accept this? may I again hold up my head for shame?" asked Jacqueline, as he threw the money-girths on the table, unloosed their buckles, and let the coin flow freely out.

"Madam, 'tis your own, and but a tithe of what is yours, did not the bandage of justice cover a pair of sleeping eyes. I know your noble nature, my mistress, and I can speak freely. By heavens, then, were any other but yourself to show such qualms, I would believe it mockery! A sound kernel is often hid in a rough rind, countess, and my harsh words may have some truth in them. Believe me, then, that false delicacy is beyond all proportion worse than the real sort is worthy. Let me call Gobelin to deal out free largesse to those German grooms and your mother's messenger, and to put up the rest of the money."

"Act for me in this matter, good Ludwick — I do confess that the vice of my birth and bringing-up seems struggling with sound reason," said Jacqueline, brought to a true sense of the affair by her companion's blunt philosophy.

Gobelin was soon in the chamber, gloating with overjoyed gaze at the goodly confusion in which gold and silver pieces of various value were strewn upon the table. With a glad heart and wide-grasping hand, he carried away uncounted fistfuls, to lavish on the messengers of Countess

Marguerite and Count Ostervent, as well as several poor pensioners who had long waited for the arrears of Jacqueline's usual bounty, which they now at length received with ample interest for the forced delay. While these gratifying acts of stewardship went on below, Jacqueline and Van Monfoort continued their conference above.

"And now, worthy Ludwick," said she, "that I have in part recovered from the turmoil caused by this unfortunate necessity, how, let me ask, could you have so soon accomplished your purpose? The very ride to Teylingen and back at utmost speed could scarcely be done in the short time you have consumed, to say nothing of that required to break your purpose to this stadtholder, to allow of consideration on his part, and to pack this hateful dross, the taking of which, even though I scorn to touch it, lies so heavy on my heart!"

"Well might you marvel, Madam, had I all this to do in such brief space. But now — for the time is come — I must tell your highness, it was all arranged ere I reached this place this morning. I took my matin meal at Teylingen. Your money was ready counted, while I wended my way thence to Leyden — and it waited my return at a village still nearer at this side, under the care of the two stalwart bearers with a fresh horse for my use, furnished by their generous, their *just* lord, who brooked no delay in his ardent wish for your service."

"What, then — this was a plot between ye?"

"With your gracious favour, Countess, it was. A plot for your happiness and the country's good — the first step towards the glorious change I promised you erewhile."

"Van Monfoort!"

"Come, lady, come! no looks of unnatural anger, no undeserved reproaches! You have been well served, while to all-seeming forlorn. Your friends, though ruined, have not all proved false. Fortune is gone, but neither zeal nor honour. Full fourteen months of work have ripened the fruit of our deep-laid designs. A revolt is ready to break out. Many gallant chiefs of lately-cherished feuds have changed their very nature at the country's call, and by your inspiration. Freedom to Holland, Zealand, and

Friesland! is the common cry. Factions are smothered — at least for awhile. Kabblejaw and Hoek, Schieringer and Vestkooper have sunk their mutual hate in patriot fellowship. From north to south, from east to west, from the forest-depths of Drent to the wide ocean here at hand, there is an impulse working that must be triumphant. Heaven favours us well. The Count of Ostervent, a glorious mind cased in a goodly form, rich, brave and bountiful, has joined our cause, and common acclaim has put him at our head. We only wait for your sanction, — for your word, to put the whole scheme in motion and strike the general blow. Oh, Madam! how I glory in that flush of hereditary valour on thy fair face, that ray of ambition lighting thy bright blue eye! They shall be the colours of our cause, red, white, and blue. I adopt them for mine from this hour, and swear that Holland shall do the same. Saints of Heaven! how my old blood is up, and my loosened nerves are stiffening again in these arms. I am young once more, and my dear country, too, shall shake off the yoke of age and slavery! Now, madam, speak! Holland waits for your words, as a legion of warriors for the trumpet's blast."

If Van Monfoort's words were not eloquence, his looks and gestures were; and Jacqueline was hurried on by their effect, as though some new Demosthenes had rolled the thunder of his genius upon her ear. The sudden burst which had been made upon her unnatural repose, the great incitement thus rapidly urged on her, the little time for thought, and her innate ambition, all in a combined impulse, led her forward now. Battle, victory, and vengeance danced confusedly in her mind, with the more noble views of her country's freedom and her people's happiness. The whole was a whirlwind inspiration, which swept her on towards her destiny.

"Be it my demon or my good angel, I know and care not now — Van Monfoort, I am all you wish or ask for!" cried she. "Lead me where and how you will — I devote myself to my country, and fearlessly throw myself on the flood, though it lead me to a cataract's verge!"

"My noble mistress! spoken like the daughter of a line

of heroes! Now, hear me; Count Ostervent and some warm friends wait for the issue of this conference, with what impatience you may judge. But I vouched for the result — I knew the blood of Bavaria! In the wild woods which surround the old castle of Teylingen our preparations have been long going on, and this passing visit of the stadtholder is a concerted scheme, to give him means of meeting with our common associates — and with *you!* Had he dared to risk discovery, he had been here to-day to lay his homage at your feet. But as this could not be, without braving Philip's vengeance, the count and the associate friends — conspirators, if you will, for we glory in the name — implore you to ride to-morrow morn towards Teylingen, where, under the appearance of a hunting party, you shall see all, and in a visit, as if by chance to the old pile, know more than I can venture now to tell. — Do I read your consent in this silence?"

"Yes, Van Monfoort, I will go! I have been ever but a plaything in the hands of fate — I yield myself up without reserve!"

"Then once more I do you homage and swear fealty," exclaimed Ludwick, plumping down on his knees and kissing her hand. "Long live Jacqueline of Holland, and death to the usurper of her rights!"

"Amen, amen! Long live Jacqueline!" cried old Gobelin, bursting open the door, and flinging himself beside Van Monfoort, having heard, through the pannel, every word of what passed, and proclaiming his espionage and his enthusiasm at the same time. But the one was pardoned for the sake of the other; and the narrow turret rung for some minutes with the prolonged shouts of this cordial proclamation. The scene was, however, quickly closed. Van Monfoort repaired below to send back the token agreed on to Count Ostervent, and to look after the care-taking of his own horse and of Jacqueline's new acquirement, which she was resolved to mount on the morrow. Gobelin set about his preparations for supper, and various other household details, with a spirit to which he had been long a stranger: and had he possessed such an audience of domestic associates as was formerly wont to

throng the palace, he could not have failed to betray the secret of which he had made himself the depository. The few unsophisticated menials of the present establishment saved him, however, and his mistress as well, from the betrayal which the cunning hangers-on of a court had surely led him to. The night passed over without any breach of trust; and the morning dawned, in all the bloom of May and all the brightness of hope.

Jacqueline had striven to sleep, but in vain; snatches of slumber mixed with broken dreams brought her through the night. But though unrefreshed, she was not fatigued. Her mind, on the contrary, was kept more on the stretch than if sleep had relaxed its tone. Those who have risen, after such a night of strong excitement, can understand the elastic spring that animates both mind and body, when it seems as if we could keep awake and in action for ever; and they can picture the feverish flush on Jacqueline's cheek, the bright energy of her eyes, the activity of every movement, and the buoyancy of every thought.

She was up with the dawn; and her attendant woman was soon, by her order, employed in looking out among the confusion of her long-neglected and much-reduced wardrobe, a dress suited to the station she was soon about to reassume, and the persons whom she was going to meet. We trust that we have not in the progress of our story given any impression of its heroine, that might imply an absence — a deficiency we are disposed to consider it — on her part, of a due attention to those minor branches of philosophy, which some call frivolous and vain. The suitableness of raiment and the becomingness of manners are links in the chain of social life, which harmonise with and beautify the whole. There is infinitely more wisdom in submitting to, than in spurning, those necessary concomitants of civilisation, which, being artificial throughout, require the cement of elegance and refinement, to polish, if it cannot lighten the chain. Jacqueline was one of the most scrupulously well-dressed women of her day; and it was even the reproach of one of her country's obscure chroniclers that of the one hundred pounds sterling allowed to her per month, by Henry V., for her support while in

England, one-half was disbursed in attire and ornaments. Much of her former finery remained to her, but the greater part was lost during the late convulsions. It was among the residue that her woman now sought for something to suit the present purpose; but it was not there that Jacqueline's taste was fixed.

Our readers may remember the hunting-dress worn by her on the occasion of her rendezvous with Glocester in the Zevenvolden? It had been made expressly for that occasion, with the minutest attention to effect both as to its workmanship and its becomingness. It had never been worn but on that day; and it was still as perfectly fresh and untarnished as ever. It caught Jacqueline's eye, among several others of more pretension, both in fashion and colour; and although a throb of heated recollection shook her frame, it was in a moment stifled, by that desperate resolution, with which pride can for awhile master the humiliating memory of insult and wrong.

"I *will* wear it!" exclaimed Jacqueline, in a tone as imperious as if her tire-woman had presumed to oppose her choice. But when the dress was on, every plait arranged, and every fold in place, she found that one finishing accessory was wanting — the fatal girdle, without which the suit was incomplete. *There* lurked a danger deeper than the remembrance of Glocester's outrage. Had she suffered her mind to rest one moment there, the business of the morn, perhaps her life's whole destiny, had been upset or turned aside; but with an instinct of danger, like those who shut their eyes on a precipice's edge, she would not even look at the perilous object, but snatching it from its place in her cabinet, she hurriedly bound it round her waist, trusting to her accuracy of touch to give its due position. The golden side-plates and bullion tassels, sparkling with rubies and emeralds, were next fastened in her hair, and when the head-dress was in place, her bow in hand and quiver in belt, she stood exactly as we first introduced her in the opening pages of our tale.

Van Monfoort waited old Gobelin's summons to attend the countess to the court-yard. His eyes glistened with pride as he gazed on his beautiful and beloved sovereign,

and a wide perspective of glory spread out before him. He bowed low, but his rude emotion did not allow him to speak, as Jacqueline, after a slight repast, gave him her hand, and they descended the stair. In the court stood Van Monfoort's borrowed horse, looking fresh and glittering, but quite eclipsed by the incomparable beauty of Jacqueline's, which was at the same moment brought out from his stable. His fine limbs, compact and nervous carcass, glossy skin, flowing mane and tail, his swelling nostrils and rolling eyes, and the unruly, but by no means vicious air with which he pawed and fractured the pavement of small bricks (which was then, as now, the flooring of court and causeway throughout the country), spoke him of pure breed and high spirit — such a one, in short, as was fitting the rider who now quickly took her graceful seat, and made him feel the mastery of her light, firm hand. After a few curvettes and caprioles that at once told her the temper of her palfrey, and were so encouraged or repressed as to show him he carried command and skill on his back, Jacqueline loosened her rein, and leading towards the wood, cantered off with Van Monfoort by her side. Old Gobelin pressed afterwards, as fast as was compatible with the wheezy and stiff-limbed animal he usually rode, urged on by a huge pair of rusty and blunted spurs, which had in earlier days formed an appanage of the war-boots of some Florent or Theodoric, names in which the early counts of Holland especially rejoiced.

Ere the wood was cleared by Jacqueline and Van Monfoort, Gobelin was thoroughly thrown out. Had the country between that and Leyden contained an elevation at all higher than a mole-hill, he might possibly have caught a distant view of his forerunners, sweeping along the causeway leading from the Hague to that town; but as it was, he never gained a glimpse of them till full an hour after their arrival at Teylingen Castle, where he had been ordered to join them as soon as he could. They had scarcely pulled in rein, or exchanged a word during the ride. Half absorbed in reverie, half excited to thoughtlessness, our heroine hastened on, delighted with the movement and the beauty of her horse, and, as all so situated

are more or less, proud, even though confined to self observation, of the mastery over the glorious animal that owns and trembles at the influence of man's slightest touch or briefest command.

Leyden left at one side, without even a passing thought of the gallant siege it had lately stood, yet but a type of the immortal one above two centuries later, which the pen of history has recorded, and the pencil of genius consecrated * — and the deep forest which then spread over the country traversed, the travellers at length arrived within sight of the castle of Teylingen, and then for the first time pulled up their steeds, and looked on the venerable pile.

Tradition threw back its origin to the commencement of the Christian era: it was on that account alone a monument well suited to inspire respect. Its appearance was accordant to its age and to the importance of the noble family who had possessed it uninterrupted, till one of the old race, having joined in the celebrated conspiracy of Gerrit Van Velsen against Floris V., Count of Holland, it was confiscated by the states of the province, and became the hereditary residence of the forester, possession being, however, granted for life to the sister of Dirk of Teylingen, its last and rebellious lord.

It was an extensive and massive construction of red brick, kept together with the cement of mixed mortar and sea-shells, common to the earliest buildings of the Christian era. Its form was in singular defiance of all regular system of architecture, the consequence, no doubt, of its being constructed at different epochs, and according to various shades of taste. Yet the general aspect was to a high degree imposing. The main building had at its south-eastern side, from which Jacqueline and Van Monfoort now viewed it, the appearance of being completely circular; but at the opposite sides its aspect was angular. The top was covered by a huge leaden cupola; the eastern and northern approaches were defended by broad and deep

* In the fine work of Gustave Wappers of Antwerp, the most beautiful picture paint d by any Flemish artist for many a year, and promising a revival of the splendid school of Rubens and Vandyke.

moats—the west and south by regular fortifications and outstanding batteries. The great entrance fronted the north, and posterns opened to the westward and eastward, the latter of which, surmounted by the little casemates that lighted the dungeons, still exist in the shell of the main building.

Van Monfoort pointed out to Jacqueline the drawbridge lowered across the moat, and quite unguarded, proving that every obstacle and every observer were designedly removed. Not even a warder was to be seen on the walls; the whole presented a picture of desolate, yet imposing majesty. It was a perfect type of solitary power; and it impressed the observers with a modified sentiment of that awe, which is one of the main attributes of the sublime, and which is ever strongly excited by monuments of mortal strength standing amidst nature's loneliness. The thick forest all around, not one young leaf of which was seen to flutter in the stilly morning, the calm surface of the moat on which no living thing floated, and the mysterious silence of the scene, produced altogether an irresistible feeling of dread in Jacqueline's bosom. She would not, however, give way to fear; nor was she susceptible to any of the satellite weaknesses that revolve round the orbit of that degrading passion. Less nobly constituted minds would have shrunk and trembled under the apprehension of treachery—but she felt nothing such.

"How desolate and unpeopled is this huge building and its appurtenant outworks!" said she. "Can it indeed contain those friendly inmates you have led me to look for? 'Tis more like some lone castle of enchantment—How is this Van Monfoort?"

"In truth there is a magic in it, Madam," replied Ludwick, with a grim smile—a most uncommon variation to the rugged expression of his vision. "Shall we now enter?"

"Enter!" exclaimed Jacqueline, starting, as though some chord of doubt had been electrically struck within her. Then, after a moment's pause, drawing her lovely head higher up, sitting still more erect than before in her saddle, and raising her bridle hand to give her palfrey a

forward motion, she added, "Ay, Monfoort, I will solve this riddle, come what may!"

In an instant more she was within the great court of the castle, the gates of which lay open, without a living soul appearing either to do her honour or offer her violence. She rode on to the porch that overhung the arched doorway of the *corps-de-logis*, or main building, which was also thrown wide back on its hinges. She here sprang from her horse, Van Monfoort having also dismounted. He turned both animals loose. His own knew the way to the stables, and followed by the stranger, whose graceful boundings made the court-yard echoes ring, was soon out of sight round an angular projection of the offices.

Jacqueline stepped on towards the entrance-door, but just as she was about to enter the porch she was arrested by the sight of a hieroglyphic emblem which hung above, of a nature so prominent and unequivocal, that it fascinated her gaze beyond the power of withdrawal, and struck her almost breathless with astonishment.

Painted in large letters on the entablature of the porch were the following words,

U

DIENAAR.

and between them hung a fresh-cut branch of willow just bursting out in the graceful foliage of spring. This emblem of feeling, properly read, made this sentence, "U WILLIGE DIENAAR," "your devoted servant:" — the word *willige* having the two meanings, *willow* and *devoted*, and the whole being, in the floral phraseology of the country and time, tantamount to a declaration of love, and a demand in marriage.

A swell of pride and resentment rushed on Jacqueline at sight of this audacious avowal, from an unknown, and, as she indignantly felt, an upstart minion of her worst enemy; and the pang was rendered ten-fold more agonising from the consciousness that she had been duped into the degradation of actually encountering this outrage, by the man on whom among all others she would have reckoned as the most incorruptible champion of her honour. With a look of angry reproach she turned towards Van Monfoort;

but he met her burning glance before her anger could explode, by motioning forward, and at the same time exclaiming,

"Madam, behold the Count of Ostervent!"

Jacqueline's eyes involuntarily turned in the direction of the person thus pointed out, who had advanced a few steps from the building under the porch. The tall figure of a man met her looks, dressed in the superb state-mantle of the order of nobility, his head covered with a richly-plumed and ornamented cap, and his whole air and mien assorting with the dignity of his station. But his *face!* when Jacqueline gazed on *it*, a mist seemed to rush from her heart to her brain. She did not lose her consciousness or self-command; no shriek broke from her; no hysteric-burst betrayed her emotion; but grasping Van Monfoort's arm, she gazed before her, and felt that the blood ran visibly hot and cold from her bosom to her face, in motion so rapid as to threaten suffocation. The Count of Ostervent—albeit as moved as she was—preserved his presence of mind, and throwing off his cap and mantle, he dropped on one knee before her, and revealed the very figure and features and the identical costume of the young hunter who had broken first on her monotony of wretchedness in the forest of Drent, and whose subsequent career and conduct had been ever since the cause of such varied and painful agitation. It was in truth Vrank Van Borselen that now stood identified with the Count of Ostervent, the title just before bestowed on him, together with the office of Stadtholder of Holland, by the too tardy gratitude of Philip of Burgundy.

Who may effectively describe such a scene as this? The pen refuses to move fast enough—it cannot keep pace with the lightning impulse of the mind, which imagines all that was looked and felt. The spoken words admit of no transcript—so few, so imperfect, so broken, that, faithfully recorded, they would only throw a taint of burlesque on the pure, bright colouring of nature and feeling.

In whatever phrase Van Borselen strove to make his emotion intelligible to the mistress of his heart—in what-

ever efforts at utterable reply she acknowledged his avowal — whatever might have been their looks, their tone, their gestures — it must altogether have amounted to that true eloquence which is of feeling more than of diction, and which speaks to the heart more than to the reason; for the rough sympathy of Van Monfoort paid the most unequivocal tribute to its effect, in a half-smothered whine, and a rapid repetition of thumps against his breast, which told that natural feeling was struggling for a vent, and that instinctive manliness was labouring to repress it.

The first sentence which he caught distinctly, all that preceded it having only buzzed and tingled in his ears, was spoken by Borselen.

"Let all then be forgotten *since* that day — all doubt, all fear, all suffering; let our minds revert alone to the day itself; let it be a point of happiness by which to steer our future course. Be now and ever as I saw you then, and as you look this moment, radiant and beautiful in the glow of feeling and courage! The dangers of that day were as nought to what we have now to brave together — *Thy* inspirations but as a shadow to that which animates me now."

"And *my* hope, my ardour, my affection — yes, I confess it fully! — but the dawning of morn compared to the meridian blaze that lights me on to-day! Oh, Van Borselen, can this be true? Am I not the sport of some wild phantasy? Do I live, indeed, in the certainty of this happiness? Is all that you tell me real — all you look sincere? My incredulous heart still throbs in doubt: I want yet some proof."

"This, this, then, be the proof of my unbounded attachment, my eternal devotion, my audacious love! ——— ———!! Bid me now die for my offence, and expiate it on the spot!"

With the first words of this speech he sprang from the kneeling posture in which he had for many preceding minutes remained, as if transfixed in immovable awe. During the long pause, which we have striven to make expressive by an unusual connecting *dash*, he had thrown his arm round Jacqueline's unshrinking form, and imprinted

on her lips such a succession of eloquent evidences of his and her own being, as would remove the doubts of the most sceptic infidel that ever marvelled at a miracle. When the phrase was finished, and the evidence registered in her heart, he loosed his clasp, withdrew a step, and drawing a short dagger from his belt, he offered its hilt to her grasp. A wild apostrophe of astonishment, accompanied by a mystic smile, was Jacqueline's answer, as she snatched the weapon and flung it aside. Then, wrenching open the clasp, which fastened the girdle round her waist, she threw it with both arms round her lover's neck—and then—draw close your veil, spirit of modern prudery! turn quick aside, essence of mock discretion!—then did our heroine freely fling herself into his embraces, and sob and weep, in the outburst of as holy a passion as ever sanctified mortal bosom.

A loud clapping of hard palms—a crash of laughter, such as a sportive hyena might have laughed on witnessing the embrace of Endymion and Diana in the forest—and a chuckling utterance of "'Tis good! 'tis good! 'tis good!" with all the glee of an enraptured Hollander, were the sounds that aroused the too happy pair from their ecstasy. But before they could break away from their fast-locked enthralment, old Ludwick burst open the inner door of the small semicircular vestibule in which this scene was enacted, and exposed to view the spacious and lofty entrance hall to the castle, so furnished and filled as to make Jacqueline cling closer and closer to the living stem, round which she twined, as though truth, shelter, and conviction were to be found there and there alone.

CHAPTER XI.

Within the hall was assembled a number, which, in its comparatively confined extent, seemed a host, of armed men—knights furnished at all points, squires bearing lances, swords, and helms; pages with banners, shields,

and war-harness; all in fact that could be combined of martial preparation, to give force to a spectacle purposely arranged for effect. The walls were hung with flags of many a brilliant hue and ingenious device, joined together with festoons of Jacqueline's peculiar colours, blue and white; and intermixed with all were decorations of verdant willow branches, while in every vacant space was written, in broad characters,

U
DIENAAR;

the whole offering an emblematical vow of service and fidelity to the cause it typified.

No sooner did Van Monfoort throw open the folding doors, and display Jacqueline in the very act of her personal and most plenary pledge, to what they had all laboured for, and all expected, than a loud cry of enthusiasm burst from the assembled chiefs, and shout upon shout made the walls ring with reverberations of her name. Aroused to the full observance of the scene, she looked and listened almost aghast, at a sight so undreamt-of, and so wild, in what had just before appeared the very centre of solitude, and at that instant only seemed fitting for the silent mysteries of love. Many a strange face caught her wandering gaze, but it was also fixed on that of many stanch adherents familiar to her memory, and pledged to her cause by innumerable proofs. Among these, were William de Brederode, Theodoric de Merwede, Spiering, Dalberg, and several others. But he, whose presence most surprised, and at the same time most pleased her, was Rudolf Van Diepenholt, dressed in all the pomp of full canonicals, with mitre on head, and crozier in hand, to give the weight and sanction of religion to the holy cause, which his associates had sworn to forward at the sword's point. He stood at the upper end of the hall, on a somewhat elevated platform, and when the mass of warriors opened out to give his person fully to Jacqueline's view, he raised his hands in the gesture of prayer, and poured out a short extemporaneous blessing of animating eloquence on Jacqueline and her cause. The pious fervour of her champions was raised still higher by this. It could not be sup-

pressed by any rules of common-place etiquette. Without distinctions of rank or thoughts of precedence, they thronged round their reinstalled sovereign; and a scene took place somewhat similar, but still more inspiring, inasmuch as it was more unlooked-for by her, and far more perilous to her friends, than that of the jay-shooting of Tergoes.

And in the midst of this intoxicating tumult, she gave a retrospective regret to the many brave men who had there been pledged, and had since fallen in her hitherto hapless cause; and even now an involuntary shudder checked the flow of her delight, in dread lest she was committing all that was dearest to her heart in the dark fate that seemed to rule her life.

When the animation of the scene subsided, and explanations of all that was strange, which, indeed, included every thing that she saw, were given to Jacqueline, Vrank—for so we love still to call him in preference to any of his titles—took her hand to lead her to the banqueting-room, where a fitting repast was prepared, on the best scale that the half-furnished state of the castle allowed. This, however, was very insufficient to the due accommodation of so many guests as were now brought together; for, even when the place was regularly inhabited by the foresters or woodwardens, no chance of such a party was ever provided for. Of eatables there was quite enough—of drink an abundant store—but table conveniences were lamentably deficient. Many a brace of high-born barons, or knights well known to fame, ate off the same plate on this occasion, but when it came to the drinking part of the feast that arrangement could not hold good. To supply each man with a vessel of some sort for the quaffing of his liquor—wine, hydromel, or other cordials for the many thirsty palates—was an absolute necessity. The whole store of glass goblet and drinking horn was displayed, but fell far short of the numbers of the guests. The ready invention of the Count of Osterven was not at fault in this dilemma. Not venturing to purchase at Leyden a quantity which must have excited suspicion there, he had the night before ordered some of his varlets to prepare for the morning feast a supply of suitably sized pitchers, formed of the yellowish gray

clay which surrounded the castle, and which was used for such purposes by the potters of the neighbouring towns. These but half-baked, and consequently still imperfectly dry, were, however, admirably suited to the thirsty and not overnice company. Beside each man was placed a pitcher, where goblet or horn was deficient; and each, as he raised his vessel to his head, left the print of his thumb and fingers deep in the sides. These marks were, however, made but *once*, for the custom of the days required that after emptying his vessel for the toast to which he pledged, each wassailer should instantly fling it away, nor do dishonour to the subject, by mixing even the dregs of the liquor with any that should be dedicate to another.

And the very first toast now proposed by the stadtholder, and for which every goblet, horn, and pitcher was filled brimming up, was, as may be divined, in honour of her, to whom politically, as well as personally, he had devoted himself, and to whose cause every man present was equally sworn. We need scarcely describe the enthusiasm inspired by this fresh mention of her name; nor is it necessary to vouch that every thirsty enthusiast saw the bottom of his caniken dry, ere he took it from his lips.

"Throw wide the casements! and let each man follow my example, in doing eternal honour to the toast we have pledged!" exclaimed Van Borselen, rising from his seat, and approaching the windows which were all opened at his bidding.

"There!" continued he, flinging his glass, a curious and valuable one *, from the window into the deep-filled moat, that flowed close under the building at its eastern side—"there! let no pollution of fermented liquid ever

* A glass, which I am well disposed to believe identical with this, is still preserved, and forms one of a beautiful and unique collection formed by Lady Bagot, the British ambassadress at the Hague. It is of that kind which was used at Friesland, long previous to the period of this tale, at banquets given in honour of affianced or newly married lovers. It is tankard-shaped, with a handle and lid. On one segment, for we cannot say side, is painted, rudely enough, the figure of a young man, whose ruddy face, red hair, blue hose, green hat, and rakish air, prove him to be a gay bridegroom, jovially pledging to his mistress—for he holds a cup in one hand, while the other is stuck a-kimbo. And on the reverse, is the fair model of a Frison maiden, broad-set, flat-faced, and leering under a profusion of yellow locks, in red kirtle, and light blue boddice, her left hand grasping a garland, and her right opened out towards her lover, and only separated from his by the green and yellow leaves of a dubious looking daffy-down-dilly.

stain again the vessel sanctified by such a toast, but let it lie to all ages, in the element fit to shrine a vessel so purified!"

This high-flown sentiment was echoed by the rest, and the example followed; every other vessel, which had been so honoured, being flung into the moat, albeit that some of them were doomed to stick for many a cycle in the mud at the bottom of the water. Thence they have been one by one extracted at various epochs since, and preserved with the glass itself; interesting relics to mere antiquaries, and more so still to enthusiasts, who have imagined a fable of Jacqueline having been the maker of these now classical pitchers, and who fancy in the rough finger-prints on their sides, the very pressure of her delicate hand, as a genuine mint-mark to stamp their value with posterity.

We cannot enter in detail on the important business of those explanations which Vrank Van Borselen undertook; firstly, in his proper character under that name; secondly, in his hereditary title, as Heer Borselen of Eversdyke; and thirdly, in his newly acquired dignity as Count of Ostervent. All that is essential for our reader's information is his absolute conviction of Jacqueline's innocence from all the charges which had weighed so heavily against her,—a conviction arising from the minutest inquiries on every point which compromised her reputation. Ludwick Van Monfoort had mainly contributed to let in the light of truth on his mind on these questions. It is of no moment to the object of our tale to relate how he made known to Van Borselen his forgetfulness of all animosity on public ground, and the growth of his personal regard. They soon came together by previous consent as friends; and when they separated again for purposes of reciprocal good, it was as conspirators. The atrocious accusations of Gyles Postel were swept away; the charge of Jacqueline's complicity with John Chevalier, disproved by the production of his dying confession, which did her justice in the most exalted terms, her true situation as to Glocester and Fitz-walter was made clear as day. The evident wrong done her by Philip of Burgundy's usurpation, even after her wretched husband's death, when not even the shadow of such a claim as his existed, was too glaring to require the magnifying lens of Van Monfoort's

eloquence. All, in short, combined to throw Van Borselen fully and fervently into the designs formed for her re-establishment in dominion; and, his deep-rooted attachment being now unrestrained by any obstacle of moral tendency or religious tie, he entered into the grand scheme which, ostensibly tending but to Jacqueline's happiness, involved the most important efforts for his own.

There are periods in which the recorder, as well as the reader of adventures, like these, requires repose. Mutual allowance should be made by the two parties concerned. We now approach the conclusion of our story; and as we have on many occasions, during our progress, repressed, or cut short, many tempting digressions, we now claim indulgence for any apparent omission, having still to relate eventful — the most eventful — incidents of our heroine's fate. We feel sensible of the embarrassment of maintaining well the connected interest of a recital, which should neither lag nor hurry on, neither become prolix nor confused; and craving the patience of our co-partners in the task of getting through the work, we beg them to excuse all imperfections, incidental to its execution at this critical period. Much, therefore, we leave to their own imagining of Jacqueline's and Van Borselen's unbounded delight, in their present re-union as lovers, and in their reciprocal hopes — she, as a reinstated sovereign, he, as the most distinguished of her subjects, to whom she paid back political fealty and homage with her heart's most deep devotion. The wild expression of her long repressed sensations, and the unrestrained enthusiasm of his hitherto reserved and serious character, gave a totally new turn to their habits of thought and action; and showed them to each other and to themselves, in an aspect as extraordinary as it was exquisite.

The full extent of their enjoyments we may not penetrate — the whole of their perilous imprudence we must not tell. Let it suffice that they abandoned themselves, their cause, their friends, their country — all, for the intoxicating rapture of the heart; and it will be soon seen what penalty they paid for the delirious happiness, to which reason brought no control, nor conscience a reproach.

After a few days of secret council and well-digested plans, the various confederates disappeared from Teylingen, which resumed all its wonted solitude of appearance; the small retinue of the stadtholder during this flying visit being but specks in the atmosphere of its loneliness. Even they, too, were in a little while removed to his castle of Zuylen, on the river Vecht, within a league of Utrecht. It was, like Teylingen, a building of great antiquity, which had come into the family of Borselen by marriage, and was at this period used by him as his principal residence in Holland. There he himself retired, after his ostensible purpose of his forest inspection was finished. But he did not retire there quite alone; nor, when unaccompanied, were his days and nights passed in the unsocial gloom of such a retreat. The truth, in fact, must out; at least as much of it as was apparent at the time, or could be sifted by the close observers, whose pleasure or business it was to scrutinize every act, word, or look of the Count of Ostervent, in relation to his renewed intercourse with Countess Jacqueline.

Frequently, then, was it said, the figure of the count was seen rapidly moving through the forest at twilight, in the close neighbourhood of the Hague; and while a varlet with a led horse was remarked loitering about the outskirts in the dawn, having passed the night no one knew where, the same figure used to return on its previous path with a slow and unwilling movement, in wide contrast to the elastic pace of the preceding evening. Whispers had even gone abroad, that a cloak-covered man of the same height as the stadtholder, was more than once observed by moonlight entering the low door of the palace-turret; and when the women of the establishment remarked at morning to old Gobelin the strange noises which had disturbed their sleep, he used to give them angry reproofs, observing, that, "it was hard if the ghosts of the old counts and countesses of Holland might not be allowed to amuse themselves, by occasional gambols in the chambers of their own palace!"

But this was not all. The numerous train of domestics at Zuylen made no secret of avowing that Countess Jacqueline, and her old confidant, came many a time there on

horseback after dusk, and that in spite of her precautions she was observed walking in the gardens with the stadtholder, in all the imprudent exposure of false security. And then her stolen visits to Teylingen on various pretexts — and the marvellous coincidence of his excursions in that direction — and — but need we multiply proofs of all that brought conviction to the public mind? or make our pages, like those of history on this occasion, a scandalous chronicle? No! We admit all the facts — make no defence — and leave the character, the motives, and the morals of our heroine, wholly at our reader's mercy.

It was not possible that Duke Philip of Burgundy should have remained long ignorant of what was notorious to all Jacqueline's enemies, the regret of most of her friends, and the common talk of the country. Among the many who knew of her almost public meeting with the stadtholder at Teylingen, was it to be expected that all were invulnerable to corruption? or supposing that very improbable case, ought it to have been looked for that none of the sordid beings, who watched the suspected and dreaded victim of their employer, could fail to detect the ill-kept secret? Avarice was not certainly in those days, before commercial selfishness extinguished martial generosity, the besetting sin of the Dutch character. The frank and cordial nature of the times coloured the customs of the people. Yet amidst the honest fidelity which distinguished them, one instance of sordid treachery crept in; as a rare occasion of hospitality may, at times, be in our days detected, varying the unsocial exclusion, which so disfigures the better parts of the now national mind.

One day, in the very midst of that inconsiderate abandonment to bliss, which we have striven to describe, a special messenger reached the castle of Zuylen, summoning the stadtholder, in the name of his liege lord, Duke Philip of Burgundy, to repair on the spot to Rupelmonde, there to receive a communication from its governor, the redoubted John Vilain, on a state affair of the utmost importance. This was a circumstance of startling difficulty. In another week the general insurrection was to have broken out. But it would have been most hazardous to hurry it on now, in

consequence of this surprise, it being impossible to communicate with the various chiefs of the confederates in sufficient time to change the previously settled plan. Yet such was Jacqueline's advice. Urged by two impulses — her personal courage, and her woman's fears for him she loved — she thought it better to brave the risk of an immediate revolt than to trust the person of Van Borselen in Philip's hands. This opinion, however strongly urged, was more strongly combated, and finally overpowered by Van Borselen. He argued that any rashness might lead to ruin; that Philip had given him no proof of suspicion; that he was not himself at Rupelmonde; and that an obedience to his mandate would at once disarm any lurking doubt, or remove any sinister impressions. But the secret feeling that prompted this reasoning existed in the fact of that passion which, by a strange anomaly in sensation, urges men to deeds of danger, and blinds them to the risks which may snatch them for ever from the object that alone gives value to life, and in the very time that the object is most worth living for.

Jacqueline found opposition useless, and submitted to the stadtholder's decision with a pang of dismal foreboding, too well founded, as shall be presently seen.

Van Borselen, without the slightest show of hesitation, prepared for his journey; and as soon as the duke's messenger was refreshed and a suitable escort equipped, he was on the road towards Flanders, duly attended, and burning with impatience to know the import of the affair which had thus broken on his brief season of delight, and frustrated the plans meant to make it eternal. He never slept, and scarcely ate, till he reached the castle of Rupelmonde, which stood on the banks of the Scheldt, the walls being washed by the river at one side, and the other being strongly defended by ramparts and the natural protection of a deep ravine that made the place, while its occupiers had the command of the river, almost impregnable. But Vrank lost no time in examination of the fortress. Love dims the vision of the keenest military eye, and adds new activity to the most vigorous limbs. So it was on this occasion, at least; for Vrank scarcely saw the peculiarities

of the place, into which he entered with a rapidity of motion that kept his followers on the stretch, and astonished those by whom he was received — for John Vilain and his garrison marvelled at his want of suspicion of what they knew so well, namely, that the Count of Ostervent was a state prisoner the moment he crossed the castle-moat.

This intelligence was conveyed to him by the governor in no phrase of measured courtesy, but with the blunt and somewhat brutal tone of triumph, which so coarse a mind as John Vilain's might feel, at getting fast hold of a criminal who had once before escaped from his gripe. Never did so full a sense of his own rash confidence strike on mortal man with morce force than that which overwhelmed Van Borselen. Few of his thoughts were given to personal concern — but he pictured the anguish of Jacqueline in this new trial, and he was irresistibly impressed with her own belief, that the fatality which pursued her extended its baneful influence on all connected with her. Still he gloried in the cause, for which he had lived an enthusiast, and was now prepared to die a martyr.

The very morning after his arrival, John Vilain entered the room appropriated to his use, and in the discomfort of which he had passed a night of much misery.

"Count Ostervent," said the the governor, with a disturbed and gloomy air, "I am forced to communicate to you an order just received from his highness the Duke of Burgundy."

"Be seated, governor; calm your perturbation, and read — I am prepared for the contents."

"Well, then — thus it runs," resumed Vilain, recovering his composure a little, taking breath, and reading from the scroll. "'We, Philip, Duke of Burgundy, Count of Artois, Namur, and Hainault, — Ruwart of Holland, Zealand, and Friesland —' By St. Michael, and as I am a true knight, I cannot go on! — I must cut it short, count — it is an order to put you instantly to death!"

In other circumstances the unfortunate prisoner might have smiled at the sensitive delicacy that boggled at the preamble, but made no hesitation in thundering forth the terrible announcement contained in the body of the sen-

tence. As it was, he was for the moment horror-stricken. He had braved death many a time, and could do so manfully again and again, arms in his hands, with his blood up, and his honour untainted, but to die a traitor's death, in the silent ignominy of a prison, was a frightful contemplation, made tenfold more so by the idea of such a separation from her he adored. The anguish of that moment was surely more than ample expiation for all the faults and misdemeanours of an ordinary sinner—and Vrank Borselen was certainly not more than that. But his natural courage and self-command prevailed quickly over this passing suffering. He summoned up all his resolution and presence of mind, and with the fast-clinging love of life, he said,

"This is indeed abrupt! Is the order under Philip's own hand?"

"Ay, Count, too surely so," said Vilain.

"It trembled, when it signed so cruel a sentence, good governor!"

"It is not used to tremble, Count Ostervent."

"Nor are you, valiant knight—yet your hand shakes, and your lip quivers while you merely read the scroll. How then must remorse work in *his* heart, who signed such a warrant against the life of a man unheard in his own defence? Think you not, governor, that he would thank the man who saved his conscience from such remorse, and gave him time to reflect twice on such a matter? Would he not hold himself better served by disobedience than by a too prompt compliance? Where is the duke?"

"At Ghent—I must myself bring him the news of your death—such is my private instruction."

"And can you, brave knight, perform this harsh office, and send a man in the very spring of youth, and known like yourself to honourable fame, to his last account, torn from all he holds dear in life, and unprepared for death?"

"The saints forbid! No, count, the castle almoner is ready in the next cell, to shrive you, while the headsman prepares you for the block, and I myself will take charge of any message to your friends."

"Good governor, is this enough! Is this all the time

you grant me, to make my peace with Heaven, and settle my worldly affairs?"

"Many a brave man, noble count, gets less on the battle-field."

"Ay, governor, but these men are prepared for their fate — they court death in a glorious cause, and die like heroes in the broad eye of fame — but it is far different when the stroke falls suddenly like this, and the severed head is held up in felon infamy? Remember also, governor ——"

"Count Ostervent, my orders are positive and peremptory."

"Then I can make no further appeal — I scorn to become a beggar even for my life — but I see your emotion."

"Do you? Then I *must* cut the matter short — count, we — that is to say, the priest, the executioner and myself — are all ready. I trust you bear *me* no ill will?"

As Vilain uttered these words he opened the door; and Vrank saw in the adjoining room the awful accompaniments of death, indeed all ready — a priest, in his cassock and book in hand, a grim ruffian holding an axe, some half-dozen armed guards, and a small wooden block, on which an assistant was placing a black cloth with one hand, while he held a basket with the other.

Vrank started back and stood still, gaping at this dreadful apparatus. The bold heart that would have swelled and bounded at the sight of legioned hosts sunk and collapsed at a spectacle like this. Whether the victim grew red or pale, whether his limbs shook or his teeth chattered, we neither know nor care. He had been less than man were he unaffected by such a doom — yet worse than craven had he not been able to meet it as a man ought to do. He looked for some seconds on the scene, then suddenly threw his eyes to Heaven — placed his hands on his breast — and then, heaving one deep sigh, as if of farewell to the world, he calmly turned towards the governor and said,

"I am now quite, *quite* ready."

But if he was, or fancied himself so, it seemed as though the governor were not. He in his turn gazed for some

moments on the hideous tranquillity of the preparations outside the cell, and a desperate internal conflict was evident in the workings of his coarse features. His stern frown, fixed teeth, projecting under lip, clenched hands, and rigid attitude, proved eloquently that he was not a mere brutal executor of a tyrant's will, but as humane as he was brave, though neither quality were adorned with the graceful attributes which add so much to their value in more refined possessors. But what could be expected from this rude soldier, when a sense of duty combated his mutinous misgivings?

"No, no — I cannot do it! Follow me, count!" exclaimed he — and he led the way into the outer room. Van Borselen followed him with a firm step; and no sooner were they inside than the headsman advanced towards them, the priest began to mutter the death-prayer, the guards stood to their arms, and the door was closed by the attendant.

About the same hour on the following morning Philip of Burgundy was pacing one of the broad galleries of his palace in the city of Ghent — the same which Jacqueline of Holland had often and often walked in, during her three months' imprisonment not two years before; and from which she had, to his great anger at the time, effected her escape. Philip had few hours free from care, and this was not one of them. Ambition's votaries can seldom give a holiday to thought; much less one who was, like Duke Philip, so steeped in the guilt of spoliation and oppression. Poor though the solace be to suffering humanity, and insufficient as is the penalty thus paid by the oppressor, it is still sweet to know that his triumph is not unalloyed by remorse, and that his hours of solitude are not hours of rest. Imagination, whose angel-visits brighten the virtuous mind, haunts him like a fiend. The blood of the brave thousands crushed by his artillery's wheels rises up before him in suffocating fumes — the shrieks of dying men, despairing women, and orphaned children ring in his brain — the curse of the generous weighs him down — the brand of history is ready to sear his name — and the fear of the grave makes the boldest tyrant start and thrill with horror.

We know not that Philip's acts deserve this extent of expression. It is perhaps prompted by deeds done in the days in which we live, rather than in those of which we write. The crimes of earlier ages may find mercy, in consideration of the darkness of the moral atmosphere in which men walked and erred. But nothing restrains us now from execrating the throned wretch, wilfully blind to the broad blaze of civilised truth, who tramples on his kind, and grows saturate with the best blood of freedom.

Philip walked apart from the attendants of his train. He displayed more than ordinary anxiety. He was now a far different man, in seeming and in every-day habits, from what he was when we showed him to our readers in the tilt-yard of Hesdin. His personal quarrel with Glocester had been long since set at rest, by the decision of the council at Paris, which declared there was no cause of combat between them. His "customs of exercise" were consequently given up; and with them much of that buoyancy of spirit and manner by which he had been distinguished. The protracted troubles of Holland and the success of his usurpation had brought him daily anxiety, and it is to be hoped remorse; while instead of fêtes and tournaments, excursions to Paris, and the inspiring variety of his former life, his time was consumed in negociations with refractory towns, in sifting conspiracies, and consolidating his new acquirements by every art of unworthy chicanery.

"The Governor of Rupelmonde is arrived post-haste, and waits outside for your highness's commands," said the officer next in attendance on Philip's person, approaching a few steps towards his line of promenade.

"Already!" exclaimed the duke, with an impatient and almost furious start, and a stamp on the floor that made the gallery ring. "Oh! this is the curse of power, to find ever at hand tools over anxious to do its most hasty bidding! Let Vilain attend me in my closet!"

With the utterance of this sentiment, (which might have been either the momentary remorse of a man really in a passion, or the affected moderation of pretence,) he quitted the gallery; and in a few moments afterwards the

Governor of Rupelmonde entered his private closet, and stood silently before him.

"Well, John Vilain, why do you not speak? Why stand with that hangman's look, and force me to question you? Is he dead?"

"Needs your highness to ask that question? Dared I disobey your orders?"

"Prithee, good friend, answer me at once. Is he dead?"

"He is, may it please your highness; the Count of Ostervent died a traitor's death yester-morn."

At these words, Philip seemed overwhelmed with grief. "Dead!" exclaimed he, perturbedly pacing the floor. "Dead, and as a traitor too! The gallant and noble stem of the Borselens, the flower of chivalry — oh, John, John! what have you done? And I, why did I not wait for proof? Why not let them consummate the marriage that would have sealed the forfeiture of all her dominions? Oh, John Vilain, my trusty but imprudent friend, we have been too hasty!"

Had Philip's sorrow been merely for the sudden death of a suspected vassal, John Vilain might have perhaps calculated on its passing over without any very violent effect. But the latter part of the duke's speech revealed other motives, which made his regret for this summary execution more likely to sink deep. Seizing on this symptom, Vilain said, in a tone of supplication and doubt.

"Does then, indeed, your highness lament the fate of this young man? Would you that he still lived?"

"Would I? Ay, by my halidome at the price of a province! I have too much blood on my head already, Vilain; and had Borselen lived to marry Jacqueline, as he no doubt would have done but for my angry mandate and your sanguinary zeal, three earldoms had been mine. Would I that he still lived? Ah, John, John, what have I gained by his death?"

"Gained nought, nor yet lost by it, my gracious master," cried Vilain, dropping on his knee; "Van Borselen lives — I have over-held his sentence — if disobedience merits death, take my head — I am ready for the block."

"He lives, he lives! ha, ha! ha! ha!" exclaimed

Philip, laughing hysterically, "he does? You are sure, John? you said just now he was dead — which must I believe?"

"Noble duke, he lives as surely as I kneel before you," replied Vilain, looking up in the smiling face of the duke, who held him by both shoulders, and joyously shook him.

"My worthy John, I am sorry I once knighted thee, that I cannot dub thee now; but here, take this in token of my love; this is the third time thou hast given me my life!"

While he spoke he flung a richly gemmed baldrick, and the sword it carried, over Vilain's head; but before he let it quite rest on his shoulder he added, in a doubtful tone——

"You hold him safe? He is secure?"

"In one of the deepest and dampest dungeons, so it please your highness."

"Then it does not please my highness, good John. Deep and damp! No, no, John — we must keep him high and dry. We must not risk ague or rheumatism to so precious a deposit for Jacqueline's ruin! Go, go, Vilain, ride fast and stop not on your road. Bring him up to your own apartments — feed him well — treat him nobly — he is a valiant knight, Vilain, and of a thick-blooded race that requires comfort and good cheer. The *dampest* dungeon! John, John, it gives me a cold fit but to think of it! Away, away! I shall soon follow thee, with a sufficient force to guard the castle from surprise."

CHAPTER XII.

THE Governor of Rupelmonde hastened back to the fortress, from better feelings than mere anxiety to save his prisoner from an ague. He longed to snatch him from the terrible suspense in which he lingered, and to have the satisfaction of assuring him of his life's safety. He hurried therefore to Van Borselen's dungeon, which was truly what he had described it to Philip; both the captive and the jailor having agreed that the utmost secrecy was necessary

as to his existence until the doubtful experiment on Philip's feelings was well gone through, the failure of which would assuredly have caused Vrank's prompt and silent execution on John Vilain's return from Ghent.

"Well, governor, well?" exclaimed Vrank, as Vilain entered the cell, and flung himself half breathless on the miserable bed which for two days had been the prisoner's resting place.

"What am I to expect or prepare for?" continued he, receiving, instead of an answer, only a convulsive squeeze of one of his hands in the governor's vice-like grasp.

"It is then all over!" said Vrank. "Oh, why did I not die at once? Why linger through these two days of desperate hope?"

"Wait a bit, wait a bit," said Vilain; "Count, give me that pitcher — by Heaven, there is something sticking in my throat. — I am choking!"

Van Borselen, alarmed at the broken and gurgling voice which confirmed this announcement, handed the pitcher to the governor. The latter gulped down a large draught of the water it contained, and then said ——

"Ay, I am better now — I can speak without blubbering. And now let me ask you, count, do you think if I had bad news to tell that I would keep you lingering? No, by St. Andrew! I would have come in with James Brockman by my side, and he should have struck off your head without a moment's notice. No, count, I am not the man to do you or any other gallant knight an unkind or indelicate turn. Your life is safe — the duke has granted it — but I fear it is coupled with a devilish hard condition for any independent man — I much doubt but he will insist on your marrying."

"Your life is safe," were words of such sweet sound, that Van Borselen must be pardoned if all that preceded or followed them were forgotten or unheard. Yet he did not betray any unseemly rapture, for a true knight of chivalry would have been as much disgraced by shewing joy at escape from death, as at fear for condemnation to it. Vrank therefore heard the good news with a decent delight; and only smiled when John Vilain explained to

him, in profound secrecy, that he was certain Duke Philip was bent on forcing him to marry Countess Jacqueline. The removal from the cell below to the chamber above was quickly effected; and the qualifying condition of pardon, so pathetically deplored by John Vilain, was not likely to cause any very great drawback to Vrank Van Borselen's satisfaction.

But few hours had elapsed after this pleasant change in the situation of the latter, when a circumstance, not quite unlooked-for by him, altered the tenor of his treatment once more, and while holding out a prospect of relief, was in reality plunging him in greater peril than before. This was the appearance of several hostile vessels, filled with soldiers, on the river, and bearing up towards the castle, while a body of armed troops were seen approaching it on the landward side.

John Vilain was too good a soldier to be taken quite by surprise. He had been, previously to Vrank's detention, led to expect some outburst of revolt in the provinces of Holland and Zealand, but he did not calculate on their affecting him. But he now saw very clearly from his ramparts that the banner of Burgundy was not flying on the approaching vessels, while the old flag of Holland waved from the mast's head, as well as one with the new colours, so romantically and gallantly adopted by Van Monfoort for Jacqueline's peculiar distinction. No sooner was the governor satisfied that an attack on his fortress was intended by the incoming squadron, and that the release of Van Borselen could be alone its object, than his decision was taken: namely, to defend himself to the last, to blow himself, his garrison, and castle into the air when resistance became hopeless; but long ere matters came to that extremity, to chop off the head of his prisoner, and so obviate any possible chance of his escape, or reproach to himself.

This decision he communicated to Van Borselen, in conformity with his peculiar notions of candour and delicacy; and the first proofs of his sincerity consisted in loading him with chains, and removing him again to his dungeon, where he waited with such feelings of agitation as may be

imagined, during the interval occupied in the fast following transactions.

To John Vilain's great comfort, the troops which approached him by land turned out to be a reinforcement of some hundred men headed by the Duke of Burgundy himself. They entered the castle, unseen from the ships, which were bearing up the river, and were so distributed as to be ready for immediate display to those who might mean to assail the place, and convince them that they were deceived in reckoning on a faint resistance from an insufficient garrison. Almost at the same instant that Philip reached the gates, a small escort approached from another direction, conducting a prisoner, who of all those against whom his crafty efforts were directed, was, next to Van Borselen, the man he most wished to get into his power. It was no other than Rudolf Van Diepenholt, the Bishop of Utrecht, who had incautiously suffered himself to be entrapped by some of Philip's emissaries, and now arrived at Rupelmonde, to make one item in that total of miraculous success which seemed in this, as in all other matters, to crown Philip's plans.

A short interview between the bishop and the duke sufficed to inform the former that much, but by no means all, of his proceedings, in conjunction with Jacqueline and Borselen, were discovered. He was not a man of many words, where words are of little avail; and neither risked committing nor degrading himself unnecessarily. He therefore submitted to Philip's reproaches without reply, and to his threats without remonstrance, and calmly waited the issue of his fate. But he was not treated with any very heavy indignity by the duke, who had other designs than the needless humiliation of his victims. He would, in fact, have instantly ordered Van Borselen's chains to be struck off, had he not had an object in view for almost immediate effect, requiring the appearance of these shackles to complete a somewhat melodramatic, but strictly historical combination.

Philip calculated correctly that Jacqueline herself was on board one of the vessels which now came so gallantly on with a full tide, in all the pride of hazardous and in-

spiring enterprise. She had not lost one moment, after Van Borselen's departure from Zeylen, in getting together with all haste such a body of troops as she and her faithful counsellor Van Monfoort, considered amply sufficient to surprise the isolated castle, to which her forebodings told her Van Borselen was inveigled only for the disgrace and danger of imprisonment, or perhaps for death itself. Two or three hundred picked men with some pieces of ordnance were secretly collected by Van Monfoort and De Brederode, and put on board three trading vessels, which lay ready for the use of the confederates close to one of the islands of the Scheldt; and they safely passed Antwerp without detection, and sailed up the river till they came to its confluence with the Neth, nearly opposite to which stood Rupelmonde. They were no sooner there than the cannons were mounted on the decks; and the bustle incident to this proceeding betraying their hostile views, the colours of Holland and of Jacqueline's cause were boldly hoisted, the soldiers prepared for a prompt landing and immediate assault, and every appearance of vigour assumed, which was likely to strike terror into a feebled and ill-garrisoned place, such as they had certain information that Rupelmonde was.

While the two largest of the vessels, under the command of De Brederode, took up a position in front of the castle, laying their broadsides close, to bear upon it with the whole force of the artillery, Jacqueline caused the other to approach the shore; and disembarking, with Van Monfoort and forty cavaliers, she mounted her horse, the beautiful animal received so lately from her mother, and placing herself at the head of the troop, rode briskly up to the raised drawbridge, that joined the castle-gate, for the purpose of summoning the place to surrender.

Had the Duke of Burgundy been desirous of Jacqueline's total destruction, he might with great ease have sallied forth and accomplished such a catastrophe; but he most probably shrunk before the odium of so terrible a measure, joining the power of tyranny with the craft of tactics. Instead therefore of repulsing the threatened attack, he chose to parley; and, to Jacqueline's infinite

astonishment, he answered her trumpeter's summons by himself appearing on the walls, while at the same instant some hundreds of warriors darted up their helmed heads and brandished spears, swords, and portable missiles of all arms above the battlements.

Jacqueline's heart sunk with terror—not for herself, but from the force of the passion which had previously inspired her energies, and now made them wither under the blighting touch of despair. Had Van Borselen not been the sole object of her thoughts, Philip and his armed soldiers had only excited her indignant courage. But thinking of him alone, she passed over all the gradations of surprise and confusion, which Philip's apparition must so naturally have excited, and she came at once to the point of absorbing interest which it involved. In a voice scarcely articulate, and barely audible in the small open gallery, which hung above the gate for the purposes of parley, she exclaimed,

"Oh, Philip, is he safe? Tell me, in mercy, by your earthly triumphs, and your hopes of Heaven, tell me, does Van Borselen yet live?"

"God's patience! Is it *you*, fair cousin, that gives us this greeting?" replied Philip, in a loud voice, and ironical tone, which excited considerable merriment among the officers by his side, and roused Van Monfoort and the rest of Jacqueline's escort to the height of fury. "You, that come so far to do honour to our presence in this poor place of Rupelmonde? Why, how is this? Does the grand master of the forests come to give an account of his trust to the Ruward, in right of his liege lady, the Countess of Holland? So nobly tended too! Some half hundred harnessed cavaliers, and three battle-ships, well filled with fighting men, instead of the common train of a dozen dingy foresters, in russet doublets, and carrying clumsy pole-axes!"

"Oh, Philip! for the sake of the Virgin, and thy holy patron, St. Andrew, answer me—I sink, I faint from dread! Does he live?"

"What then! Is this, after all, a visit not of courtesy to us, but of inquiry after the noble stadtholder, the valiant

Count Ostervent, the Kabblejaw chief? By my patron, whom you invoke, fair cousin, who may have inspired you with this charity for your old enemy—and the Virgin, who, I much fear me, has not served for your model in chastity, I swear that this moves my wonder!"

"Devils of hell! Why have I not a bow or arquebuss to send a shaft or shot against the insolent tyrant!" exclaimed Van Monfoort, as he placed one arm round Jacqueline's waist, seeing that she was drooping, and almost sinking in her seat, while with the other outstretched, he shook all the anger of a clenched fist in the direction of Philip's position. This imprudence roused Jacqueline to a sense of the danger of exciting the duke's rage, and revived her more than the best-directed efforts of prudence or reasoning could have done.

"Philip!" she cried once more, but in tones expressing desperation rather than exhaustion, "this torture is terrible—I can endure no more. Answer me, does he live? Answer quick and clear, or by Heaven's host I plunge headlong into this deep fosse—and my blood be on thy head!"

She rose up in her seat as she spoke, and holding her reins high in both hands, the noble animal, who had learned to obey her slightest touch, raised his forelegs, and was on the point of bounding across the low parapet that skirted the ditch. Van Monfoort was thrown on one side and nearly unhorsed, by the prompt movement of Jacqueline's palfrey—the others of the escort were several paces behind; nothing intervened between her and the fatal plunge, which would have dashed her to pieces on the rocky bottom of the fosse, when Philip, shocked at the horrid catastrophe so threatened, and which Jacqueline's wild air and tone convinced him was certain to follow a protraction of his cruel mockery, almost threw himself over the balustrade of the little gallery, in his outstretching impatience to stop the desperate result.

"Hold, Jacqueline, hold!" cried he—"He *is* safe—he lives—hold but one moment, and you shall see him safe and well."

Jacqueline instinctively pulled in her palfrey, who reared

and plunged, in brute impatience at restraint, even though saved by it from destruction. At the same moment Van Borselen was led out by the small door opening from the castle into the gallery; and as he stood, loaded with chains, and gazing down in astonished rapture, that made him forget the presence of his tyrant master, his own peril, and all but her on whom his looks were riveted, she uttered one of those short wild shrieks of joy, which such scenes and such only call forth; and viewing at the instant the drawbridge let down, and the castle gate fly open, she threw herself forward on her palfrey's neck, urged him to utmost speed — and he flew rather than galloped across, and disappeared in the gloom of the arched entrance. Before any one of the observers could take breath after this astounding event, the drawbridge began slowly to rise again, and the ponderous gates to close, moved by unseen persons, who worked the chains and pulleys from within. The sound of the palfrey's feet was heard in hollow rattling on the pavement inside. Van Monfoort recovered electrically from his stupified amaze; and darting his spurs into the sides of his steed, Van Borselen's noble gift, he just cleared the drawbridge, and entered the gate, as the one opened upwards, and rose above the chasm it guarded, and the other closed on its creaking hinges, and was fastened by huge self-shooting bolts.

A loud shout of triumph, and a laugh of mockery burst from the battlements. The troop which had formed Jacqueline's escort stood for a moment bewildered at the scene — they then, as if by common consent, though not a word of command was given, wheeled away, and made with all speed to the river side, where, as fast as could be, they reembarked, turning their horses loose in the low pastures, and carrying the strange news, and their own panic on board the little squadron. Within half an hour afterwards, in accordance to a convention between De Brederode and the duke, the former struck both his flags, unarmed his guns, and moored his vessels in peace, if not in friendship, close under the walls of the castle.

It may well be supposed that this eventful half hour was busily and conclusively employed inside.

The wild joy of Jacqueline and Van Borselen as they stood clasped in each other's arms—the triumph of Philip at the success of the stratagem on which he calculated so well for entrapping our heroine—the fury of Van Monfoort —the grave regret of Diepenholt, must all be trusted to the reader's own conception. The consequence of all is quickly told. Philip having now got at once into his power the four individuals most feared by him on earth, and who alone possessed any serious means of opposing his cherished designs of aggrandisement, was enabled to make with each whatever terms he pleased. The first object was to obtain Jacqueline's unconditional abdication of all her rights to Holland, Zealand, and Friesland, as the price of Van Borselen's life. No sooner was the proposition made than she signed a short but explicit act, which was ready drawn up for the occasion by one of Philip's secretaries, even while Jacqueline had held parley in front of the castle. This being duly executed, and signed with her seal of state, which was procured from on board the vessel that bore her on her expedition, it might have been expected—and it was perhaps hoped by some of the parties—that generosity would have paid its tardy visit to Philip's breast, and that he would recompense Jacqueline's sacrifices and sufferings, by proposing a marriage between her and the man she so avowedly loved and lived for. Not so. Whatever Philip might have been inclined to do before they fell into his power, for the purposes of selfish ambition, he was now resolved to give no chance for the existence of some future claimant to the dominions secured after such labour and such iniquity for himself and the heirs he looked for. He therefore resolved that both Jacqueline and Borselen should remain his prisoners for ever, in all the anguish of separation, and the blight of singleness. Flanders was the place he destined for their final imprisonment; but before he removed them to that most secure ground of all his possessions, he felt it necessary to have Jacqueline's renunciation of her claims loudly and beyond cavil proclaimed by herself, in the country most materially affected. It was for this purpose that Philip resolved to remove, in the first instance, with his four prisoners, to Dordrecht, in Hol-

land, where Zweder Van Culemburg had (under his protection) installed himself, and removed the nominal authority of the see of Utrecht, which he still persevered in calling his, notwithstanding his ignominious defeat by Van Diepenholt, the chapter, and the citizens.

The surrender of Van Diepenholt's pretensions was also a point of material interest to Philip; as it would relieve him from the constant dread of Jacqueline's most powerful friend, and secure the restoration of his own devoted creature, which, to a sovereign of Philip's stamp, was equivalent to a stanch adherent. The double abdication of Jacqueline and Rudolf being thus resolved on, with perpetual confinement in some strong fortress to each of his captives, — for Van Monfoort also was no mean prey nor an enemy to let loose again — the duke determined to set out the next day on his triumphal march for Dordrecht; and he gave such orders as ensured for it every possible demonstration of his own power and the utter humiliation of his prisoners.

We shall pass over a description of this march. It was all that the last written sentence promised. Every disposable cavalry soldier within the fortress or the surrounding cantonments swelled the convoy, which was enriched with all the parade of music and banners; and when it reached Antwerp at eve the whole population poured out to gaze on the captives, and make the air ring with shouts of praise in honour of their mighty and magnanimous sovereign.

Another day of easy journeying brought the cortége — now increased to the appearance of a little army — to a second halting place, a few leagues from Dordrecht; and all was again arranged for the resumption of the march at sunrise the following morning, in order that the public entry into the last-named town should be made early in the day, to give ample room for the ceremonies intended in honour of the occasion.

The events of that momentous day must be recorded in another — and concluding — chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEVER was morning ushered in by a night more ominously dismal, or a dawn more fearful, than that which now broke over the whole district through which lay the line of march. Darkness had scarcely thrown its pall on the expiring beauties of the preceding day, when a low moaning was heard to sweep across the plains that stretched westward towards the sea. The dashing of the waves against the defences which centuries had scarcely sufficed to form, sounded like ocean's voice, angrily claiming from man the spoils he had after so long a struggle rescued from its dominion. Those who had listened to the rushing tide might well have shuddered while picturing the early days when the waters rolled for leagues upon the shore, and all that now smiled in culture and wealth was a waste of swamp and marsh, whose savage occupiers were taught by instinct to raise those mounds and dykes, perfected by civilisation, into barriers against the whelming element. And all who listened now might remember how often those barriers had proved insufficient, and fearfully reckon up the inundations which had at intervals desolated the country.

The Duke of Burgundy, and those he conducted, journeyed inland, a few miles from the great volume of ocean; but several branches of the sea ran up in narrow currents through the dead flat of this district; and the cortége was at times forced to make a sweep round the heads of these salt-lakes, to the eastward of the dykes that kept out their encroachments, or to ride across the strand where the passage was safe and easily effected. Such was more particularly the nature of the country, on this last day's march close up to Dordrecht; but all the intervals between these occasional interruptions were covered by numerous villages and highly cultivated pastures. It was, in fact, the most populous and wealthiest district of Holland, a notion of which may be imagined by the traveller who sees the *Pay de Waes*, in Flanders, at this day.

The sound of wailing, at first sent forward by the west wind, at sunset on the evening of the second halt, was soon followed by irregular gusts that spoke the rising wrath of the storm. Flights of wild-fowl, and sea-birds that rarely sought the shore, were faintly seen in the twilight, or heard in the fast-coming gloom, sweeping with outstretched wings before the blast—their shrill screams mixing at times with its whistling voice, or varying its hoarse and hollow tones.

Hour after hour the tempest grew louder and stronger. The sea rose with the increasing wind, and the natural roar of the billows made fierce harmony with the awful echoing of their splash against the dykes. No mortal closed an eye in sleep that night throughout the populous tract we describe, save the worn victims of disease, and even they must have touched close on the extinction of life, who were not roused by terror at the elemental war.

At day-break the storm was at its height. The desolate look . . earth was in keeping with the dull gray of the sky and the muddy foam which rose on the turbid waters. Fear seemed to have seized on every living thing. The people were all abroad. Some were seen exerting their utmost energy in repairing and strengthening the dykes, wherever the slightest symptom of failure was perceived. Others drove the cattle into shelter, while the plaintive lowing of cows and the timid bleat of sheep spoke the subduing influence of the general alarm. The sun at length rose, not in dazzling brightness, or through an atmosphere of many-coloured tints, all tinged with golden radiance—but with red, dull and bloated disk, like some drunken reveller slowly rising through the fumes of a debauch.

The stern heart of Philip of Burgundy did not quail at these symptoms of evil omen, which might have persuaded a more superstitious man that Heaven was wrathful at his iniquitous projects. As the wind blew, and his frightened horse recoiled from the blast, he only wrapped his cloak the closer, struck his spurs deep, and reiterated his commands for the march. The advanced guard was already forward; and the duke, with his prisoners, close

followed by the main body, was soon moving on, in the regular order of the preceding days.

Progress was, however, extremely slow, and with great difficulty feasible at all. Gusts of wind at times stopped, not only the advanced picquets but compact squadrons; men were unhorsed; steeds and riders suddenly whirled round, or overthrown together; and the blocked up passage of the narrow road, more than once threw the whole into confusion. Then came the angry efforts of ill-tempered men, and the resistance of restive beasts, the loud vociferations of the chiefs; the curses of the soldiers; neighings, snortings, tramping on the paved road, splashing in the water that in places overflowed it; but all at intervals outvoiced and hushed, by the terrific roar of the west wind, which bellowed like a troop of forest-monsters above the shrieks of their flying prey.

Philip, impatient at the obstacles which crowded the road and stopped the march, had pushed on to the front to set an example of perseverance, and disembarrass himself from the throng among whom he was crushed and hustled. The prisoners kept close to him, by his invitation. Jacqueline and Van Borselen were side by side behind the duke. Van Diepenholt and Ludwick came next, and some stragglers of the advanced guard followed without any order of precedence. Above an hour was thus consumed, and not a league yet traversed, when they arrived at a pass, formed by some wooded sand-banks on the one side, and on the other by a tolerably high dyke, or mound of earth, over which the spray of the waves dashed into the road, while its loosened and broken construction was visibly shaken, and threatened with utter overthrow by each successive sea-stroke which lashed it outside.

Standing close at the base of the mound, at times shrouded by the spray, and even during the respites from its attacks dripping from head to feet, were four men, between the ages of twenty and thirty, each armed with the peculiar spade or shovel, used for dyke-digging labour, and all in a costume totally different from that of the inhabitants of the district where they were now found. The reader, who remembers the dress described as worn by

Vrank Van Borselen's companion in the Zevenvolden, may correctly picture that of the four strangers; and Duke Philip, with those around him, who had seen, and closely remarked the countenance of that personage, thought they could trace in the half-savage and drenched features of the men now before them, a strong likeness to it — a resemblance, however, of the species, rather than the individual, such as the lion's cubs might bear to their sire. Vrank Van Borselen knew the men well; and an innate conviction, founded on this knowledge, told him they were there to do him service. He was satisfied they had not for nothing found their way from Eversdyke, where he had certain intelligence they had been four days previously; and the place of this unexpected meeting, the air of resolution which frowned in the four faces, and, more than all, the non-appearance of *him*, who, something irresistibly whispered Vrank, was yet not far off, convinced him that some deep-laid scheme, some desperate effort for his rescue, was now on the point of execution.

With this conviction he turned to Jacqueline, who had all along contrived to keep her beautiful and spirited palfrey close by the side of his, and he said to her, his face glowing the while with courageous hope,

"My own beloved one, my matchless Jacqueline, all is well; there is freedom and safety at hand."

"Count Ostervent, what mean those words?" asked Philip, sternly, and suddenly wheeling round his horse, as though the impulse which prompted his question was not altogether unaided by a disinclination to press too much forward into the strange company so close before him.

"Their meaning, duke, must be found in their fulfilment — Heaven works for the innocent — our deliverance is at hand!" answered Van Borselen, closely pressing Jacqueline's waist within his arm.

"Who are yonder men? free Frisons, methinks?" said Philip, still urging his horse, as if to pass back to the straggling soldiers of the advanced guard.

"The sons of Oost, the dyke-digger," replied Vrank, still in a respectful tone, but without making way for the retreating duke.

"And where is their fierce father?" said Philip, looking round with an anxious stare.

"*Here* he is, Philip?" cried Oost, in his loudest and harshest key, and in the low German jargon, the only language he spoke, (though he had picked up a smattering of others,) springing at the same time from the shrubs which skirted the wood and came close to the road.

"Ah! treason! treachery!" exclaimed Philip, at the apparition of this terrible figure; and with these words he dashed forward, endeavouring to burst through the impediments to his flight. But while Oost seized his bridle with a powerful grasp, and held his horse fast with as much ease as a common man might master the struggles of a child, Van Monfoort and Van Diepenholt, promptly seeing the state of things, closed upon the unhappy duke, who thus saw himself completely caught in his own net, and threatened with destruction by the instruments he had wrought with, as if for his own ruin.

What followed was acted with more rapidity than may be traced by pen, told by tongue, or imagined by thought. Sculpture or painting can alone embody the vivid variety of such events, and show forth at once a group of incidents and passions, forming a living combination of all that may interest or agitate the mind.

"Away, away! There, there! The wide world is now your own;" halloed Oost, in the peculiar idiom of Friesland, which Van Borselen alone understood, and stretching forth one muscular arm towards the sea.

"Away, Jacqueline, away, my beloved!" echoed Vrank, heading his horse in the direction pointed out by Oost's rapid gesture. She needed no more than his example or his command to rush with him into the open arms of death; and little less seemed their joint movement now, to the astonished eyes of Philip, Ludwick, and Rudolf, as they breasted the sloping dyke, and appeared to court the watery grave beyond.

"Now, now, my sons!" cried Oost to the four men — and simultaneously with his signal they each struck their weapons deep into the already loosened summit of the dyke,

and with every stroke a gash was made, through which the water hissed and oozed in frightful rapidity.

"Well done, bold dyke-diggers!" said he again, and at each renewed stroke which let in destruction upon both him and them he cried—but never loosening hold of Philip and his horse's rein—"Well done, Tabbo! Bravely struck, Ubbo! Ha, ha, for Igo of the strong arm! Good, good, young Gosso, my last born boy! Free Frisons all, for life and death!"

While Philip struggled for escape as if in the last agony, and his frightened followers all fell back in total derout, not one coming to his aid, Van Borselen and Jacqueline having gained the top of the mound, which crumbled under their horse's hoofs, and they were a moment visible, struggling to urge the animals down the opposite side; but every effort was repelled by the fierce storm-gusts which continually forced them back, and threatened to blow them prostrate on the road. The waves now rushed freely in, and the fierce workmen, self-sacrificed, and in their dreadful task, were mid-deep in the water, mud, and sand which poured down the dyke.

Van Monfoort seeing Jacqueline's perilous situation, thought only of her, but had neither means of succour, nor a notion how to aid her. Van Diepenholt, with a clearer head, and a mind less absorbed by others' danger, resolved on an effort to escape from his own. He felt that Van Borselen must have had Oost's authority for the seeming madness of his course. He therefore pressed forward for the place where he and Jacqueline still struggled—Van Monfoort followed instinctly—they forced their horses to scramble up the mound—and just as they reached the top, Van Borselen and Jacqueline having a moment before disappeared beyond, the whole mass came down, swept inwards by the booming sea, which rushed after in one wide, earth-swallowing deluge.

Billow after billow poured surging on, chasing each other with loud roar, like barbarian hordes shouting over the conquest of some fair and fertile land. In less time than fancy can suppose possible for such destruction, a whole district was overflowed. No hill existed to oppose—no

rock to mark the depth, or measure the speed of the inundation — but the thirsty soil drank the waves, till, replete and saturated, it flung them up again, thickened, discoloured, and loathsome. Men and cattle were drowned; houses dashed down; trees uptorn; their roots wrenched from their grasp in the deep soil, and huge masses of earth scooped out by the sharp waves, and whirled up to the surface of the seething flood. The horrible rapidity of such a catastrophe in such a country left no time for flight, no place for refuge. Fate struck quick and strong. Within an hour an extent of many square miles was under water, seventy-two villages were submerged, and full one hundred thousand human beings had perished. A new sea was formed — a whole district blotted from the world's face — and many a voyager now steers his course through the broad waves of the *Bisbosch*, without even knowing that he sails over a space once fertile and flourishing, a second Atlantis — or casting a glance into the waves, or a thought into time, for the monuments covered by the one, or the thousand associations of history and romance deep buried in the other.

In the very earliest burst of the deluge through the torn-down dyke, Oost and his four sons were suffocated by the mingled ruins. Self-immolated in the cause to which he had vowed his existence, and swore to sacrifice his life, the noble savage and his congenial children quitted the world without a pang, save those of the physical agony which they despised. Deep in the plot which was to have burst out so soon, and in which he embarked, with his usual ferocious fidelity, Oost heard soon, like Vrouwe Bona and the rest of the confederates, of Van Borselen's detention in Rupelmonde. To rescue the Lord of Eversdyke, or perish in the attempt, was his firm resolve. His sons had no thought beyond his will. Patriarchial and feudal authority were combined in the person of every Frison father; and to bid his children follow his footsteps, and to share his fate, was to have it done. Oost's quickness and sagacity were not surpassed by any wood roving Indian, who traverses whole wastes of forest to relieve a friend, or kill a foe. He scarcely entered on the confines of Holland, when

he learned of Philip's triumphal march towards Dordrecht; and he was not long in fixing on the place in which, with the assistance of his sons, he saw a fair chance of effecting the rescue of Vrank and Jacqueline, and the destruction of Philip and such of his host, for whose safety Heaven might not interpose a miracle — but neither calculating or caring for the immensity of ruin which followed. Such was not interposed. Of all the brilliant train that followed their sovereign's steps on that wild march, not one was left to tell the tale.

But Philip's good fortune saved him from the general fate, and procured him a protector in one whom he expected to find a relentless witness of his destruction.

The unerring sagacity of Oost had made him remark and single out a sand-formed elevation, the only one near the head of that arm of sea, which was dammed out by the dyke he subsequently destroyed. It lay a few score yards northwards of the mound, and was sufficiently large and firm to act as a breakwater for its preservation, turning off the surge furiously to windward, and forming a shallow and comparatively smooth channel between it and the shore.

It needs not to be told that it was to this haven of safety that poor Oost pointed in that last exertion of devoted service, that showed Vrank the way to freedom. And there did he and Jacqueline safely stand, just joined in time by Van Monfoort and Van Diepenholt, and all looked awe-struck back, on the sublime desolation from which they had miraculously escaped.

As they gazed and marked the billows, frightfully populous with hideous forms of death, one living being caught their eye, clinging with convulsive grasp to the branch of an old oak, the only tree that had withstood the shock, and even that was bent and bowed down to the water, and every instant threatening to sink, like its fellows of the forest. In the drenched and agonised man, who thus grappled with fate and buffeted the waves that washed over and threatened to choak him, the group of Providence's chosen-ones recognised the person of the magnificent, the mighty Duke of Burgundy.

Vrank Van Borselen knew no impulse then but generous

humanity. Wrongs passed or intended were expunged from his memory, while the long account of princely kindnesses, and late honours received from Philip, rose swelling in his mind, more buoyant and more palpable from the warm-gushing pity, which now seemed to overflow his breast.

"What!" cried he, as if a moment's internal struggle had held him back, "shall I be outdone by those half-civilised men, who have lost themselves to save such a one as I am! Shall I let the pride of chivalry and Europe's masterpiece perish like a drowned dog!"

He waited no answer to these questions, even from himself to whom they were put; but driving his horse headlong into the flood, and holding him well up, he was quickly borne close to the spot on the watery waste where Philip clung, almost senseless from exhaustion and fright. Vrank staid his own course by seizing another branch, and shouted to Philip to loose his hold, and drop behind him on the horse's croup. A wild stare was Philip's only notice of the summons. The flood was rushing on, and had just swept the animal round into a less favourable direction, when the duke recovering a full sense of the only chance for escape, sprang actively away, gained the safe seat, and grasped Vrank's waist with one hand, still holding in the other a portion of the branch which had so long kept him up, with the tenacious clutch of giant-nerved despair. The eddying current favoured Vrank's return. He urged on his horse by hand and heel. The animal's instinct forced it to utmost exertion. Philip was not idle in efforts to increase the speed with which it swam — and a few minutes brought it and its double cargo of mortality to the safety-mound.

There Jacqueline sat on her trembling palfrey, benumbed with wet and cold, pale, shivering, and awe-stricken — yet offering up warm thanksgiving for the safety of the hero to whom her heart and soul were pledged.

Philip instantly flung himself from the horse, sank on his knees, and fell prostrate, in the deep sincerity of pious acknowledgments to Heaven. A low-murmured prayer first passed his lips, fresh glowing from his heart. He

next bethought him of the man who had saved him; and his varied emotions of admiration, remorse, and gratitude, for awhile kept him dumb.

A movement of princely munificence promptly spoke to the identity of Philip's character, and stamped it as unaltered, though at once subdued and elevated, by this awful trial.

"Here, Count Ostervent," cried he, at the same time taking the splendid collar and medal of the golden fleece from his neck and placing it on Vrank's — "Here is the proudest distinction my gratitude may bestow. I make thee one of the noblest order which Christendom may boast — Thou art now in brotherhood and fellowship with kings! I name thee, too, lord of East and West Voorne, of Mastersdyke and Brille — I confirm thee stadtholder and governor of Holland, Zealand, and Friesland — I endow thee with ——"

"Hold, hold, my sovereign!" said Vrank, "shame not an act of sheer humanity, by loading it with praise and payment due but to deeds of most heroic stamp."

"And is not this heroism? Is not the forgiveness of evil done, the snatching from perdition of a deadly foe, a deed for sovereigns to reward, and Heaven to bless? Thus, then, I make my poor atonement to thee and her whose heart enshrines thee in its core. Yes, Jacqueline, this hour of awe and dread shall witness my repentance. Thou shalt be his — he thine — both evermore each other's! I give not mere consent — but I command, implore ye, for my happiness as for your own bliss, to be this day but one — joined in eternal bonds of marriage as of love. Look yonder at that fleet sweeping towards us with swelling sails, to rescue what is left of this sad pageant of destruction. It will soon bear us hence to shore. Let your first act of gratitude to Heaven be the union of two thankful hearts, a sacrifice more worthy than burnt-offerings! Be married this very day!"

Philip was amazed to see a faint smile, which even the awful spectacle around could not quite repress, quiver on Jacqueline's and Van Borselen's pallid lips, like a quick glancing sunbeam on a frozen stream. They clasped each

other in a close embrace, but spoke not. Van Diepenholt, exchanging a significant glance with them and Van Monfoort, said in solemn accents —

"Duke Philip, thy consent, command, or entreaty, each and all come too late. Heaven has already effected what thou would'st have opposed, but might not prevent. A month gone I joined this couple in holy wedlock at the chapel-altar at Teylingen, bright love her dowry and proud honour his inheritance, with Van Monfoort here for witness of the rite. What Heaven has joined, man may not, durst not separate!"

"Yet these impious hands, this irreverent tongue were moved to do that deed?" exclaimed Philip, with a tone of bitter remorse. "Thank Heaven I was spared an act of gloom and guilt! and now for retribution! Jacqueline, from this hour I reinstate thee in thy rights, full and unshackled mistress of all that was ever thine, and which I ought never to have looked upon with ambition's narrow glance, Countess of Holland, Zealand, Hainault ——"

"No, Philip, no!" said Jacqueline in fervent and impassioned accents — "never shall those vain titles be mine again — never shall aught but the sway over one noble heart be my sovereignty! Here, in this harrowing yet hallowed scene, I renounce the pomp of worldly greatness. Devoted to privacy and bliss, my days shall now run free from the agonising pangs of power. I vow myself to love, retirement, and calm virtue, an humble but pure offering to the omnipotent being who has saved us all!"

The records of history prove that the vow so solemnly made was devoutly kept.

The fleet of fisher-boats, carracks, and ships of war now came on, from every quarter where the inundation was visible. The immense expanse covered by the sea sufficed to calm its fury; and it floated in deep calm and still repletion over the tract it had engulphed, as a glutted tiger might lie down reposing on the mangled body of its prey.

Few, very few, except the one group that interests us most, were snatched from death. *They* were carried safely off in one of the boats. And even in that hour, with a heart swelling with joy for her own deliverance, and horror

at the wide-sweeping destruction, Jacqueline could not repress a sigh, and barely restrained a tear, for the beautiful horse who had swam with her to safety, but which was, of stern necessity, left to perish with its fellows in the fast-flowing flood that soon swept them from the mound.

The public marriage of Jacqueline and Vrank Van Borselen took place in the old halls of Eversdyke. Is the fancy of a romancer required to picture the acclamations that broke from its delighted groups — the calm and regulated pleasure of the old; the wild rapture of the young, who shared in the general joy? And can the most uncurbed imagination that ever pierced the mysteries of the human mind — tell what and how *they* felt, the pair who sat down at length in the calm sunset of wedded bliss, and in the leafy shade of private life?

Need we tell how smooth, how brilliant, how quick the years passed by? Or shall we stop the soft murmur of the stream, to dive in its placid current, seek whirlpools and rocks beneath, or tell how at length it was arrested in its course, and dashed over the brink of the dark grave?

No, we have traced what they suffered in their perilous trials. Let the knowledge of what they afterwards enjoyed be gathered from the fact, that from the moment of their second marriage their names are lost to history. What better proof could be that their days were unbroken in upon by the world's turmoil, and their nights devoted to its forgetfulness! — the one, the only real luxury of life!

Jacqueline passed the rest of her happy existence alternately at Zuylen, Eversdyke, and Teylingen. In the last of those castles she died. And we do not envy him who can gaze on its ruins to-day, or pace the grass-covered courts, without his mind being carried back to her whose happiest and whose latest hours were passed within those time-worn walls, which read such deep and varied lessons to all who can feel and think.

For the rest we refer to history. Philip's long career of greatness and *goodness* — so called — was the wonder of his times, and is still the admiration of ours.

Glocester and his frail partner went on as might be

looked for, till her unholy ambition ruined and lost them both. For their subsequent history, and that of Elinor's vile creatures, Bolingbroke and Jourdain, Shakspeare's ever-living page must speak.

St. Pol felt the withering influence of all who crossed Philip's path of greatness. He followed his wretched brother to the grave, ere he was well seated in his sovereign chair; and was, as well as Jacqueline, succeeded by the Duke of Burgundy as his uncontested heir. Bedford was soon removed from life, full of fame—but blotted by one ineffaceable stain.

De Richemont lived long enough to make a glorious name, founded on inveterate hatred and great success against the English arms, and a large share in the deliverance of his country from the invader's grasp.

Van Diepenholt was soon confirmed in his bishopric of Utrecht—and Zweder Van Culemburg died in obscurity, as he had lived in disgrace.

Vrouwe Bona Van Borselen reached a good old age, doubly happy in the society of her dear son and the reflection of having revenged her husband. One thing alone seemed at times to darken her joy—the memory of a feeling which lingered to the last in old Floris's mind with respect to Vrank—a never-to-be-forgotten regret, close married to resentment, that he had shown a reluctance so degenerate, to plunge in the bliss of civil war, and to imbrue his hands (if *duty* called) in the heart's-blood of his father.

* * * * *

In the year 1769, nearly three centuries and a half from the period of our tale, the vaults of the chapel of the Counts of Holland in the Hague were opened. Coffins and skeletons were found. One body was almost in a perfect state of preservation, enwrapped in costly searcloths. It was that of a female. The head dress was garnished with rose-coloured ribbons. When the assistants of the ceremony of exhumation raised this body up it crumbled instantly to dust—the squalid skeleton and long thick tresses alone remaining, of her who was once the paragon of beauty, greatness of soul, and goodness of heart.

The bones were piously reburied. The hair is to this day preserved *, as it once graced her head; and its strong natural curl, and the few straggling lines of grey that silver its light brown wreaths, tell how firm was the mind and how tried the heart of her, who lived as we have told, and who died in her prime, too deeply touched by the hand of premature decay.

* In the Museum of the Hague.

THE END.

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