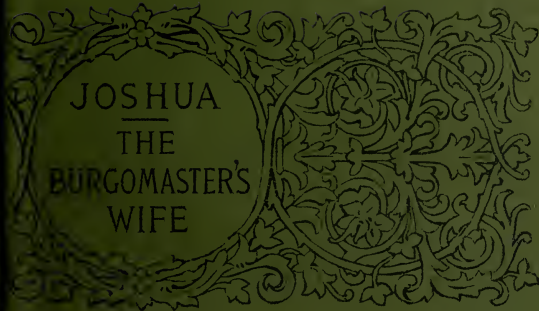


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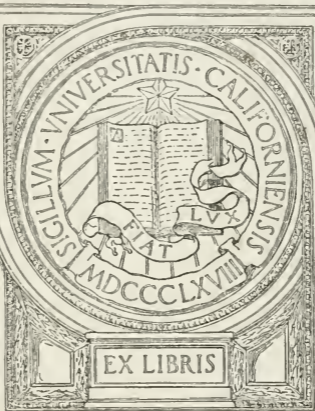
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A large, intricate decorative border in a dark green color, featuring a complex pattern of leaves, vines, and flowers. It frames the title text on the left side of the cover.


JOSHUA
THE
BURGOMASTER'S
WIFE

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Emil G. Beck
1865-1932



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JOSHUA.

A BIBLICAL PICTURE.

BY GEORGE EBERS.

AND

THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE.

A ROMANCE.

BY GEORGE EBERS.



NEW YORK:
JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY,
142 TO 150 WORTH STREET.

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY
OF
GUSTAV BAUR.

GIF.
Book.

PT 1951
E 5162
1839

PREFACE.

WHEN in the course of last winter I made up my mind to finish this book and occupied myself in giving it the form in which it is now offered to the public, I constantly bore in mind the dear friend to whom I always intended to dedicate it. Now, it is my sad privilege to inscribe it only to the Manes of Gustav Baur, for death snatched him away only a few months since.

Every one who had ever come into close communion with him felt his death as an unspeakably bitter loss, not only because his bright and cheerful nature and happy wit brought light to the soul of his friends; not only because he was ready from the brimming stores of his abundant knowledge to give freely to all who came into intellectual contact with him; but, above all, because the warm heart which beamed through his eyes, made him feel the joy and sorrow of others as his own, and throw himself into their thoughts and feelings. Till my latest day I can never forget how, in these latter years, infirm in body and overwhelmed with the work of a professor and a member of the Consistory, he would still constantly find his way to see me, his yet more crippled friend. The hours it was then my good fortune to spend in eager conversation with him, were such as we "write down good," to quote old Horace, whom he knew and loved so well. I have done so; as I gratefully recall them my friend's voice sounds in my ear asking: "And what about the tale of the Exodus?" When I first told him that it was in the midst of the desert, while following up the traces of the fugitive Hebrews, that the idea had occurred to me of treating their wanderings in a work of imagination, he expressed his approval with the captivating eagerness which was characteristic of the man. When, then, I developed the idea which I had first sketched riding on a camel, he never was weary of encouraging me, although he quite understood my hesitation and fully recognized the difficulties which surrounded the execution of my task.

This book, then, in a certain sense, is his, and the fact that it can no longer be offered to him living, can never

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be the subject of his subtle judgment, is one of the sorrows which make it hard to accept with a good grace the advancing years which otherwise have brought so much that is sweet.

He, who was one of the most famous, clear-sighted and learned students of the Bible and its exegesis of our day, was familiar with all the critical labours which have been published within the last few years in the field of Old Testament criticism. He took up a determined attitude against the views of a younger school who endeavor to expunge the Exodus of the Israelites from the page of history, and regard it as a later outcome of the myth-forming spirit of the people; a theory which he, like myself, regarded as untenable. One of his sentences on this question, dwells in my memory, to this effect: "If the events recorded in the Second Book of Moses really never occurred—a hypothesis I entirely reject—then no historical event entailing equally important results need have happened anywhere or at any time. The story of the Exodus has, for thousands of years, survived in the minds of numberless human beings as a real event, and has influenced them as such. Hence it is no less certainly a part of history than the French Revolution and its results."

But in spite of such encouragement, for many years I lacked courage to bring my tale of the Exodus to a conclusion, till, last winter, an unexpected request from abroad prompted me to take it up again. I then carried it through without interruption and with fresh spirit, and I may say with rejuvenated delight in the perilous and yet fascinating theme.

The locality of the narrative, the scenery in which it moves, I have described as exactly as possible from that which I saw in Goshen and the Sinaitic peninsula, and it will answer to the preconceptions of many a reader of "Joshua." With regard to those parts of the story which I have introduced on the ground of ancient Egyptian lore it will be different. They will surprise the novice, for few, perhaps, have ever reflected as to how the events related in the Bible from the Jewish point of view, may have effected the Egyptians; or what the political condition of the land of the Pharaohs may have been when they bid the Israelites depart. I have endeavored to depict these things as truly as possible from the monumental records. For the portraits

of the Hebrews mentioned in Scripture the Bible is the best authority, and the character of the Pharaoh of the Exodus is also painted from the Bible narrative; it agrees very remarkably with the remaining pictures of the weak King Menephtah. From the history of a somewhat later period I have borrowed and introduced the conspiracy of Siptah; the accession of Seti II. and the person of Aarsu the Assyrian, who, according to the Harris Papyrus No. I. (London) seized the reins of government after Siptah had been proclaimed king.

Monsieur Naville's excavations have left no doubts as to the position of Pithom, or Succoth. They brought to light the fortified Storehouse of Pithom mentioned in the Bible; and as the narrative tells us that the Israelites rested there, and then set forth again, it must be assumed that they conquered the garrison of the building and took possession of the contents of the vast granaries which may be seen at this day.

In my work, published so long ago as 1868,* I already pointed out that the Etham of the Bible was identical with the Egyptian Khetam, that is to say, the line of fortresses which protected the Isthmus of Suez from the attacks of the peoples of the East, and my opinion has long since been generally accepted. It fully explains the return of the wanderers from Etham.

The Mount of the Lawgiving is, to me, the majestic peak of Serbal, not the Sinai of the monks; my reasons are fully explained in my work on Sinai.† I have also endeavoured, in the same book, to show that the resting place called in the Bible Dophkah, is identical with the abandoned mines now called Wadi Maghâra.

The writer has endeavoured by means of the actors in his tale, their adventures and reflexions—in part the invention of his own fancy—to make the mighty destinies of the people he has attempted to describe, more humanly real to the sympathetic reader. If he has succeeded in this, without seeming to dwarf the splendid narrative of the Bible, he has attained his end; if he has failed, he must rest content with the pleasure and personal exaltation he has enjoyed while composing the work. GEORG EBERS.

TUTZING am Starnberger See. September, 1889.

* *Egypten und die Bucher Mose's.* Leipzig, W. Engelmann.

† *Durch Gosen nach Sinai.* Leipzig, W. Engelmann. Second Edition, 1882.

GENERAL PREFATORY NOTE

TO THE

LIBRARY OF FOREIGN LITERATURE.

By THE EDITOR.

THERE is nothing in which the Anglo-Saxon world differs more from the world of the Continent of Europe than in its fiction. English and American readers are accustomed to satisfy their curiosity with American and English novels, and it is rarely indeed that we turn aside to learn something of the interior life of those other countries the exterior scenery of which is often so familiar to us. We climb the Alps, but are content to know nothing of the pastoral romances of Switzerland. We steam in and out of the picturesque fjords of Norway, but never guess what deep speculation into life and morals is made by the novelists of that sparsely peopled but richly endowed nation. We stroll across the courts of the Alhambra, we are listlessly rowed upon Venetian canals and Lombard lakes. We hasten by night through the roaring factories of Belgium, but never pause to inquire whether there is now flourishing a Spanish, an Italian, a Flemish school of fiction. Of Russian novels we have lately been taught to become partly aware, but we do not ask ourselves whether Poland may not possess a Dostoieffsky and Portugal a Tolstoi. Yet, as a matter of fact, there is no European country that has not, within the last half century, felt the dew of revival on the threshing-floor of its worn-out schools of romance. Everywhere there has been shown by young men, endowed with a talent for narrative, a vigorous determination to devote themselves to a vivid and sympathetic interpretation of nature and of man. In almost every language, too, this movement has tended to display itself more and more in the direction of what is reported and less of what is created. Fancy has seemed to these young novelists a poorer thing than observation, the world of dreams fainter than the world of men. They have not been occupied mainly with what might be or what should be, but with what is, and in spite of all their

shortcomings they have combined to produce a series of pictures of existing society in each of their several countries such as cannot fail to form an archive of documents invaluable to futurity.

But to us they should be still more valuable. To travel in a foreign country is but to touch its surface. Under the guidance of a novelist of genius we penetrate to the secrets of a nation, and talk the very language of its citizens. We may go to Normandy summer after summer and know less of the manner of life that proceeds under those gnarled orchards of apple-blossom than we learn from one tale of Guy de Maupassant's. The present series is intended to be a guide to the inner geography of Europe. It presents to our readers a series of spiritual Baedekers and Murrays. It will endeavor to keep pace with every truly characteristic and vigorous expression of the novelist's art in each of the principal European countries, presenting what is quite new, if it is also good, side by side with what is old, if it has not hitherto been presented to our public. That will be selected which gives with most freshness and variety the different aspects of continental feeling, the only limits of selection being that a book shall be, on the one hand, amusing, and on the other wholesome.

One difficulty which must be frankly faced is that of subject. Life is now treated in fiction by every race but our own with singular candor. The novelists of the Lutheran North are not more fully emancipated from prejudice in this respect than the novelists of the Catholic South. Everywhere in Europe a novel is looked upon now as an impersonal work, from which the writer, as a mere observer, stands aloof, neither blaming nor applauding. Continental fiction has excluded, in the main, from among the subjects of its attention, all but those facts which are of common experience, and thus the novelists having determined to disclaim nothing and to repudiate nothing which is common to humanity; much is freely discussed, even in the novels of Holland and of Denmark, which our race is apt to treat with a much more gingerly discretion. It is not difficult, however, we believe—it is certainly not impossible—to discard all which may justly give offence and yet to offer to an American public as many of the masterpieces of European fiction as we can ever hope to see included in this library. It will be the endeavor of the editor to search on all hands and in all languages for such books as combine the greatest literary value with the most curious and amusing qualities of manner and matter.

EDMUND GOSSE.

JOSHUA.

CHAPTER I.

“Go down, grandfather. I will keep watch.”

But the old man to whom the words were spoken shook his shaven head.

“But up here you will get no rest.”

“And the stars?—or even below; rest, in such times as these! Throw my cloak over me—rest in such a fearful night!”

“You are so cold; and your hand and the instrument shake.”

“Then steady my arm.”

The lad willingly obeyed the request; but after a short space he exclaimed: “It is all in vain. Star after star is swallowed up in black clouds. Ah, and the bitter cry of the city comes up. Nay, it comes from our own house. I am sick at heart, grandfather; only feel how hot my head is. Come down, perchance they need help.”

“They are in the hands of the gods, and my place is here. But there, there! Eternal gods! Look to the north across the lake! No, more to the westward. They come from the city of the dead!”

“Oh, grandfather, father, there!” cried the youth, a priestly neophyte, who was lending his aid to an elder whose grandson he was, the chief astrologer of Amon-Ra.

They were standing on the watchtower of the temple of the god at Tanis, the capital of the Pharaohs, in the north of the land of Goshen. As he spoke he drew away his shoulder on which the old man was leaning. “There, there! Is the sea swallowing up the land? Have the clouds fallen on the earth to surge to and fro? Oh, grandfather, may the immortals have mercy! the nether world

is yawning ! The great serpent Apep is come forth from the city of the dead ! It comes rolling past the temple. I see it, I hear it ! The great Hebrew's threat is being fulfilled ! Our race will be cut off from the earth. The serpent ! Its head is set toward the southeast. It will surely swallow up the young sun when it rises in the morning ! ”

The old man's eyes followed the direction of the youth's finger, and he, too, could discern that a vast, black mass, whose outline was lost in the darkness, came rolling through the gloom, and he, too, heard with a shudder the creature's low roar.

Both stood with eye and ear alert, staring into the night, but the star-gazer's eye was fixed not upward, but down, across the city to the distant sea and level plain. Overhead all was silent, and yet not all at rest, for the wind swept the dark clouds into shapeless masses in one place, while in another it rent the gray shroud, and scattered them far and wide.

The moon was not visible to mortal ken, but the clouds played hide and seek with the bright southern stars, now covering them, and now giving their rays free passage. And as in the firmament, so on earth there was a constant change from pallid light to blackest darkness. Now the glitter of the heavenly bodies flashed brightly down on the sea and estuary, on the polished granite sides of the obelisks in the temple precincts and the gilt copper roof of the king's airy palace ; and again, lake and river, the sails in the harbor, the sanctuaries and streets of the city, and the palm-strewn plain surrounding it were all lost in gloom.

Objects which the eye tried to rest on vanished in an instant, and it was the same with the sounds that met the ear. For a while the silence would be as deep as though all life, far and near, were hushed or dead, and then a piercing shriek of woe rent the stillness of the night. And then, broken by longer or shorter pauses, that roar was heard which the youthful priest had taken for the voice of the serpent of the nether world ; and to that the grandfather and grandson listened with growing excitement.

The dusky shape, whose ceaseless movements could be clearly made out whenever the stars shot their beams between the striving clouds, had its beginning out by the city

of the dead and the strangers' quarter. A sudden panic had fallen on the old man as on the young one, but he was quicker to recover himself, and his keen and practiced eye soon discovered that it was not a single gigantic form which was rising from the necropolis to cross the plain, but a multitude of moving creatures who seemed to be surging or swaying to and fro on the meadow land. Nor did the hollow hum and wailing come up from one particular spot, but was audible now nearer and now more remote. Anon he fancied that it was rising from the bosom of the earth, and then again that it fell from some airy height.

Fresh terror came upon the old astrologer. He seized his grandson's hand in his right hand, and pointing with his left to the city of the dead, he cried in a trembling voice: "The dead are too many in number. The nether world overflows, as the river does when its bed is too narrow for the waters of the south. How they swarm and sway and surge on! How they part, hither and thither! These are the ghosts of the thousands whom black death hath snatched away, blasted by the Hebrew's curse, and sent unburied, unprotected from corruption, to descend the rungs of the ladder which leads to the world without end."

"Yea, it is they!" cried the other, in full belief. He snatched his hand from the old man's grasp and struck his fevered and burning brow, exclaiming, though hardly able to speak for terror: "They—the damned! The wind has blown them to the sea, and its waters spew them out and cast them on the land again, and the blessed earth rejects them and drives them into the air. The pure ether of Shoo flings them back to the ground, and now—look, listen! They are groaning as they seek the way to the desert."

"To the fire!" cried the elder. "Flame, purify them; water, cleanse them!"

The youth joined in the old priest's form of exorcism, and while they chanted it in unison, the trap door was lifted which led to this observatory on the top of the highest gate of the temple, and a priest of humble grade cried to the old man:

"Cease thy labors. Who cares now for the stars of heaven when all that has life is being darkened on earth?"

The old priest listened speechless, till the messenger

went on to say that it was the astrologer's wife who had sent for him, and then he gasped out :

“ Hora? Is my son then likewise stricken? ”

The priest then bent his head, and both his hearers wept bitterly, for the old man was bereft of his first-born son, and the lad of a tender father.

But when the boy, trembling with fear, fell sick and sorrowing on his grandfather's breast, the elder hastily freed himself from his embrace and went to the trap door ; for although the priest had announced himself as the messenger of death, it needs more than the bare word of another to persuade a father to give up all hope of life for his child. The old man went quickly down the stone stairs, through the lofty halls and wide courts of the temple ; and the lad followed him, although his shaking knees could scarcely carry his fevered frame. The blow which had fallen within his own little circle had made the old man forget the fearful portent which threatened the whole world perhaps with ruin ; but the boy could not get rid of the vision ; even when he had passed the first court, and was in sight of the outermost pylons, to his terrified and anxious soul it seemed as though the shadows of the obelisks were spinning round, while the two stone statues of King Rameses on the corner piers of the great gate beat time with the crook in his hand.

At this the lad dropped fever-stricken on the ground. A convulsion distorted his features and tossed his slender frame to and fro in frantic spasms ; and the old man, falling on his knees, while he guarded the curly head from striking the hard stone flags, moaned in a low voice : “ Now, it has fallen on him.”

Suddenly he collected himself and shouted aloud for help, but in vain, and again in vain. At last his voice fell ; he sought consolation in prayer. Then he heard a sound of voices from the avenue of sphinxes leading to the great gate, and new hope revived in his heart.

Who could it be who was arriving at so late an hour?

Mingled with cries of grief the chanting of priests fell on his ear, the tinkle and clatter of the metallic sistrum shaken by holy women in honor of the god, and the measured footfall of men praying as they marched on.

A solemn procession was approaching. The astrologer raised his eyes, and after glancing at the double line of

granite columns, colossal statues and obelisks in the great court, looked up, in obedience to the habits of a lifetime, at the starry heavens above, and in the midst of his woe a bitter smile parted his sunken lips, for the gods this night lacked the honors that were their due.

For on this night—the first after the new moon in the month of Pharmutec—the sanctuary in former years was wont to be gay with garlands of flowers. At the dawn of day after this moonless night the high festival of the spring equinox should begin, and with it the harvest thanksgiving.

At this time a grand procession marched through the city to the river and harbor, as prescribed by the Book of the Divine Birth of the Sun, in honor of the great goddess Neith, of Rennoot, who bestows the gifts of the field, and of Horus, at whose bidding the desert blooms; but to-day the silence of death reigned in the sanctuary, whose court-yards should have been crowded at this hour with men, women and children, bringing offerings to place on the very spot where his grandson lay under the hand of death.

A broad beam of light suddenly fell into the vast court, which till now had been but dimly lighted by a few lamps. Could they be so mad as to think that the glad festival might be held in spite of the nameless horrors of the past night?

Only the evening before, the priests in council had determined that during this pitiless pestilence the temples were to be left unadorned and processions to be prohibited. By noon yesterday many had failed to attend because the plague had fallen on their households, and the terror had now come into this very sanctuary, while he, who could read the stars, had been watching them in their courses. Why else should it have been deserted by the watchmen and other astrologers, who had been with him at sunset, and whose duty it was to keep vigil here all night?

He turned once more to the suffering boy with tender anxiety, but instantly started to his feet, for the gates were opened wide, and the light of torches and lanterns poured into the temple court. A glance at the sky showed him that it was not long past midnight, and yet his fears were surely well grounded—these must be the priests crowding into the temple to prepare for the harvest festival.

Not so.

For when had they come to the sanctuary for this purpose, chanting and in procession? Nor were these all servants of the divinity. The populace had joined them. In that solemn litany he could hear the shrill wailing of women mingled with wild cries of despair such as he had never before, in the course of a long life, heard within these consecrated walls.

Or did his senses deceive him? Was it the groaning horde of unresting souls which he had seen from the observatory who were crowding into the sanctuary of the god?

Fresh horrors fell upon him; he threw up his arms in interdiction, and for a few moments repeated the formula against the malice of evil spirits; but he presently dropped his hands, for he marked among the throng some friends who yesterday, at any rate, had been in the land of the living. Foremost, the tall figure of the second prophet of the god; then the women devoted to the service of Amon-Ra, the singers and the holy fathers; and when at last, behind the astrologers and pastophoroi, he saw his son-in-law, whose home had till yesterday been spared by the plague, he took heart and spoke to him. But his voice was drowned by the song and cries of the coming multitude.

The courtyard was now fully lighted; but every one was so absorbed in his own sorrow that no one heeded the old astrologer. He snatched the cloak off his own shivering body to make a better pillow for the boy's tossing head, and while he did so, with fatherly care, he could hear among the chanting and wailing of the approaching crowd, first, frantic curses on the Hebrews, through whom these woes had fallen on Pharaoh and his people, and then, again and again, the name of the heir to the crown, Prince Rameses; and the tone in which it was spoken, and the formulas of mourning which were added, announced to all who had ears to hear that the eyes of the first-born of the king on his throne were also sealed in death.

As he gazed with growing anguish in his grandson's pale face, the lamentations for the prince rang out afresh and louder than ever, and a faint sense of satisfaction crept into his soul at the impartiality of Death, who spared not the sovereign on his throne any more than the beggar by the wayside.

He knew now what had brought this noisy throng to the sanctuary.

He went forward with such haste as his old limbs would allow to meet the column of mourners, but before he could join them he saw the gatekeeper and his wife come out of the gatehouse, bearing between them, on a mat, the corpse of a boy. The husband held one end, his frail, tiny wife held the other; and the stalwart man had to stoop low to keep their stiff burden in a horizontal position that it might not slip down towards the woman. Three children closed the melancholy party, and a little girl holding a lantern led the way.

No one, perhaps, would have observed them, but that the gatekeeper's wife shrieked forth her griefs so loudly and shrilly that it was impossible not to hear her cries. The second prophet of Amon turned to look, and then his companions; the procession came to a standstill, and, as some of the priests went nearer to the body, the father cried in a loud voice: "Away, away from the plague-stricken! Our first-born is dead!"

The mother, meanwhile, had snatched the lantern from her little daughter, and, holding it so as to throw a light on the face of the dead boy, she shrieked out:

"The god hath suffered it to come to pass. Yes, even under our own roof. But it is not his will, but the curse of the stranger in the land that has come over us and our lives. Behold, this was the first-born; and two temple servants have likewise been taken. One is dead already; he is lying in our little room yonder; and there—see, there lies young Kamus, the grandson of Rameri, the star-reader. We heard the old man calling and saw what was happening, but who can hold another man's house up when his own is falling about his ears? Beware while it is yet time, for the gods have opened even the temple gates to the abomination, and if the whole world should perish I should not be surprised, and never complain—certainly not. My lords and priests, I am but a poor and humble woman, but am I not in the right when I ask: Are our gods asleep? Has a magic spell bound them? Or what are they doing, and where are they, that they leave us and our children in the power of the vile Hebrew race?"

“Down with them! Down with the strangers! They are magicians. Into the sea with Mesu,* the sorcerer!”

As an echo follows a cry, so did these imprecations follow the woman's curse; and Hornecht, the old astrologer's son-in-law, captain of the archers, whose blood boiled over at the sight of his dying, fair young nephew, brandished his short sword, and cried in a frenzy of rage: “Follow me, every man who has a heart! At them! Life for life! Ten Hebrews for each Egyptian whom their sorcerer has killed!”

A flock will rush into the fire if only the ram leads the way, and the crowd flocked to follow the noble warrior. The women pushed in front of the men, thronging the doorway, and as the servants of the sanctuary hesitated till they should know the opinion of the prophet of Amon, their leader drew up in his majestic figure, and said deliberately:

“All who wear priests' robes remain to pray with me. The people are the instrument of heaven, and it is theirs to repay. We stay here to pray for success to their vengeance.”

CHAPTER II.

BAIE, the second prophet of Amon, who acted as deputy for the now infirm old head prophet and high priest Ruie, withdrew into the holy of holies, and while the multitude of the inferior ministers of the god proceeded to their various duties, the infuriated crowd hurried through the streets of the town to the strangers' quarter.

As a swollen torrent raging through a valley carries down with it everything in its way, so the throng, as they rushed to their revenge, compelled every one on their road to join them. Every Egyptian from whom death had snatched his nearest and dearest was ready to join the swelling tide, and it grew till it numbered hundreds of thousands. Men, women and children, slaves and free, borne on the wings of their desire to wreak ruin and death on the detested Hebrews, flew to the distant quarter where they dwelt.

* Mesu is the Egyptian form of the name of Moses.

How this artisan had laid hold of a chopper or that housewife had clutched an axe, they themselves scarcely knew. They rushed on to kill and destroy, and they had not sought the weapons they needed; they had found them ready to their hand.

The first they hoped to fall upon in their mad fury was Nun, a venerable Hebrew, respected and beloved by many—a man rich in herds, who had done much kindness to the Egyptians; but where hatred and revenge make themselves heard, gratitude stands shy and speechless in the background.

His large estates lay, like the houses and huts of the men of his race, in the strangers' quarter, to the west of Tanis, and were the nearest of them all to the streets inhabited by the Egyptians themselves.

At this morning hour Nun's flocks and herds were wont to be taken, first to water, and then to the pasture; so the large yard in front of his house would be full of cattle, farm men and women, carts and field implements. The owner himself commonly ordered the going of his beasts, and he and his were to be the first victims of the popular rage.

The swiftest runners had already reached his spacious farm, and among them Hornecht, the captain of the archers. There lay the house and buildings in the first bright beams of the morning sun, and a brawny smith kicked violently at the closed door; but there was no bolt, and it flew open so readily that he had to clutch at the door post to save himself from falling. Others pushed by him into the courtyard, among them the archer chief.

But what was the meaning of this?

Had some new charm been wrought to show the power of Mesu, who had brought such terrible plagues already on the land, and display the might of his god?

The yard was empty, absolutely empty; only in their stalls lay a few cattle and sheep, slain because they had suffered from injury, while a lame lamb hobbled away at the sight of the intruders. Even the carts and barrows had vanished. The groaning and bleating crowd, which the star-gazer had taken to be the spirits of the damned, was the host of the Hebrews, who had fled by night with all their herds, under the guidance of Moses.

The leader dropped his sword, and it might have been thought that the scene before him was to him an agreeable

surprise ; but his companion, a scribe from the king's treasury, looked round the deserted courtyard with the disappointed air of a man who has been cheated.

The tide of passions and schemes which had risen high during the night, ebbed under the broad light of day. Even the soldier's easily-stirred ire had subsided to comparative calm. The mob might have done their worst to the other Hebrews, but not to Nun, whose son Hosea (Joshua) had been his comrade in battle, one of the most esteemed captains in the field, and a private friend of his own. If Hornecht had foreseen that Nun's farmstead would be the first spot to be attacked, he would never have led the mob to their revenge, and once more in his life he bitterly rued that he had been carried away by sudden wrath to forget the calm demeanor which beseemed his years. And now, while some of the crowd proceeded to rifle and pull down Nun's deserted dwellings, men and women came running in to say that no living soul was to be found in any of the other houses near. Some had to tell of yelling cats squatting on vacant hearths, of beasts past service found slaughtered, and broken household gear, till at last the angry crowd dragged forward a Hebrew with his family, and a grey-haired, half-witted woman whom they had hunted out among some straw. The old woman laughed foolishly and said that her people had called her till they were hoarse, but Mehela knew better ; and as for walking, walking forever, as her people meant to do, that she could not ; her feet were too tender, and she had not even a pair of sandals.

The man, a hideous Jew, whom few even of his own race would have regarded with pity, declared, first with humility, bordering on servility, and then with the insolent daring that was natural to him, that he had nothing to do with the god of lies in whose name the impostor Moses had tempted away his people, but that he and his wife and child had always been friends with the Egyptians. As a matter of fact he was known to many, being an usurer, and when the rest of his tribe had taken up their staves he had hidden himself, hoping to pursue his dishonest dealings and come to no loss.

But some of his debtors were among the furious mob ; and even without them he had not a chance for his life, for he was the first object on which the excited multitude

could prove that they were in earnest in their revenge. They rushed on him with yells of rage, and in a few minutes the bodies of the hapless wretch and his family lay dead on the ground. No one knew who had done the bloody deed; too many had fallen on the victims at once.

Others who had remained behind were dragged forth from houses or hovels, and they were not a few, though many had time to escape into the country. These all fell victims to the wrath of the populace; and while their blood was flowing, axes were heaved, and doors and walls were battered down with beams and posts to destroy the dwellings of the detested race from the face of the earth.

The glowing embers which some furious women had brought with them were extinguished and trodden out, for the more prudent warned them of the danger which must threaten their own adjoining dwellings and the whole city of Tanis if the strangers' quarter were set in flames.

Thus the homes of the Hebrews were spared from fire, but as the sun rose higher the site of the dwellings they had deserted was wrapped in an impenetrable cloud of white dust from the ruins, and on the spot where, but yesterday, thousands of human beings had had a happy home, and where vast herds had slaked their thirst by fresh waters, nothing was now to be seen but heaps of rubbish and stone, while broken timber and splintered woodwork strewed the scorching soil. Dogs and cats, abandoned by the fugitives, prowled among the ruins, and were presently joined by the women and children who herded in the beggars' hovels on the skirts of the neighboring necropolis, and who now, with their hands over their mouths, poked among the choking dust and piles of lumber for any vessels or broken victuals which the Hebrews might have left behind and the plunderers have overlooked.

In the course of the afternoon Baie was borne in his litter past the scene of devastation. He had not come hither to feast his eyes on the sight of the ruins, but because they lay in the nearest way from the city of the dead to his own home. Nevertheless, a smile of satisfaction curled his grave lips as he noted how thoroughly the populace had done their work. What he himself had hoped to see had not indeed been carried out; the leader of the fugitives had

evaded their revenge ; but hatred, though it is never satiated, can be easily gratified. Even the smaller woes of an enemy are joy, and the priest had just quitted the mourning Pharaoh, and though he had not yet succeeded in freeing him completely from the bonds laid upon him by the Hebrew soothsayer, yet he had loosened them.

Three words had the proud, ambitious man murmured to himself again and again—a man not wont to talk to himself—as he sat alone in the sanctuary, meditating on what had happened and on what had to be done ; and those three words were : “ Bless me also ! ”

It was Pharaoh who had spoken them, addressing the petition to another ; and that other not old Ruie, the pontiff and high priest, nor Baie himself, the only men living whose privilege it could be to bless the king ; no, but the worst of the accursed, the stranger, the Hebrew Mesu, whom he hated as he hated none other on earth.

“ Bless me also ! ” That pious entreaty, which springs so confidently from the human soul in anguish, had pierced his soul like a dagger-thrust. He felt as though such a prayer, addressed by such lips to such a man, had broken the staff in the hand of the whole priesthood of Egypt, had wrenched the panther skin from its shoulders, and cast a stain on all the nation he loved.

He knew Mesu well for one of the wisest sages ever produced by the schools of Egypt ; he knew full well that Pharaoh was spell bound by this man, who had grown up in his house, and had been the friend of the great Rameses, his father. He had seen the monarch pardon misdeeds in Mesu which any other man, were he the highest in the land, must have expiated with his life ; and how dear must this Hebrew have been to Pharaoh—the sun-god on the throne of the world—when he could compel the king, standing by the death-bed of his son, to uplift his hands to him and implore him : “ Bless me also.”

All this he had told himself and weighed with due care, and still he, Baie, could not, would not, yield to the powerful Hebrew. He had regarded it as his most urgent and sacred duty to bring destruction on him and his whole race. To fulfil that duty he would not have hesitated to lay hands on the throne ; indeed, in his eyes, by the utterance of that blasphemous entreaty, “ Bless me also,” Pharaoh Menephtah had forfeited his right to the sovereignty.

Moses was the murderer of Pharaoh's first-born, whereas he himself and the venerable high priest of Amon held the weal or woe of the deceased youth's soul in their hands. And this weapon was a keen and a strong one, for he knew how tender and irresolute was the king's heart. If the high-priest of Amon—the only man who stood above him—did not contravene him in some unaccountable fit of senile caprice, it would be a small matter to reduce Pharaoh to submission, but the vacillating monarch might repent to-morrow of what he resolved to-day, if the Hebrew should again succeed in coming between him and his Egyptian counselors. Only this very day, on hearing the name of Moses spoken in his presence, the degenerate son of Rameses the Great had covered his face and quaked like a frightened gazelle, and to-morrow he might curse him and pronounce sentence of death against him. He might perhaps be persuaded to do this ; but even then by the day after he would very surely recall him and beseech his blessing once more.

Away with such a monarch ! Down with the feeble reed who sat on the throne, down to the very dust ! Baie had found a fitting successor among the princes of the blood royal, and when the time should come—when Ruie, the high priest of Amon, should cross the boundary of the time of life granted to man by the gods, and close his eyes in death—then he, Baie himself, would fill his place ; a new life should begin for Egypt, and Moses and his tribes were doomed.

As the prophet thus meditated a pair of ravens fluttered around his head, and then, croaking loudly, alighted on the dusky ruins of one of the wrecked tenements. His eye involuntarily followed their flight and perceived that they had settled on the body of a dead Hebrew, half buried in rubbish ; and again a smile stole over his cunning, defiant features, a smile which the inferior priests who stood about his litter could by no means interpret.

CHAPTER III.

HORNECHT, captain of the bowmen, had by this time joined company with the prophet. He was, indeed, in his confidence, for the warrior likewise was one of the men of high rank who had conspired to overthrow the reigning Pharaoh.

As they approached the ruined dwelling of Nun the priest pointed to the heap of destruction and said: "The man to whom this once belonged is the only Hebrew I fain would spare. He was a man of worth, and his son Joshua——"

"He will be true to us," interrupted the captain. "Few better men serve in the ranks of Pharaoh's armies, and," he added, in a lower voice, "I count on him in the day of deliverance."

"Of that we will speak before fewer witnesses," replied the other. "But I owe him a special debt of gratitude. During the Libyan war—you know of it—I was betrayed into the hands of the enemy, and Joshua, with his handful of men, cut me a way of escape from the wild robbers." Then, dropping his voice, he went on in his didactic manner, as though he were making excuse for the mischief before them. "Such is life here below! When a whole race of men incurs punishment, the evil falls on the guiltless with the guilty. Not even the gods can in such a case divide the individual from the mob; the visitation falls even on the innocent beasts. Look at that flock of pigeons hovering over the ruins; they seek the dovecote in vain. And that cat with her kittens! Go, Bekie, and rescue them; it is our duty to preserve the sacred animals from starving to death."

And this man, who had contemplated the destruction of so many of his fellow-creatures with barbarous joy, took the kindly care of the unreasoning brutes so much to heart that he made the bearers stop, and looked on while the servants caught the cats. But this was not so quickly done as he had hoped, for the mother fled into the nearest cellar opening, and the gap was so narrow as to prevent

the men from following her. However, the youngest of them all, a slim Nubian, undertook to fetch her out; but he had hardly looked down into the opening when he started back and cried to his lord:

“A human being is lying there, and seems to be yet alive. Yes, he beckons with his hand. It is a boy or a youth, and certainly not a slave. His hair is long and curly, and on his arm—for a sunbeam falls straight in—I can see a broad gold band.”

“One of the family of Nun, perhaps, who has been forgotten,” said the warrior, and Baie eagerly added: “It is the guidance of the gods! The sacred beasts have led me to the spot where I may do a service to the man to whom I owe so much. Try and make your way in, Bekie, and fetch the youth out.”

The Nubian, meanwhile, had moved away a stone, which, in its fall, had partly closed the entrance, and in a short while he held up to his comrades a motionless young form, which they lifted out into the open air and carried to a well. There they soon brought him back to life with the cool water.

As he recovered consciousness he rubbed his eyes, looked about him in bewilderment as though he knew not where he was, and then his head fell on his breast as if overcome by grief and horror, and it could be seen that at the back of his head the hair was matted with dark patches of dried blood.

By the prophet's care the wound, which was deep, from a stone which had fallen on the lad, was washed at the well; and when it was bound up he bid him get into his own litter, which was screened from the sun.

The youth had arrived before sunrise, after a long walk by night from Pithom, called by the Hebrews Succoth, to bring a message to his grandfather, Nun, but finding the place deserted he had lain down in one of the empty rooms to rest awhile. Awakening at the uproar of the infuriated Egyptians, and hearing the curses on his race, which rang out on every side, he had fled to the cellar, and the falling roof, although he had been hurt, had proved his salvation, for the clouds of dust which had hidden everything as it crashed down had concealed him from the sight of the plunderers.

The priest gazed at him attentively, and though the

youth was unwashed and pale, with a blood-stained bandage around his head, he could see that the being he had restored to life was a handsome, well-grown lad, on the verge of manhood. Full of eager sympathy, he mollified the stern gravity of his eye, and questioned him kindly as to whence he came and what had brought him to Tanis, for it was impossible to tell from the youth's features even of what nation he might be. He might easily have passed himself off as an Egyptian, but he quite frankly owned that he was the grandson of Nun. He was eighteen years of age, his name was Ephraim, like his ancestor the son of Joseph, and he had come to see his grandfather. And he spoke with an accent of steadfast self-respect and joy in his illustrious descent.

When asked whether he had been the bearer of a message he did not forthwith reply, but after collecting his thoughts he looked fearlessly into the prophet's face and answered frankly :

"Be you who you may, I have been taught to speak the truth. You shall know, then, that I have another kinsman dwelling in Tanis—Joshua, the son of Nun, who is a captain in Pharaoh's army, and I have a message for him."

"And you shall know," replied the priest, "that it was for the sake of that very Joshua that I lingered here and bid my servants rescue you alive from that ruined house. I owe him thanks; and although the greater number of your nation have done deeds worthy of the heaviest punishment, yet for his noble sake you shall dwell among us free and unharmed."

On this the boy looked up at the priest with a flash of eager pride; but before he could speak, Baie went on with encouraging friendliness :

"I read in your eyes, my boy, if I am not mistaken, that you are come to seek service under your Uncle Joshua in Pharaoh's army. Your stature should make you skillful in handling weapons, and you certainly cannot lack for daring."

A smile of flattered vanity lighted up Ephraim's face, and turning the broad gold bangle on his arm, perhaps unconsciously, he eagerly replied :

"I am brave, my lord, and have proved it often in the hunting-field. But at home there are cattle and sheep in abundance, which I already call my own, and it seems to

me a better lot to wander free and rule the shepherds, than to do what others bid me."

"So, so," replied the priest. "Well, Joshua perhaps will bring you to another and a better mind. To rule! a noble goal indeed for a youth! The pity is that we who have reached it are but servants, the more heavily-burdened in proportion to the greater number of those who obey us. You understand me, captain; and you, boy, will understand me later, when you have become such a palm tree as your sapling growth promises. But time presses. Who sent you hither to Joshua?"

The youth again looked down and hesitated; but when the prophet had broken in on his silence by saying, "And that candor which you have been taught?" he replied firmly and decidedly: "I came to do pleasure to a woman whom you know not. Let that suffice."

"A woman!" echoed the prophet, and he cast an inquiring glance at Hornecht. "When a valiant warrior and a fair woman seek each other the Hathors are wont to intervene and use the binding* cords, but it ill seems a minister of the divinity to play spectator to such doings, so I inquire no further. Take this boy under your protection, captain, and help him to carry his errand to Hosea. The only question is whether he is yet returned."

"No," replied the soldier, "but this very day he and 10,000 men are expected at the armory."

"Then may the Hathors, who favor love-messages, bring these two to a meeting no later than to-morrow!" cried the priest. But the youth broke in indignantly: "I bear no love-message from one to the other!"

And the priest, who was well pleased by his boldness, replied gayly: "I had forgotten that I am speaking to a shepherd-prince." Then he added more gravely, "When you shall have found Joshua give him greeting from me, and say to him that Baie, the second prophet of Amon, whom he saved from the hand of the Libyans, believes that he is paying some part of his debt by extending a protecting hand over you, his nephew. You, bold youth, know not, perhaps, that you were in other and greater danger than that from your wound. The furious Egyptians would no more have spared your life than would the choking dust

* The Hathors were the Egyptian love goddesses. They are often depicted with cords in their hands.

and falling houses. Bear that in mind, and tell Joshua, moreover, from me, Baie, that I am sure that as soon as he sees with his own eyes the misery wrought on the house of Pharaoh, to which he has sworn allegiance, and with it on this city and on the whole land, by the magic arts of one of your race, he will cut himself off in horror from those cowards. For they have basely fled, after slaying the best and dearest of those among whom they have dwelt in peace, whose protection they have enjoyed, and who for long years have given them work and fed them abundantly. If I know him at all, as an honest man he will turn his back on those who have sinned thus. And you may tell him likewise, that the Hebrew officers and fighting men under the captainship of Aarsu, the Syrian, have already done so of their own free will. This day—and Joshua will have heard the tidings from others—they offered sacrifice, not only to their own gods, Baal and Set, whom you, too, many of you, were wont to serve before the vile magician, Mesu, led you astray, but also to Father Amon and the sacred nine of our eternal gods. And if he will do likewise, he and I, hand in hand, will rise to great power—of that he may be assured—and he is worthy of it. The rest of the debt of gratitude I still owe him I will find other means of paying, which as yet must remain undiscovered. But you may promise your uncle from me that I will take care of Nun, his worthy father, when the vengeance of the gods and of Pharaoh overtakes the other men of your nation. Already—tell him this likewise—is the sword set, and judgment without mercy shall be done on them. Tell him to ask himself what can fugitive shepherds do against the might of that army of which he himself is one of the captains? Is your father yet alive, my son?”

“No; he was borne out long since,” replied Ephraim in a broken voice.

Was it that the fever of his wound was too much for him? That the disgrace of belonging to a race who could do such shameful deeds overpowered his young soul? Or was the youth true to his people, and was it wrath and indignation that made his cheek turn pale, then red, and stirred up such turmoil in his soul that he could hardly speak? No matter. But it was clear that he was no fit bearer of this message to his uncle, and the priest

signed to the captain to come with him under the shade of a broad sycamore tree. The Hebrew must at any rate be retained with the army ; he laid his hand on his friend's shoulder, saying : " You know that it was my wife who won you over to our great scheme. She serves it better and with greater zeal than many a man, and while I admire your daughter's beauty, she is full of praises of her winning charm."

" And Kasana is to join the conspiracy ? " exclaimed the soldier in displeasure.

" Not as an active partner, like my wife—of course not."

" She would hardly serve that end," replied the other in a calmer tone, " for she is like a child."

" And yet she may win over to our cause a man whose goodwill appears to be inestimable."

" You mean Joshua ? " asked Hornecht, and again his brow grew black, while the prophet went on.

" And if I do ? Is he not a noble Hebrew, and can you think it unworthy of the daughter of a warrior of valor to give her hand to the man who, if our undertaking prospers, will act as chief captain over all the troops of the land ? "

" No, my lord," cried the archer. " But one of the causes of my wrath against Pharaoh, and of my taking part with Siptah, is that his mother was not of our nation, while Egyptian blood flows in Siptah's veins. Now, the mother determines a man's race, and Joshua's mother was a Hebrew woman. I call him my friend ; I know how to value his merits ; Kasana is well inclined to him——"

" And yet you desire a greater son-in-law ? " interrupted Baie. " How can our difficult enterprise prosper if those who risk their lives in it think the very first sacrifice too great ? And your daughter, you say, is well inclined to Joshua."

" She was ; yes, truly," the soldier put in. " Yes, her heart longed after him. But I brought her to obedience ; she became the wife of another ; and now that she is a widow shall I be the one to offer her to him whom I compelled her to give up—the gods alone know how hardly ? When was the like ever heard of in Egypt ? "

" Whenever the men and women by the Nile have so far mastered themselves as to submit to necessity in opposition to their own wishes, for the sake of a great

cause," replied the priest. "Think of these things. We shall meet again this evening—you know where. Meanwhile will you give hospitality to Joshua's nephew and bespeak your fair daughter's care, for he seems to need it sorely."

In fact, hunger, thirst, loss of blood and a long struggle against suffocation had broken Ephraim's youthful strength. On the skirts of the necropolis, where litters stood awaiting the convenience of visitors, he was placed in one by himself and carried to his destination.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was mourning in the house of Hornecht, as in every house in the city. The men had shaved their heads and the women had strewn dust on their foreheads. The captain's wife was long since dead, but his daughter and her women met him with waving veils and loud wailing, for their lord's brother-in-law was bereft both of his first-born son and of his grandson; and in how many houses of their circle of friends had the plague claimed its victims.

However, the fainting youth demanded all the women's care; he was washed, and the deep wound in his head was freshly bound up; strong wine and food were set before him, and then, refreshed and strengthened, he followed at the bidding of his host's daughter.

The dust-stained and exhausted lad now stood revealed as a handsome young fellow. His scented hair flowed in long, waving locks from beneath the clean, white bandage, and his elastic, sunburnt limbs were covered by Egyptian garments embroidered with gold out of the wardrobe of the captain's deceased son-in-law. He seemed pleased to see himself in the handsome raiment, from which there proceeded a fragrance of spikenard new to his experience, for his black eyes brightly lighted up his well-cut features.

It was long since the captain's daughter had seen a better-favored youth, and she herself was full of great and lovely charm. After a brief married life with a man she had never loved, Kasana, within a year, had come back a widow to her father's house, where there was now no mistress; and the great wealth of which she had become

possessed by her husband's death enabled her to bring into the warrior's modest home the splendor and luxury which to her had become a necessity.

Her father, who in many a contest had proved himself a man of violent temper, now yielded to her will in all things. In past time he had ruthlessly asserted his own, and had forced her at the age of fifteen into a marriage with a man much older than herself. This he had done because he had observed that Kasana's young heart was set on Joshua, the man of war, and he deemed it beneath him to accept the Hebrew, who at that time held no place of honor in the army, as a son-in-law. An Egyptian could but obey her father without demur when he chose her a husband, and so Kasana had submitted, though during the period of her betrothal she shed so many bitter tears that the archer-captain was glad indeed when she had done his bidding and given her hand to the husband of his choice.

But even in her widowhood his daughter's heart clung to the Hebrew; for when the army was in the field she never ceased to be anxious, and spent her days and nights in troubled unrest. When tidings came from the front she asked only concerning Joshua, and it was to her love for him that Hornecht, with deep vexation, ascribed her repeated rejection of suitor after suitor. As a widow she had the right to dispose of her hand, and this gentle yielding young creature would amaze her father by the abrupt decisiveness with which she made her independence felt, not alone to him and her suitors, but likewise to Prince Siptah, whose cause her father had made his own.

This day Kasana expressed her satisfaction at Joshua's home-coming so frankly and unreservedly, that the hot-tempered man hastened out of the house lest he should be led into some ill-considered act or speech. He left the care of their young guest to his daughter and her faithful nurse; and how delightful to the lad's sensitive soul was the effect of the warrior's home, with its lofty, airy rooms, open colonnades and bright, richly-colored paintings; its artistic vessels and ornaments, soft couches and all-pervading fragrance. All this was new and strange to the son of a pastoral patriarch, accustomed to live within the bare, grey walls of a spacious, but perfectly graceless farm dwelling; or, for months at a time in canvas

tents, amid flocks and shepherds, and more often in the open air than under a roof or shelter. He felt as though by enchantment he had been transported to some higher and more desirable world, and as though he became it well in his splendid garb, with his oiled and perfumed curls and freshly-bathed limbs. Life, indeed, was everywhere fair, even out in the fields among the herds, or in the cool of the evening round the fire in front of the tent, where the shepherds sang songs, and the hunters told tales of adventure, while the stars shone brightly overhead. But hard and hated labor had first to be done. Here it was a joy merely to gaze and breathe; and when presently the curtain was lifted and the young widow greeted him kindly and made him sit down by her, now questioning him and now listening sympathetically to his replies, he almost fancied that he had lost his senses, as he had done under the ruins in the cellar, and that the sweetest of dreams was cheating him.

The feeling which now seemed to choke him, and again and again hindered his utterance, was surely the excess of bliss poured down upon him by great Astarte, the partner of Baal, of whom he had heard many tales from the Phœnician traders who supplied the shepherd settlers with various good things, and of whom he was forbidden by stern Miriam ever to speak at home.

His people had implanted in his young soul a hatred of the Egyptians as the oppressors of his race; but could they be so evil, could he abhor a nation among whom there were such beings to be found as the fair and gentle lady who looked so softly and yet so warmly into his eyes; whose gaze set his blood in such swift motion that he could hardly bear it, as he pressed his hand to his heart to still its wild throbbing?

There she sat opposite to him, on a stool covered with a panther skin, and drew the wool from the distaff. He had taken her fancy, and she had welcomed him warmly because he was kin to the man she had loved from her childhood. She believed she could trace a likeness in him to Joshua, although the boy still lacked the gravity of the man to whom she had given her young heart, when and how she herself could not tell, for he had never sued for her love.

A lotos-flower was fastened into her well-arranged waving black hair, and its stem lay in a graceful curve on her bent neck, round which hung a mass of beautiful curls. When she raised her eyes to look into his, it was as though two deep wells opened before him to pour streams of bliss into his young breast, and that slender hand, which spun the yarn, he had already touched in greeting and held in his own.

Presently she inquired of him concerning Joshua and the woman who had sent him a message—whether she were young and fair, and whether there were any tie of love between her and his uncle. At this Ephraim laughed aloud. For she who had sent him was so grave and stern that the mere idea of her being capable of a tender emotion roused his mirth. As to whether she were fair, he had never given it a thought.

The young widow took this laughter as the most welcome reply she could hear, and with a sigh of relief she laid aside the spindle she held and desired Ephraim to come with her into the garden.

How sweet it was with scent and bloom, how well trimmed were the beds, the paths, the arbors and the pool! The only pleasance of his simple home was a broad courtyard devoid of ornament, full of pens for cattle and sheep; yet he knew that some day he would be ruler over great possessions, for he was the only son and heir of a rich father, and his mother was a daughter of the wealthy Nun. The serving-men had told him all this many a time, and it vexed his soul to see that his own home was little better than the quarters for the captain's slaves, which Kasana pointed out to him.

As they rambled through the garden she bid Ephraim help her pluck some flowers, and when the basket which he carried for her was full, she invited him to sit with her in an arbor, and lend a hand in twining garlands. These were offerings to the beloved dead. Her uncle and a favorite cousin—somewhat like Ephraim himself—had been snatched away during the past night by the pestilence, which his folks had brought upon Tanis.

And from the street which ran along the garden wall the wailing of women was incessantly heard, as they mourned over the dead or bore a corpse to its burying; and, when suddenly it rose louder and more woeful than before, she

gently reproached him for all that the people of Tanis had suffered for the sake of the Hebrews, and asked him if he could deny that her nation had good reason to hate a race that had brought such plagues upon it.

To this he found it difficult to answer discreetly, for he had been told that it was the God of his people who had stricken the Egyptians, to release His own from oppression and slavery, and he dare not deny or condemn his own flesh and blood. So he was silent, that he might neither lie nor blaspheme, but she gave him no peace, and at last he made answer that all which ended in sorrow was repugnant to him, but that his people had no power over health and life, and that when a Hebrew was sick he very commonly applied to an Egyptian leech. What had now come to pass was no doubt the act of the great God of his fathers, who was of more might than all other gods. He, at any rate, was a Hebrew, and she might believe him when he assured her that he was guiltless of the pestilence, and that he would gladly call her uncle and cousin back to life again if he had it in his power. For her sake he was ready to do anything, even the hardest task.

She smiled on him sweetly and said: "Poor boy! If I find a fault in you, it is only that you belong to a race to whom patience and pity are alike unknown. Alas! for our hapless and beloved dead. They must even be deprived of the songs of lamentation of those who mourn for them; for the house where they lie is plague-stricken and none may enter there."

She dried her eyes and said no more, but went on winding her garland; but tear after tear rolled down her cheeks. He knew not what more to say, and could only hand her flowers and leaves. Whenever her hand chanced to touch his, the blood coursed hotly through his veins. His head and the wound began to ache violently, and now and then he shivered. He felt that the fever was gaining on him, as it had once before, when he had nearly lost his life in the red sickness, but he was ashamed to confess it, and held out against it.

When the sun was getting low the captain came out into the garden. He had already seen Joshua, and, although he was sincerely glad to meet his trusted friend once more, he had been ill pleased and uneasy that, before all else, he had made warm inquiry for his daughter. He did not

conceal this from Kasana, but the glare of his eyes revealed the dissatisfaction with which he greeted her from the Hebrew. Then he turned to Ephraim, and told him that Joshua with his host had halted outside the city by reason of the plague. They were to pitch their tents without its precincts, between Tanis and the sea. They must presently go forth to the camp, and his uncle sent him word that he was to seek him there in his tent.

When he saw the lad helping his daughter to wind the funeral wreaths he smiled, exclaiming: "Only this morning this young lordling longed to be free and a ruler all his life, and now he has entered your service, Kasana. Nay, do not blush, my young friend. And if either your mistress or your uncle can prevail upon you to become one of us, and devote yourself to the noblest toil—that of warrior—it will be well for you. Look at me! For more than forty years have I wielded the bow, and to this day I rejoice in my calling. I have to obey, to be sure, but I have also to command, and the thousands that do my bidding are not sheep and beasts, but brave men. Consider the matter once more. He would make a splendid chief of the bowmen; what do you say, Kasana?"

"Certainly," replied the lady, and she had it in her mind to say more, but beyond the garden walk the measured tread of approaching troops fell on the ear. The bright blood mounted to her cheeks, her eyes glowed with a flame which startled Ephraim, and, heedless of her father or her guest, she flew past the pool, across the avenues and flower beds, and up a turf-bank near the wall, to gaze with eager eyes out into the road and on the armed host that presently came past.

Joshua marched at its head in full armor. He turned his grave face as he came by the captain's garden, and when he saw Kasana he lowered his battle-axe in friendly greeting. Ephraim had followed with the captain, who had pointed out Joshua, and said: "A bright weapon like that would well become you, too, and when the drum is beating and pipe squeaking, while the standards ride high overhead, a man marches as lightly as though he had wings. To-day the martial music is silenced by reason of the dreadful grief that the malignant Hebrew has brought upon us. Joshua, indeed, is of his race; yet, little as I can overlook that fact, I must confess that he is a thorough

soldier and a model for the younger generation. Only tell him what I think of him in this respect. Now, bid farewell at once to Kasana, and follow the troops ; the little side gate in the wall is open."

As he spoke he turned to go back into the house, and Ephraim held out his hand to bid the young woman farewell. She gave him hers, but instantly withdrew it, saying : " How hot your hands. You are in a fever ! "

" Nay, nay," murmured the boy ; but even as he spoke he dropped on his knees, and a cloud came over the suffering lad's soul, hunted as it had been from one emotion to another.

Kasana was startled, but she at once recovered her presence of mind and proceeded to cool his brow and the top of his head with water out of the adjacent pool. And as she did so she looked anxiously in his face, and never had his likeness to Joshua struck her so vividly. Yes, the man she loved must have exactly resembled this youth when he himself was a boy. Her heart beat faster, and as she supported his head in her hands she softly kissed him.

She thought he was unconscious, but the refreshing moisture had recovered him from his brief swoon, and he felt the touch with a sweet thrill, but kept his eyes shut, and would have lain thus for a lifetime, with his head on her bosom, in the hope that her lips might once more meet his. Instead of kissing him again she called loudly for help. At this he roused himself, gave one more passionate, fervid look into her face, and before she could stop him, fled like a strong man to the garden door, pushed it open and was gone after the host. He caught up the rear, soon overtook the others, and at last, finding himself by the captain's side, he called to his uncle and announced himself by name. At this Joshua, in joy and surprise, held out his arms ; but almost before Ephraim could fall upon his neck he again lost consciousness, and strong soldiers carried the lad into the tent which the quarter-master had already pitched on a sandhill by the lake.

CHAPTER V.

It was midnight. A fire burned before Joshua's tent and he sat alone beside it, gazing sadly and thoughtfully first into the flames and then out into the distance. The lad Ephraim was lying inside the tent on his uncle's camp bed.

The leech who accompanied the troops had dressed the youth's wound, and having given him a strengthening draught bade him remain quiet, for he was alarmed at the high fever that had fallen on him.

But Ephraim found not the rest the physician had advised. The image of Kasana now rose before his imagination and added fire to his already overheated blood. Then his thoughts flew to the advice that he should become a warrior like his uncle; and it seemed to him reasonable, because it promised him glory and honor, as he would fain persuade himself, though in truth he desired to follow it because it would bring him nearer to her whom his soul longed for.

Then again his pride rebelled when he thought of the insult with which she and her father had branded those to whom he belonged by blood and sympathy. He clinched his fist as he remembered the ruined house of his grandfather, whom he had always considered the worthiest of men. Nor had he forgotten his message. Miriam had said it over to him several times, and his clear memory held it word for word; also at intervals he had repeated it over to himself as he wandered on the lonely way to Tanis. Now he endeavored to do so again, but before he could get to the end, his mind carried him back to thoughts of Kasana. The doctor had ordered Joshua to forbid any talking, so when the patient tried to deliver his message he bade him be silent. Then the soldier smoothed his pillow as gently as a mother might, gave him his medicine, and kissed him on the brow.

At last he sat down by the fire in front of the tent, and only rose to give the youth a drink when the stars showed him that an hour had passed.

The flames lighted up Joshua's somewhat dark features, and showed them to be those of a man who had faced many dangers, and had vanquished them by stern perseverance and prudent forethought. His black eyes wore a domineering expression, and his full, tightly-closed mouth gave evidence of a hot temper, but even more of the iron will of a determined man. His broad-shouldered frame leaned against a sheaf of spears set crossing each other in the ground, and when he drew his powerful hand through his thick black hair, or stroked his dark beard while his eyes lighted up with wrath, it was plain that his soul was seething, and that he stood on the threshold of some great resolve.

As yet the lion rests, but when he springs up his enemies must beware.

His soldiers had often compared their bold, strong-willed leader, with his mane-like hair, to the king of beasts; and now as he shook his fist, and at the same time the muscles of his brown arm swelled as though they would burst the gold bands that surrounded them, bright flames flashed from his eyes and he was an unapproachable and awesome presence.

Out there in the west, whither he turned his gaze, lay the city of the dead and the ruined strangers' quarters. A few hours before, he had led his troops past his father's dismantled house and on through the deserted town, round which the ravens were flying.

In silence, for he was still on duty, he had passed it by, and it was not until they had halted, that quarters might be found for his troops, that he learned the events of the past night from Hornecht, the captain of the archers. He had listened in silence and without moving a muscle or asking one word of further information, and meanwhile the soldiers had pitched their tents; but scarcely had he gone to rest when a lame girl, in spite of the threats of the watch, forced her way in and besought him, in the name of Eliab, one of the oldest slaves of his house, whose granddaughter she was, to go with her to the old man. He had been left behind, as febleness and ill-health prevented his wandering, and directly after the departure of his people he and his wife had been brought on an ass to the little cottage by the harbor which had been given to the old servant by his generous master.

The girl, too, had been left to look after the infirm couple, and now the heart of the old slave was longing to see once more the first-born of his lord, whom as a child he had carried in his arms. He had bidden the girl tell the captain that his father had promised that he, Joshua, would leave the Egyptians and follow his people. The people of Ephraim, yea, the whole race, had heard the news with great rejoicing. The grandfather would give him more news, for she herself had been nearly out of her mind with trouble and anxiety. He would deserve the richest blessings if he would only go with her.

The warrior perceived from the first that he must fulfil this wish, but he had postponed the visit to the old man until the next morning. The messenger, though in haste, managed to inform him of several things that she had seen or heard of from others.

At last she was gone. He made up the fire, and as long as the flames blazed brightly he looked with a dark and thoughtful gaze toward the west. It was not till they had consumed the fuel, whose flame flickered feeble and blue over the charred wood, that he fixed his eyes on the embers and the flying sparks, and the longer he did so the deeper and more insurmountable did he feel the discord in his soul, which only yesterday had been set on a single glorious man.

For a year and a half he had been far from home fighting against Libyan rebels, and for fully ten months he had not heard a word from his people. A few weeks since he had been ordered home; his heart beat with joy and hopefulness, and he, a man of thirty, had felt a boy again as he drew nearer and nearer to Tanis, the city of Rameses, famed for its obelisks.

In a few hours he would once more behold his beloved and worthy father, who had only after deep consideration and discussion with his mother—now long since departed in peace—allowed him to follow his own inclinations and devote himself to military service and Pharaoh's army. This very day he had hoped to surprise him with the news that he had been promoted above other and older captains of Egyptian race.

The neglect which Nun had feared for his son had, through the power of his presence, his valor, and, as he modestly added, his good luck, been turned to advance-

ment ; and yet he had not ceased to be a Hebrew. When he had felt the need of acknowledging a god with sacrifice and prayer, he had worshiped Set, into whose sanctuary his own father had led him as a child, and whom, at that time, all the Semitic race in Goshen had worshiped. For him, however, there was another god, and this was not the God of his fathers, but the god who was confessed by all those Egyptians who had received initiation, though he remained hidden from the common people, who were not able to comprehend him. It was not only the adepts that knew him, but also most of those who were placed in the service of the state and in the army—whether they were ministers of the divinity or not. Every one, however, knew what was meant when they spoke simply of “The God,” the “Sum of All,” the “Creator of Himself,” or of the “Great One.” Hymns praised him, epitaphs which every one could read spoke of him, the only god, who revealed himself in the world, who was co-existent and co-equal with the universe, immanent in all creation, not merely as life exists in the body of man, but as being himself the sum total of created things, the universe itself in its perennial growth, decay and resurrection, himself obeying the laws he had laid down. His essence, dwelling in every part of himself, dwelt likewise in man ; and, look where he might, a mortal could perceive the presence and action of the One. Without him nothing could be conceived of, and thus he was one—like the God of his fathers. Without him nothing could come into being nor any event happen on earth. Thus, like the God of Israel, he was almighty. Joshua had long been wont to think of these gods as essentially the same, and differing only in name. He who worshiped the one he deemed was the servant of the other ; and so the captain of the host could, with a clear conscience, have stood before his parent and have told him that he had been as faithful to the God of his people as he had been, as a warrior, in the service of the king.

And there was something else which had made his heart beat faster and more gladly as he saw from afar the pylons and obelisks of Tanis, for in his endless marches across the silent desert and in many a lonely camp-tent the image had haunted his vision of a maiden of his own people, whom he had first known as a strange child stirred by

wondrous thoughts, and whom he had seen again as a woman grown, unapproachable in her dignity and severe beauty, not long before he had last led his host to the Libyan war. She had come from Succoth to Tanis to his mother's burial; her image had been deeply stamped on his heart, and his—he dared to hope—on hers. She had now become a prophetess, hearing the voice of God. While other daughters of Israel were strictly secluded, she had asserted her freedom, even among men and in spite of her hatred for the Egyptians, and for his place among them, she had not concealed from Joshua that to part from him was grief, and that she would never cease to think of him, His wife, when he should wed, must be as strong and grave as himself, and Miriam was both, and cast another and brighter image, of which he once had loved to dream, quite into the shade.

He was fond of children, and a sweeter child than Kasana he had never seen, either in Egypt or in distant lands. The sympathy with which this fair daughter of his comrade-in-arms had watched his achievements and his fortunes, and the modest, tender affection which the much-courted young widow had since shown him, had brought him much joy in times of peace. Before her marriage he had thought of her as growing up to be his wife; but her union with another and her father's repeated declarations that he would never give his daughter to wife to a foreigner, had wounded his pride and cooled his ardor. Then he had met Miriam, and she had inspired him with a fervent desire to call her his own. And yet, though as he marched homeward the thought of seeing Kasana once more had been pleasing to him, he was well content that he no longer wished to marry her, for it must have led to much vexation. The Egyptians and Hebrews alike deemed it an abomination to eat at each other's table, or to use the same seats or knives, and though as a fellow soldier he was accepted as one of themselves, and had often heard the young widow's father speak kindly of his people, still "the strangers" were hateful in the sight of Hornecht and his household.

In Miriam he had found the noblest helpmate. Would that Kasana might make another happy. Henceforth she could be no more to him than a delightful child, from whom we look for nothing but the pleasure of her sweet presence.

He had learned to ask nothing of her beyond a glad smile, always at his service. Of Miriam he demanded herself, in all her lofty beauty, for he had long enough endured the loneliness of a camp life, and now that no mother's arms were open to the home-comer, he felt the emptiness of his single state. He longed once more to feel glad in times of peace, when he laid down his arms after perils and privations of every kind. It was his duty to take a wife home to dwell under his father's roof, and to provide that the noble race of which he was the only male descendant should not die out. Ephraim was only his sister's son.

His heart uplifted with such glad thoughts as these, he had come back to Tanis, and had almost reached the goal of his hopes and wishes, when behold! there lay before him, as it were, a field of corn destroyed by hail and swarms of locusts.

And, as though in mockery, fate brought him first to what had been the home of his fathers. Where the house had once stood in which he had grown up, and for which his heart had longed, there lay a dust-heap of ruins. Where those near and dear to him had proudly watched him depart, beggars were searching for booty in the rubbish.

Kasana's father was the first to hold out a hand to him in Tanis, and instead of a glance of kindly welcome he had from him nothing but a tale of woe that had cut him to the heart. He had dreamed of fetching home a wife, and the house in which she should have been mistress was level with the earth. The father whose blessing he craved, and who was to have rejoiced over his promotion, was by this time far away, and the foe henceforth of the sovereign to whom he himself owed his elevation.

It had been a proud thought that, in spite of his birth, he had risen to power and dignity, and that now, as the leader of a great army, he might indeed show of what great deeds he was capable. There was no lack of schemes in his fertile brain, plans which, if they had been ratified by the authorities, might have led to good issues; and now he was in a position to carry them out at his own pleasure, and he himself the motive power instead of the tool. All this had roused a delightful exultation in his breast, and had lent wings to his feet on the homeward march; and now, when he had reached the longed-for goal, was to turn

back, to become the comrade of shepherds and masons? By birth, indeed, he belonged to them (and how hard a fortune did that at this moment seem), though there was no denying that they were now as alien to him as the Libyans against whom he had taken the field. On almost every point for which he cared he had nothing whatever in common with them. To his father's question as to whether he had returned still a Hebrew, he had believed he might truly answer, yes; but now he felt that it would be against his will, a less than half-hearted adherence.

His soul clung to the standards under which he had marched to battle, and which he now might himself lead to victory. Was it possible to tear himself from them, and forfeit all he had won by his own merit? But had he not heard from the grandchild of his old slave, Eliab, that his people expected him to quit the army and follow them? A messenger must ere long arrive from his father—and among the Hebrews a son might not resist a parent's command.

Yet there was another to whom he owed strict obedience—Pharaoh, to whom he had sworn that he would serve him faithfully and follow his call without hesitation or reflection through fire and water, by night or day. How many a time had he stigmatized a soldier who should go over to the foe or rebel against the orders of his chief as a wretch devoid of honor, and many a one who had deserted from his standard had perished shamefully on the gallows under his own eye. And should he now commit the crime for which he had scorned others or done them to death. He was known for his swift decisiveness throughout the army, for even in the greatest straits he could arrive at the right determination and reduce it to action; but in this dark and lonely hour he seemed to himself as a bending reed, as helpless as a deserted orphan.

A gnawing rage against himself possessed him wholly, and when he presently thrust his spearhead into the fire, so that the glowing brands fell in and the sparks danced brightly up into the night, it was fury at his own vacillating mind that spurred his hand.

If the events of the past night had called him to the manly task of revenge, all hesitation and doubt would have vanished, and his father's call would have determined him to act; but who had here been the victims of ill-usage? Be-

yond doubt the Egyptians, who had been bereft by Moses' curse of thousands of precious lives, while his people had escaped their vengeance by flight. To find the home of his fathers destroyed by the Egyptians had, indeed, roused his wrath; but he saw no just cause for a bloody revenge when he reflected on the unutterable woe which had come upon Pharaoh and his subjects through the Hebrews.

No. He had no revenge to take; he could only look upon himself as one who sees his father and mother in danger of their lives, and knows that he cannot save both, but if he risks his own life to rescue one the other must certainly perish. If he obeyed the call of his people honor was lost—that honor which he had kept as bright as the brass of his helmet—and with it all he most hoped for in life; if he remained faithful to Pharaoh he was betraying his own blood, his father's curse would darken the light of all his days, and he must renounce all his fairest dreams for the future; for Miriam was a true daughter of her race, and woe to him if her lofty soul could hate as bitterly as it could fervently love.

Her image rose before his mind's eye, tall and beautiful, but with a dark look and warning mien, as he sat gazing across the dying fire out into the night; and his manly pride surged up, and it seemed to him a mean thing to throw away everything that is dear to the warrior's heart for fear of a woman's wrath and blame.

"No, no," he murmured to himself, and the scale which held duty, and love, and filial obedience, and the ties of blood, suddenly kicked the beam. He was what he was—the captain of ten thousand in the king's army. He had sworn allegiance to him and to none other. His people! Let them run away if they chose from the Egyptians' yoke! He, Joshua, scorned flight. Bondage had lain heavy on him; but as for him, the mightiest in the land had treated him as their equal and held him worthy of honor. To repay their goodwill with treason and desertion went against him, and with a deep sigh he started to his feet, feeling as though he had chosen rightly. A woman and a weak desire for love to fill his heart should never lead him to be false to grave duty and the highest aims of his existence.

"I remain," cried a loud voice in his breast. "My father is wise and kind, and when he hears my reasons he

will approve them, and instead of cursing he will bless me. I will write to him, and the boy that Miriam sent to me shall be my messenger."

A cry from the tent made him start ; looking at the stars he found he had neglected his duty toward the sick youth, and went quickly to his bedside.

Ephraim was sitting up expecting him, and cried to him : " I have been wanting you a long time. So much has passed through my mind, and, above all, the message from Miriam. Till I have delivered it I shall not find any rest, so hear me now."

Joshua nodded to him, and after the youth had taken the healing draught that he handed him, he began :

" Miriam, the daughter of Amram and Jochebed, sends greeting to the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua, or the Helper, is thy name, and the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be the helper of his people. And henceforth thou shalt be called Joshua,* the Holpen of Jehovah. For the God of her fathers, who is the God of thy fathers also, hath spoken by Miriam, His handmaid, commanding thee to be the shield and sword of thy people. In Him is all power, and His promise is to strengthen thine arm that He may smite the enemy."

The lad began in a low tone, but his voice gradually grew stronger, and the last words rang out loud and solemn in the silence of the night.

Thus had Miriam spoken to him, and had laid her hands on his head and looked earnestly into his eyes with her own, which were as black as the night, and as Ephraim repeated them he had felt as though some secret power compelled him to cry them aloud to Joshua, as he had heard them from the mouth of the prophetess. Then he breathed a sigh of relief, turned his face to the white canvas wall of the tent, and said quietly :

" Now I will sleep."

But Joshua laid his hand on his shoulder and said in commanding tones : " Say it again."

The lad did his bidding, but this time he repeated the words unheeding and in a low tone to himself. Then he said imploringly : " Leave me to rest," put his hand under his cheek and shut his eyes.

* More correctly Jehoshua.

Joshua let him have his own way. He gently laid a fresh wet bandage over his burning head, put out the light and cast more logs on the dying fire outside; but the keen, resolute man did it all as in a dream. At last he sat down, resting his elbows on his knees and his head on his hand, with his eyes fixed on vacancy or gazing at the flames.

Who was this God who called him through Miriam to be, by His aid, the sword and shield of his people.

He was to bear a new name, and to the Egyptians the name was the man. "Honor to the name of Pharaoh!" not "to Pharaoh," was written in every inscription and document; and if henceforth he was to be called Joshua, this involved a command to cast the old man off and to become a new man. This, which Miriam had declared to him as the will of the God of his fathers, was nothing less than a bidding to cease to be an Egyptian, as his life had made him, and become a Hebrew again, as he had been as a boy.

How could he learn to act and feel as a Hebrew?

And Miriam's message required him to go back to his own tribe. The God of his nation, through her, bid him to do what his father expected of him. Instead of the Egyptian host, which he must make haste to forget, henceforth he should lead the sons of Israel when they went forth to battle; this was the meaning of her words; and when that high-souled maiden and prophetess declared that it was God Himself who spoke by her mouth, it was no vain boast; she was certainly obeying the voice of the Most High. And now the image of the woman whom he had dared to love appeared to him as unapproachably sublime; many things which he had heard in his childhood of the God of Abraham and His promises, recurred to his mind; and the scale which till now had been the heavier gradually rose. What had but just now seemed firmly settled was no longer sure, and once more he stood face to face with the fearful abyss which he fancied he had overleaped.

How loud and mighty was the call he had heard! The sound in his ears disturbed his clearness and peace of mind. Instead of calmly weighing the matter as he had done before, memories of his boyhood, which he had fancied long since buried, lifted up their voices, and disconnected flashes of thought confused his brain.

Sometimes he felt prompted to turn in prayer to the God who called him, but as often as he made the attempt he remembered the oath he must break, and the vast host he must leave behind him to become the leader, no more of a well-trained, brave, obedient troop of brothers in arms, but of a miserable horde of cowardly serfs, and wild, obstinate shepherds accustomed to the rule of oppression.

It was three hours past midnight. The men on guard had been relieved, and he began to think of giving himself a few hours' rest. He would think the matter out again by daylight with his wonted rational decisiveness, which now he felt he could not attain to. But as he entered the tent, and Ephraim's steady breathing fell on his ear, in fancy he heard again the lad's solemn delivery of his message. It startled him, and he was about to repeat the words to himself when he heard a tumult among the outposts, and a vehement dispute broke the stillness of the night.

The interruption was welcome. He hurried out to where the guards were posted.

CHAPTER VI.

HOGLAH, the granddaughter of the old slave Eliab, had come to entreat Joshua to go with her forthwith to see her grandfather, whose strength had suddenly failed him, and who, feeling death near at hand, could not die without seeing him and blessing him once more. So the captain bade her wait, and after assuring himself that Ephraim slept peacefully, he charged a man he could trust to keep watch over the lad, and went with Hoglah.

As she led the way she carried a small lantern, and when the light fell on the girl's face and figure, he saw how ill-favored she was, for slave's toil had bent the poor child's back before its time. Her voice had the rough tones which a woman's tongue often acquires when her strength is too unsparingly taxed ; but all she said was loving and kind. Joshua forgot her appearance as she told him that she had a lover among the men who had gone forth, but that she had remained behind with her grandparents, for she could not bring herself to leave the old folks alone ;

that as she was not fair to look upon, no man had coveted her as his wife till Asser had come, and he did not look to appearances, because he was hardworking, as she herself was, and had expected that she would help to save his earnings. He would have been willing to stay behind with her, but his father had commanded him to set out with him ; so he had no choice, but must obey and part from her forever.

The tale was simply told, and in a harsh accent, but it struck to the heart of the man who, for his part, meant to go his own way in opposition to his father.

As they presently came in sight of the harbor, and Joshua looked down on the quays and the huge fortified storehouses, built by the hands of his own people, he thought once more of the gangs of ragged laborers whom he had so often seen cringing before the Egyptian overseer, or, again, fighting madly among themselves. He had marked, too, that they did not hesitate to lie and cheat in order to escape their toil, and how hard it was to compel them to obey and do their duty !

The more odious objects among these hapless hundreds rose clearly before his mind ; and the thought that perhaps his fate in the future might be to lead such a wretched crew came over him as a disgrace which the humblest of his subalterns, the captain of fifty, would fain be spared. There were, of course, among the mercenaries of Pharaoh's armies many Hebrews who had won a reputation for courage and endurance, but they were all the sons of owners of herds, or of men who had been shepherds. The toiling multitudes whose clay hovels could be overturned with a kick formed the greater mass of those to whom he was bidden to return.

Firmly resolved to remain faithful to the oath which bound him to the standard of the Egyptian host, and yet stirred to the depths of his soul, he entered the slave's hut, and his vexation was increased when he found the old man sitting up and mixing some wine and water with his own hand. So he had been brought away from his nephew's bedside on a false pretense, and deprived of his own night's rest that a slave, who, in his eyes, was scarcely a man at all, should have his way. Here he himself was the victim of a trick of that cunning selfishness which, in the Egyptians' eyes, was the reproach of his people, and which,

indeed, did not attract him to them. But the wrath of the clear-sighted and upright man was soon appeased as he saw the girl's unfeigned delight at her grandfather's rapid recovery ; and he then learned from the aged wife that Hogleh had hardly set out on her quest when they remembered that they had some wine in the house, and after the first draught her husband got better and better, though she had before thought he had one foot already in the grave. Now he was mixing some more of the blessed gift to strengthen himself with a draught of it every now and then.

Here the old man himself broke in, and said that he owed this and much that was better to the goodness of Nun, Joshua's father ; for besides this hut and wine and meal for bread, he had given him a milch cow and likewise an ass, on which he could ride out and take the air, and he had left him his granddaughter and some silver, so that he could look forward with contentment to their end, all the more so as they had a patch of land behind the house, which Hogleh would sow with radishes, onions and leeks for their pottage. But best of all was the written deed which made them and the girl free forever. Aye, Nun was a true lord and father to his people ; and his good gifts had brought with them the blessing of the Most High, for immediately after the departure of the Hebrews, by the help of Asser, Hogleh's betrothed, he and his wife had been conveyed hither without any demur or difficulty.

"We old folks," the old woman added, "will die here. But Asser has promised Hogleh to come back for her when she has done her duty to her parents to the very last." And turning to the girl she said in an encouraging tone : "And it cannot be for much longer now."

At this Hogleh began to wipe her eyes with the skirt of her blue gown, and cried : "Long, long may it be ! I am young. I can wait."

Joshua heard these words, and it seemed to him as though the poor, ill-favored, deserted girl was giving him a lesson.

He had let the old folks talk on, but his time was precious, and he now asked whether it was for any special cause that Eliab had sent for him.

"I could not help sending," was the answer, "and not only to ease the longing of my old heart, but because my lord Nun had bidden me to do so.

“Great and noble is thy manhood, and now art thou become the hope of Israel! Thy father, too, hath promised the men and women of his house that after his death thou shalt be their lord and their head. His speech was full of thy glory, and great was the rejoicing when he declared that thou wouldst follow the departing tribes. And I am he whom my lord vouchsafed to command that, if thou shouldst return before his messenger could reach thee, I was to say that Nun, thy father, awaited his son. By sunrise, or at latest by midday, thy people shall stay to rest by Succoth. He would hide a writing in the hollow sycamore before the house of Aminadab, which should tell thee whither next they take their way. His blessing and the blessing of our God be with thee in the way!”

As the old man pronounced the last words Joshua bent his head, as though an invisible hand were inviting him to kneel. Then he thanked the old man, and asked in a subdued voice whether all had been willing to obey the call to quit house and home.

The old woman clasped her hands, exclaiming: “No, no, my lord; by no means. What a wailing and weeping there was before they departed! Many rebelled, others escaped or sought some hole or corner in which to hide. But in vain. In the house of our neighbor, Deuel—you know him—his young wife had been lately brought to bed with a boy, her first-born. How could the poor creature set forth to wander? At first she wept bitterly, and her husband blasphemed; but there was no help for it. She and her infant were laid in a cart, and as things went forward they got over it, he and she both, like all the rest; even Phineas, who crept into a pigeon-house with his wife and five children, and even old crippled Graveyard Keziah—you remember her, Adonai—she had seen her father and mother die, her husband, and then five well-grown sons; everything the Lord had given her to love, and had laid them one after another in our graveyard; and every morning and evening she would go to the resting place, and as she sat there on a log of wood which she had rolled close to the tombstone her lips would always be moving; but what she muttered was not prayer; no—I have listened to her many a time when she did not heed me—no; she talked with the dead as if they could hear her in the tomb, and could understand her speech like those

who live in the light of the sun. She is nigh upon three-score years old, and for three times seven years she has been known to the folk about as Graveyard Keziah. It was a senseless way she had, but for that very reason perhaps it was doubly hard to her to give it up; and she would not go, but hid away behind the shrubs. When Abiezer, the head of the house, dragged her forth, her wailing was enough to make your heart ache. But when it came to the last she plucked up courage and could not bear to stay behind any more than the rest."

"What had come over the poor wretches? What possessed them?" Joshua here broke in, interrupting the old woman's flow of words; for his fancy again pictured the people that he ought to, nay, that he must, lead, as surely as he held his father's blessing of price above all else; and he saw them in all their misery. The old woman started, and, fearing lest she might have angered the first-born son of her master, this proud and lordly warrior, she stammered out:

"What possessed them, my lord? Aye, well—I am but a poor, simple slave-woman; but indeed, my lord, if you had but seen them also——"

"Well, what then?" cried the soldier roughly and impatiently; for now, for the first time in his life, he found himself compelled to act against his inclinations and convictions.

At this the old man tried to come to his wife's rescue, saying timidly:

"Nay, my lord, tongue cannot tell of it nor the understanding conceive of it. It came upon Israel from the Eörd, and even if I could describe how mightily He worked in the souls of the people——"

"O's Fry," said Joshua, "but my time is short. Then they were forced to depart? It was against their will that they took up their staff? That they have followed Moses and Aaron for some time past, as sheep follow the shepherd, is known even to the Egyptians. And have those men, who brought down the pestilence on so many innocent beings, worked a miracle to blind the eyes of you and your wife here?"

The old man lifted supplicating hands to the warrior, and replied, much troubled, in a tone of humble entreaty: "Oh, my lord, you are the first-born son of my master, the

greatest and noblest of his house, and if you will you can tread me in the dust like a beetle ; and yet will I lift up my voice and say to you they have told you falsely. You have been among strangers all this year, while mighty signs have been wrought upon us. You were far from Zoan* as I have heard when the people went forth. For any son of our race who had beheld this thing would sooner that his tongue should wither in his mouth than laugh to scorn the mighty things which the Lord has vouchsafed to us to behold. If you had patience, indeed, and could grant me to tell the story——”

“Speak,” cried Joshua, amazed at the old man’s fervor ; and Eliab thanked him with a glowing look, and cried :

“Ah ! would that Aaron, or Eleazar, or my lord Nun, your father, were here ; or that the Most High would grant me the gift of their speech ! But as it is, well. And, indeed, meseems as though I saw and heard it all, as though it were all happening again ; and yet how may I tell it ? But by God’s help I will try.”

He paused, and as Joshua saw that the old man’s lips and hands trembled, he himself reached him the cup, and the old man thankfully emptied it to the bottom. Then he began with half-closed eyes, and his wrinkled features grew more keenly eager as he proceeded with his tale :

“What befell after that it became known what command had come to the people my wife has already told you ; and we, too, were among those who lost heart and murmured. But last night we all who were of the house of Nun were bidden to the feast—even the shepherds and the slaves and the poor—and there we ate of roast lamb and fresh unleavened bread, and had plenty of wine, more than usual at the harvest festival which begins on that night, and which you yourself have often witnessed as a boy. There we sat and enjoyed ourselves, and my lord, your father, spoke words of encouragement and told us of the God of our fathers and of the great things He had done for his people. Now, said he, it was the Lord’s will that we should set forth and depart out of this land, where we have borne contempt and bondage. This was no such sacrifice as that for which Abraham had sharpened his knife to shed the blood of his son Isaac withal, at the bid-

* The Hebrew name for Tanis.

ding of the Most High, although it would fall hardly on us to leave a home grown dear to us, and many an old custom. Nay, it would at last bring much happiness on us all. For, cried he, we were not to wander forth into the unknown, but toward a lordly land which God himself had set before us. He had promised us a new home instead of this land of bondage, where we should dwell as free men on fruitful meadows, and fine rich pastures where a man and his household might be fed and their hearts made glad. Just as a man must work hard to earn his wage, so were we to endure a brief space of privation and sorrow to earn that beautiful new home for ourselves and our children, as the Lord had promised. A land of God it must surely be, since it was the gift of the Most High.

“Thus he spoke, and thus he blessed us all; and promised that you, too, would shake the dust from off your feet and join yourself to the people, and fight for them with a strong arm, as an experienced warrior and an obedient son.

“Hereupon we all shouted for joy, and when we were all gathered in the market-place and found that all the bondsmen had been able to escape from the overseers our courage rose. Then came Aaron into our midst and stood upon the salesman’s bench, and all that my lord Nun had spoken at the feast we now heard from his lips, and the words he spoke sounded now like rolling thunder and now like the sweet tones of the lute; and we all knew that it was the Lord our God who spoke by him, for he touched the hearts even of the rebellious, so that they murmured and complained no more. And when at last he proclaimed to the multitude that no erring man, but the Lord God Himself, would be our Captain; when he described the beauty of the promised land, whose gates he would open before us, and where we should dwell as free and happy men, released from all bondage, owing no obedience to any but to the God of our fathers and those whom we may choose for our leaders, it was as though every man there was drunk with new wine, and as if the way that lay before them, instead of a barren track across the desert into the unknown, led to a great feast spread for them by the Most High Himself. Nay, and even those who had not heard Aaron’s words were likewise filled with marvelous confidence, and men and women were all more cheer-

ful and noisy than their wont at the harvest feast, for all hearts overflowed with pure thankfulness. It even seized the old folks. Old Elishama, the father of Nun, who is an hundred years old, and, as you know, has long sat bent and silent in his seat, rose up with a light in his eyes and spoke fiery words. The spirit of the Lord had come upon him as upon us all.

“ I felt myself quite young again in body and soul ; and as I passed by the carts which were made ready for their departing I saw Elisheba with her babe in a litter, and she looked as happy as on the day of her marriage, and pressed her infant to her heart and blessed his lot in growing up in the promised land and free. And her husband, Deuel, who had blasphemed the loudest, swung his staff and kissed his wife and child with tears of joy in his eyes, and shouted for joy like a vintager at the pressing, when jars and wine skins are too small to hold the blessing. The old woman, too, Graveyard Keziah, who had torn herself away from the tombs of her race, sat with other feeble folk in a chariot, and waved her veil and joined in the hymn of praise which Elkanah and Abiasaph, the sons of Korah, had begun. And thus they set forth. We who were left behind fell into each other's arms, and knew not whether the tears we shed flowed from our eyes for grief or for overjoy at seeing the multitude of those we loved so glad and full of hope. Thus it came to pass.

“ Such torches were carried in front of the multitude, seeming to light it up more brightly than the great blaze of lamps which the Egyptians light up at the gates of the temple to Neith ; and it was not till they were swallowed up in the darkness that we set forth, so as not to keep Asser too long behind the rest. As we made our way through the night, the streets were full of the mourning cry of the citizens, but we sang softly the hymn of the sons of Korah, and great joy and peace fell upon us, for we knew that the Lord our God would keep and lead His people.”

Here the old man ceased, but his wife and the girl, who had hearkened to him with eager eyes, drew closer to each other, and without any word between them they both together began the hymn of praise, and the old woman's thin voice mingled with pathetic fervor with the harsh tones of the girl, ennobled as they were with lofty enthusiasm.

Joshua felt that it would be wicked to break in on this overflow of full hearts, but the old man presently bade them cease and looked up at his master's first-born son with anxious inquiry in his grave features.

Had Joshua understood?

Had he made it plain to this warrior who served Pharaoh how that the Lord God Himself had ruled the souls of His people at their departing?

Was he so fallen away from his own nation and their God, so led away by the Egyptians, that he would dare to defy the wishes and commands of his own father?

Was he, in whom they had set the highest hopes, a deserter and lost to his own people?

To these questions he might have no answer in words; but when Joshua took his horny old hand between his own, and shook it as that of a friend when he bade him farewell, his eyes glistening with moisture, and murmured, "You shall hear of me!" he felt that this was enough, and overcome by vehement joy he kissed the soldier's arm and clothing again and again.

CHAPTER VII.

JOSHUA returned to his tent with a bowed head. The discord in his soul was resolved. He knew now what burthen he must take up. His father called him and he must obey.

And the God of his people! As he listened to the old man's tale all he had heard of that God in his childhood now reawakened in his soul, and he knew now that He was another than Set, the god of the Asiatics in lower Egypt; another than the "One," the "Sum of All," of the adepts. The prayer he had been wont to say on going to rest, the story of the Creation which he had never been weary of hearing, because it so plainly showed how everything which existed in heaven and on earth had gradually come into being till man came to take possession of it and to enjoy it all; the history of father Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, Esau and his own forefather Joseph—how gladly had he hearkened to all this as it was told him by the gentle mother who had borne him, by his

nurse, and his grandfather Elishama ; and yet he seemed long since to have forgotten it. But under his old slave's humble roof he could have repeated the tale word for word, and he now knew of a surety that there was indeed one God, invisible, almighty, who had chosen Israel to be His own people, and had promised to make them a great nation. That which the Egyptian priesthood kept secret as the greatest mystery was the common possession of his people ; every beggar, every slave, might lift his hands in prayer to the one invisible God who had revealed Himself to Abraham and promised him great things. Over-wise heads among the Egyptians, who had divined His existence, had overlaid His essence with the monstrous births of their own imaginings and their own thoughts, and had shrouded Him in a thick veil, and hidden Him from the multitude. It was only among His chosen people that He lived and shewed forth His power in its mighty and awful greatness.

This God was not nature, though the initiated in the temples confounded them ; no, the God of his fathers was enthroned on high, above all created things and the visible universe, above man, His last and most perfect work, created in His own image ; and all creatures were subject to His will. He, the King of Kings, ruled all that had life with just severity ; and although He hid himself from the sight of man who was His image, and was beyond man's apprehension, yet was He a living, thinking, and active Being even as men were, save that His term of life was eternity, His mind was omniscience, His realm was infinity.

And this God had instituted Himself the leader of His people. There was no captain who could dare to defy His power. If Miriam were not deceived by the Spirit of prophecy, and if He had indeed called Joshua to be His sword, how could he resist, or what higher place could he fill on earth ?

And His people ; the rabble crowd of whom he had thought with scorn, how transfigured they seemed by the power of the Most High now that he had heard old Eliab's tale ! Now he only longed to lead them ; and on his way back to the camp he stayed his steps on a sandy knoll, from whence he could see the limitless waters gleaming under the lamps of heaven, and for the first time for many

long years uplifted his arms and eyes to the God whom he had found again.

He began with a simple prayer which his mother had taught him ; but then he cried to the Lord as to a mighty counselor, and besought Him with fervent entreaty to show him the way in which he should walk without being disobedient to his father, or breaking the oath he had sworn to the king, or becoming a traitor in the eyes of those to whom he owed so much.

“ Thy people glorify Thee as the God of truth, punishing those who break their oath ! ” he cried. “ How canst Thou bid me to be faithless and to be false to the pledge I have given ? All I am or can do is Thine, O Lord, and I am ready to give my blood and my life for my brethren. But rather than cast me into dishonor and perjury let me die, and give the task Thou hast chosen me, Thy servant, to do, to a free man bound by no oath ! ”

Thus he prayed, and he felt as though he clasped in his arms a friend whom he had accounted as lost. Then he walked on in silence through the diminishing darkness, and, as the grey dawn stole up, the high tide of passion ebbed in his soul, and the clear-headed warrior could think calmly.

He had vowed to do nothing against the will of his father or his God ; but he was no less resolved never to be a traitor and oath-breaker. What he had to do he now saw plainly and clearly. He must quit Pharaoh's service, and declare before the face of his superiors that, as a dutiful son, he must obey the commandments of his father, and go forth to share his fortunes and the fortunes of his people.

But he did not conceal from himself that his demand might be refused ; that he might be kept back by force ; and perhaps, if he persisted unmoved in his resolve, be threatened with death, or, if it came to the worst, be handed over to the executioner. But even if this should be his doom, if his deed cost him his life, he would have done what was right, and his comrades in arms, whose esteem was dear to him, would still think of him as their worthy mate ; his father and Miriam would not be wroth with him ; nay, but would mourn for the faithful son, the true man who preferred death to treason.

Calm and elevated in spirit, he gave the watchword to the sentry with proud composure, and went into his tent.

Ephraim still lay sleeping and smiling as though wrapped in sweet dreams. Joshua lay down on a mat near him to seek strength for the hard day before him. His eyes soon closed, and after sleeping an hour he awoke of his own accord and called for his handsomest raiment, his helmet and gilt armor which he was wont to wear only at high festivals or in the king's presence.

Meanwhile Ephraim, too, awoke, gazed at his uncle from head to foot with delighted curiosity as he stood before him in stalwart manliness and shining warlike splendor, and cried as he started up :

"It must be a fine thing to be dressed like that and feel oneself the leader of thousands."

The elder man shrugged his shoulders and replied :

"Obey the Lord thy God, and give no man, whether great or small, the right to regard you with anything but respect, and then you may carry your head as high as the proudest hero in his purple robe and gilt breast-plate."

"But you have done great things among the Egyptians," the lad went on. "They hold you in high esteem—even Hornecht the great captain, and his daughter Kasana."

"Do they?" said the warrior with a smile ; and he bid his nephew to lie down and keep quiet ; for his brow, though less burning than it had been the night before, was still very hot.

"Do not go out of doors," Joshua added, "till the leech has been to see you, and await my return."

"And will you be long away?" asked the boy.

At this Joshua paused in thought, looked kindly in his face and then gravely replied :

"The man who serves a master never knows how long he may be detained." Then, changing his tone, he added less emphatically : "To-day, this morning, I may perhaps get through my business quickly and return in a few hours. If it should not be so, if I should not be with you by this evening, or early to-morrow morning, then," and he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, "then make your way home as fast as you can. If when you reach Succoth the people have gone on before you, look in the hollow sycamore before the house of Aminadab and you will find a letter which will tell you whither they have gone ; and when you come up with them greet my father and my grandfather Elishama, and likewise Miriam, and tell them

and all the people that Joshua will ever be mindful of the commands of God and of his father. Henceforth he will be called Joshua by all men—Joshua and not Hosea. Tell this to Miriam first of all. Finally, say to them that if I stay behind, if I am not allowed to follow them as I fain would do, it is that the Most High hath dealt otherwise with me, and hath broken the sword which He had chosen before He had used it. Do you understand me, boy?"

And Ephraim bowed his head and said: "You mean that death alone can keep you from obeying the call of God and your father's commands?"

"That was my meaning," replied his uncle. "And if they ask you why I have not stolen away from Pharaoh and escaped from his power, answer that Joshua would fain enter on his office as a true man unstained by perjury, or, if it be God's will, to die true. Now rehearse the message."

Ephraim obeyed, and his uncle's words must have sunk deep into his soul, for he neither forgot nor altered a single word; but he had no sooner ended his task of repetition than he seized Joshua's hand with vehement urgency, and implored him to tell him whether he had indeed any fear for his life.

At this the warrior clasped him in a loving embrace, and assured him that he hoped that he had given him this message only to be forgotten.

"Perhaps," he added, "they may try to keep me by force; but by God's help I shall soon be back with you again, and we will ride forth together to Succoth."

He turned and went out without heeding his nephew's questions, for he heard the sound of wheels without, and two chariots with five horses came rapidly up to the tent and stopped in front of the entrance.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOSHUA was well acquainted with the men who stepped out of the chariots; they were the head chamberlain and one of the king's chief scribes, and they had come to bid him to the High Gate, as the palace of the Pharaohs was called. No hesitancy or escape was possible, and he got into the

second chariot with the scribe, surprised indeed but not uneasy. Both officials wore mourning robes, and instead of a white ostrich plume, the insignia of office, a black plume fixed on the brow. The horses, too, and the runners were decked with badges of the deepest woe; and yet the king's messenger seemed to be cheerful rather than dejected, for the noble bird which they were charged to bring into Pharaoh's presence had come out at their call; and they had feared to find the nest deserted.

The long-limbed bays of royal breed carried the light vehicles with the swiftness of the wind across the uneven sandy way and the smooth high road beyond, towards the palace.

Ephraim with youthful inquisitiveness had gone out of the tent to see the unwonted scene that met his eyes. The soldiers were well pleased that Pharaoh should have sent his own chariots to fetch their captain, and he even felt his vanity flattered when he saw his uncle drive away. But he had not long the pleasure of watching him, for thick clouds of dust soon hid the chariots from view.

The hot desert wind had risen which so often blows in the Nile-valley during the spring months, and whereas all night and in the morning the sky had been clearly blue, it was now not clouded but veiled, as it were, with white haze.

The sun looked down, a motionless globe, like a blind eye above the heads of men, and the fierce heat it shed seemed to have burnt up its beams which to-day were invisible. The eye protected by the mist could look up at it unhurt, and yet its scorching power was as great as ever. The light breeze which commonly fanned the brow in the early part of the day touched it now like the hot breath of a raging beast of prey. It was loaded with the fine scorching sand of the desert, and the pleasure of breathing was turned to torture. The usually fragrant air of a March-day in Egypt was now an oppression both to man and beast, choking their lungs and seeming indeed to weigh on the whole frame and check its joy in life.

The higher the pale and rayless orb rose in the sky, the denser grew the mist, the heavier and swifter rolled the sand clouds from the desert.

Ephraim still stood in front of the tent gazing at the spot where Pharaoh's chariots had vanished in the dust.

His knees shook, but he attributed this to the wind sent by Set-Typhon, at whose blowing even the strongest was aware of a weight about his feet.

Joshua was gone, but he might return in a few hours, and then he would be compelled to follow him to Succoth. There the fair dreams and hopes which yesterday had brought him, and whose bewitching charms his fever had enhanced, would be lost to him for ever.

In the course of the night he had quite made up his mind to enter Pharaoh's army, to the end that he might remain near Tanis and Kasana; but although he had not more than half understood Joshua's message, he could clearly infer that he meant to turn his back on Egypt and his high office, and that he counted on taking him, Ephraim, with him, unless meanwhile he could make good his escape. So then he must give up his desire to see Kasana once more. But this thought was more than he could endure, and a voice within whispered to him that he had neither father nor mother, and was free to act as he choose. His guardian, the brother of his deceased father, in whose house he had been brought up, had died not long since of an illness, and no new guardian had been appointed to him, as he was now past childhood. He was destined by-and-bye to become one of the chiefs of his proud tribe, and until yesterday he had never wished for anything better.

When, yesterday, he had rejected the priest's challenge to become a warrior under Pharaoh, with the pride of a shepherd-prince, he had followed the impulse of his heart; but now he said to himself that he had been foolish and childish to reject a thing of which he knew nothing, which had always and intentionally been represented to him in a false and hideous light in order to attach him more closely to his own people. The Egyptians, he had always been told, were his enemies and oppressors; and how delightful, on the contrary, had everything seemed in the first house of an Egyptian warrior which he had happened to enter.

And Kasana! What would she think of him if he quitted Tanis without a word of greeting or leave-taking? Would it not be a perpetual vexation and regret to him that he must dwell in her memory as a clumsy peasant shepherd? Indeed, it would be actually dishonest not to

restore the costly garments which she had lent him. Gratitude was accounted among the Hebrews, too, as the holiest duty of a noble heart. He would be a hateful wretch all his life long if he did not go to see her once more.

Only he must make haste, for when Joshua should return he must find him ready to set out.

He began forthwith to strap the sandals on his feet, but he did it but slowly, and he could not understand what it was that made everything so difficult to him to-day.

He crossed the camp unimpeded, the pylons and obelisks in front of the temples showed him the way, though they seemed to quiver in the heated, sand-filled air, and he presently came out on the broad road which led to the town market-place. A panting Egyptian, whose ass was carrying wine-skins to the camp, directed him on his way.

The path was deep in dust, and dust wrapped him as he went; the sun overhead poured a flood of fire down on his bare head, and his wound again began to ache; the sand filled his eyes and mouth and stung his face and bare limbs. He was overpowered by thirst, and more than once he was forced to stop for his feet felt strangely heavy. At last he reached a well, dug for wayfarers by a pious Egyptian, and although it was graced with the image of a god, and Miriam had taught him that it was an abomination to turn from the way to such images, he drank nevertheless, drank again and again, and thought he had never enjoyed such a refreshing draught.

He got over his fear of losing his senses, as he had done yesterday, and though his feet still dragged he walked on briskly to the tempting goal. But presently his strength again failed him, the sweat streamed from his brow, there was a throbbing and hammering in the cut on his head, and he felt as if his skull was being crushed in an iron fillet. Now his usually keen sight was failing, for the things he tried to see seemed to float in dancing dust, the horizon rocked before his eyes; and suddenly he felt as though the hard pavement had turned to a bog beneath his feet. Still, all this troubled him little, for his fancy had never glowed so brightly within him. The things he thought of rose before him with marvelous vividness. Image after image stood before the wide-opened eyes of his soul, and not at his bidding, but as if raised by a will outside himself. Now

he beheld himself lying at Kasana's feet, his head fondly laid on her lap while he gazed up into her lovely face—then it was Joshua who stood before him in splendid armor, as he had just now seen him, only more gorgeous, and in ruddy fire-light instead of the dim light in the tent. Then again all the finest oxen and rams of his herds passed in front of him ; and mingling with all these, sentences of the message he had learned passed through his mind, nay, he fancied that they were being shouted in his ears ; but before he could be quite sure of their meaning some new and dazzling vision, or a loud, rushing sound filled his mind's eye and ear.

And on he went tottering like one drunk, with the sweat standing on his brow and a parched mouth. Now and then he mechanically lifted his hand to wipe the dust from his burning eyes, but he cared little that they failed to shew him clearly what was passing around him, for nothing could be more delightful than what he beheld when he looked within. Every now and then, to be sure, he was conscious of acute suffering, and he felt inclined to fling himself on the ground in sheer exhaustion, but then again a strange sense of relief kept him up. At last the delirium was too much for him ; his head seemed growing and swelling till it was as large as the head of the colossus he had seen yesterday in front of a temple ; then it rose to the height of the palm-trees by the road side, and at last it reached the mist over the firmament, and higher and higher yet. Then this head, which was still his head, was as wide as the horizon, and he pressed his hands to his temples and held his brow, for his neck and shoulders were too weak to bear the burthen of so huge a head, till, possessed with this madness, he shrieked aloud, his knees gave way, and he sank senseless in the dust.

CHAPTER IX.

AT this same hour a chamberlain was leading Joshua into the hall of audience.

Though subjects bidden to attend the king commonly had hours to wait, the Hebrew's patience was put to no severe test. At this time of deep mourning the spacious

rooms of the palace, in which a gay and noisy throng were wont to move, were as still as the grave ; for not the slaves and sentries only, but many persons of superior rank in immediate attendance on the royal pair, had fled from the pestilence and escaped without leave.

Here and there a solitary priest or official leaned against a pillar or cowered on the ground, hiding his face in his hands, while awaiting some command. Soldiers went about trailing their arms and in silent brooding. Now and then a few young priests in mourning robes stole through the deserted rooms, and speechlessly swung the silver censers, which shed a pungent perfume of resin and junipers.

It was as though a terrible incubus weighed on the palace and its inhabitants ; for, added to the loss of the king's beloved son, which came home to many hearts, the fear of death and the desert-wind had crushed the energies of mind and body alike.

Here, under the shadow of the throne, where of yore all eyes had glittered with hope, ambition, gratitude or fear, devotion or hatred, Joshua saw to-day only bowed heads and downcast looks.

Baie, alone, the second prophet of Amon, seemed untouched by sorrow, or the terrors of the night, or the enervating influences of the day ; he greeted the captain in the ante-chamber as frankly and cheerfully as ever, and assured him, though in an undertone, that no one dreamed of calling him to account for the sins of his people. But when the Hebrew, of his own free will, acknowledged that at the moment when he was sent for by the king he was in the act of going to the superior captains of the army to beseech them to release him from his service, the priest interrupted him to remind him of the debt of gratitude which he, Baie, owed to him. And he declared that, for his part, he would do his utmost to keep him with the army, and to prove to him that an Egyptian knew how to honor faithful service without respect of persons or considerations of birth, nay, even against Pharaoh's will ; and of this he would presently speak with him in secret.

But the Hebrew had no time to reiterate his purpose, for the head chamberlain interrupted them to lead Joshua into the presence of the " kind god." *

* An euphemistic title of the Pharaohs.

Pharaoh awaited him in the smaller reception hall, adjoining the royal apartments. It was a noble room, and looked more spacious to-day than when, as usual, it was filled with a crowd. Only a few courtiers and priests, with some of the queen's ladies, formed a small group, all in deep mourning, round the throne; opposite the king, squatting in a circle on the ground, were the king's councillors and scribes, wearing each his ostrich plume.

All wore badges of mourning, and the monotonous chant of the wailing women, broken now and then by a loud, shrill, tremulous outcry, came pealing out from the inner rooms and found its way to the great hall, a token that death had claimed a victim even in the palace.

The king and queen sat on a couch under a canopy of black; the throne itself was of ivory and gold. Instead of their splendid state attire they were clad in dark robes, and the royal wife and mother, who bewailed her first-born, leaned motionless and with downcast head against her husband's shoulder.

Pharaoh, too, kept his eyes fixed on the ground, as if lost in a dream. The sceptre had fallen from his hand and lay in his lap.

The queen had been torn from the corpse of her son, which was now given over to the embalmers, and it was not till she entered the audience hall that she had been able to control her tears. But she had not thought of resistance, for the unrelenting ceremonial of court life made the queen's presence indispensable at any audience of high importance. And to-day of all days she certainly would fain have escaped, but that Pharaoh had commanded her to appear. She knew what counsel was to be taken, and approved of it beforehand; for she was wholly possessed by her dread of the power of Mesu the Hebrew, called by his own people Moses, and of his God, who had brought such terrors on Egypt. Alas! for she had other children to lose, and she had known Mesu from his childhood, and knew in what high esteem the learning of this stranger had been held by the great Rameses, her husband's father and predecessor, who had brought him up with his own sons.

Oh, if it were but possible to make terms with this man! But Mesu had departed with his people; and she knew his iron will, and that the terrible foe was armed not alone

against Pharaoh's threats but even against her passionate supplications.

Now she would meet Joshua ; and he, the son of Nun, and the most noble of the Hebrews of Tanis, could succeed, if any man could, in carrying out such measures as she and her husband might think best for all parties, in concert with Ruie, the venerable high priest and chief prophet of Amon, the pontiff of all priesthood of Egypt, who combined in his own person the dignities of chief judge, treasurer and viceroy of the realm, and who had come with the court from Thebes to Tanis.

When she had been sent for to the audience chamber she was winding a garland for the beloved dead, and lotos flowers, larkspurs, mallow and willow leaves were handed to her as she required them. They lay before her now on a table and in her lap, but she felt paralyzed, and her hand, as she put it forth, refused its service.

Ruie, the chief prophet of Amon, sat on his heels on a mat to the left of the king ; he was a very old man, long past his ninetieth year. A pair of shrewd eyes, shaded by a pent-house of thick white eyebrows, looked out of his brown face, which was as gnarled and wrinkled as a bark of a rugged oak, like bright flowers from withered foliage, and their brilliancy was startling in such a shrunken, huddled, stooping figure.

This old man had long since left all active conduct of affairs to the second prophet, Baie, but he clung stoutly to his dignities, to his place at Pharaoh's side, and his seat in the council ; and rarely as he spoke, his opinion more often carried the day than that of the eloquent, fiery and much younger second prophet.

Since the pestilence had invaded the palace the old man had not quitted Pharaoh's side, yet he felt more alive than usual to-day, for the desert wind, which made others languish, revived him. He was wont to shiver continually in spite of the panther skin which covered his back and shoulders, and the heat of the day warmed his sluggish old blood.

The Hebrew Mesu had been his pupil, and never had he had the guidance of a grander nature or the teaching of a youth more richly graced with all the gifts of the spirit. He had initiated the Hebrew into all the highest mysteries, and had expected the greatest results for Egypt

and the priesthood ; and when Mesu had one day slain an overseer who was unmercifully flogging one of his fellow Hebrews, and had fled into the desert, Ruie had bewailed the rash deed as deeply as if his own son had committed it and was to suffer the consequences. His intercession had procured Mesu's pardon, but when Mesu had returned to Egypt, and that change had been wrought in him which his friends in the temple called his apostasy, he had caused his old master a keener grief than by his flight. If Ruie had been younger he would have hated the man who had cheated his dearest hopes ; but the old priest, to whom the human heart was as an open book, and whose sober impartiality enabled him to put himself in the place of his fellow-man, confessed to himself that it was his own fault that he had failed to foresee this falling away. Education and dogma had made of Mesu, the Hebrew, an Egyptian priest after his own heart and pleasing to the divinity, but when once he had raised his hand to defend one of his own race against those to whom he had been allied only by human agencies, he was lost to the Egyptians. He was henceforth a true son of his people ; and whithersoever this high-minded and strong-willed man might lead, others must inevitably follow.

Aye, and the high priest knew full well what it was that the apostate hoped to give to his people ; he had confessed to Ruie himself that it was the faith in One God. Mesu had denied that he was guilty of perjury, and had pledged himself never to betray the mysteries to his people, but only to lead them back to the God whom their forefathers had served before Joseph and his kindred had ever come into Egypt. The One God of the initiated was, no doubt, in many respects like the God of the Hebrews, and that was precisely what had reassured the ancient sage ; for he knew by experience that the common folk would not be content with a god, one and invisible, such as many of the more advanced of his own disciples found it difficult to conceive of. The men and women of the masses required sensible images of everything of which they perceived the effects in and about them, and this need the religion of the Egyptians gratified. What comfort could a love-lorn maid find in an invisible and creative Power governing the course of the universe ? She would be drawn to the gentle Hathor, who held in her beneficent grasp the cords which

bind heart to heart, the fair and powerful goddess of procreation before whom she could pour forth in full confidence all that weighed on her soul. Or a mother who longed to snatch a darling child from death—how could her small sorrows concern the incomprehensible and almighty Being who ruled the whole world? But Isis, the gracious mother, who herself had wept in such deep anguish, she could understand her grief! And how often in Egypt it was the wife who influenced her husband's attitude to the gods!

And the high priest had frequently seen Hebrew men and women worshipping devoutly in the sanctuaries of Egypt. Even if Mesu should succeed in persuading them to acknowledge One God, he, the experienced old man, foresaw with certainty that they would ere long turn away from the invisible Spirit who must ever remain remote and unreal to their apprehension, and flock back in hundreds to the gods they could understand.

Now, Egypt was threatened with the loss of the husbandmen and brickmakers she so greatly needed. Still Ruie believed he could lure them back.

"When kind words will do the work let sword and bow lie idle," he had said to his deputy, Baie, who had urged that the fugitives should be pursued and slain. "We have more corpses than enough already; what we lack are workers. Let us try to keep our hold on what we are so likely to lose."

And this milder counsel had been quite after the heart of Pharaoh, who had had enough of lamentation, and who would have thought it less rash to go unarmed into a lion's cage than to defy the terrible Hebrew any further.

So he had turned a deaf ear to the incitements of the second prophet, whose decisive and energetic nature had an influence all the more powerful as his own was irrelative, and had approved old Ruie's proposal that Joshua, the man of war, should be sent to his people, to treat with them in Pharaoh's name—a plan which had calmed his fears and inspired him with new hopes.

Baie himself had at last agreed to this suggestion. It gave him a further chance of undermining the throne he hoped to overthrow; and if once the Hebrews were re-established in the land, Prince Siptah, in whose eyes no punishment was too severe for the Hebrews, who hated

him, might very probably seize the sceptre of the cowardly Menephtah. But first the fugitives must be stopped, and for this Joshua was the right man. No one, Baie thought, was better fitted to win the confidence of an unsuspecting soldier than Pharaoh himself and his royal wife.

The old high priest was on this point of the same opinion, although he had nothing to do with the conspiracy ; and thus the sovereigns had determined to interrupt the lamentations for the dead and themselves speak with the Hebrew.

Joshua fell on his face before their feet, and when he rose the king's weary face was bent on him, sadly indeed, but graciously.

The father who had lost his first-born son had, according to custom, sacrificed his hair and beard to the razor. They had formerly framed his face in glossy-black, but near twenty years of anxious rule had turned them grey, and his figure had lost its upright bearing and had a languid, senile stoop, though he was scarcely past fifty. His regular features were still handsome, and there was something pathetic in their melancholy softness, evidently incapable of any severe tension, especially when a smile lent bewitching charm to his mouth. The indolent deliberateness of his movements scarcely detracted from the natural dignity of his person, though his voice, which was agreeable, generally had an exhausted and plaintive sound. He was not born to rule ; thirteen brothers, older than he, had died before the heirship to the throne had devolved upon him, and he, meanwhile, as the handsomest youth in all the land, the darling of the women and a light-hearted favorite of fortune, had lived a life of unbroken enjoyment till he had almost arrived at manhood. Then he had succeeded his father, Rameses the Great ; and hardly had he grasped the sceptre when the Libyans, with strong allies, had rebelled against his rule. The veteran troops and their captains, schooled in his father's wars, helped him to conquer. But in the twenty years which had now elapsed since his father's death his armies had rarely had any rest, for rebellions had constantly to be quelled, now in the East and now in the West ; and instead of dwelling in Thebes, where he had spent many happy years, and living in the most gorgeous of palaces, as he would fain have done, enjoying the blessings of peace and the society

of the illustrious students and poets who were at that time to be found there, he was forced sometimes to lead his armies into the field, and sometimes to reside at Tanis. Thus only could he settle the difficulties that disturbed the border province, and in this he yielded willingly to the counsels of Ruic. In the later years of his father's reign the national sanctuary at Thebes, and, consequently, its high priest, had attained greater wealth and power than the royal family, and it suited Menephtah's indolent nature to be an instrument rather than a master, so long as he abdicated none of the external honors due to Pharaoh. These he guarded with a resolute care which he was incapable of exerting when more serious matters demanded it.

The gracious condescension with which the king received him gratified Joshua, and at the same time roused his suspicions. However, he had the courage to declare freely that he desired to be released from his office and from the oath he had taken to his sovereign lord.

Pharaoh listened unmoved, and it was not till the soldier had confessed that his father's commands had moved him to take this step that Pharaoh signed to the high priest, who then spoke in scarcely audible tones :

“A son who sacrifices greatness that he may continue dutiful to his father must be one of the most faithful of Pharaoh's servants. Go then, do the bidding of Nun. The child of the sun, the lord of Upper and Lower Egypt, sets you free. But on one condition, which I, as the minister of his master, declare to you.”

“And what is that?” inquired Joshua.

And again the king signed to the old priest; then he sank back on the throne, while Ruic fixed his piercing eyes on Joshua and went on :

“That which the Lord of both worlds requires of you by my mouth is easy to fulfill. You must return, to be his servant and one of us again, as soon as your people and their chief, who brought such woe on this land, shall have taken the hand of the divine son of the Sun which he vouchsafes to hold forth to them in pardon, and shall have come back under the shadow of his throne. He, of his divine mercy, is ready to attach them to him and to his land again with rich gifts, as soon as they come home from the desert, whither they are gone forth to sacrifice to their god. Mark me well! All the oppressions which weighed on the

people to whom you belong shall be lifted from them. The divine King will make a new law granting them much freedom and many privileges, and all that we promise them shall be written down and witnessed on our part and on yours, as a new covenant binding on our children and our children's children. Now when this shall have been done, with an honest purpose to abide by it forever on our part, and when your people shall have agreed to accept it, will you then consent to be one of us once more?"

"Take upon yourself the office of mediator," the queen here broke in, in a low voice, and her sad eyes were fixed beseechingly on the Hebrew's face. "I quail before Mesu's wrath, and all that may be done shall be done to win back his former friendship. Speak to him in my name, and remind him of the days when I, Isis Nefert, would learn of him the names of the plants I carried to him, and he taught me and my sister their uses or their poisonous powers when he came to see the queen, his second mother, in the women's quarters. The wounds he has inflicted on our hearts shall be forgiven and forgotten. Be our ambassador, Joshua; do not refuse our prayer!"

"Such words from such gracious lips are a command," replied the warrior, "and are sweet to the heart. I will be mediator."

At this the old high priest nodded approval, and said: "Then I hope that the fruit of this short hour may be a long period of peace. But mark me. Where medicine may avail we avoid the knife and cautery; where there is a bridge over the river a man does not rashly try to swim through the whirlpool."

"Yes, verily, we will avoid the whirlpool," said the king, and the queen repeated his words; then she again fixed her eyes on the flowers in her lap.

Then a formal council was held.

Three private scribes sat down on the ground, close to the high priest, to enable them to hear his low tones, and the interpreters and counselors, in their places, took out their writing things, and, holding the papyrus in their left hands, wrote with reeds or brushes, for nothing might remain unrecorded which was discussed and decided in Pharaoh's presence. Hardly a whisper was to be heard in the hall while this went on; the guards and courtiers remained motionless in their places, and the royal couple

sat rigid and speechless, gazing into vacancy, as if in a dream.

Neither Pharaoh nor his wife could possibly have caught a word of the murmured colloquy of the speakers, but the Egyptians never ended a sentence without glancing up at the king, as if to make sure of his approval. Joshua, who was accustomed to the scene, followed their example, speaking like the others in a subdued voice, and when presently the voice of the second prophet, or of the chief interpreter, sounded rather louder, Pharaoh raised his head and repeated the high priest's last saying: "Where there is a bridge over the river a man does not try to swim the whirlpool," for this exactly expressed his wishes and the queen's. No fighting. Peace with the Hebrews, and respite from the wrath of their terrible leader and of his god, without losing the thousand diligent hands of the fugitive tribes.

Thus matters proceeded, and when the muttering of the speakers and the scratching of the pens had gone on for fully an hour, the queen was still sitting in the same attitude; but Pharaoh began to stir and raise his voice, for he knew that the second prophet hated the man whose blessing he had received and whose hostility filled him with such dread, and he feared but he should be requiring some impossible conditions of the envoy.

Still, all he said was again a repetition of the counsel as to the bridge; but his inquiring glance at the chief interpreter moved that official to assure him that all was proceeding favorably. Joshua had merely demanded that the overseers, who kept guard over the men at work, should not, for the future, be watchmen of Libyan race, but Hebrews themselves, to be chosen by the elders of their people under the sanction of the Egyptian government.

At this Pharaoh cast his look of anxious entreaty at Baie and the other councillors. The second prophet only shrugged his shoulders regretfully, and, feigning to defer his own opinion to the divine wisdom of Pharaoh, conceded this point to Joshua. The god enthroned on earth acknowledged this submission with a grateful bow, for Baie's will had often crossed his; and then, when the herald or rehearser had read aloud all the clauses of the treaty, Joshua was required to take a solemn oath that he would in any case come back to Tanis and report how his people had received the king's advances.

But the cautious warrior, who was well aware of all the snares and traps with which the State was only too ready, took this oath most unwillingly, and only when he had obtained a written pledge that, whatever the issue, his freedom should be in no way interfered with as soon as he could give them his word that he had done his part to induce the leader of his people to accept these terms.

At last Pharaoh held out his hand for the captain to kiss, and when he had also pressed to his lips the hem of the queen's robe, Ruie signed to the monarch, who understood that the moment was come when he should withdraw. And he did so with goodwill and a sense of encouragement, for he believed that he had acted for the best for his own welfare and that of his people.

A bright radiance lighted up his handsome, languid features, and when the queen rose and saw him smile, content, she did the same. At the door the king drew a breath of relief, and turning to his wife he said: "If Joshua does his errand well we shall get across the bridge."

"And not swim the whirlpool," replied the queen in the same tone.

"And if the Hebrew captain can pacify Mesu," Pharaoh went on, "and he persuades his people to remain in the land——"

"Then you must adopt this Joshua into the royal family. He is well favored and of a lordly mien," his wife broke in.

But at this Pharaoh suddenly abandoned his stooping and indifferent attitude.

"Impossible!" he eagerly exclaimed. "A Hebrew! If we raise him to be one of the 'friends,' or a fanbearer, that is the highest he can hope for. In such matters it is very difficult to avoid doing too much or too little!"

As the royal couple went forward toward the private apartments the wailing of the mourners fell more loudly on the ear. Tears started afresh to the queen's eyes, while Pharaoh continued to deliberate precisely what position in the court Joshua might be allowed to fill if he succeeded in his embassy.

CHAPTER X.

JOSHUA had now to hasten if he was to overtake the Hebrews in time, for the further they had got on their way the more difficult it might be to persuade Moses and the heads of the tribes to return and accept the terms offered them.

The events of this morning were to him so marvelous that he regarded the issue as a dispensation of the god he had found once more; also he remembered the name of Joshua, that is to say, "holpen of the Lord," which had been laid upon him by Miriam's message, whereas he had hitherto been called Hosea. He was willing to bear it, although he felt it hard to deny the sovereign who had raised him to honor. Many of his fellow-warriors had assumed similar names, and his had proved itself nobly true. Never had the help of God been more clearly with him than it had been this day. He had gone into Pharaoh's palace in the expectation of losing his freedom or being handed over to the executioner as soon as he declared his wish to follow his people; and how easily had the ties been severed which bound him to Egypt. And he had been charged with a task, in his eyes so great and noble, that he could not forbear believing that the God of his fathers had called him to fulfill it.

He loved Egypt. It was a glorious land. Where could his people find a fairer dwelling place? The conditions only under which they had dwelt there had been intolerable. Better days were now before them. The Hebrews were to be permitted to return to Goshen or to settle in the lake-land west of the Nile, a district whose fertility was well known to him. No one henceforth might compel them to serfdom, and if they laid their hands to labor for the State, Hebrews only were to be their taskmasters, and not the hard and cruel stranger. That his people must remain subject to Pharaoh was a matter of course. Joseph, Ephraim and his sons, Joshua's forefathers, had called themselves so, and had been well content to be regarded

as Egyptians. If his embassy came to a good end, the elders of the tribes were to be allowed to rule the domestic affairs of the people. Moses must be the chief ruler in the new settlement, in spite of the second prophet's objections, and he himself would be captain of the united force which should defend its frontiers, and form fresh legions of those Hebrew mercenaries who had already proved their valor in many wars. Before he left the palace the second prophet had given him several mysterious hints which had remained unsolved, but from which he inferred that Baie was big with portentous schemes, and proposed to give him some important charge as soon as the conduct of the State should fall from the hands of old Ruie into his own ; perhaps the chief captaincy of the whole army of mercenaries, a post at present held by a Syrian named Aarsu. This disturbed rather than gratified him ; but on the other hand it was a great satisfaction to him to have made it a condition that the eastern frontier should, every third year, be thrown open to the Hebrews, that they might go forth to the desert to offer sacrifices to their God. On this Moses had insisted most strongly, for, as the law now stood, no one was permitted to cross the eastern limit line, which was fortified at all points, without the express consent of the authorities. This concession to their great leader's desires might perhaps gain his assent to a treaty so favorable to his people.

All through these transactions Joshua had felt keenly how far he had been cut off from his tribe ; he could not even say what was the aim of this worship in the desert. He had frankly confessed before Pharaoh's council that he knew nothing of the complaints or demands of the Hebrews, and he did so advisedly, reserving their right to alter and amplify the proposals of which he was the bearer. But what could the people or their chief hope for better ?

The future lay before him full of hope for his nation and himself. If the covenant should be concluded the time would come for him to found a family, and the image of Miriam rose before him in all its lofty beauty. The thought of winning this noble woman was an intoxicating one ; and he asked himself whether he were indeed worthy of her, and if it were not too bold to sue for the possession of this superb inspired maiden and prophetess.

He knew life well, and understood how little trust could

be placed in the promises of the irresolute man for whose weak hand the sceptre was too heavy. But he had taken precautions, and if the elders of the people could only be pacified, the covenant, clause by clause, would be graven on metal tablets, like every other compact between Egypt and a foreign nation, and hung up in the national temple at Thebes, signed by Pharaoh and by the representatives of his people. Such a document—as he had learnt from the treaty of peace concluded with the Kheta—secured and prolonged the brief “forever” of international compacts. He had omitted nothing that might protect the Hebrews against treason and faithlessness.

Never had Joshua felt stronger, more confident, more glad of life, than when he once more stepped into Pharaoh’s chariot to take leave of his subalterns. Even Baie’s mysterious hints and confessions did not disturb him, for he was wont to leave the cares of the future to the future day ; but in the camp a trouble awaited him which darkened the present hour, for he there heard to his surprise, wrath, and distress, that Ephraim had quitted the tent and stolen away, telling no man whither. His hasty questions elicited the fact that the lad had taken the road to Tanis, so Joshua charged his faithful shield-bearer to seek the boy out in the town, and if he found him to bid him follow his uncle to Succoth.

Then, as soon as the captain had taken leave of his men, he set forth, followed by his old squire.

It was a pleasure to him to see that the Adones* and other inferior officers who had served with him, hard warriors, with whom he had shared all he possessed in war and peace, in peril and privation, so frankly showed their grief at parting. The tears rolled down the brown cheeks of many a man grown grey in battle as he shook hands with him for the last time. Many a bearded lip was pressed to the hem of his garment, or his feet, and the shining coat of the Lybian charger which bore him through the ranks with arched neck and eager prancing, though firmly held in by his rider. His own eyes were moist for the first time since his mother’s death, as shouts of honest regret and farewell wishes broke from the manly hearts of his troops and echoed along the lines. Never had he felt

* Answering to our adjutants.

so deeply as at this moment. How closely his heart was knit to those men, and how precious to him was his noble calling.

But the duty which lay before him was high and noble, too ; and the God who had released him from his oath and made his way plain to obey his father's behest, and yet be true and faithful, would perhaps lead him back to his comrades in arms, whose farewell he could fancy still rang in his ears when he was long since out of hearing.

Still, the full glory of the work intrusted to him—the exalted frame of mind of a man who goes forth with a high moral purpose to fulfill—a difficult task—the perfect bliss of a lover who flies with well-grounded hopes to crown the purest and dearest wish of his heart—did not wholly possess him till he had left the town behind him and was hastening, at a brisk trot, across the level plain dotted with palm groves and pools that lay to the southeast.

So long as he had kept his horse at a moderate pace along the streets of the town and about the harbor, his mind was so full of the immediate past and of anxiety for the missing youth that he had paid small heed to the scene around him ; the numerous vessels lying at anchor, the motley throng of ships' captains, merchants, sailors and porters of the most diverse races of Africa and Western Asia, who here sought their fortunes, or the officials, soldiers and supplicants who had followed the court from Thebes to Tanis.

And he had also failed to observe two men of higher rank, though one of them, Hornecht, the captain of the bowmen, had saluted him as he passed. They were standing back under the gateway of the temple of Set for shelter from a cloud of dust blown along the road by the wind from the desert. And as the archer vainly endeavored to attract the rider's attention, Baie, his companion, said to him : " It matters not ; he will learn soon enough where his nephew has found refuge."

" By your command," replied the soldier. Then he went on eagerly with what he had been saying : " The lad looked like a lump of clay in the potters' shed when he was brought in."

" And no wonder," interrupted the priest. " He had been lying quite long enough in Typhon's dust. But what did your steward want among the soldiers?"

"My Adon, whom I had sent out last evening, brought word that the poor lad was in a high fever, so Kasana packed up some wine and her nurse's balsam, and the old woman went with them to the camp."

"To the boy or to the captain?" asked the prophet, with a cunning smile.

"To the sick lad," replied the soldier, decisively, with an ominous frown. But he checked himself and went on, apologetically: "Her heart is as soft as wax, and the Hebrew boy—you saw him yesterday——"

"A handsome fellow—quite after a woman's heart," laughed the priest. "And stroking the nephew down cannot hurt the uncle."

"She can hardly have had that in her mind," said Hornecht sharply. "And the unembodied God of the Hebrews, it would seem, is no less mindful of his own than the immortals you serve, for when he led Hotepoo to the spot the boy was very nigh unto death. And the old man would have ridden past him, for the dust had already——"

"As you said, turned him into a lump of potter's clay. But what then?"

"Then the old man saw something golden gleam in the grey mass."

"And for gold the stiffest back will bend."

"Very true! So did my old man. The broad gold bracelet, glittering in the sun, saved the boy's life once more."

"And the best of it is that we have got him alive."

"Yes. I, too, was glad to see him open his eyes again. He quickly got better and better, and the leech says he is like a young cat and nothing will kill him. But he is in a high fever and talks all sorts of nonsense in his ravings, which even my daughter's old nurse, a woman from Ascalon, does not understand. But she believes she can distinguish Kasana's name."

"A woman once more at the bottom of the mischief."

"Cease jesting, reverend father," replied the warrior, and he bit his lip. "A decent widow and this downy-checked boy!"

"At his tender years," the priest went on, in the same tone, "full-blown roses tempt young beetles more than buds do, and in this case," he added, more gravely, "nothing could be more fortunate. We have Joshua's

nephew in our net, and now it is your part not to let him escape the toils."

"You mean," cried the soldier, "that we are to keep him a prisoner?"

"As you say."

"But you esteem his uncle highly?"

"Certainly, but higher still the State."

"But this lad——"

"He is a most welcome hostage. Joshua's sword was an invaluable weapon; but if the hand that wields it is guided by that man whose power over greater men than he we know too well——"

"You mean Mesu, the Hebrew?"

"Joshua will wound us as deeply as heretofore our enemies."

"But I heard you yourself say that he was incapable of treachery."

"And I say so still; and he has proved my words this very day. It was simply to procure his release from the oath of fealty that he this day put his head into the crocodile's jaws. But if Joshua is a lion, in Mesu he will find his tamer. That man is Egypt's arch foe, and my gall rises only to think of him."

"The cries of woe within these gates are enough to keep our hatred alive."

"And yet the feeble creature who fills the throne postpones revenge and sends forth a pacificator."

"With your consent, I believe?"

"Quite true," replied the priest, with a sardonic smile. "We have sent him forth to build a bridge! A bridge, forsooth! The dried-up wisdom of an ancient sage recommends it, and the notion is quite after the heart of that contemptible son of a great father, who, for his part, never shrunk from swimming the wildest whirlpool, specially when revenge was in view. Well, Joshua may try to build it. If the bridge over the torrent only brings him back to us, I will give him a warm and sincere welcome. But we, who alone have any spirit in Egypt, must make it our business to see that as soon as this one man has recrossed to our shore the piers shall give way under the tread of the leader of his nation."

"Yes, yes. But I fear, that we should lose the captain, if his people met the fate they deserve."

“It may seem so.”

“You are wiser than I.”

“But, still, in this case you think I am mistaken.”

“How could I make so bold!”

“As a member of the Council of War it is your duty to express your own opinion, and I regard it now as my part to show you whither the road leads along which you have come so far with bandaged eyes. Listen, then, and be guided by what I tell you when it is your turn to speak in the assembly. Ruie, the high priest, is very old.”

“And you already exercise half his prerogatives.”

“Would that he might soon lay down the rest of the burden!—Not for my own sake, I love a contest, but for the welfare of our country. It has become a deeply-rooted habit to accept as the language of wisdom all that age decides and rules; thus there are few among the councillors who do not adhere to the old man, and yet his statecraft, like himself, goes only on crutches. All that is good gets lost in a fog under his weak and half-hearted guidance.”

“On this point you may count on my support,” cried the warrior. “I will lend both hands to overthrow the dreamer on the throne and his senseless counselor.”

At this the prophet laid his finger to his lip in warning, went close up to his companion, and said in low, rapid accents: “I am now expected at the palace, so hearken only to this much: If Joshua effects a reconciliation, his people, the guilty with the innocent, will all return, and the guilty will be punished. Among the innocent we may reckon the whole of Joshua’s tribe, the tribe of Ephraim, from old Nun, the father, down to the boy in your house.”

“They may be spared; but as Mesu is a Hebrew, whatever is done to him——”

“It will not be done in the open street; and there is never any difficulty about sowing the seeds of discord between two men who have an equal right to rule in their own circle. I will take care that Joshua shall wink at the death of the other, and then Pharaoh, whether his name be Menephtah or” (and here his voice fell to a murmur) “or Siptah, shall raise him to such a giddy height—for he deserves it—that his bewildered eye will never see anything we choose to hide from him. There is a dish of

which no man can cease to eat who has once tasted it, and that meat we shall serve him withal."

"A dish—meat?"

"Power, Hornecht. Immense power. As governor of a province, or captain-general over all the mercenary troops in Aarsu's place, he will beware of quarreling with us. I know him. If we can but make him believe that Mesu has done him a wrong—and that overbearing man will of a certainty give us some ground—and if he can but be convinced that the law prescribes such punishment as we may inflict on the magician and the worst of his followers, he will not merely consent, but approve."

"But if the embassy should fail?"

"Still he will come back to us: for he never would break an oath. But in the event of his being forcibly detained by Mesu, who is capable of anything, the boy will prove useful; for Joshua loves him, his people set great store by his life, and he is a son of one of their noblest families. Pharaoh shall at any rate threaten the lad; we, on our part, will protect him, and that will bind us more closely than ever to his uncle, and join him to those who are wroth with the king."

"Admirable!"

"And we shall yet more certainly gain our end if we can bind him by yet another tie, and now I beseech you to be calm, for you are too fiery for your years. In short, our brother in arms, the man who saved my life, the best warrior in all the army, and who consequently must rise to the highest honors, must be your daughter's husband. Kasana loves the Hebrew—that I know from my wife."

The frown once more knit the archer's brow and he struggled painfully to be calm. He felt that he must subdue his aversion to calling this man his son-in-law; for indeed he liked and esteemed him, though he was averse to his nationality. He could not, indeed, refrain from muttering a curse, but his reply to the priest was calmer and more reasonable than Baie had expected. If Kasana was so possessed by demons as to be drawn to this stranger, then she should have her way. But Joshua, as yet, had not wooed her. "And," he added furiously, "by the red god Set and his seventy fellows! neither you nor any other man shall ever move me to force my child, who has suitors by the score, on a man who, though he calls himself our

friend, has never yet found leisure to greet us in our own house ! Taking charge of the lad is another matter, and I will see that he does not escape."

"Very good, my friend," replied the priest, laying his hand on his companion's shoulder. "You know how highly I value Joshua, and if he should become your son-in-law he will be the most important and indispensable of all our colleagues, and then I fancy his nephew may grow up to be a valiant officer in our army."

CHAPTER XI.

THE midnight sky, sown with innumerable stars, spread deeply and purely blue over the broad level of the eastern delta and the town of Succoth, which the Egyptians called, from its presiding deity, Pithom, or the city of Toom. The March night was drawing to its close. White mists floated above the canal, a work of the Hebrew bondsmen, which intersected the plain and watered the pasture-land and meadows which lay on all sides as far as the eye could reach. To the east and north the horizon was shrouded by the thick haze which rose from the broad lakes by the isthmus. The hot, sandy, desert-wind, which yesterday had blown over the thirsty grass ; the desert border-land to the east, and the houses and tents of Succoth, had died away during the night, and the chill hour which in March precedes sunrise, even in Egypt, was very perceptible.

Any one who had in former days arrived between midnight and dawn at the humble frontier town with its squalid hovels of Nile-mud and modest farms and dwellings, could not have recognized it now. Even its one important building besides the splendid temple of the god Toom, the spacious and fortified storehouse, presented a strange spectacle. The long, white, lime-washed walls gleamed as usual through the dusk ; but it no longer towered in death-like silence over the sleeping town ; all about it was stir and bustle. It did duty as a fortress against the plundering tribes of Shasooos* who had made their way round the

* Bedouins, whose nomad hordes swarmed in the desert adjoining Egypt on the east, now regarded as belonging to Asia.

outworks of the isthmus, and an Egyptian garrison dwelt within its indestructible walls, which could easily be held against very superior numbers.

This morning it might have been supposed that the sons of the desert had taken it by storm ; but the men and women who were so busy round the walls and on the broad marble parapet of the huge building were not Shasooos, but Hebrews. With shouts and demonstrations of joy they were taking possession of the thousands of measures of wheat and barley, rye and doorah, lentils, dates and onions, which they had found in those vast lofts, and had set to work before sunrise to empty the storehouse and pack the contents into sacks and pitchers and skins, into kneading-troughs, jars and sheets, let down from the roof by cords or carried up and down on ladders.

The chiefs of the tribes, indeed, took no part in the work, but in spite of the early hour, children of all ages might be seen, as busy as the rest, carrying as much as they could lift in pots and bowls—their mothers' cooking vessels.

Above, close to the open trap-doors of the lofts, into which the stars shone down, and round the foot of the ladders below, women held lanterns or torches to light the others at their work. Flaring pitch-brands were burning in front of the ponderous closed doors, and armed shepherds were pacing up and down in the light of the blaze. When, now and again, there was a sound within as of a stone thrown, or a kick against the brass-bound door, and of threatening words in the Egyptian tongue, the Hebrews outside were ready enough with words of mockery and scorn.

On the day of the harvest festival, at the hour of the first evening watch, certain swift runners had come to Succoth and had announced to the sons of Israel who dwelt there, and whose numbers were twentyfold as great as those of the Egyptians, that they had started from Tanis early that morning, that their people were to depart thence that night, and that their kindred of Succoth were to make ready to fly with them. At this there had been great rejoicing among the Hebrews. They, like their fellow Israelites of Tanis, had assembled together that night of the new moon after the spring equinox, when the harvest festival began, to a solemn feast ; and the heads

of their households had declared to them that the day of freedom was now at hand, and that the Lord was about to lead them forth to the promised land.

Here, as at Tanis, many had been faint-hearted and rebellious, and others had attempted to separate their lot from that of the rest and so remain behind ; but here, too, they had been carried away by the multitude. And as Aaron and Nun had addressed the people at Tanis, so here Eleazar, the son of Aaron, and Nahshon and Hur, the heads of the tribe of Judah, had done the same. And Miriam, the maiden sister of Moses, had gone from house to house, and with her glowing words had lighted and fanned the flames of enthusiasm in the hearts of the men, and persuaded the women that, with the morning's sun, a day of gladness, plenty and freedom would dawn on them and on their children.

Few had turned a deaf ear to the prophetess, and there was something majestic and commanding in the presence of this maiden, whose large black eyes, overarched by thick, dark eyebrows which met in the middle, seemed to read the hearts of those they gazed on, and to awe the refractory with their grave gleam.

When the feast was over each household had retired to rest with hopeful and uplifted hearts. But the next day and the following night and dawn had changed everything. It was as though the desert-wind had buried all courage and confidence in the sand it swept before it. The dread of wandering through the unknown had crept again into every soul, and many a one who had brandished his staff with the high spirit of enterprise, now clung obstinately to the house of his fathers, to his well-tended garden plot, and to the harvest in the fields, of which no more than half was yet garnered.

The Egyptian garrison in the fortified stone house had not indeed failed to observe that some unusual excitement prevailed among the Hebrews, but they had ascribed it to the harvest feast. The commander of the fort had heard that Moses desired to lead his people forth into the desert, there to sacrifice to their God, and he had asked for reinforcements. But he knew nothing more, for till the morning when the hot wind had arisen no Hebrew had betrayed his brethren's purpose.. On that day, however, as the heat oppressed them more and more, the

greater grew the dread of the terrified people of marching ever onward through the scorching sandy and waterless waste. This fearful day was but a foretaste of what lay before them, and when toward midday the dust cloud was yet dense, and the air more suffocating, a Hebrew dealer, from whom the Egyptian soldiers would purchase small wares, stole into the storehouse and instigated the captain to hinder his fellow Hebrews from rushing to destruction.

Even among the better sort the voice of discontent had been loud. Izehar and Michael and their sons, who disliked the power of Moses and Aaron, had gone from one to another and tried to incite them to call the elders together again before they set forth, and ask them whether it would not be wiser to make terms with the Egyptians.

While these malcontents had succeeded in assembling many followers, and the traitor had gone to the captain of the Egyptian garrison, two more runners had come in with a message to say that the multitude of the Hebrew fugitives would arrive at Succoth between midnight and dawn.

Breathless and speechless, bathed in sweat and bleeding at the mouth, the elder of the two messengers dropped on the threshold of the house of Aminadab where Miriam just now was dwelling. The exhausted men had to be revived with wine and food before even the less weary one could speak coherently; and then, in a husky voice, but overflowing with thankfulness and enthusiasm, he had told all that had happened at their departing, and how that the God of their fathers had filled all hearts with His spirit, and infused fresh confidence into the most faint-hearted.

Miriam had listened with flashing eyes to this inspiring tale, and then, flinging her veil about her head, she bade the servants of the house, who had collected about the runners, to gather all the people together under the sycamore, whose broad boughs, the growth of a thousand years, sheltered a wide space from the scorching sun.

The hot wind was still blowing, but the glad tidings seemed to have broken its power over the spirits of men, and thousands had come pouring out to assemble under the sycamore. Miriam gave her hand to Eleazar, the son of her brother Aaron, sprang on to the bench which stood close to the huge, hollow trunk of the tree, and in a loud voice prayed to the Lord, raising her hands and eyes to Heaven, as though in ecstasy her eyes beheld Him.

Then she bade the messenger speak, and when he had once more declared all that had befallen in Zoan, a loud cry went up from the multitude. Then Eleazar, the son of Aaron, described in glowing words all that the Lord had done for his people and had promised to them and their children, and their children's children.

Every word from the speaker's eager lips had fallen on the hearts of his hearers like the fresh dew of morning on parched grass. The believers had shouted greeting to him and to Miriam, and the faint-hearted had found new wings of hope. Izehar and Michael and their followers murmured no more ; nay, most of them had caught the general enthusiasm, and when presently a Hebrew soldier of the garrison stole out from the storehouse and revealed to them that his chief had been informed of what was going forward, Eleazar, Nahshon, Hur and some others had held a council with the shepherds present, and had urged them in fiery language to show now that they were men and not afraid to fight, with God's mighty help, for their nation and its freedom. There was no lack of axes, staves, sickles and brazen pikes, of heavy poles and slings, the shepherds' weapons against the beasts of the desert, though of bows and arrows they had none. A strong force of powerful herdsmen had collected round Hur, and they at once had marched upon the Egyptian overseers who were in authority over some hundreds of Hebrew bondsmen toiling at the earthworks.

With the cry, "They are coming ! Down with the oppressors ! The Lord our God is our captain !" they threw themselves on the Libyan guard, scattered them abroad and released the Hebrew laborers and stone-hewers. The noble Nahshon had set the example of clasping one of the hapless serfs as a brother to his heart, and then the others embraced the men they had set free, and thus the shout : "They are coming ! The Lord God of our fathers is our captain !" rang out far and wide. When at last the handful of shepherds had swollen to a thousand Hur had led them on to meet the Egyptian warriors, whose numbers were far inferior.

The garrison, indeed, was but a handful ; the Hebrew host was now beyond counting.

The Egyptian archers had shot a flight of arrows, and the slings of the stalwart Hebrews had sent a shower of

deadly pebbles among the foremost of the foe, when a trumpet-call was heard calling the party of soldiers back into the shelter of the scarped walls and stout doors. The Egyptian chief had judged the Hebrew force too great, and his first duty was to hold the fort till reinforcements should arrive.

But Hur had not been content with this first victory. Success had fanned the courage of his followers as a new breeze fans a smoldering fire; whenever an Egyptian showed himself on the roof of the storehouse a smooth pebble hit him sharply from the sling of a shepherd marksman. By Nahshon's orders ladders were brought out. In an instant the besiegers were swarming up the building on all sides, and after a short and bloodless struggle the stores were in the hands of the Hebrews. The Egyptians could only keep possession of the adjoining stronghold.

Meanwhile the wind had fallen. The more furious of the released bondsmen had piled straw, timber and brushwood before the door of the little fort into which the Egyptians had retired, and they could without difficulty have destroyed the foe to the last man by fire; but Hur, Nahshon and the other wiser heads among the Hebrews had not permitted the destruction of the victuals laid up in the great storehouse

It had, indeed, been no easy matter to keep the younger men among the oppressed serfs from this deed of vengeance; but they all belonged to some family in the settlement, and as Hur's prohibition was supported by the commands of their parents, they were soon not merely pacified but ready to help in distributing the contents of the granaries among the households, and in loading them into carts or on to beasts of burden, to be carried off by the fugitives.

All this took place by the flaming light of torches, and it soon had assumed the character of an orgie, for neither Nahshon nor Eleazar had been able to hinder the men and women from opening the wine skins and jars. However, they succeeded in saving the larger part of the precious booty for the time of need, and although there, indeed, too many were drunk, the strong juice of the grape and their glee at securing so much plunder moved the multitude to thankfulness. When at length Eleazar went among them once more to speak to them of the Promised Land they were ready to listen to him with uplifted hearts, and joined in a hymn of praise started by Miriam.

As in Zoan the spirit of the Lord had fallen on the people in the hour of their departing, so now in Succoth. When some ancient men and women who had hidden themselves in the temple of Zoan heard the song of triumph, they came forth and joined the rest, and packed up their possessions with as much glad hope and confidence in the God of their fathers as if they had never murmured at departing.

As the stars faded, joy and excitement increased. Men and women went out in troops on the road to Tanis to meet their brethren. Many a father led his youthful son by the hand, many a mother carried her infant on her arm: for there were kindred to greet in the coming multitude, and this day must bring some moments of solemn joy in which all who were near and dear must share, and which even the youngest child would remember when he himself had children and grandchildren.

None sought his bed in the tent, hut or houses, for every hand was needed to finish the work of packing. The crowd of toilers in the storehouse had diminished, and most households were furnished with as much food as they could carry away.

In front of the tents and hovels men and women, ready to depart, were camping round hastily lighted fires, and in the farm yards the cattle were being driven together, and such beasts and sheep as were unfit to march were at once slaughtered. Outside many of the houses men plied the axe and hammer, and the sound of sawing was heard, for litters and couches had to be hastily constructed for the sick and feeble. Here, again, chariots and wagons were still being loaded, and husbands had no small trouble with their wives; for it is always hard to forfeit a possession, be it great or small, and a woman's heart often clings more fondly to some worthless trifle than to the most precious object she owns. When Rebecca was eager to carry away the roughly-made cradle in which her infant died rather than the beautiful ebony chest inlaid with ivory which her husband had taken in pledge from an Egyptian, who could blame her? Lights shone from every window and tent door, and torches or lanterns blazed from the roof of all the better dwellings to welcome the coming host.

At the feast which had been held on the night of the harvest festival not a table had lacked its lamb roast with

fire, but in this hour of waiting the housewives again offered such food as they had ready.

The narrow street of the little town was alive with stir; the waning stars had never before looked down on such joyful faces, such bright and eager eyes, such beaming looks of hope and happy faith.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN morning dawned all those who had not already gone forth to greet the wanderers were gathered on the roof of one of the largest houses in Succoth, where the coming Hebrews were to make their first long halt.

Hurrying on before them fleet-footed men and boys, one after another, arrived in the town. Aminadab's house was their goal. It consisted of two buildings, one of which was inhabited by Nahshon, the son of the owner, and his family. In the other and larger part, besides the master of the house and his wife, his son-in-law, Aaron, dwelt with his wife, children and grandchildren, and also Miriam.

The old man, a prince of the tribe, who had given over the duties connected with his position to his son Nahshon, stretched out his trembling hands toward each messenger, and listened to his story with sparkling eyes that were nearly blinded by tears. He had persuaded his old wife to sit in the armchair in which she was to be carried after their people, so that she might become accustomed to it, and for the same reason he was reclining in his.

When the old woman heard the messengers announce that the glorious future that had been promised the people was now within reach, her eyes sought her husband and she cried: "Aye through Moses!" For she held the brother of her daughter's husband in high esteem, and it pleased her to see his prophecies fulfilled. She looked also with pride on Aaron, her son-in-law; but above all she loved Eleazar, her grandson, in whom she looked forward to the development of a second Moses. She had found Miriam, after the death of her parents, a very welcome house companion. But the warm-hearted old folks' affection for the grave young maid never grew to parental tenderness, and Elisheba, Aaron's busy wife, would not

share the cares of the great household with Miriam ; nor did their son Nahshon's wife need her help, for she, indeed, lived with her nearest of kin under their own roof. But the old people were grateful to Miriam for her care of their grandchild, Milcah, the daughter of Aaron and Elisheba, whom a great misfortune had changed from a happy child into a melancholy woman, for whom all joy was dead. A few days after her marriage with a beloved husband he had allowed himself, in a fit of wrath, to lift his hand against an Egyptian tax-gatherer, who, when Pharaoh was passing eastward by Succoth, wanted to drive off a large herd of his finest oxen for the kitchen of the lord of two worlds. In consequence of this self-redress the unfortunate man had been taken as a State prisoner to work in the mines, and it was well known that the convict there must perish, body and soul, of torturing overwork. Through the influence of Nun, Joshua's father, the prisoner's wife and household were spared from sharing this punishment. She, however, pined away more and more, and the only one who understood the way to rouse the pale, silent wife from her brooding was Miriam. To her had the deserted woman attached herself, and she followed Miriam where she practiced the medical knowledge that she had learned, and carried remedies and alms into the huts of the poor.

The last messengers, whom Aminadab and his wife received on the roof, painted in dark colors the pain and misery of wandering of which he had been a witness, but when a soft-hearted creature among them wept aloud at the great sufferings the women and children had undergone during the gale from the desert, and gloomily foretold for the future horrors not less than those he so vividly remembered, the old man spoke words of comfort to him, reminding him of the almighty power of God, and of the force of habit, which would also help them. His wrinkled face expressed sincere hope, whereas in Miriam's beautiful but stern features there was little expression of the religious trust of which youth usually has more than age.

While the messengers went and came she did not stir from the side of the old people, and left it to her sister-in-law, Elisheba, and her serving maids to give refreshments to the fatigued wanderers. She listened to them intently and with deep-drawn breath, though it appeared to her that all she learned forbode trouble. For she knew that

only those who were attached to her brothers, the leaders of the people, would have found their way into the house that sheltered Aaron.

Now and then she would ask a question, as well as the old man, and as she spoke the messengers, who heard her voice for the first time, looked up at her in surprise, for it was indeed sweet, though singularly deep.

After several runners had assured her, in answer to her inquiry, that Joshua, the son of Nun, had not come with the others, she dropped her head, and asked no more, until pale Milcah, who followed her everywhere, cast a beseeching look from her black eyes and whispered "Reuben," the name of her imprisoned husband. Then the young girl kissed the lonely child and looked at her as though she had neglected something, and asked the messengers with pressing eagerness if they had heard anything of Reuben, who had been carried away to the mines. But only one had heard from a released criminal that Milcah's husband was alive in the copper mines in the district of Beck, near Mt. Sinai. The news encouraged the young prophetess to assure Milcah with vivid warmth that when the people should march eastward they would certainly go to the mines to release the captive Hebrews who were there.

These were good words, and Milcah, who was leaning on the breast of her comforter, would gladly have heard more, but those who were looking out into the distance from Aminadab's roof were now in great excitement. From the north came a dark cloud, and directly after a wonderful muttering, then a loud roar, and lastly a thousand-voiced cry and shout, with bellowing, neighing and bleating, such as had never been heard before—and the multitudinous and many-voiced mass of men and herds came rolling along in that interminable stream which the astrologer's grandson, when watching from the temple at Tanis, had taken for the serpent from the nether world.

Even now, by the light of dawn, it was easy to mistake it for an army of disembodied spirits driven from the stronghold of the dead; for a pale grey column of dust reaching to the blue heavens swept before them, and no single figure could be distinguished among the immense swarming, noisy throng which was enveloped in the cloud. Every now and again the sunbeams caught the metal point

of a lance or of a brass vessel with a bright gleam, and the loud shout of one voice could be heard above the others.

Now the foremost waves of the stream had reached Aminadab's court yard, in front of which lay a vast tract of pasture lands.

Commands rang out, and the multitude halted and parted like a mountain lake which, flooded in spring, overflows in brooks and tiny rills. However, the narrow streams soon reunited, and, taking possession of the broad, level pasture land now wet with morning dew, the procession of men and beasts settled down to rest, and there the veil of dust that had hidden them presently vanished.

The road remained for some time wrapped in the cloud, but in the meadows, men, women and children were to be seen in the blaze of the rising sun, with oxen and asses, sheep and goats, and in a little while tent after tent was erected in the fields around Aminadab's and Nahshon's houses. The cattle were penned in with hurdles; poles and stakes were driven into the hard ground, awnings spread, cows fettered, herds of oxen and sheep driven to water and fires lighted. Long files of women, carrying jars on their heads which they balanced with easily and beautifully-curved arms, passed by to the well behind the old sycamore, or the bank of the nearest canal.

To-day, as on every other work day, a humped ox turned the water wheel. It irrigated the land that the owner of the oxen must leave on the morrow; but the slave that drove it thought not of the morrow, and, as no one hindered him, worked on in the stolid way he was used to, watering the grass for the enemy into whose hands it would fall.

It was a good hour before the wandering crowd had all reached the camp, and Miriam, as she described to Aminadab—whose eyes were no longer strong enough to see at a distance—what was going on down below, beheld many a sight from which she would gladly have turned away her eyes.

She dared not tell the old man openly all she saw, for it would have destroyed his glad hopefulness.

She, who trusted with the whole ardor of an inspired soul in the God of her fathers, had shared till yesterday the confidence of the old man, although the Lord had certainly granted her the fatal gift of seeing things and hearing

words no one else could comprehend. This generally took place in her dreams, but also in lonely hours when she fixed her mind in meditation on the past and the future.

The message from the Most High which Ephraim had carried to Joshua in her name had come to her from invisible lips as she sat under the sycamore, thinking of the exodus, and of the man she had loved from her childhood; and this very morning, between midnight and dawn, as she lay under the venerable tree, overpowered by fatigue, it seemed to her that she had again heard the same voice. The words had vanished from her mind as she woke, but she knew that they had been sad and ominous.

Vague as the warning had been, it still haunted her painfully, and the cry which came up from the plain was certainly no shout of joy at having happily reached their brethren and the first stage of their wanderings, as the old man at her side believed; nay, it was the angry cry of fierce, ungoverned men wrangling and fighting for a pleasant spot in the meadow whereon to pitch their tents, or for a good watering place for their beasts by the well or on the banks of the rivulets.

Rage, disappointment and despair were heard in that cry; and presently, looking round for the spot whence it rose the loudest, she beheld a woman's corpse borne along by some bondsmen on a sheet of tent cloth, and a pale babe, touched by the finger of death, which its father, a wild-looking fellow, carried in one arm, while he shook his clenched left hand, which was free, with threatening gestures in the direction of her brothers.

And in a moment she saw an old man, bent with hard labor, lift up his hand against Moses, whom he would have struck to the ground if others had not dragged him away.

She could no longer bear to stay on the roof. Pale and panting she flew out to the camp. Milcah followed her closely, and wherever they met people belonging to Succoth they were greeted with respect. The people of Zoan, and those of Pha-gos, whom they met in the way, did not know Miriam; still, the prophetess' tall figure and noble dignity made them move aside for her, or reply to her questions.

Then she heard terrible and evil tidings, for the multitude which had set forth so joyfully on the first day had crept along in dejection and woe on the second. The hot

wind had broken the spirit and strength of many who had started in high health, and other sick folks besides the bondsman's wife and infant had fallen sick of fever from the choking dust and scorching heat, and the speaker pointed to a procession making its way to the Hebrew burying place of Succoth. Nor were those who were being borne to the rest whence there is no return women and children only, or such as their kindred had brought away sick rather than leave them behind ; but likewise men, who only yesterday had been strong, and who had either sunk under too heavy a burden or had heedlessly exposed themselves to the sun's rays as they drove their herds onward.

In one tent Miriam found a young mother, who lay trembling with fever, and she bade Milcah go fetch her case of medicines. The forlorn wife gladly and quickly departed on this errand. On her way she stopped many a passer-by to inquire timidly for her captive husband, but she could get no news of him. Miriam, however, learned from Nun, Joshua's father, that Eliab, the freedman he had left behind, had sent him word that his son was ready to follow his people. She also heard that Ephraim had been hurt and had found shelter in Joshua's tent.

Was the lad seriously ill, or what could it be that detained his uncle in Tanis? The question filled Miriam's heart with fresh anxiety, yet she dispensed help and comfort wherever it was possible with unflinching energy.

Old Nun's hearty greeting had cheered her, and no more stalwart, kind, or more lovable old man could be imagined. The mere sight of his noble head with its thick, snow-white hair, and beard, and the bright eyes which sparkled with youthful fire in the handsome face, had done her good, and when he expressed his joy at seeing her once more in his vivid and winning manner, pressing her to his heart and kissing her brow, she told him that she had bidden his son, in the name of the Lord, henceforth to bear the name of Joshua, and had called upon him to be reunited to his people and to be the captain of their host. Then she felt, indeed, as though she had found a father in the place of him she had lost, and applied herself with renewed vigor to the stern duties which called her from every side.

Nor was it a small effort to the lofty-minded maiden to devote herself with loving kindness to her fellow-creatures, whose wild and coarse demeanor pained her soul. The

women, indeed, were glad of help, but to the men, who had grown up under the overseer's whip, modesty and consideration were unknown. Their minds were as savage as their manners. As soon as they knew who she was they reviled her because her brother had tempted them forth to leave endurable woes and rush to a fearful fate ; and as she heard their curses and blaspheming, and saw the fierce black eyes that glittered in those brown faces all hung about with rough, curling black hair and beard, her heart shrank within her. And yet she was able to control her fear and aversion ; her pulses throbbed and she was prepared for the worst, yet she did but commend the men who were so repulsive to her to the God of their fathers and His promises, though womanly weakness prompted her to flee.

Now, indeed, she understood what the sad, warning voice forboded which she had heard under the sycamore, and as she stood by the bed of a young mother sick unto death she lifted up her hands and heart to the Most High, and made a vow that she would dedicate all her powers to fight against the faint-hearted want of faith and the wild insubordination which threatened to bring her people into great straits. The Lord Almighty had promised them a fair land, and the short-sighted pride of a few erring ones should not cheat them of it. And God himself could hardly be wroth with a race which was content so long as the bodies were supplied with the food they needed, and which had endured scorn and blows as unresistingly as cattle. The multitude did not yet understand that they must live through the night of their present woes to be worthy of the day which awaited them.

Her medicines seemed to relieve the sick woman, and she quitted the tent in revived spirits to seek her brothers.

In the camp matters were no better, and again she witnessed many scenes which shocked her soul and made her regret that she had brought with her the tender-hearted Milcah.

Certain evil-doers among the bondsmen, who had laid hands on the cattle and goods of others, had been caught and tied up to a palm tree ; and the ravens which had followed the tribes, and had found ample food by the way, were already croaking greedily round the hastily contrived **yellow**s tree.

None knew who was judge or executioner of the sentence ; but the owners who were assisting in the deed thought themselves fully justified and gloried in it. With hasty steps and averted head, Miriam drew the trembling Milcah away and placed her in the charge of her uncle, Nahshon, to be conducted home. Nahshon was just parting from the man who shared with him the rank of prince of the tribe of Judah. This was that same Hur who had won the first victory against the Egyptians at the head of the shepherds, and he now led the maiden with happy pride toward a man and a youth—his son and grandson. They had both been in the service of the Egyptians, and at Memphis had worked as goldsmiths and brass founders to Pharaoh. The elder, by reason of his skill, had received the name of Uri, or the Great ; and the son of this father, Hur's grandson, Bezaleel, was said to be more gifted even than his father, though as yet hardly more than a youth.

Hur gazed at his child and grandchild with justifiable pride, for although they had both risen to high esteem among the Egyptians they had followed without demur at their father's bidding, leaving behind them much to which their hearts clung, and which bound them to Memphis, to join the wandering people and share their uncertain fate.

Miriam warmly greeted the newcomers, and the men before her, representatives of three generations, afforded a picture on which no kindly eye could fail to rest with pleasure. The grandfather was nigh on threescore, but although there was much silver mingled with his ebony black hair, he still held himself as straight as a young man, and his thin, sharply-cut features revealed an unbending determination, which sufficiently accounted for the readiness with which his son and grandson had obeyed his call. Uri, too, was a well-grown man, and Bezaleel a lad in whom it could be seen that he had made good use of his nineteen years, and could already stand firmly on his own feet. His artist's eye sparkled with a peculiar light, and when presently he and his father took leave of Miriam to pay their respects to Caleb, their grandfather and greatgrandfather, she heartily congratulated Hur, her brother's truest friend, on having such descendants to keep up the noble race.

At this Hur, taking her hand, exclaimed with a grateful fervor, which sprang from his heart, and which was usually

foreign to the stern, imperious nature of this chief of an unruly tribe of herdsmen: "Yes, they have ever been good and true and dutiful. God hath protected them and granted me to see this joyful day. Now it lies with you to make it a high feast day. You must long since have seen that my eye was ever on you, and that you are dear to my heart. I am a man, and you as a woman are pledged to do all that is best for the people and their welfare, and that constitutes a bond between us. But I would fain be bound to you by a yet stronger tie, and whereas your parents are dead, and I cannot go to Amram with the bride gift in my hand and pay him for you, I ask you of yourself in marriage, noble maiden. And before you say me yea or nay let me tell you that my son and grandson are ready to honor you as the head of our house as they honor me, and that I have your brother's permission to approach you as a suitor."

Miriam had listened to this proposal in speechless surprise. She held the man who pleaded so warmly in high esteem, and was well inclined toward him. Notwithstanding his ripe age he stood before her in all the strength of manhood and lofty dignity, and the beseeching of his eyes, more wont to command, went to her soul.

But she looked for another with ardent longing, and her only reply was a regretful shake of the head.

But this man, the head of his tribe, who was accustomed to go straight to the end of anything he had resolved upon, was not deterred by this silent rejection, and went on more fervently than before: "Do not in one moment overthrow the cherished hopes of many years! Is it my age that repels you?"

And once more Miriam shook her head. But Hur again spoke:

"That, indeed, was what troubled me, although in strength and vigor I could measure myself against many a younger man. And if you could but overlook your suitor's grey hairs you might perhaps bring yourself to consider his request. Of the truth and devotion of my suit I will say nothing. No man sues to a woman at my age unless his heart urges with great power. But there is another thing which to me seems of no less weight. I would fain, as I have said, take you home to my house. There it stands; it is strong and roomy enough; but from to-morrow a

tent must be our roof, a camp our dwelling place, and wild deeds will be done there. Look only on the hapless creatures they have bound to that palm tree. There is no judge to try the accused: the hasty impulse of the people is their only law. No one is secure even of his life, least of all a woman, however strong she may feel herself, who casts in her lot with those against whom the multitude murmur. Your parents are dead, your brothers cannot protect you, and if the multitude should lay hands on them the stone over which you hoped to cross the flood will drag you to the bottom."

"And if I were your wife, drag you with me," replied Miriam, and her thick, black brows were gloomily knit.

"That danger I am prepared to face," answered Hur. "Our lot is in the hands of the Lord; my faith is as firm as yours, and behind me stands the whole tribe of Judah, which follows me and Nahshon as a flock follows the shepherd. Old Nun and the Ephraimites are faithful to us, and if it came to the worst it would be our duty to perish as God wills, or, after reaching the Promised Land, to wait in patience for our latter end in faithful union, in wealth and power."

At this Miriam looked him full and fearlessly in the eyes, and laid her hand on his arm, saying:

"Such words are worthy of the man I have revered from my childhood, the father of such sons. Yet I cannot be your wife."

"You cannot?"

"Nay, my lord, I cannot."

"A hard saying, but I must be content," replied Hur, and he bowed his head sadly.

But Miriam went on:

"Nay, Hur, you have a right to ask the reason of my refusal, and inasmuch as I honor you I owe you the simple truth. My heart is set on another man of our people. I first saw him while I was but a child. Like your son and grandson, he joined himself to the Egyptians. But he, like them, has heard the call of God and of his father, and if he, like Uri and Bezaleel, has obeyed them, and still desires to have me to wife, I will go to him if it be the Lord's will, whom I serve and who grants me of His grace to hear His voice. But I will ever think thankfully of you." As she spoke the girl's large eyes glistened through

tears, and her grey-haired suitor's voice quivered as he asked her shyly and hesitatingly :

“But if the man you wait for—I do not seek to know his name—if he turns a deaf ear to the call that has gone forth to him, if he refuses to throw in his lot with the uncertain lot of his nation?”

“That can never be!” cried Miriam; but a cold chill ran through her veins, as Hur exclaimed :

“There is no never, no certainty save with God. And if in spite of your high faith, things fall out other than you expect—if the Lord deny you the desire which first grew up in your heart when you were yet but a foolish child?”

“Then will He show me the right way by which He hath led me until now.”

“Well, well,” said Hur, “build on that foundation, and if the man of your choice is worthy of you and becomes your husband my soul shall rejoice without envy, if the Lord shall bless your union. But if, indeed, God wills it otherwise, and you shall crave a strong arm on which to lean, here am I. The heart and the tent of Hur will be ever open to you.”

He hurried away. Miriam gazed after him, lost in thought, till the proud and princely figure was out of sight.

Then she made her way back toward the home of her protectors; but as she crossed the way leading to Tanis she paused to look northward. The dust was laid and the road could be traced far into the distance; but he, the one who should be riding toward her and toward his people, was not in sight. It was with a heavy sigh and drooping head that she went on her way, and the sound of her brother Moses, deep voice made her start as she reached the sycamore.

CHAPTER XIII.

AARON and Eleazar in stirring words had reminded the murmuring disheartened people of the might and promises of their God. Those who had stretched themselves out quietly to their rest, after being refreshed by drink and food,

found their lost confidence revived. The freed bondsmen remembered the cruel slavery and degrading blows from which they had escaped, acknowledging, as the others did, that it was by God's providence that Pharaoh was not pursuing them. The rich supplies, which were still being distributed from the plundered storehouse, contributed not a little to reanimate their courage, and the serfs and lepers—for they, for the most part, had marched forth also, and were resting outside the camp—in short, all those for whose maintenance Pharaoh had provided, knew that for some time they were secure from need and want. Nevertheless there was no lack of discontented spirits, and now and then, without any one knowing who had started the question, it was asked if it would not be wiser to turn back and trust to Pharaoh's forgiveness. Those who uttered it did so secretly, and had often to take a sharp or threatening answer.

Miriam had come out to meet her brothers and shared their anxiety. How quickly had the spirit of the people been broken in this short march by the hot desert wind! How discontented, how distrustful, how hostile they had shown themselves at the very first adversity. How unbridled in following their own wild impulses!

When they had been called together for prayer on the way, a short time before sunrise, some had turned toward the sun as it rose in the east, some had pulled out images of the gods which they had brought with them, and others again had fixed their eyes on the acacia trees by the road, which were regarded as sacred to many of the provinces by the Nile. What, indeed, could they know of the God who had commanded them to leave so much behind them and to carry such a burden? Many of them were even now quite disheartened, and as yet they had faced no real danger, for Moses had purposed to lead his people by the direct road to Philistia into the Promised Land of Palestine, but their demeanor forced him to give up this place and to think of another.

In order to reach the highway which connected Asia and Africa, it was necessary to pass over the isthmus which really divides rather than it unites the two continents; but it was well defended from invaders, and the way was secure from fugitives, partly by natural and partly by artificial obstacles. A succession of deep lakes

broke the level land, and where these did not check the wanderers' march, strong fortifications towered up in which lay Egyptian troops ready to fight.

Khetam, or, as the Israelites called it, Etham, was the name of this range of forts, and the nearest and strongest could be reached in a few hours by the tribes who were marching from Succoth.

With the people full of the spirit of their God, inspired and prepared for the worst, freed from their chains and rejoicing in their newly gained liberty, rushing along toward the Promised Land, Moses and the other leaders with him had intended that, like a mountain torrent bursting through dams and sluices, they should annihilate and destroy all who came in their way. With this inspired throng, whose bold advances might achieve the highest triumphs, and to whom cowardly retreat could have meant nothing but death and destruction, they had expected to overthrow the works of the Etham frontier like a pile of brushwood. But now that a few short hours of weariness and suffering had quenched the fire in their souls, now that on every side could be seen for every happy, elated man, two indifferent and five discontented or frightened, the storming of the Etham lines would have cost streams of blood and would have risked all that they had already gained.

The conquest of the little garrison in the storehouse at Pithom happened under such favorable circumstances as they could not expect to occur again, and so the original plan had to be altered and an attempt made to get round the fortress. Instead of marching north-east the people turned toward the south.

These things were discussed under the sycamore tree in front of Aminadab's house, and Miriam listened, a mute witness.

When the men held counsel, the women, and she also, had to be silent, but she found it hard to hold her peace when they came to the conclusion that they must avoid attacking the forts, even if Joshua, the man skilled in war and chosen by the Lord Himself to be the sword of Jehovah, should return.

"Of what avail is the bravest leader when there is no army to obey him?" cried Nahshon, the son of Aminadab, and the rest had been of his opinion.

When at length the assembled elders parted Moses took leave of his sister with brotherly tenderness. She knew that he had it in his mind to go forth into fresh dangers, and in the modest way she always used when she ventured to speak to the man who, in body and mind, was so far above all others, she told him of her fears. He looked her in the face with kindly reproof, and with right hand pointed to heaven. She understood him, and kissed his hand with grateful warmth, saying: "Thou art under the shield of the Most High, and I fear no longer."

He pressed his lips to her brow, and taking her tablets from her, wrote on them a few words and cast them into the hollow stem of the sycamore.

"For Hosea—nay, for Joshua," said he, "if he should come while I am absent. The Lord hath great things for him to do when he shall have learned to trust in Him rather than in the mighty ones of the earth."

He quitted her; but Aaron, who, as being the elder, was the head of the family, remained with Miriam and told her that a worthy man had asked for her to wife; she turned pale and answered: "I know it."

He looked her in the face much surprised, and went on in a tone of grave warning:

"It must be as you will, but it would be well that you should reflect that your heart belongs to God and to your people; the man whom you marry must be as ready as yourself to serve them both, for two become one when they are wed, and if the highest aim of one is as nought to the other they are no more one, but two. The voice of the senses which called them together is presently silent, and what remains is a gulf between them."

With these words he left her, and she, too, turned to quit the assembly, for perhaps now, on the eve of their departing, she might be needed in the house of which she was an inmate; but a new incident arose to keep her by the sycamore, as if she were bound and fettered to it.

What could the packing matter, and the care for perishable treasure and worldly goods, when questions here were raised which stirred her whole soul. There was Elisheba, Nahshon's wife, and any housewife or slave woman could do the home work; here there were other matters to decide, the weal or woe of the nation.

Certain men of the better sort from among the people

had by this time joined themselves to the elders under the sycamore, but Hur had departed with Moses.

Now Uri, the son of Hur, came into the group. He, as a metal worker, but just come from Egypt, had at Memphis had dealings with many about the court, and he had heard that the king would be willing to relieve the Hebrews of their heaviest burdens, and to grant them new privileges, if only Moses would entreat the God he served to be favorable to Pharaoh, and persuade the people to return so soon as they should have sacrificed in the desert. So the assembly now proceeded to discuss whether envoys should not be sent to Tanis to treat once more with the "High Gate."

This proposal, which he had not, indeed, dared to lay before his father, had been made by Uri in all good faith to the assembled elders, and he hoped that its acceptance might save the Hebrews much suffering. But hardly had he ended his very clear and persuasive speech when old Nun, Joshua's father, who had with difficulty held his peace, started up in wrath.

The old man's face, usually so cheerful, was crimson with anger, and its deep hue was in strange contrast with the thick, white hair which hung about it. Only a short while since he had heard Moses reject similar proposals with stern decision and the strongest arguments; and now must he hear them repeated. And by many signs of approval on the part of those assembled he saw that the great undertaking for which he, more than any one, had staked and sacrificed his all, was imperilled. It was too much for the vehement old man, and it was with a flashing eye and threatening fists that he exclaimed:

"What words are these? Shall we reknit the ends of the cord which the Lord our God hath cut? Are we to tie it, do you say, with a knot so loose that it will hold just so long as the present mood of an irresolute weakling, who has broken his word to Moses and to us a score of times? Would you have us return into the cage from which the Almighty hath released us by a miracle? Are we to stand before the Lord our God as false debtors? Shall we take the false gold which is offered us rather than the royal treasure which He hath promised us? Oh, man! You who have come from the Egyptian! I would I could——"

And the fierce old man shook his fist ; but before he had spoken the threat which was on his lips he ceased and his arm fell, for Gabriel, the elder of the tribe of Zebulun, called out :

“ Remember your own son, who at this day is still content to dwell among the enemies of Israel ! ”

The blow had told ; but it was only for a moment that the fiery patriarch's high spirit was quelled. Above the hubbub of voices which rose in disapproval of Gabriel's malice, and the lesser number who took part with him, Nun's was heard : “ It is by reason of the fact that, besides the loss of the ten thousand acres of land which I have left behind, I may, perchance, have also to sacrifice my noble son in obedience to the word of the Lord, that I have a right to speak my mind.” His broad breast heaved sorrowfully as he spoke, and now his eyes, beneath their thick, white brows, fell with a milder gleam on the son of Hur, who had turned pale under this violent address, and he went on : “ This man is indeed a good son and obedient to his father, and he, too, has made a sacrifice, for he has come away from his work, in which he won great praise, and from his home in Memphis, and the blessing of the Lord rest upon him ! But inasmuch as he has obeyed that bidding, he ought not to try to undo that which, by the Lord's help, we have begun. And to you, Gabriel, I say that my son is of a surety not content to dwell with the enemy ; nay, that he will obey my voice and join himself to us, even as Uri, the first-born son of Hur. Whatever keeps him back, it is some good reason of which Joshua need not be ashamed, nor I, his father. I know him. I trust him for that ; and he who looks for aught else from him will of a surety, by my son's dealings, sooner or later, be shown to be a liar.”

He ceased, pushing his white hair back from his heated brow ; and as no more contradicted him he turned again to the metal worker, saying with hearty kindness : “ It was not your meaning, Uri, which roused my ire. Your will is good ; but you have measured the greatness and glory of the God of our fathers by the standard of the false gods of the Egyptians, who perish and revive again, and, as Aaron has said, are but a small part of Him who is in all and through all above all. Till Moses showed me the way I, too, believed I was serving the Lord by slaying an ox, a

lamb or a goose on an altar, as the Egyptians do, and now, if your eyes are opened, as mine were by Moses, to behold Him who rules the world and who hath chosen us to be His people, you, like me and all of us—yea, and ere long my own son—will feel the fire kindled for sacrifice in your own hearts—a fire that never dies out, and consumes everything which does not turn to love and truth and faith and worship of Him. For the Lord hath promised us great things by the word of His servant Moses: Redemption from bondage, that we may be free lords and masters henceforth on our own soil and in a fair land which is ours and our children's forever! We are on our way to this gift, and whosoever would delay us on our way, or desires us to return and crawl back into the net whose meshes of brass we have burst asunder, counsels the people to become as sheep who leap back into the fire from which they have escaped. I am not wroth with you now, for I read in your face that you know how greatly you have erred, but hereby ye all shall know that I heard from the lips of Moses but a few hours since that whosoever shall counsel a return or any covenant with the Egyptians, he himself will accuse as condemning the Lord Jehovah our God, and as the destroyer and foe of his people."

At this Uri went up to the old man, held out his hand, and, deeply persuaded in his heart of the justice of his reproof, exclaimed: "No dealings, no covenant with the Egyptians! And I am grateful to you, Nun, for having opened my eyes. The hour is at hand when you, or another who stands nearer to Him than I, shall teach me to know more perfectly the God who is my God likewise."

Hereupon he went away with the old man, who leaned his arm upon his shoulder.

Miriam had listened with breathless eagerness to Uri's last appeal, and when he gave utterance to the wish to know more perfectly the God of his fathers, her eyes shone with inspired ecstasy. She felt that her spirit was full of the greatness of the Most High, and that she had the gift of speech wherewith to make known to others the knowledge she herself possessed. But the custom of her people required her to be silent. Her heart burned within her, and when she had again mingled with the crowd, and assured herself that Joshua was not yet come, as it was now dusk she went up to the roof, there to sit with the others.

None seemed to have missed her, not even poor, forlorn Milcah, and she felt herself alone indeed in this house. If Joshua might but come. If only she might find a strong breast on which to lean, if this sense of being a stranger among her kindred might have an end—this useless life under the roof which she must call her home, although she had never felt at home there !

Moses and Aaron, her brothers, had departed, and had taken with them Hur's grandson ; and she, who lived and breathed only for her people and their well-being, had not been found worthy to be told more particularly whither they were faring, or to what end. Ah ! why had the Almighty, to whom she had devoted herself, body and soul, given her the spirit and mind of a man in the form of a woman ?

She waited awhile as if to see whether, of all this circle of kind hearts, her kith and kin, there was not one to love her, listening to the chatter of old and young who surrounded her ; but Eleazar's children gathered about their grandparents, and she had never had the art of attracting the little ones. Dame Elisheba was directing the slaves who were putting the finishing touches to the baggage. Milcah sat with a cat in her lap, gazing into vacancy, and the bigger lads were out of doors. No one noticed her or spoke to her.

Bitter sorrow fell upon her. After eating her supper with the others, making a great effort not to cast the gloom of her own dark mood over the happy excitement of the children, who looked forward with great glee to their departing, she felt she must get out into the free air.

Veiling her face closely, she crossed the camp alone. But the scenes she saw there were ill-fitted to lift the burden that weighed upon her. It was still astir, and although here and there pious songs rang out, full of triumph and hope, there was more quarreling to be heard, and rebellious uproar. Whenever threats or reviling against her great brothers met her ear she hastened forward, but she could not run away from her anxiety as to what might happen at sunrise, when the people were to set forth, if the malcontents gained the upper hand. She knew that the multitude must necessarily move onward ; still she had never been able to subdue her fears of Pharaoh's mighty army. It was personified to her in Joshua's heroic form. If the Lord of

Hosts Himself were not with the ranks of these wretched bondsmen and shepherds who were squabbling and fighting all about her, how should they be able to stand against the tried and well-armed troops of Egypt, with their chariots and horses?

She had heard that men had been placed on guard at every part of the camp, and ordered to blow a blast on a horn or drum or a metal plate in the event of the enemy's approach, till the Hebrews should have come together at the spot where the alarm should be first sounded.

She stood for some time listening for some such call, but yet more eagerly for the hoofs of a solitary horse, the firm tread and the deep voice of the warrior for whom she longed.

Looking for him she made her way to the northern side of the camp next the road to Tanis, where, too, by Moses' order the larger portion of the fighting men had pitched their tents. Here she had hoped to find nothing but confidence; but as she listened to the talk of the men-at-arms, who sat in large parties round the watch-fires, she shuddered to hear that Uri's counsel had reached even to them. Many of them were husbands and fathers, had left a house or a plot of land, a business or an office, and although many spoke of the commands of the Lord, and of the fair land promised them by God, others were minded to turn back. She would gladly have gone among them and have called upon these blind hearts to obey the bidding of the Lord and of her brother. But here again she must keep silence. However, she might at any rate listen, and she was most tempted to linger where she might expect to hear rebellious words and counsels.

There was a mysterious charm in this painful excitement. She felt as though she had been robbed of a pleasure when the fires died out, the men retired to rest and silence fell.

Now, for the last time, she gazed out on the way from Tanis, but nothing stirred except the watch pacing to and fro.

As yet she did not despair of Joshua's coming, for the bidding she had sent him, in the full conviction that it was the Lord Himself who had chosen her to deliver it, must certainly have reached him; now, however, as she read in the stars that it was past midnight, she began to reflect how many years he had dwelt among the Egyptians, and

that he might think it unworthy of a man to hearken to the call of a woman, even when she spoke in the name of the Most High. She had endured much humiliation this day ; why should not this also be hanging over her ? To the man she loved, likewise, she ought, perhaps, to have kept silence, and have left it to her brothers to declare the Lord's behests to him.

CHAPTER XIV.

MUCH disturbed and grieved by such thoughts as these, Miriam turned her steps homeward to retire to rest ; but as she reached the threshold she stayed her steps and listened once more, gazing northward whence Joshua must come. Nothing was to be heard but the tramp of a watchman and the voice of Hur, as he went the rounds of the camp with a company of armed men. He, too, had found it impossible to rest within.

The night was mild and bright with stars, the hour meet for silent dreaming under the sycamore. Her seat was vacant under the ancient tree, so, with a bowed head, she made her way to the favorite spot which on the morrow she must quit forever. But she had not reached the bench when she suddenly stopped, raised her head, and pressed her hand to her panting bosom. She had heard the tramp of hoofs, she was sure of it, and the sound came from the north. Were the chariots of Pharaoh hurrying down to fall upon the Hebrew camp ? Should she shout to wake the men-at-arms ? Or could it indeed be he whom she so passionately longed for ? Yes, yes. It was the step of a single horse, and it must be some new arrival, for there was a stir among the tents, and clapping of hands and shouts and eager talking came nearer and nearer as the horseman approached.

It was Joshua, she felt certain.

That he should have ridden forth through the night and torn asunder the ties which bound him to Pharaoh and his brethren in arms was a proof of his obedience. Love had steeled his will and lent speed to his steed, and the thanks which love alone can give, the reward which love alone can bestow, should no longer be withheld from him. He

should learn in her arms that, though he had given up much, it was to earn something sweeter and fairer. She felt as though the night about her was as bright as noonday, when her ear told her that the rider was making straight for Aminadab's dwelling. By that she knew that it was her call that had brought him to seek her before going to his father, who had found a lodging in the empty, roomy house belonging to his grandson Ephraim.

Joshua would gladly have flown to her side as fast as his horse could carry him, but it was not safe to ride at too brisk a pace through the camp. Oh, how long the minutes seemed till at last she saw the horseman, till he leaped from the saddle, and his companion flung the reins to another man who came behind.

It was, indeed, Joshua. But his comrade—whom she saw quite plainly, and started at the sight—was Hur, the very man who a few hours since had asked her to be his wife.

There they stood, side by side in the starlight, the two men her suitors, their figures lighted up the blazing pine torches which were still burning by the carts and litters where they stood ready for the next morning's march.

The elder Hebrew, a splendid man, was much taller than the younger and no less strongly built warrior, and the lord of many herds held his head no less high than the Egyptian hero. Both spoke with grave decision; but her lover's voice was the deeper and fuller. Now they were so close to her that she could hear what they were saying.

Hur was telling the newcomer that Moses had gone forth to reconnoitre, and Joshua expressed his regret, as he had a matter of importance to discuss with him.

In that case he would have to set forth with them at daybreak, Hur observed, for Moses thought to meet the people on the way. Then he pointed to the house of Miriam's protector, Aminadab, which lay in total darkness, unbroken by a single twinkling light, and desired Joshua to come with him and spend the remainder of the night under his roof, for no doubt he would fain not rouse his father at so late an hour. At this, as Miriam saw, her friend hesitated and looked inquiringly up at the women's rooms and the roof, and then, knowing whom he sought and unable any longer to resist the impulse of her heart, she went forward from under the shadow of the sycamore

and warmly bid Joshua welcome. He, too, scorned to conceal the joy of his heart, and Hur, standing by, saw the reunited pair clasp hands, at first in silence and then with eager words of greeting.

"I knew that you would come!" cried Miriam, and Joshua replied with glad emotion: "That you might easily know, O prophetess, for one of the voices that bid me hither was your own." Then he added more calmly: "I hoped to find your brother here with you, for I am the bearer of a message of the greatest importance to him, to us and to the people. I find all made ready for departing, and I should be sorry if your venerable protectors were roused from their rest and hurried forward to a perilous adventure which it still seems possible to avert."

"You mean——?" asked Hur, and he came closer.

"I mean," replied Joshua, "that if Moses persists in leading the multitude forth eastward, there will be much useless bloodshed to-morrow, for I heard at Tanis that the garrisons of Etham have orders not to let a single man pass, much less this countless multitude, whose numbers dismayed me as I rode through the camp. I know Apoo, who commands the place, and the legions who serve under him. There will be a fearful and fruitless butchery among our unarmed and undisciplined tribes—in short I must speak strongly to Moses, and immediately, to avert the worst, before it is too late."

"We have not failed to fear all that you can warn us of," replied Hur, "and it is expressly to avert it that Moses has set forth on a perilous journey."

"Whither?" asked Joshua.

"That is the secret of the leaders of the people."

"Among them my father?"

"No doubt, and I am ready to lead you to him. If he thinks fit to inform you——"

"If that is contrary to his duty he will be silent. Who leads the marching host to-morrow?"

"I do."

"You?" cried Joshua in surprise, and the other quietly replied:

"You are amazed that a shepherd should be so bold as to lead an army, but the Lord God of Hosts, in whom we put our trust, is indeed our captain, and I look for His guidance."

"It is well," replied Joshua, "but I too believe that the God of our fathers, who called me hither by the voice of Miriam, has intrusted me with a message of great importance. I must find Moses before it is too late."

"You have been told that till to-morrow, or even till the day after, he is beyond our reach, even mine. Wili you meanwhile speak with Aaron?"

"Is he in the camp?"

"No; but we look for his return before the departing of the people—that is to say, in a few hours."

"Has he the right of deciding questions of importance in the absence of Moses?"

"No; he only declares to the people in eloquent words that which his great brother commands."

At this the disappointed warrior gazed thoughtfully on the ground; but after a moment's reflection he eagerly went on: "It is to Moses that the Lord our God declares His will; but to you, too, his noble, virgin sister, to you, too, the Most High reveals himself."

"Oh, Joshua!" the prophetess broke in, lifting her hands to him with an imploring and deprecating gesture; but the captain paid no heed to her interruption, and went on in an earnest tone: "The Lord God charged you to call me, His servant, back to His people. He commanded you to give me the name I am to bear instead of that given me by my father and mother, and which I have borne in honor for thirty years. In obedience to your bidding I have cast from me all that could make me great among men. It was when I was in the way to face death in Egypt, with my God and your image in my heart, that the message came to me which I am here to deliver, and I therefore believe that it was laid upon me by the Most High. I am constrained to deliver it to the leader of the nation; so, as I cannot find Moses, I can do no better than to deliver it to you, who, next to your brother, dwells nearest to God. I pray you now to hear me; but the words I have to speak are not yet ripe for any third hearer. At this Hur drew himself up. Breaking in on Joshua's speech he asked Miriam whether it was her desire to hear what the son of Nun should say without witnesses, and she replied in a low voice, "Yes."

Hur turned to the warrior and said, with cold pride: "I believe that Miriam knows the will of the Lord and

likewise her brother's, and that she is aware of what beseems a woman of Israel. If I am not mistaken it was under this very tree that your own father, the venerable Nun, repeated to my son Uri the only reply which Moses will give to the bearer of such message as yours."

"Do you know it, then?" asked the soldier, sternly.

"No," replied the other, "but I guess its purport. See here." He stooped with youthful agility, raised two large stones so that they supported each other, rolled a few smaller stones into a heap around them, and then, in breathless eagerness, he spoke as follows:

"This heap shall be a witness between me and thee, like the heap of Mizpah which Laban and Jacob made when Laban called upon the Lord to watch between him and Israel: so do I now, and I show thee this heap that thou mayest remember it when we are absent one from another. I lay my hand on this heap of stones, and I declare that I, Hur, the son of Caleb and Ephratah, put my trust in none other but only in the Lord, the God of our fathers, and am ready to do His bidding by which He calleth us out of the land of Pharaoh to the land which He hath promised us. And thou, Joshua, the son of Nun, do I ask, and the Lord our God heareth thee: Dost thou look for any help other than that of the God of Abraham, who chose thy nation to be His own people? Moreover, thou shalt answer and say whether henceforth thou wilt hold the Egyptians who oppressed us, and out of whose hand the Lord our God hath promised to redeem us, as the foes forever of thy God and thy people?"

There was a dark look in the warrior's bearded face, and he was inclined to kick down the heap of stones and dismiss the overbold questioner with a wrathful reply; but Miriam had laid her hand on the top of the heap, and, seizing his right hand, she cried:

"He inquires of thee in the sight of our God and Lord who is our witness!"

Joshua was able to control his wrath, and pressing the maiden's hand as he held it he answered with due solemnity: "He asks me, but I cannot answer him; for 'yea' and 'nay' say little in this case. Yet I call God to witness on my part, and here by this heap of stones you, Miriam, shall hear what I have in my mind and wherefor I am come. And thou, Hur, see here! Like thee I lay my hand

on the heap and testify that I, Joshua, the son of Nun, put my trust in none other but only in the Lord God of our fathers. He shall stand between thee and me as a witness, and decide whether my way is His way or the way of an erring man. I will walk in His way as He hath declared it to Moses and to this noble maiden. That I swear with an oath, and to that God be my witness."

Hur had listened eagerly, and now, persuaded by the gravity of Joshua's speech, he cried :

"The Lord our God hear mine oath! And I, too, by this heap, will take an oath! If the hour should come when, remembering this heap, thou shalt give the testimony which thou hast refused me, no wrath henceforth shall come between us; and if it be the will of the Lord I will deliver into thy hands the leadership, for thou in many wars hast learned more skill than I, who have ruled only over herdsmen and flocks. And thou, Miriam, bear in mind that this heap is a witness of the words you twain shall speak here in the sight of God. Call to mind the wrathful words we heard spoken under this tree by this man's father; yea, and I call God to witness that I would have darkened the life of Uri, my beloved son, who is the joy of my heart, if he had spoken to the people to persuade them by the message which he delivered to us, for it would have turned away those of little faith from their God. Remember this, maiden, and again hear this: If thou needest me thou canst find me. The door I opened, come what may, will never be shut."

And he turned away from Miriam and the soldier.

Something, they knew not what, had come over them. He, who all through his long ride, beset with many dangers, had longed with burning ardor for the moment which should see him reunited to the maid he loved, stood looking down in confusion and deep anxiety. Miriam, who, at his approach, had been ready to bestow on him all that a woman has of best and sweetest to reward truth and love withal, had sunk on the ground in front of the awful heap of stones close to the sycamore tree, and was pressing her head against its old hollow trunk.

CHAPTER XV.

FOR some time nothing was to be heard under the sycamore but the young girl's low sobbing and the impatient step of the warrior, who, while struggling for composure himself, did not venture to address her. He could not fully understand what this was that had suddenly come like a mountain between him and the woman he loved.

He had learned from Hur's speech that Moses and his own father had each, severally, rejected all mediation; and yet to him the promises he was empowered to make seemed a grace and gift from Heaven. As yet none of his nation had heard them, and if Moses were the man he believed him, the Lord must of a surety open his eyes and show him that He had chosen Joshua to guide the people to a happier future: nor did he doubt that he could easily win over his father, Nun. It was in full conviction that he had again sworn that it was indeed the Most High who had shown him this way; and after thinking all this over as Miriam at length rose, he went toward her with renewed hope. The love in his heart prompted him to clasp her in his arms; but she drew back, and her voice, usually so pure and full, sounded harsh and husky as she asked him wherefore he had tarried so long, and what it was that he purposed to reveal to her.

As she knelt under the sycamore she had not merely been praying and struggling for composure; she had looked into her soul. She loved Joshua, but her heart misgave her that he had some proposal to make such as Uri's, and old Nun's wrathful words rang in her ears louder than ever. Her fear lest her lover had gone astray into an evil way, and Hur's startling proceedings, had lulled the surges of her passion; and her spirit, brought back to calmer reflection, now craved above all else to know what could so long have detained him whom she had sent for in the name of the Lord, and wherefore he had come alone without Ephraim. The clear sky, glorious with stars, instead of looking down on the bliss of a pair of reunited

lovers, was witness only to the anxious questioning of a terrified woman and the impatient answers of a hot-spirited and bitterly-disappointed man. He began by urging his love, and that he had come to make her his wife, but she, though she suffered him to hold her hand, implored him to postpone his wooing, and to tell her first all she wanted to know.

On his way hither he had heard news of Ephraim from a fellow-soldier from Tanis. He was therefore able to tell her that he had gone into the town in disobedience to orders, sick and weary as he was, and moved, it would seem, by curiosity, and that he had found care and shelter under a friendly roof. This, however, did not comfort Miriam, who blamed herself as she thought of the inexperienced and fatherless lad, who had grown up under her own eyes, and whom she herself had sent forth among strangers, as a guest under an Egyptian's roof. However, Joshua assured her that he would take upon himself to bring the boy back to his people, and when she still was not satisfied he asked her whether he had indeed lost all her trust and love. But she, instead of giving him a word of comfort, began to question him further, desiring to know what had delayed his coming, so he was forced to tell his tale, though greatly disturbed and cut to the heart, beginning in fact with the end of his story.

While she listened to him, leaning against the trunk of the sycamore, he, distraught by love and impatience, paced up and down, or else, hardly able to control himself, stood close to her, face to face. At this moment nothing seemed to him worthy to be clothed in speech but the passion and the hopes which filled his being. Had he been convinced that her heart was estranged from him he would have fled from the camp as soon as he had unburdened his soul to his father, and have ridden away into the unknown in search of Moses. All he cared for was to win Miriam and to keep clear of dishonor; and important as the events and hopes of the last few days had been, he answered her questions hastily, and as though the matters involved were but a light thing. He began his tale in broken sentences, and the oftener she interrupted him the more impatient he became and the deeper the frown which knit his brows.

Joshua had been riding southward for some few hours, in

high spirits and full of blossoming hopes, when shortly before dusk he perceived a large crowd of men marching on in front of him. At first he had taken them to be the rear guard of the fugitive Hebrews, and he had hastened his horse's pace. But before he came up with the wanderers some peasant folk and drivers, leaving their carts and beasts of burden in the lurch, had flown to meet him with loud shrieks and shouts of warning, telling him that the troops in front were the multitude of lepers. And their warning was but too well justified, for the first who met him with the heart-breaking cry, "Unclean! unclean!" bore the tokens of those who were a prey to the terrible disease, their dull eyes staring at him from faces devoid of eyebrows and covered with the white, scurfy dust peculiar to leprosy.

Joshua presently recognized one and another of them, among them here and there an Egyptian priest with shaven head, and Hebrew men and women. He questioned them with the calm severity of a warrior chief, and learned that they had come from the quarries opposite Memphis, their place of exile on the eastern shore of the Nile. Certain Hebrews among them had heard that their people had fled from Egypt to seek a land which the Lord had promised them. On this, many had determined to put their trust in the mighty God of their fathers and to follow the wandering tribes; and the Egyptian priests even, whose affliction had cast in their lot with the Hebrews, had set forth with them, fixing on Succoth as the goal of their wanderings, whither, as they heard, Moses was first to lead the people. But every one who might have told them the road had fled at their approach. Thus they had gone too far to the northward, even almost as far as the fortress of Tabnae. It was at a mile from that place that Joshua had overtaken them, and had counseled their leaders to return forthwith and not to bring misfortune on the host of their brethren. During their parley a company of Egyptian soldiers had come out from the citadel to meet the lepers and clear the road of their presence; however, the captain, who knew Joshua, had used no force, and the two warriors had persuaded the leaders of the unclean to let themselves be guided to the peninsula of Sinai, where there was already a colony of lepers among the mountains, not far from the mines. They had yielded to this proposal because Joshua

had promised them that if the Israelites wandered eastward they would visit them and receive all who should be healed; but even if the Hebrews remained in Egypt the pure air of the desert would bring health to many sufferers, and every one who recovered was free to return to his people.

All this consumed much time; and then other delays had occurred, for as Joshua had been in such near neighborhood to the lepers he had been compelled to go to Tabnae, where he and the captain of the troops, who had been with him, were sprinkled with the blood of birds, clothed in clean linen, and obliged to go through certain ceremonials which he himself had deemed necessary, and which could only be performed in broad sunlight. His squire had not been suffered to leave the citadel; the soft-hearted fellow, seeing a kinsman among the hapless wretches, had clasped his hand.

The cause of this detention was saddening and sickening, and it was not till he had quitted Tabnae at noonday and turned his face toward Succoth that the hope and joy of seeing Miriam again, and of delivering so cheering a message, had revived in Joshua's breast.

Never had his heart beat higher with glad anticipation than as he rode on through the night, each step bringing him nearer to his father and his beloved, and at his journey's end, instead of the highest bliss, naught had he found till now but the most cruel disappointment.

He had related his meeting with the lepers briefly and reluctantly, although he had done, as he believed, what was best for these hapless folk. Any one of his fellow-soldiers would have had a word of praise for him, but she, whose approbation was dearer to him than all else, pointed, as he ended, to a certain spot in the camp, saying mournfully:

"They are of our blood; our God is their God. The lepers of Zoan, Phakos and Phibeseth followed the rest at a reasonable distance, and their tents are pitched outside the camp. Those of Succoth likewise—they are not many—are to journey with them, and when the Lord promised the people the land for which they longed it was to great and small and poor alike, and, of a surety, to those poor wretches who now are left in the hands of the enemy. Would you not have done better to divide those of our race from the Egyptians and bring them hither?"

At this the soldier's manly pride rebelled, and his reply was grave and stern.

"In war a man learns to sacrifice hundreds that he may save thousands. Even the shepherd removes the rotten sheep to save the flock."

"Very true," replied the girl eagerly, "for the shepherd is but a man, who knows no remedy against the evil. But the Lord who hath called all His people will not suffer them to come to harm through obedience."

"So women think!" retorted Joshua. "But the counsels of compassion which move them must not be suffered to weigh too heavily in those of men. You are ready to follow the dictates of your heart, as indeed is most fitting, so long as you do not forget what beseems you and your sex.

Miriam's cheeks flushed crimson, for she felt the stab that was hidden in this speech with a double pang, since it was dealt by Joshua. How much had she this day been forced to renounce for her sex's sake? And now she was to be made to feel that she was not his equal, that she was but a woman. In the presence of the heap of stones which Hur had built up, and on which her hand at this moment rested, he had appealed to her judgment as though she were one of the leaders of the people; and now he roughly set her in her place—her, who felt herself second to no man in gifts and in spirit.

But he, too, had been wounded in his pride, and her demeanor warned him that this hour would decide whether in their future union he or she should get the mastery. He stood up in front of her in all his pride and high determination—never, indeed, had she thought him so manly or so desirable. Yet the instinct to fight for her injured womanly dignity was stronger than any other impulse, and finally it was she who broke the painful silence which had followed his words of reproof. With a degree of composure which she only achieved by the exertion of her utmost power of will she began:

"But we are both forgetting what keeps us here at this hour of the night. You were to reveal to me what brought you hither, and to hear from my lips the judgment of the Lord—not that of Miriam, the foolish woman."

"I had hoped to hear the voice of the maiden in whose love I trusted," he gloomily replied.

"You shall hear it," she said, taking her hand from off the heap of stones. "But it may befall that I cannot consent to the judgment of the man whose power and wisdom are so far greater than mine, and you have taught me that you cannot brook a woman's contradiction—not even mine."

"Miriam!" he exclaimed, reproachfully, but she went on more vehemently :

"I have felt it deeply ; and as it would be the greatest sorrow of my life to lose your heart, you must understand me fully before you call upon me to pronounce judgment."

"But first hear my message."

"No—no!" she eagerly replied. "The answer now would die on my lips. First, let me tell you of the woman who, though she has a loving heart, knows something which she holds far above love. You smile? And you have a right to smile till you know that which I will reveal to you."

"Speak, then!" he broke in, in a tone which betrayed how hard he felt it to keep patience.

"Thanks for that," she said, warmly. Then, leaning against the tree trunk, while he sat down on the bench and looked into her face and now on the ground, she spoke :

"I have left childhood behind me, aye, and my youth will soon be a thing of the past. While I was still but a little child I was not very different from other girls. I played with them, and although my mother taught me to pray to the God of our fathers, still I was well content to hear what other children would tell me of Isis. As often as I could I would steal into her temple, buy spices and strip my little garden for her ; would pour oil on her altar and offer her flowers. I was taller and stronger than many maidens of my age, and the daughter of Amram to boot, so that the others were ready enough to obey me and do all I proposed. When I was eight years old we moved hither from Zoan. Before I had found a playfellow here you came to stay in the house of Gamaliel, your sister's husband, to be healed of a wound from a Libyan's lance. Do you remember that time, when you, a young man, made a comrade of the little girl? I fetched you all you needed ; I chattered to you of all I knew, and you told me tales of bloody fights and victory, and described

the splendid armor and the horses and chariots of the soldiers. You showed me the ring you had won by your valor, and when the wound in your breast was healed we wandered about the meadows together.

“ Isis, whom you worshiped, had her temple here also, and how often would I steal secretly into its courts to pray for you and carry her my holiday cakes. I had heard so much from you of Pharaoh and his magnificence, of the Egyptians and their wisdom, skill and luxurious lives, that my little heart longed to dwell among them in the capital ; it had moreover come to my ears that my brother Moses had been treated with great kindness in the king’s palace, and had become a man held in high honor among the priesthood. I could no longer be content with my own folk, who seemed to me in all respects far behind the Egyptians.

“ Then came the parting from you, and as my little heart was piously inclined, and looked for all good to come from divine power, by whatever name it was called, I prayed for Pharaoh and for his army with which you were fighting.

“ My mother would sometimes speak of the God of our fathers as of a mighty Defense who had done great things of old for His people, and she told me many fine tales of Him ; still she herself often sacrificed in the temple of Set, or carried clover flowers to the sacred bull of the Sun-god. She had kind thoughts, too, of the Egyptians, among whom our Moses. her pride and joy, had risen to such high honor.

“ Thus I came to be fifteen years old and lived happily with the rest. In the evening, when the herdsmen had come home, I sat round the fire with the young ones, and it pleased me when the sons of the great owners preferred me above the others and paid court to me ; but I rejected them all, even the Egyptian captain who commanded the guard in charge of the storehouse, for I always thought of you, the companion of my childhood. The best I had to give would not have seemed too much for a magic spell which might have brought you to my side, when at high festivals I danced and sang to the tambourine, and the loudest praise was always for me. Whenever I sang before others I thought of you, and as I did so I poured out all that filled my heart as a lark might, so that my song was

to you and not to the praise of the Most High, to whom it was dedicated."

At this a fresh glow of passion possessed the man to whom his beloved confessed such gladdening truth. He sprang up and held out his arms to her, but she forbade him with stern severity, that she herself might remain mistress of the longing which threatened to be too much for her.

Her deep voice had a different ring in it as she went on, at first quickly and softly, but presently louder and more impressively :

"And so I came to be eighteen, and I could endure Succoth no longer. An unutterable yearning, not for you only, came over my soul. Things that had formerly brought me joy now seemed empty, and the monotony of my life here in this remote frontier town, among flocks and herdsmen, seemed to me dreary and wretched.

"Eleazar, Aaron's son, had taught me to read, and brought me books full of tales which could never have been true, but which nevertheless stirred my heart. Many of them contained praises of the gods and ardent songs, such as lovers sing one to another. These took deep hold on me, and when I was alone in the evening or at mid-day, when all was still and the shepherds and herdsmen were away at pasture, I would rehearse these songs or invent new, mostly hymns in praise of the Divinity, in honor of Amon, with his ram's head, or of Isis, with the head of a cow ; but often, too, of the Almighty Lord who revealed Himself to Abraham, and of whom my mother spoke more often as she grew older. And this was what I loved best—to think in silence of such songs of praise, and wait for visions in which I saw God's greatness and glory, or fair angels and hideous demons. From a merry child I had become a pensive maiden who let her life go as it might. There was no one to warn or to hinder me ; my parents were now dead, and I lived alone with my Aunt Rachel, a misery to myself and no joy to any one else. Aaron, my eldest brother, had gone to dwell with his father-in-law, Aminadab, for the old home of Amram, his inheritance, was too small for him, and he had bestowed it on me. My companions even avoided me, for all gladness had departed from me, and I looked down upon them in sinful scorn because I could compose songs and see more in my visions than ever they saw.

“Now I was nineteen, and on the eve of my birthday, which no one remembered save Milcah, Eleazar’s daughter, the Lord for the first time gave me a message. He appeared in the form of an angel and bid me set the house in order, for a guest was on the way whom I loved greatly.

“It was very early in the morning and I sat under this tree ; so I went into the house, and with old Rachel’s help I set the house in order and made ready a bed, and prepared a meal with wine and all that we welcome a guest withal. But noon came, and the afternoon and the evening became night, and the night morning again, and still I waited for the guest. However, as the sun was getting low that day the dogs began to bark loudly, and when I went forth to the gate a tall man came hurrying toward me. His hair was grey and in disorder, and he wore a priest’s white robe all in tatters. The dog shrank from him whining, but I knew him for my brother Moses.

“Our meeting again after such a long time brought me more fear than pleasure, for Moses was fleeing from his pursuers because he had slain the overseer. But this you know.

“Wrath still flashed from his sparkling eyes. He appeared to me to resemble the god Set, and each of his slow words was engraved on my mind as with a hammer and chisel. He remained three times seven days and nights under my roof, and since I was alone with him and deaf Rachel—for he had to remain hidden—no one came between us, and he taught me to know Him who is the God of our fathers. I listened to his burning words with fear and trembling, and his weighty speech fell, as it seemed to me, like rocks upon my breast when he impressed on me what the Lord God expected of me, or when he described the wrath and the greatness of Him whom no mind can comprehend, and whose name none may utter. Yes, when he spoke of Him and of the Egyptian gods, it appeared as though the God of Israel stood forth like a giant whose brow touched the heavens ; while the other gods all crouched at his feet in the dust like whimpering hounds.

“He also taught me that we alone, and no others, were the Lord’s chosen people. Now, for the first time, I was filled with pride that I was a scion of Abraham, and that every Hebrew was my brother and every daughter of Israel my sister. Now, too, I understood how cruelly

those of my own kindred had been tortured and oppressed. I had hitherto been blind to the anguish of my people, but Moses opened my eyes and sowed the seeds of hatred in my heart—a great hatred of the tyrants of my brethren; and from that hatred grew love for the oppressed. I vowed that I would cling to my brother and wait on the voice of the Lord, and, behold! He did not tarry; the voice of Jehovah spoke to me as with tongues.

“About that time old Rachel died, and by Moses’ desire I did not live alone, but followed the bidding of Aaron and Aminadab and became a guest under their roof. Still, even then I lived a life apart. Nor did they hinder me; and this sycamore in their field became, as it were, my place. It was under its shade that God bid me call thee and name thee Holpen of Jehovah—and thou, Joshua, and no longer Hosea, hast done the bidding of the Lord thy God and of His prophetess!”

At this point the soldier interrupted the damsel’s tale, to which he had listened earnestly, though with growing disappointment.

“Yes,” he said, “I obeyed you and the Lord God! What it cost me to do so you care not to inquire. You have told all your story down to the present hour, but you have nothing to say of the days you spent with us as our guest at Tanis after my mother’s death. Can you forget what your eyes first told me there, and then your lips? Has the day of our parting vanished from your memory, and the evening on the sea when you bid me set my hopes on you and remember you? Did the hatred which Moses implanted in your heart exclude all else, even love?”

“Even love?” cried Miriam, raising her tearful eyes to his face. “Oh, no! How could I ever forget that time, the happiest of my life? But from the day when Moses came from the desert to redeem the people from bondage by the command of the Lord—it was three months after your departing—from that day I have lost all count of years and months, days and nights.”

“And you will forget this night?” asked Joshua, bitterly.

“Nay, not so,” said Miriam, looking beseechingly in his face. “The love which grew up in the child’s heart and did not fade in the girl’s can never die——” Here she suddenly broke off, raised her hands and eyes to heaven as

if wrapt in ecstasy, and cried aloud: "Thou art nigh to me, great God Almighty, and canst read my heart! Thou knowest wherefor Miriam counts no more by days and years, and asks only to be Thy handmaid until Thou hast granted to her people, who is this man's people, that which Thou hast promised!"

While the maiden was uttering this prayer, which came from the very bottom of her heart, a light breeze had sprung up, the herald of dawn, and the thick, leafy crown of the sycamore tree whispered above her head. Joshua devoured her tall, majestic figure with his eyes as she stood half lighted and half shrouded in the doubtful gleam of dawn, for the things he saw and heard seemed to him as a miracle. The tidings of great joy to which she looked forward for her people, and which must be accomplished before she would allow herself to follow the desires of her heart, he believed himself to be the bearer of in the name of the Lord. Carried away by the high flight of her spirit, he hastened to her side, seized her hand and cried with hopeful excitement:

"The hour has come when you may once more tell day from night and hearken to the wishes of your heart. For I, Joshua, no more Hosea, came at the message of the Lord, and the message I bear brings new happiness to the people whom I will learn to love as you love them, and, if it be the will of the Most High, a new and better land."

Miriam's eyes flashed with gladness. Carried away by thankful joy, she cried:

"Are you, then, come to lead us to the land Jehovah hath promised us? Oh, Lord, how great are Thy mercies! He—he comes as Thy messenger."

"Yea, he comes; he is here!" cried Joshua, rapturously, and she did not prevent him as he clasped her to his breast. With a thrill of joy she returned his ardent kiss

CHAPTER XVI.

FRIGHTENED at her own weakness, Miriam presently freed herself from her lover's arms, but she was ready to listen with eager gladness to his tale of a fresh mercy vouchsafed by the Most High, and his brief account of all he had done and felt since he had received her call.

First, he described how terribly he had been divided in his mind; how then he had found entire faith, and in obedience to the God of his nation and to his father's appeal had gone to the palace, facing the risk of imprisonment or death, to be released of his oath. Next he told her how graciously the mourning sovereigns had received him, and how finally he had taken upon himself the office of appealing to the leader of his people and persuading him to take the Hebrews only a short way into the desert, and then bring them home again to Egypt, where a new and splendid province should be granted them on the west of the Nile. Henceforth no Egyptian overseer should oppress them; their own elders should be permitted to rule them, and a man of their own choosing should govern them.

To conclude, he observed that he himself was minded to become the captain of the Hebrew fighting men, and also to mediate and smooth matters between them and the Egyptians whenever it might seem needful. Happily united to her in that new home, he would extend his care to the humblest of his brethren. On his way hither he had felt as though, after a furious fight, the blasts of the trumpets proclaimed victory. And, indeed, he had a right to believe himself a messenger and ambassador from the Lord.

Here, however, he interrupted himself, for Miriam, who at first had listened to him with anxious ears and flashing eyes, had heard him, as he proceeded, with a more and more anxious and troubled mien. And when he spoke of his hope that they might together do much for their people, she drew away her hand, gazed with terror into his handsome face glowing with glad excitement, and then cast down her eyes as if striving for self-control.

Unsuspecting of what had moved her thus, he went closer to her. He deemed that it was maidenly shyness that held her silent at having yielded a first favor to the man she loved. But when she shook her head disapprovingly at his last words, announcing his commission as God's messenger, he was almost beside himself with cruel disappointment, and exclaimed vehemently:

"Then do you believe that the Lord hath defended me, as by a miracle, against the wrath of the mighty, and given me grace to win for His people, from the hand of the great king, such boons as never before did the strong vouchsafe to the weak, only to trifle with the happy trustfulness of a man whom He Himself called to serve Him?"

At this she interrupted him in a woful voice, with difficulty restraining her tears :

“The strong to the weak ! If this is your thought you force me to ask you in your own father’s words : ‘Who, then, is the mightier, the Lord our God or that poor creature on the throne, whose first-born has perished at a sign from the Most High as grass is cut down and withered?’ Oh, Hosea, Hosea !”

“Nay, Joshua,” he wildly exclaimed. “Do you refuse me the name which your God bestowed on me? I trusted in His aid when I entered the palace of the great king ; I sought redemption and release for the nation under God’s guidance, and I found them, and you—you——”

“Moses and your father, aye, and all the faithful leaders of Israel, sees no redemption at the hand of the Egyptians,” she replied, with fluttering breath. “All that they can bestow must bring destruction on Israel ; the grass that we have sown withers where the Egyptian treads. And you, whose honest soul they have but mocked at, you are the lure sent forth by the bird catcher to entice the birds into the net. You are, as it were, the hammer in their hand to rivet the fetters withal more firmly than ever, which we, by God’s help, have broken. With the eyes of the spirit I see——”

“Enough ! Too much !” cried the warrior, grinding his teeth with rage. “Hatred has clouded your clear soul. And if the bird catcher, as you would have it, is of a truth using me as his lure, and mocked at me and led me astray, it was from you, yes, you, that he has learned it. Encouraged by you I built on your love and faithfulness ; of you I hoped everything. And that love—where is it? You have spared me nothing that could wound me, and I, likewise, will not spare myself, but confess the whole truth. It is not alone because the God of my fathers bid me, but because it was through you and my father that the call came to me, that I obeyed. You aspire after a land in the far unknown, promised by the Lord. I opened to my people the way to a certain and happy home. Nor was it for their sake, for what have my people ever done for me? But above all, that I might dwell there with you, whom I love, and with my old father, and you, whose cold heart knows not love, with my kiss on your lips, you reject the boon I offer out of hatred for the hand that has bestowed it

on me. All your thoughts and deeds have become as those of a man, and all that other women prize most highly you spurn from you with your foot!"

At this Miriam could bear no more. She clasped her hands over her quivering face, sobbing bitterly.

By this time the sleeping tribes were awakening in the growing dawn. Serving men and women came forth from the houses of Aminadab and Nahshon. All, as they woke to a new day, made their way to the well or the drinking-troughs, but she heeded them not.

How her heart had leaped and rejoiced when her lover had declared to her that he had come to lead them to the land which the Lord had promised to His people. She had rested so gladly on his bosom, to know for a moment that highest bliss, but how soon had it been turned to cruel disappointment! While the morning breeze had rustled through the thick foliage of the sycamore, and while Joshua was telling her of Pharaoh's promises to the people, it had seemed to her that the voice of God in His wrath was murmuring on the tree-tops, or that she heard once more the angry speech of old Nun. He had stormed at Uri like thunder and lightning, and wherein did Joshua's proposals differ from Uri's?

The people, as she had heard from Moses himself, were lost if they failed in truth to their God and yielded to Pharaoh's enticements. To ally herself with a man who had come to undo all for which her brothers and his own father had lived and struggled would be base treason. And yet she loved Joshua, and instead of repulsing him harshly, how willingly, ah, how gladly, would she again have lain on the heart which, as she knew, longed for her so ardently.

But the murmur in the boughs still went on. She could fancy it was echoing Aaron's words of warning, and she vowed to remain true, strong as the impulse was that drew her to her lover. The whispering in the tree was of a surety the voice of God, who had chosen her to be His handmaid. When Joshua had declared in his passionate excitement that the desire to possess her was what had prompted him to action on behalf of the people who to him were as indifferent as to her they were dear, she had suddenly felt her heart stand still, and she could not forbear sobbing in her mental anguish.

Heedless of Joshua or the awakening multitude, she flung herself again at the foot of the sycamore, with arms upraised to heaven, staring wide-eyed at the boughs, as though expecting some fresh revelation. The morning air sighed among the leaves, and suddenly it seemed as though a bright radiance shone not only in her soul, but all about her, as always happened when a vision was granted to her prophetic eye. And in the midst of the light, behold a figure, whose aspect terrified her while his name was whispered by every trembling leaf; and the name was not Joshua, but that of another whom her heart could not desire. He stood in the blaze of glory before her mind's eye, a tall, noble form, and, with a solemn gesture, laid his hand on the heap of stones he had made.

Breathless with suspense she gazed at the vision; and yet she would gladly have closed her eyes to avoid seeing it, and have shut her ears to the voice of the murmuring sycamore. Suddenly the glory was extinct, the figure had vanished, the voice of the leaves was hushed; she saw before her, in a ruddier glow, the figure of the only man whose lips her own had ever kissed, sword in hand, rushing on an invisible foe at the head of his father's herdsmen. The vision came and was gone as swiftly as a flash of lightning; and yet, even before it had vanished, she knew all it meant to her. This man, whom she had named Joshua, and who had every quality that could fit him to be the guardian and leader of his people, should not be led astray by love from the high task to which the Lord had called him. None among the Hebrews should hear the message he had brought, and thereby be turned away from the perilous path on which they had entered. Her duty was now as clear in her sight as the vanished vision had been. And as though the Most High would fain show her that she had understood rightly what the vision demanded of her before she had risen from her knees to announce to Joshua the sorrow to which she had condemned him and herself, she heard Hur's voice close at hand bidding the crowd, which was gathering from all sides, to form in order for their march.

The way of salvation from herself lay before her.

Joshua, meanwhile, had not ventured to intrude on her devotions. He was wounded and angered to the depths of his soul by her rejection. But gazing down on her he

had seen her tall frame shiver as with a sudden chill, her eyes and hands uplifted as if spell-bound; and he had understood that something great and sacred was stirring in her soul which it would be a crime to disturb; nay, he had been unable to resist an instinctive feeling that he was a bold man who could desire a woman so closely one with God. It would be bliss indeed to be lord of this sublime creature, but at the same time hard to see her prefer another, though it were the Almighty, so far above her lover.

Men and beasts were already trooping in crowds past the sycamore, and when at length Joshua decided that he must speak to Miriam and remind her of the gathering throng she rose, and turning to him spoke these vehement words:

“I have spoken with the Lord, Joshua, and I now know His will. Dost thou remember the words with which God called thee?”

He bowed his head and she went on:

“It is well. Then learn now what it is that the Most High God hath said to thy father, and to Moses, and to me. He will lead us forth from the land of Egypt, far, far away, to a land where neither Pharaoh nor his rulers shall have dominion over us, and He alone will be our King. This is His will, and if thou desire to serve Him thou shalt follow us, and, if we have need to fight, be captain over the men of our people.”

At this he beat his breast and cried in great trouble: “I am bound by an oath to return home to Tanis to tell Pharaoh how the leaders of the Hebrews have received the message which I have brought to them. Yea, and even if it should break my heart I cannot be forsworn.”

“And rather shall mine break,” Miriam moaned, “than I break my vow to the Lord. We have chosen. And here, in the presence of this heap of stones, all the ties are cut which ever bound us!”

At this he was beside himself; he eagerly strove to take her hand, but she repulsed him with an imperious gesture, turned away and went forward towards the throng of people who were crowding round the well with the cattle and sheep.

Great and small respectfully made way for her as she walked with proud dignity towards Hur, who was giving

orders to the shepherds. He came to meet her, and when he had heard the promise she made him in an undertone he laid his hand on her head and said with grave solemnity : " May the Lord bless our union."

Then, hand in hand with the gray-haired man to whom she had plighted her troth, Miriam turned to meet Joshua, and nothing betrayed the deep agitation of her soul but the fluttering rise and fall of her bosom, though her cheeks were indeed pale ; her eyes were dry, and her demeanor as unbending as ever.

She left it to Hur to tell the lover whom she had rejected, now and forever, what she had done ; and when the warrior heard it he started back as though a gulf had yawned at his feet.

His lips were bloodless as he gazed at the unequally matched pair. Scornful laughter seemed to him the only fit answer for such an announcement, but Miriam's earnest face helped him to suppress it, and to conceal his painful agitation under some trivial speech. However, he felt that he could not for long preserve the semblance of indifference, so he bid Miriam farewell. He must, as he hastily explained, greet his father, and request him to call a meeting of the elders.

But before he had done speaking the quarreling herdsmen came crowding round Hur that he might decide what place in the procession it behooved each tribe to take ; so he went with them ; and as soon as Miriam found herself alone with the soldier she said beseechingly, but in a low voice and with imploring eyes :

" A hasty deed has broken the bonds that united us, but a higher tie still holds us together. As I have given up that which my heart held dearest, to be faithful to my God and my people, so do thou sacrifice that to which thy soul clings. Obey the Most High, who hath named thee Joshua ! This hour hath changed our gladness to bitter grief ; may the good of the people be its fruit ! Remain a true son of the race which gave thee thy father and mother, and be what the Lord hath called thee to be, a captain of His people.

" If thou abide by the oath thou hast sworn to Pharaoh, and reveal to the elders the promises thou hast brought, they will go over to thy side ; that I know full well. Few will stand up against thee, but foremost of these few will

be thine own father. I can hear him uplift his voice in anger against his own beloved son ; and if thou shut thine ear even to his admonition, then the people will follow thee instead of following the Lord, and thou wilt lead the Israelites as a mighty man of valor. But, then, when the day comes in which the Egyptian lets his promises fly to the four winds, thou wilt see thy people more cruelly oppressed than even heretofore, and when they turn aside from the God of their fathers to worship the gods with the heads of beasts the curse of thy father shall fall upon thee. The wrath of the Most High shall be visited upon the forward, and despair shall be the lot of him who shall lead the foolish folk astray after that the Lord hath chosen him to be the captain of His people. I, a weak woman, the handmaid of the Lord, and the damsel who loved thee better than life—I cry unto thee, ‘Beware of the curse of thy father and the hand of the Lord! Beware lest thou lead the people into sin!’”

A slave girl here came out to Miriam to bid her go to the old people, so she only added in a low voice : “One word more. If thou wouldst prove thyself not less weak than the woman whose opposition moved thee to anger, renounce thine own will for the sake of the multitude of thy brethren. Lay thine hand on this heap and swear to me—”

But the prophetess’ voice failed her. Her hands felt about vainly for some support, and with a cry she fell on her knees close to Hur’s heap of stones. Joshua hastened to raise her, holding her in his strong arms, and at his call some women hurried up and soon revived the fainting girl.

As she opened her eyes they wandered vaguely from one to another, and it was not till her gaze fell on Joshua’s anxious face that she fully understood where she was and what had happened. Then she hastily drank a deep draught of the water which a shepherd woman offered her, dried her eyes which were streaming with tears, sighed bitterly, and with a wan smile said to Joshua :

“I am after all but a weak woman.”

Then she went towards the house, but after walking a few steps she turned round, signed to Joshua, and said :

“You see they are forming in ranks. They are about to set forth. Are you still of the same mind? There is yet time to call the elders together.”

But he shook his head in denial, and, as he met her eye glistening with gratitude, he softly replied: "I will ever bear in mind this heap, and this hour, wife of Hur! Greet my father from me, and tell him that I love him. Tell him, too, the name which his son is henceforth to bear by the command of the Most High. In that name, which promised me the help of the Lord, he shall put his trust when he hears whither I go, to keep the oath I have sworn."

He waved his hand to Miriam, and turned to go to the camp, where his horse had been fed and watered, but she called after him:

"One last word. Moses left a letter for you in the hollow of the tree." At this the warrior went to the sycamore and read the message which the man of God had left for him.

"Be steadfast and strong," was the brief injunction, and Joshua raised his head and cried joyfully: "The words are a comfort to my soul; and if it is for the last time that we have met, wife of Hur, if I now go to my death, be sure that I shall know how to be steadfast and strong, even unto the end. And do you do all you can for my old father."

Herewith he sprang on horseback, and as he made his way to Tanis, faithful to his oath, his soul was free from fears, although he did not conceal from himself that he was riding forth to great peril. His highest hopes were destroyed, and yet glad excitement struggled with the grief in his soul. A new and glorious emotion had its birth there, filling his whole being, and it was scarcely damped though he had suffered a wound cruel enough to darken the light of day to any other man. He had now a fixed aim in life, and, besides this, he had the assurance that he might hold himself as worthy as Hur or as any other man. None could depose him from this high place but the glorious twain to whom he would dedicate his blood and his life: his God and his people.

He was amazed to discern how greatly this new enthusiasm cast into the shade everything else that stirred in his breast. Now and again, indeed, he bowed his head in sorrow as he remembered his old father; still, he had done right in setting aside his longing to press him once more to his heart. The old man would scarcely have understood his motives, and it was better for them to separate without meeting rather than in open dissension.

Sometimes it seemed to him as though all that had happened could be but a dream; and as he was still intoxicated, as it were, by the agitations of the last few hours, his stalwart frame was but little conscious of the fatigues he had gone through. At a well-known inn on the road, where he found several warriors, and among them certain captains well known to him, he at length allowed himself and his horse to rest and eat; and as he rode on refreshed, daily life asserted its rights. He passed various companies of soldiers on their way to the city of Tanis, and was informed that they were under orders to join themselves there to the troops which he himself had brought home from Libya.

At last he rode into the town, and as he went past the temple of Amon he heard loud wailing, though he had learned on his way that the pestilence was wellnigh at an end. From many signs he gathered the fact which was presently announced to him by some guards, the god's high priest and first prophet, Ruie, had just died in the 90th year of his age, and Baie, the second prophet, who had so warmly assured him of his friendship and gratitude, and who counted on his co-operation in a dangerous enterprise, was his successor—high priest and judge, seal-bearer and treasurer; in short, the most powerful man in the kingdom.

CHAPTER XVII.

"HE whom Jehovah helps!" murmured a chain-laden prisoner with a bitter smile, as five days later, he, with forty fellow-sufferers, was led through the triumphal arch of Tanis toward the east.

Their destination was the mines on the peninsula of Sinai, where fresh-forced laborers were needed.

The smile on the victim's face soon vanished; then he drew up his muscular form while his bearded lips muttered the words: "Steadfast and strong!" and he whispered to the youth who was walking at his side, as though he wished to convey to him some of the strength that he had recovered: "Courage, Ephraim, courage; look up and not in the dust, come what may!"

“Silence whilst marching!” cried one of the armed Libyan guards who escorted the gang to the elder prisoner, and he raised his whip with a menacing gesture. Joshua was the man he threatened, and his companion was Ephraim, who had been condemned to share his fate.

Every Egyptian child knew what this meant, for “Send me to the mines!” was this people’s most dreadful imprecation, and no prisoner’s lot was half so hard as that of the condemned state criminal.

A series of frightful humiliations and hardships awaited them at the mines. The strength of the healthiest was ruined by unheard-of over-work, and the exhausted victims were forced to do things so far beyond their power that they soon sank into the everlasting rest for which their martyred souls had long pined.

Joshua’s encouraging words had little effect on Ephraim; but when a few minutes later a chariot, shaded by an umbrella, drove past the gang, and in it, behind the charioteer and a matron, stood an elegant young woman, he turned round quickly and gazed after the vehicle with sparkling eyes, until the dust on the road hid it from sight.

The lady was thickly veiled, yet the youth thought that he had recognized her for whose sake he had rushed into peril, and whose lightest sign he would even now fly to obey. And Ephraim had guessed correctly, for the young lady in the chariot was Kasana, the daughter of the captain of the archers; the elder woman was her nurse.

On reaching a little temple on the road, near a thicket of acacia, among which stood a well for the use of travelers, after the chariot had left the prisoners at some distance behind, Kasana begged the matron to wait. Then, springing out lightly on the road, she walked to and fro with a bowed head under the shadow of the trees until she knew by a rolling cloud of dust that the criminals were approaching.

Then, taking out of her garment some gold rings which she had brought with her for the purpose, she went up to the driver of the melancholy procession as he drew near on an ass, and while she talked to him and pointed to Joshua the guard cast a stolen glance at the rings which had been slipped into his hand. His modesty had only allowed him to expect silver, and his face at once assumed a friendly and courteous expression at the sight of their pleasing yellow glitter.

His countenance certainly darkened again at the demand Kasana made, but it brightened once more at a promise of further largesse from the young widow. "Take the moles to the well, men! Let them drink! They shall go fresh and healthy underground!"

Then he rode up to the prisoners and called to Joshua: "You, who have yourself once ruled over many people, seem to me more stiff-necked still than is good for you or me. You, guards, look after the others. I will watch this one; I have a few words to say to him."

Then he clapped his hands as if he was driving poultry from a garden, and whilst the prisoners drew water in the buckets of the well, and, with their guards, rejoiced in the refreshing drink, the leader led Joshua and Ephraim on one side, for they could not be separated by reason of the chains that bound them together by the ankles. They were soon hidden from the others behind the little temple, and then the driver sank down on a bench at a little distance, having first, with a significant gesture, shown the two Hebrews the bludgeon in his right hand, and pointed to the dogs who were rubbing against his feet.

He kept his eyes open, too, during the conversation that followed. They might say what they pleased; he knew his duty, and though he understood how to shut one eye on a parting in return for good gold, for quite twenty years, in spite of many attempts to escape amongst his moles—as he called those condemned to the mines—not one had ever succeeded in getting away.

This lovely woman was perhaps this fine fellow's betrothed, for he had been told that Joshua had been commander. But he had already called many noble birds "moles," and if this veiled woman should contrive to slip files or gold into the prisoner's hands so much the better; this evening nothing on these two should be left unsearched, not even the youth's black hair, which had been left unshorn in the confusion that had taken place at the start of the prisoners, for they had been sent off just before the departure of Pharaoh's army.

The subject of the woman's whispered negotiations with the fallen captain remained unknown to the driver, but from her sorrowful face and manner he inferred that she had caused the ruin of this noble man. Oh! woman, woman! and that lad in chains! The glances he cast at

the slender creature were so ardent that she had to draw her veil closer. But patience! Great Father Amon! His moles were going to a good school for modesty.

Now the woman removed her veil. She was beautiful! It must be hard to part with such a lovely creature; and now she cried so bitterly.

The rough guard's heart was touched as much as his position would allow, and he could have struck the elder prisoner with his whip, for was it not an outrage, having such a lover, to stand like stone? At first the wretch did not even stretch out a hand to the woman, who certainly loved him; whilst he, the guard, would have been glad to see the two kiss and embrace.

Or was this beauty perhaps the warrior's wife, who had deceived him? But no, no, how kindly he approached her now. A father speaks like that to his child, but his "mole" was much too young to have so old a daughter. A riddle! However, he did not care about the answer, since it was in his power during the march to make the most taciturn convict as frank as an open book.

And not alone the simple driver of the gang, but everyone might have wondered why this beautiful woman had come out into the highway at early dawn to see an unfortunate man weighed down with chains.

Nothing but tormenting anxiety for the man she loved could have impelled Kasana to take this journey and expose herself to scorn as a woman of no reputation. A terrible fate awaited him; her lively imagination had pictured Joshua in the mines languishing, broken down, pining away, and at last dying with a curse on her upon his lips.

On the evening of the day on which Ephraim, shivering with high fever and half choked with dust, was carried into their house, her father had informed her that in the person of the young Hebrew she held a hostage which would force Joshua to return to Tanis, and yield to the wishes of the prophet Baie, with whom she knew her father to be allied in a secret plot. He likewise confided to her that not only were great distinctions and high honors to be offered to Joshua, but also marriage with herself, to secure his fidelity to Egypt and to a cause from which he, Hornecht, looked for great benefits to the country and to his own kindred. This had filled her with high hopes of attaining long-wished-for joys; and as they sat near the

little road-side temple, she now confessed this to the prisoner with a drooping head and low sobs ; for he was now forever lost to her, and even if he could not return the love she had felt for him since her childhood, he at any rate would not hate her and condemn her unheard.

Joshua, indeed, listened to her willingly, and assured her that nothing would gladden his heart more than that she should clear herself from the reproach of being answerable for the terrible fate awaiting himself and the youth by his side.

At this she sobbed aloud, and had to struggle to compose herself before she could succeed in telling her story with any degree of calmness.

Shortly after Joshua's departure the high priest had died, and Baie, the second prophet of Amon, had succeeded him. Things were then greatly altered ; this man, the most powerful in the land, stirred up Pharaoh to hatred against the Hebrews and their leader, Moses, whom, till then, the king and queen had protected and feared. He had also persuaded the king to pursue the fugitive Hebrews, and the army was at once ordered to go forth and compel them to return. She immediately feared that Joshua would certainly refuse to fight against those who were of his own blood, and that it must anger him to be sent forth to sign a contract which the Egyptians would begin to break before they could know whether it had been accepted. Then, when he had returned home, he himself knew only too well how Pharaoh had treated him like a prisoner, and had refused to admit him to his presence until he had sworn to continue to lead the Egyptian troops, and remain a faithful servant to the king. Still, Baie, the high priest, had not forgotten that he had saved his life, and was well disposed toward him and grateful ; and she knew that he had hoped to entangle Joshua in the secret conspiracy in which her father also was implicated. It was Baie, too, who had caused Pharaoh to release him from fighting against his own nation on condition of his renewing his oath of fidelity, to place him in command of the foreign mercenaries, and to raise him to the high rank of "Friend of the King"—but of course he must know all this already, for the new high priest had with his own hand set the tempting prospect before Joshua, who had rejected it with firm and manly decision. Her father had in the

first instance been on his side, and for the first time had entirely refrained from speaking with reproach of his Hebrew origin.

On the third day after Joshua's return the captain of the archers had gone out to speak with him, and since then everything had gone wrong. He therefore must know what it was that had turned the man of whom she dared think no evil, since she was his daughter, from being a friend into a mortal enemy. She looked inquiringly into Joshua's face, and he was ready with his answer. The captain had told him that he would be a welcome son-in-law.

"And you," asked Kasana, looking anxiously at the speaker.

"I," replied the prisoner, "could only say that you had from your childhood been kind and dear to me, but that nevertheless there was much to forbid my linking the fate of any woman to mine."

At this Kasana's eyes flashed and she cried: "It is because you love another—a woman of your own people—the woman who sent Ephraim to you!"

But Joshua shook his head and answered gently: "You are in error, Kasana. The woman of whom you speak is this day another man's wife."

"But then," cried the widow, with revived spirit, and she looked at him with tender entreaty, "why—oh forgive me—why did you repulse him so harshly?"

"That was far from my purpose, dear child," he replied warmly, laying his hand on her head. "I always have thought of you with all the affection of which I am capable. And though I could not, indeed, accede to his wish, it was because the sternest necessity forbids me ever to look forward to that peace and joy by my own hearth which other men may strive for. If I had been a free man my life would have been one of constant journeying and warfare."

"But how many men," Kasana put in, "wield the sword and shield, indeed, but rejoice at their home-coming to their wives, and the joys they find under their own roof?"

"Very true," said he sadly. "But the duties that call me are such as the Egyptians know not of. I am the son of my nation."

"And you propose to serve it?" said Kasana. "Oh! I quite understand you. But then—why did you return to Tanis? Why did you trust yourself in Pharaoh's power?"

“Because I was pledged by a sacred oath, my child,” said he kindly.

“An oath!” she exclaimed. “A promise that puts death and captivity between you and her whom you love, and those whom you desire to serve! Oh! would that you had never come back to this land of unrighteousness, of treachery and ingratitude! That oath will plunge many into grief and weeping. But what does a man care for the woe he brings on others? You have spoilt all my joy in life, hapless creature that I am; and at home, among your own people, you have a worthy father whose only son you are. How often have I seen the noble old man with his snow-white hair and flashing eye? And you will be like him if you attain to old age, as I used to think when I met him by the harbor, or in the four-court of the High Gate, when he was ordering his hinds to bring in his tribute of beasts or woolly sheep to the receipt of custom. And now his latter days are to be darkened by his son’s perversity.”

“And, now,” corrected Joshua, “his son is going into misery, loaded with fetters; still he may hold his head high above those who have betrayed him. They, and Pharaoh at their head, have forgotten that I have shed my heart’s blood for them on many a battle-field, and been faithful to the king through every kind of danger. Menephtah has abandoned me, and with him his chief minister, whose life I saved, and many another who once called me friend; they have deserted me and cast me out, and this innocent lad with me. But, I tell you, woman, those who have done this, those who have committed this sin—one and all, shall——”

“Curse them not!” cried Kasana, and her cheeks flushed scarlet.

But Joshua did not heed her prayer, but exclaimed: “Should I be a man if I did not thirst for vengeance?”

The young woman clung in terror to his arm and beseechingly went on:

“How, indeed, can you forgive him? Only do not curse him, for it was out of love for me that my father became your enemy. You know him well, and his hot blood, which easily carries him to extremes in spite of his years. He kept silence, even to me, of what he took as an insult—for he has seen me courted by many suitors, and I am precious above all else in his eyes. Sooner will

Pharaoh forgive the rebel than my father will pardon the man who scorns me, his dearest treasure. He came home frantic with rage. Every word he spoke was abuse. Then he could not bear to remain indoors, and he stormed outside as he had stormed within. At last, however, he would have allowed himself to be pacified, as he often had done before, if he had not met some one in the palace courts who made it his business to pour oil on the flames. I heard all this from the high priest's wife, for she, too, was greatly troubled to think that she had brought evil upon you, and her husband had already done everything in his power to save you. She, who is as brave as a man, was ready to second him and to open the door of your prison; she has not forgotten that you saved her husband's life in Libya. Ephraim's chains were to be struck off at the same time as yours, and all was ready to enable you to escape."

"I know," replied Joshua gloomily. "And I would return thanks to the God of my fathers if they spoke falsely who told me that it was your doing, Kasana, that our dungeon was locked on us more closely than ever." At this the pretty heart-broken young creature exclaimed vehemently: "And should I be here if that were true? Hatred indeed seethed in my soul, as in that of every woman whose love is scorned; but the ill-fortune which befell you quickly changed my wrath into pity, and revived the fires in my heart. As truly as I pray to be mercifully judged after my death, I am innocent of this thing, and never ceased to hope for your release. It was not until last evening, when it was too late, that I learned that Baie's attempt had failed. The high priest can do much, but the very man whom he will not thwart is closely allied to my father."

"You mean Pharaoh's nephew, Prince Siptah," interrupted Joshua in great excitement. "They hinted to me the plots they were weaving about him. They wanted to set me in the place of Aarsu, the Syrian captain, if I would but consent to let them work their will with my people and renounce my own flesh and blood. But rather would I have died twenty deaths than stain myself with such treason. Aarsu is far more fit for such dark schemes, though at last he will betray them all. So far as I am concerned, the prince has good reason to hate me."

At this Kasana put her hand over her mouth, pointing

uneasily to Ephraim and the gaoler, and whispered: "Spare my father! The prince—whatever it was that roused his enmity——"

"He is seeking to tempt you, too, into his net, and he has been told that you are in love with me," the warrior broke in. But she only blushed, and bending her head in assent went on:

"And for that reason Aarsu, whom he has taken into the conspiracy, is bound to keep such close ward over you and Ephraim."

"The Syrian's eyes are wide open," cried Joshua. "But I believe you, and thank you heartily for coming to us hapless wretches."

"And you will always think of poor Kasana without wrath or hatred?"

"Gladly, most gladly."

The young widow grasped the captive's hand with passionate agitation, and was about to press it to her lips, but he drew it away; and she said anxiously, gazing up at him with tearful eyes: "Do you refuse me the favor which no benefactor refuses to a beggar?" Then she suddenly started up, and exclaimed so loudly that the gaoler was roused, and looked to see where the sun was: "But I tell you, that the time will come when you will offer me that hand to kiss. For when the messenger shall come from Tanis to bring you and this lad the freedom you pine for, it will be to Kasana that you will owe it!"

The fair face glowed with the flush of eager anticipation, and Joshua, seizing her hand, exclaimed: "Oh, if only you might succeed in doing what your faithful soul desires! How can I bear to prevent your trying to alleviate the terrible misfortune which fell upon this boy under your roof? Still, as an honest man, I must tell you that I can never more take service with the Egyptians; come what may, I shall henceforth forever belong, body and soul, to those whom you persecute and despise, the nation and tribe into which my mother bore me."

At this her lovely head dropped; but she raised it again immediately to say: "There is no one so high-souled and honest as you, no one that I have ever known from my childhood up. And when, among my own people, I fail to find any man whom I may reverence, still I will remember you, in whom everything is great, and true, and without

spot. And if poor Kasana may succeed in setting you free, do not despise her if you find her fallen away from the virtue in which you left her ; for the humiliation she may have to endure, the shame she may be brought to—”

Joshua anxiously interrupted her.

“What are you about to do ?” he cried ; but he was not to hear the answer, for the leader of the gang rose and clapped his hands, crying out : “Now, on again, you moles, on again, at once.”

At this the warrior's heart was moved to deep regret. Obedient to a hasty impulse he kissed the hapless Kasana on her fair brow and hair, and whispered : “Leave me to pine if our freedom is to cost you such degradation. We shall never, indeed, meet again ; for, come what may, my life henceforth will be nothing but a struggle and self-sacrifice. The night will close in on us darker and darker ; but, however black it may be, one star will often shine on me and on this lad—the remembrance of you, sweet child, my loving and faithful Kasana.” He pointed to Ephraim, and the youth pressed his lips, as if beside himself, to the hand and arm of Kasana, who was sobbing aloud.

“Come on !” cried the driver once more, and with a grateful grin for a fresh gift of money he helped the open-handed lady into her chariot.

The horses started, fresh shouts were heard, the whip cracked here and there on bare shoulders, a few yells of anguish rose through the morning air, and the file of prisoners went off towards the east. The chains on the victims' feet stirred up the dust which shrouded the wanderers, as grief, and hatred, and dread, clouded each separate soul among them.

On they went, bent in gloomy brooding ; only Joshua held his head erect. It was a comfort to him to know that Kasana, the sweet creature he had loved as a child, was innocent of his fate ; and when his spirit sank within him he could revive it by repeating to himself the words of Moses : “Steadfast and strong.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT a long hour's distance beyond the little temple where the prisoners had rested, the road leading southwards to Succoth and Baal Zephon parted from that which led in a south easterly direction, across the fortified frontier line, to the isthmus and the mines.

Not long after the departure of the prisoners the army gathered together to pursue the Hebrews had set forth from the city of Rameses, and as the criminals had rested some considerable time by the well, the troops had nearly overtaken them. Thus they had not gone much further when some pioneers rode up to clear the highway for the approaching host. They ordered the gang of prisoners to stand aside, and proceed no farther till the swift baggage train containing Pharaoh's tents and household gear should have passed them; and, indeed, the king's chariot wheels could already be heard.

The drivers were well content to be bidden to wait; they were in no hurry; the day was hot, and if they were late in reaching their journey's end it was the fault of the army. To Joshua, too, the incident was agreeable, for his young companion in chains had been staring before him as if in delirium, and had answered his questions vaguely or not at all, so that the older man was growing uneasy. He knew full well how many of those condemned to forced labor fell into madness or melancholy. And now a portion of the host would march past them, and the sight was new to the lad, and might rouse him from his dull moodiness. There was by the roadside a sand hill overgrown by tamarisk bushes, and to this the driver led his file of men. He was stern, but not cruel, so he allowed his "moles" to stretch themselves on the sand, for the march past would be a long business. They had scarcely settled themselves when the roll of wheels, the neighing of fiery steeds, and shouts of command were heard, with now and then the harsh bray of an ass.

As the foremost chariots approached, Ephraim inquired

whether Pharaoh were not coming ; but Joshua informed him, with a smile, that when the king led forth his troops to battle first of all, immediately after the advanced guard, the king's camp and furniture were sent on : for that Pharaoh and his nobles liked to find their tents pitched and the tables spread when the day's march was over, and all, officers and men alike, were to rest for the night.

Joshua had not yet ceased speaking when a number of empty carts and asses free of burdens came past ; they were to carry the tribute of bread and meal, beasts and birds, wine and beer, to be paid by each village through which the sovereign should pass. This had been levied by the collectors the day before. Soon after came a company of warriors in chariots. Each small, two-wheeled chariot, plated with bronze, was drawn by a pair of horses, and in each stood a man and a charioteer. Large quivers were attached to the breastworks of the chariots, and the soldiers rested on their spears, or on their large bows. They were protected against the missiles of the foe by shirts covered with scale armor, or thickly padded coats of mail under gayly colored tunics ; and by a helmet, as well as by the breastwork of the chariot. These, whom Joshua designated as the vanguard, went forward at an easy pace, and were followed by a vast multitude of wagons and carts, drawn by horses, mules, or oxen ; and with them were whole herds of asses with towering loads on their backs. Next he pointed out to his nephew the tall spars and poles, and heavy rolls of rich stuffs which were to be used in erecting the king's tent, and which were a burden for several beasts ; the asses and the carts with the kitchen utensils, and the camp smithies. With these came the leeches, wardrobe-keepers, salve-makers, cooks, garland-winders, attendants and slaves attached to the royal camp, all mounted on asses driven by nimble runners. All these, having so lately set out, were still fresh and in high spirits, and those who noticed the prisoners flung many a sharp jest at them, as is the Egyptian way, though several applied a balm in the shape of an alms ; others, who said nothing, sent a slave with a few fruits or some small gift, for he who was free to-day might, on the morrow, be sent after these poor wretches. The driver let this pass, and when a slave whom Joshua had sold some time since for his dishonesty shouted aloud " Hosea," and pointed to him

with a malignant gesture, the good-hearted rough fellow offered the insulted Hebrew a drink of wine out of his own flask.

Ephraim, who had fared from Succoth on foot with a staff in his hand, and a small wallet containing dried lamb's flesh, bread, radishes, and dates, expressed his amazement at the numberless men and things which one man required for his comfort, and then sank into melancholy again until his uncle roused him with some fresh explanation.

As soon as the camp baggage had gone by, the driver wanted to start with his prisoners, but the king's pioneer—the "opener of the way"—riding in front of the archers of the guard, who came next, forbade it, as it ill-beseemed criminals to mingle with the soldiers: so they remained on their hillock and looked at the rest of the procession.

After the archers came the heavy infantry, carrying shields of strong ox-hide so long as to cover the brawny bearers from their feet almost to the chin; and Joshua told the boy that at night they were placed in a circle round the king's camp, and so inclosed it, as it were, with a fence. Besides their shields they carried a javelin, and wore a short dagger-like sword or war sickle. When after some thousands of these heavily armed men there followed a troop of sling men, Ephraim spoke for the first time of his own accord, exclaiming that such slings as the shepherds had taught him to make were far better than those of the soldiers; and then, encouraged by his uncle, he told him, so eagerly that the men lying about him listened to his words, how he himself could slay not mere jackals, wolves, and panthers with a stone from a sling, but even a vulture on the wing. And meanwhile he asked the meaning of the standards and the names of the different companies of warriors.

Several divisions had already gone past when at last another crowd of chariots came in sight, and the driver cried aloud: "The kind god! The lord of both worlds! Long life to him, health and happiness!" As he spoke he fell on his knees in an attitude of adoration, and the prisoners lay prostrate on their faces to kiss the ground, holding themselves in readiness to join at the right moment, at their gaoler's signal, in the cry, "All hail and happiness!"

But they still had long to wait before the expected

monarch appeared. After the chariot-men came the body guard, mercenaries of foreign nations wearing a peculiar kind of helmet and long swords. They marched on foot, and immediately behind them a vast multitude of priests and scribes appeared, with a number of images of the gods. Then again a company of guards, and at last Pharaoh and his court. Foremost of them all was Baie, the high priest, in a gilt war chariot drawn by splendid brown steeds. He had, in former days, led troops forth to battle, and had taken the lead of this pursuing army at the bidding of the gods, wearing his priest's robes, indeed, but also the helmet and battle-axe of a captain of the host. At last, close behind Baie's chariot, came Pharaoh himself; but he did not ride forth to battle in a war-chariot, as his bolder forefathers had done, but preferred to be borne on his throne. A magnificent canopy over his head screened him from the scorching sun, and to the same end he was surrounded by fan-bearers, carrying immense bunches of ostrich feathers fastened at the end of long fan sticks.

When Menephtah had fairly left the city and the gate of victory behind him, and the triumphant shouts of the populace had ceased to keep him awake, he had fallen asleep; and the spreading fans would have screened his face and person from the eyes of the prisoners if their cries of "Hail!" had not been so loud as to rouse him and cause him to turn his head toward them. But the gracious wave of his hand showed that he had something else in his mind than criminals, and before the voices of the hapless convicts had died away his eyes were closed once more.

Ephraim's dull brooding had given way to eager interest, and when the king's gilt chariot came past empty, drawn by the most splendid horses he had ever beheld, he broke out in admiration. These noble beasts, their clever heads crowned with ostrich plumes, and their harness glittering with gold and precious stones, were indeed a sight to see. The large gold quivers, studded with emeralds, at the sides of the chariot, were full of arrows. The sleeping man, whose feeble hand held the reins of government of a great nation, the languid idler who shunned every sort of effort, recovered his energies as soon as he was in the hunting field, and he looked upon this expedition as a hunt on a grand scale; and, inasmuch as it seemed to him a royal

sport to shoot his arrows at men instead of a brute game—at men, too, of whom he had but lately been in mortal dread—he had yielded to the high priest's behest and come with the army. The expedition had been sent forth by order of Amon, so he could now have no further cause to fear the power of Mesu. When he should catch him he would make him repent of having struck terror to the heart of Pharaoh and his queen, and causing him to shed so many tears!

While Joshua was telling the youth from what Phœnician city the gilt chariot had been brought, he suddenly felt his wrist clutched by Ephraim, and heard him exclaim, "She—she—look, it is she!"

The lad was crimson with blushes, nor was he mistaken, for there, in the same traveling chariot in which she had come to visit the prisoners, was Kasana, and many ladies besides formed part of the court accompanying the expedition, which the captain of the foot soldiers, a brave old iron-eater of the time of the Great Rameses, called a mere party of pleasure. When the monarch went forth across the desert to do battle in further Syria, Libya, and Ethiopia, only a select party of women accompanied him, in curtained vehicles, under the conduct of eunuchs; but on this occasion, though the queen had remained at home, Baie's wife and some other women of rank had set the example of going forth with the troops, and it had been a tempting opportunity to many to enjoy the excitement of war without running into danger.

Scarcely an hour since, Kasana had surprised her old friend, the high priest's wife, by joining the rest, for only yesterday nothing could persuade the young widow to go forth with the host. Yielding to a sudden impulse, without asking her father, and with so little preparation that she had not the most necessary gear, she had overtaken the army; and it seemed as though the magnet which had drawn her was a man whom she had hitherto avoided, albeit he was no less a personage than Siptah, the king's nephew.

As the cortège passed the sand-hill the prince was standing by the fair young woman in her waiting-woman's place, and interpreting to her with many a jest the symbolism of the flowers in a nosegay, while Kasana declared it could not have been intended for her, as not more than an

hour since she had had no idea of following the expedition. Siptah, however, assured her that even at sunrise the Hathors had revealed to him the happiness that was in store for him, and that the interpretation of these flowers proved it. A party of youthful courtiers, who had quitted their chariots or litters, were walking by the side of her carriage and taking part in the laughter and merry talk; the high priest's wife also put in a word now and again, for her litter was borne close by Kasana.

All this had not escaped Joshua; and as he saw Kasana with the prince, whom she had hitherto detested, rapping his hand with her fan with gay audacity, his brow darkened, and he asked himself whether the young widow had not been cruelly mocking him in his overthrow. But at this moment the driver of the prison-gang caught sight of the curl on Siptah's temple, which he wore as a badge of the blood royal, and his loud cry of "Hail! Hail!" in which the other guards and the prisoners joined, attracted the attention of Kasana and her companion. They turned to look at the tamarisk thicket whence it came, and then Joshua could see that the young woman turned pale and, with a hasty gesture, pointed to the group. She must have given Siptah some behest, for the prince at first shrugged his shoulders, but, after some delay and argument, half in jest and half in earnest, he sprang from his chariot and beckoned to the driver of the gang.

"Did these people gaze on the countenance of the kind god, the lord of both worlds?" he asked in a voice so loud that Kasana must have heard him from the road; and when he received a hesitating answer he went on in haughty tones: "No matter. At any rate they have seen mine, and that of the fairest women, and if, by reason of that, they hope for mercy they are justified. You know who I am. Those who are chained together are to be relieved of their ankle-fetters;" then signing to the head gaoler he whispered in his ear: "but you must keep your eyes open all the wider. That fellow close to the bush is that Joshua who was a captain in Pharaoh's army. When I am at home again come and tell me what has become of the man. The more completely you can quiet him the deeper shall I dip into my money-bag. Do you understand?"

The man bowed low and thought to himself: "I will take good care, my prince, and see that no one takes 'he

life of any of my moles. The greater these lords, the stranger and more bloody are their demands. How many an one has come to me with a similar request. Siptah can release the feet of these poor wretches, but he would load my soul with a cowardly murder! But he has come to the wrong man! "Here, you fellows, bring the bag of tools this way and strike the chains off these men's ankles."

Pharaoh's host moved on, and meanwhile the grinding of files was heard on the hillock, the prisoners were freed from their fetters, and then for security their arms were tied.

Kasana had desired Prince Siptah to have the poor creatures who were being led away to misery relieved at any rate of their heavy foot-chains; and she frankly confessed that it was intolerable to her to see an officer who had so often been a guest in her own house so terribly humiliated. The high priest's wife had seconded her wish, and the prince had been forced to yield. Joshua knew full well to whom he and Ephraim owed this respite, and received it with thankful gladness. Walking was made easier to him, but anxiety weighed him down more heavily than ever.

The army which had marched past would suffice to annihilate a foe ten times as great as the Hebrew force, to the very last man. His nation, and with them his father and Miriam, seemed doomed to a cruel death; Miriam who had wounded him so deeply, but to whom he owed it that even in prison he had discerned the path which he now saw was the only right one. However powerful the God might be whose greatness the prophetess had so fervently extolled, to whom, indeed, he himself had learned to look up with fervent adoration; the sweeping onslaught of this vast host must inevitably and utterly destroy a troop of unarmed and inexperienced herdsmen. This certainty, which each fresh division, as it passed by, made more sure, sank deep in his soul. Never in his life had he experienced such anguish; and that pain was intensified as he beheld his own men—all well-known faces who had so lately obeyed his word—under the orders of another. And it was to slaughter his own kith and kin that they were now marching to the field. This was a great grief, and Ephraim's state likewise gave him cause for fresh anxiety, for since Kasana's appearance and her intercession for him and his

companion in misfortune he had relapsed into silence, and gazed with wandering eyes either at the rear of the army or into vacancy. Ephraim was now freed of his irons, and Joshua asked the lad in an undertone whether he did not feel a longing to return to his people and to help them to resist so mighty an armament, but Ephraim only replied : " In the face of such a foe they have no choice ; they must surrender. What indeed did we lack before our departing from Zoan ? You were a Hebrew, as they were, and yet you rose to be a mighty captain among the Egyptians until you obeyed Miriam's call. I should have acted differently in your place."

" What would you have done ? " asked Joshua.

" What ? " replied the boy, and the fiery young soul blazed up in him. " What ? I would have remained where honor and fame were to be found, and everything that is good. You might have been the greatest of the great, the happiest of the happy ! I know it for certain, and you chose otherwise."

" Because duty required it," said Joshua gravely ; " because I never more will serve any one but the people of whose blood I am."

" The people ! " said the boy, contemptuously. " I know the people, and you too have seen them at Succoth ! The poor are abject creatures who cringe under the lash ; the rich prize their beasts above everything on earth ; and those who belong to the heads of tribes are always quarreling among themselves. Not one of them knows what is pleasing to the eye and heart. I am one of the richest of the nation, and yet I shudder to remember my father's house which I have inherited, though it is one of the largest and best. Those who have seen anything finer cease to care for that." At this the veins swelled in Joshua's brow, and he wrathfully reproved the lad who could deny his own race, and fall away like a traitor to his own tribe.

But the driver commanded silence, for Joshua had raised his admonishing voice, and the defiant lad was well pleased to obey ; and as they went on their way, whenever his uncle looked reproachfully in his face, or asked him whether he had thought better of it, he sulkily turned his back and remained gloomily silent, till the first star had risen, and, the pioneers having encamped on the waste for the night, their meagre fare was dealt out to them.

Joshua dug out a bed in the sand with his hands, and kindly and skillfully helped his nephew to do the same. Ephraim accepted his service in silence ; but presently, as they lay side by side, and Joshua began to speak to the boy of the God of his fathers in whose help they must put their trust if they were not to perish of despair in the mines, Ephraim interrupted him, saying in a low voice but with fierce decisiveness :

“ They shall never get me to the mines alive. Sooner will I perish in the attempt to escape than die in such misery ! ”

Joshua whispered a word of warning in his ear, and reminded him of his duty to his people. But Ephraim only begged to be left to rest in peace.

Soon after, however, he lightly touched his uncle, and asked in a low voice :

“ What have they to do with Prince Siptah ? ”

“ I know not ; nothing good, that is certain. ”

“ And where is Aarsu, the Syrian, the commander of the Asiatic mercenaries, your enemy who watches us with such malignant zeal ? I did not see him with the rest. ”

“ He remains in Tanis with his troops. ”

“ To guard the palace ? ”

“ Just so. ”

“ Then he is captain over many, and Pharaoh trusts him ? ”

“ Entirely, though he hardly deserves it. ”

“ And he is a Syrian, and so also of our blood ? ”

“ At least he is nearer to us than the Egyptians, as you may know by his speech and features. ”

“ I should have taken him for a Hebrew ; and yet, you say he is one of the highest men in the army. ”

“ And other Syrians and Libyans are captains of large troops of mercenaries, and Ben Mazana, the herald, one of the greatest men about the court, whom the Egyptians have named ‘ Rameses in the Sanctuary of Ra, ’ is the son of a Hebrew father. ”

“ And he and the others are not looked down upon by reason of their birth ? ”

“ It would scarcely be true to say as much as that. But what is the aim of all your questions ? ”

“ I could not sleep. ”

“ And such thoughts as these came into your head ? ”

Nay, you have something definite in your mind, and, if I guess it rightly, I am sorry. You wish to enter Pharaoh's service."

After this there was a long silence between the two; then Ephraim spoke again, and, although he addressed Joshua, he spoke rather as if to himself:

"They will destroy all our nation, and those who escape will fall into slavery and disgrace. By this time my house is doomed to destruction, not a head of my great herds will be left to me, and the gold and silver I have inherited, and which is said to be a great sum, they will carry away with them; for it is in your father's keeping, and must fall a booty into the hands of the Egyptians. And shall I, now that I am free, go back to my people, and make bricks? Shall I bow my back to be flogged and ill-treated?"

Here Joshua exclaimed in an eager whisper:

"Call rather on the God of our fathers to protect and deliver His people; and if the Most High has determined on the destruction of our nation then be a man, and learn to hate with all the might of your young soul those who have trodden them under foot. Flee to the Syrians, and offer them the strength of your young arm; give yourself no rest till you have taken revenge on those who have shed the blood of the Israelites, and cast you, innocent, into bondage."

Then, again, there was silence, and nothing was to be heard from where Ephraim lay but moans from an oppressed heart. At length, however, Joshua heard him murmur:

"We are no longer weighed down by chains, and could I hate her who promised our release?"

"Be grateful to Kasana, but hate her people," he whispered in reply. And he heard the lad turn over in his trough, and again he sighed and groaned.

It was past midnight; the growing moon stood high in the sky, and Joshua, still sleepless, did not cease to listen to his young companion; but Ephraim spoke not. Still sleep shunned him likewise, for Joshua heard him grinding his teeth—or was it that some mice had wandered out to this parched spot covered with dry brown grass, between salt plains on one side and bare sand on the other, and were gnawing the prisoners' hard bread? This grinding and gnawing must disturb the sleep even of those who most

desire it, and Joshua, on the contrary, wished to keep awake that he might open the eyes of his blinded nephew. But he waited in vain for any sign of life on Ephraim's part.

At last he was about to lay his hand on the boy's shoulder, but he paused as he saw in the moonlight that Ephraim was holding up his arm, although, before he lay down, his wrist had been tied more tightly than before. Joshua now understood that the noise which had puzzled him was the gnawing of the lad's sharp teeth as he worked at the knot of the cords ; so he sat up and looked first at the sky and then round about him. He held his breath as he watched the young fellow, and his heart throbbed painfully—Ephraim meant to escape ! He had even achieved the first step toward freedom. He hoped his good fortune might follow him, but dreaded lest the fugitive might set forth in the wrong direction. This boy was the only child of his sister, a fatherless and motherless orphan, so he had never had the advantage of those numberless lessons and hints which only a mother can give, and which a proud young spirit will take from none else. Strangers' hands had trained the young tree, and it had grown straight enough ; but a mother's love would have graced it with carefully selected grafts. He had not grown up on his parents' hearth, and that alone is the right home for the young. What wonder, then, that he felt a stranger among his own people ?

At such thoughts as these great pity came upon Joshua, and with a consciousness of being deeply guilty in regard to this gifted youth, who had fallen into captivity for his sake when bearing a message to him. Still, strongly as he felt prompted to warn him yet once more against treachery and faithlessness, he would not do so for fear of imperiling his enterprise. The least sound might attract the attention of the men on watch, and he was now so much interested in his attempt for liberty as though Ephraim were making it by his instigation. So, instead of tormenting him with useless admonitions, he kept his eyes and ears open ; his knowledge of life had taught him that good advice is oftener neglected than followed, and that personal experience is the only irrefragable master.

Very soon his practiced eye discerned the path by which Ephraim might escape if only fortune favored him. He

gently spoke his name, and then his nephew softly replied : " Uncle, I can untie the cord if you put out your hands ; mine are free."

At this Joshua's anxious face grew brighter. This bold-spirited youth was a good fellow at heart ; he was ready to risk his own success for the sake of an older man who, if he escaped with him, might only too probably hinder him in the path which, in his youthful illusion, he hoped might lead him to fortune.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOSHUA looked cautiously about him. The sky was still clear, though, if this north wind held, the clouds, which seemed to be coming up from the sea, would soon overcast it.

The air was sultry, but the men on watch kept their eyes open and relieved each other at regular intervals. Their vigilance would be hard to evade ; but close to the trough which formed Ephraim's bed, and which his uncle, for their greater comfort, had dug by the side of his own, on the gentle slope of a mound, a narrow rift widened to a ravine, its edge gleaming in moonlight with veins of white gypsum and sparkling ores. If the supple lad could but slip unseen into this hollow, and creep along it as far as the shores of yonder salt lake, overgrown with tall mares-tail and a thicket of desert shrubs, under cover of the gathering clouds he might succeed in his attempt.

Having come to this conclusion, Joshua next considered, as calmly as though he were deciding on a route for his troops, whether, if he had the use of his hands, he might be able to follow Ephraim without imperiling the boy's escape. But to this he could only find a negative ; for one of the watch was close at hand, sitting or standing on a higher point of the hillock, and in the bright moonlight he could not fail to see every movement if the lad untied his bonds. Moreover the clouds might perhaps have covered the moon before this was accomplished, and thus Ephraim might let the one favorable moment slip which promised him release, and be led into danger on his account. He was the boy's natural protector, and would it

not be base indeed to bar his way to freedom for the sake of a doubtful prospect of escape for himself.

So he whispered to Ephraim: "I cannot go with you. Glide along the rift to the right down to the salt lake. I will keep an eye on the guards. As soon as the clouds hide the moon and I cough, creep away. If you succeed, fly to your people, greet my old father for me, assure him of my love and truth, and tell him whither I am being taken. Listen to his and Miriam's counsel; it will be good. Now the clouds are gathering about the moon—not another word."

Ephraim persisted in imploring him in the softest whisper to put forth his hands, but he bid him be silent, and as soon as the moon was shrouded, and the watch, who was pacing to and fro just at their head, had begun a conversation with the man who came to relieve him, Joshua coughed gently, and then listened in the darkness with a throbbing heart and bated breath.

First, he heard a slight rustle, and by the flare of the fire on the top of the slope, which the drivers now mended to keep off wild beasts, he saw that Ephraim's bed was deserted.

At this he breathed more easily, for the ravine must by this time hide the boy, and when he listened more sharply than before to catch a sound of creeping or slipping, he could hear nothing but the guards talking and their heavy footsteps.

Their voices reached his ear, but not the words they spoke, so eagerly was he set on following the youth in his flight. How agile and how cautious the fugitive must be in his movements! He must still be in the ravine. The moon seemed to be struggling with the clouds, till for a moment the silver disk victoriously rent the heavy, black curtain which hid it from the eyes of men, and the long, bright shaft of light was mirrored in the motionless waters of the salt lake; Joshua could see everything that lay below him, but he detected nothing which bore any resemblance to a human figure.

Had the lad met with some obstacle in the dell? Was he checked by a cliff or a gulf in its gloomy depths? Or—and at this thought his heart seemed to stand still—had the abyss swallowed him up as he felt his way in the darkness? Now he longed to hear a sound, the very

faintest, from the depths of the rift. This stillness was fearful.

Ah! sooner silence than this! A clatter of falling stones and slipping earth came up too loud now through the still night. The moon, too, again peeped out from its veil of clouds, and Joshua saw, down by the pool, a living form which seemed that of a beast rather than of a man, for it went along forefooted. And now the water splashed up in glittering drops. The creature, whatever it was, had plunged into the lake. And again the clouds hid the moon, and all was dark. Joshua breathed more freely, saying to himself that it was Ephraim whom he had seen, and that the fugitive, come what might, had gained a good start on his pursuers.

But the men were not sleeping nor deceived; for, although he cried out in order to mislead them, "a jackal!" a shrill whistle rang out awaking all the sleepers. In a moment the driver of the gang was standing over him, a burning torch in his hand, and he heaved a sigh of relief when he saw his prisoner safe. It was not for nothing that he had tied him with double cords, for he would have been made to pay for it dearly if this man had escaped him.

But, while the driver was feeling the rope that bound the Hebrew's wrists, the flare of the torch he held fell on the fugitive's empty resting place. The cords he had bitten through lay there yet, as if in mockery. The driver picked them up, cast them at Joshua's feet, whistled loudly again and again, and shouted:

"Gone! Flown! The Hebrew! The young one!"

And troubling himself no further about the elder prisoner, he at once began the search.

Hoarse with rage, he gave his orders rapidly; all were clear, and all forthwith obeyed. While some of his men collected the gang, counted them over, and bound them together with cords, the leader, with the rest, and helped by dogs, sought some trace of the fugitive.

Joshua saw him bring the beasts to snuff at the cords Ephraim had gnawed through, and the place where he had lain, and then they started direct for the ravine. He breathed hard as he perceived that they lingered there some little time, and at last, just as the moon again came through the clouds, emerged on the shore and rushed down to the water's edge. He was glad that Ephraim had waded

through it instead of running round it, for the dogs here lost the scent, and many minutes slipped by while the guards and the dogs, who poked their noses into every footprint left by the runaway, made their way round the shore to find the trace again. Then their loud tongue told him that they had recovered the scent. But even if they should track and run down the fugitive, the fettered warrior need not now fear the worst, for Ephraim had a long start of his pursuers; still his heart beat fast, and time seemed to stand still till the driver came back again exhausted and unsuccessful. But though he, a man of middle age, could never have overtaken Ephraim, the two youngest and swiftest of his men had been sent after him, as he himself announced with scornful fury.

The man, before so good-natured, was entirely changed; for he felt the lad's escape as a disgrace he could hardly get over, nay, as a positive misfortune.

And the wretch who had tried to mislead him by crying out "a jackal" was the fugitive's accomplice! Loudly did he curse Prince Siptah who had interfered in the duties of his place. But it should not happen again, and he would make his victims suffer for his misfortune! The prisoners were immediately loaded with chains again. Joshua was coupled with an asthmatic old man, and the whole gang were made to stand in a row, where the fire-light fell on them, till daybreak. Joshua could make no reply to the questions put to him by his new companion in bonds; he awaited in painful suspense the return of the pursuers. Meanwhile he strove to control his thoughts to prayer, beseeching the Lord, who had promised to be his Helper, on his own behalf and on that of his nephew. Often enough, to be sure, he was interrupted by the driver, who vented his wrath on him.

However, the man who had in his day commanded a host submitted to all, and commanded himself to endure whatever came like the inevitable discomfort of rain or hail; nay, it cost him some little effort to conceal his gladness when the young runners who had been after Ephraim came in after sunrise, breathless and with disordered hair, bringing with them nothing but a dog with a broken skull.

The driver could do no more, therefore, than advise the soldiers in the first fort on the Etham frontier, which the

prison-gang must now cross, of what had happened ; and to this point the file of men were now led.

Since Ephraim's flight all the men on guard had changed their tone for a harder one. Yesterday the unhappy wretches had been allowed to proceed at an easy pace ; now they were hurried on as fast as possible. The day was sultry, and the scorching sun struggled with the storm-clouds, which were gathering in the north into dense masses. Joshua's frame, inured to every kind of fatigue, could resist the severity of this forced march, but his more feeble companion, who had grown grey as a scribe, often stumbled, and at length lay where he fell. At this the driver saw the necessity of placing the sufferer on an ass, and fettering Joshua to another companion. This was the first man's brother, an overseer of the king's stables, a well-grown Egyptian who was going to the mines for no other excuse than that it was his misfortune to be the brother of a state criminal. Linked to this sturdy mate walking was much easier, and Joshua listened to him with sincere sympathy, and tried to cheer him when, in a low voice, he confided to him all his woes, lamenting sadly that he had left a wife and child at home in want and misery. Two of his children had died of the pestilence, and it weighed on his heart that he had been prevented from caring for their burial, for thus the two beings he had loved were lost to him for ever, even in the other world.

At their second resting place the bereaved father spoke more freely. His soul was consumed by thirst for revenge, and he took it for granted that his companion felt the same, seeing that he had fallen into disgrace from a high office. The overseer of the stables had a sister-in-law who was one of the ladies about Pharaoh's court, and through her and her sister, his wife, he had been informed that a conspiracy against the king was being hatched in the women's house.* Aye, and he knew too who it was that the women purposed to set in Menephtah's place.

As Joshua looked at him with an inquiring and doubtful gaze his comrade whispered :

"Siptah, the king's nephew, and his noble mother are at the head of the plot. If only I get free I will bear you in mind ; and my sister-in-law is sure not to forget me."

* The house of the secluded ones ; equivalent to the harem of the Modern Moslem Egyptians

He then desired to know what had brought the Hebrew to the mines, and Joshua frankly told him who he was. When the Egyptian heard that he was linked together with an Hebrew, he tore madly at his chains and cursed his fate ; however, his wrath presently died out before the amazing coolness with which Joshua endured the hardest things, and to Joshua himself it was a relief that his partner besieged his ear less often with complaints and questions.

For whole hours he would walk on unmolested, and give himself up wholly to his longing, to collecting his thoughts, to giving himself a clear account of the terrible experiences which his soul had gone through in the last few days, and to making up his mind to his new and dreadful situation.

This silent meditation and introspection did him good ; and, when they again stopped for the night, he enjoyed deep and refreshing sleep.

When he woke the stars were still bright in the western sky, reminding him of the sycamore at Succoth, and the all-important morning when his beloved had won him over to serve her God. Above him spread the sparkling firmament, and for the first time he was conscious of a budding hope that the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth might find some way and means of saving the people He had called His own from the overwhelming host of the Egyptians.

When he had thus fervently besought the Lord to spread His protecting hand over the feeble tribes who, in obedience to His word, had left so much behind them, and had so confidently set forth for the remote unknown, he commended his old father, whom he himself could not defend, to His especial care, and his soul was filled with wondrous peace.

The shouts of the men on guard, the rattle of fetters, his wretched fellow-victims, everything about him kept him in mind of the fate before him. He must henceforth toil day and night in abject slavery, in a sweltering, choking cavern, bereft of the joy of breathing the fresh air of heaven, or of seeing the sunshine ; loaded with chains, flogged and reviled, starving and athirst, in a gloomy monotony of misery, agonizing alike to body and soul ; and yet not for a moment did he lose his confident trust that this fearful fate was intended for any other rather than for him, and that something would intervene to preserve him from it.

On their further march eastward, which began at dawn, he could only think of this confidence as folly, while he strove to cling fast to it, and he succeeded.

Their way lay across the desert, and after a few hours' brisk march they reached the first fort, called "Seti's Stronghold." In the clear air of the desert they had seen it for a long time, looking as though they could shoot an arrow into it. It stood up from the bare, stony soil, ungraced by a palm or a shrub, with its wooden stockade, its ramparts, its scarped wall, its watch-tower looking westward, with a broad, flat roof swarming with men at arms. The garrison had been warned from Pithom that the Hebrews were preparing to break through the frontier lines on the isthmus, and the gang of prisoners with their guards had been taken from a distance for the van of the emigrant Israelites.

From the top of the huge bastions, which projected like balconies from all sides of the scarped walls to prevent the use of scaling ladders, soldiers were spying out between the battlements at the approaching party; but the archers had replaced their arrows in the quivers, for it had at once been perceived that the troop was a small one, and a runner had delivered the pass from the military authorities, desiring the captain of the garrison to permit the file of prisoners to cross the frontier. The door in the palisade was thrown upon to them, and the driver gave them leave to stretch their limbs a while on the hot pavement within. From hence none could escape, even if the guard left them to themselves; for the fence was too high to climb, and arrows shot from the roof of the building or from the loopholes of the projecting battlements would overtake the runaway.

It did not escape the warrior's eye that everything here was in a state of preparation for resistance, as though it were war-time. Every man was at his post, and guards stood by the great metal gongs on the roof with heavy mallets in their hands to beat an alarm at the approach of the expected foe; for, though there was not a tree or a house to be seen as far as the eye could reach, the sound would ring out to the next fort on the frontier line, and warn the garrison, or bring them to the rescue. It was not indeed a punishment, but a piece of ill-fortune to be quartered in these isolated desert stations, and the chiefs

of Pharaoh's army took care that the same companies did not remain too long at a time in this wilderness.

Joshua himself had in former years commanded the most southerly of these strongholds, known as Migdol of the South; for the name of Migdol was common to them all, meaning in the Semitic tongue a fortress-tower.

Here his people were evidently still expected; nor could he for a moment think that Moses would have led them back into Egypt. Either they had lingered in Succoth, or they had marched southwards; but to the south lay the bitter lakes and the Red Sea, and how should the Hebrew multitude cross those deep waters? Joshua's heart beat anxiously as he reflected on this, and his fears were presently confirmed, for he heard the captain of the fortress telling the driver of the gang that the Hebrews had come some days since very near the frontier-line of defence, and then had turned off to the southward. Since then, it would seem that they had been wandering in the desert between Pithom and the Red Sea. All this had forthwith been reported at Tanis, but the king had been obliged to postpone the departure of the army till after the seven first days of deep mourning for the heir to the throne. This delay might have given the Israelites an immense advantage; but a message had to-day come by a pigeon, announcing that the foolish multitude were encamped at Pihahiroth, not far from the Red Sea, so that it would be an easy task for the army to drive them into the waters like a herd of cattle, for there was no escape in any other direction.

The driver had listened to this report with much satisfaction, and he whispered a few words to the captain, pointing at Joshua, who, for his part, had already recognized the officer as a companion in arms who had served under him as a centurion, and to whom he had shown much kindness. It was painful to him to reveal himself in this miserable plight to one who had been his subaltern, and who owed him a debt of obligation; and as he looked at him, the captain colored, shrugged his shoulders expressively, as if to convey to Joshua his pity for his ill-fortune and the impossibility of doing anything to mend it. Then he said in a voice so loud that the Hebrew must hear him: "I am forbidden by the rules to speak with your prisoners, but I knew that man in better days, and I will send you out some wine, which you will share with him, I beg."

When they presently went towards the gateway, the driver remarking that Joshua was less deserving of such favor than other and weaker men, inasmuch as he had assisted the runaway of whom he had spoken to make his escape, the captain pushed his fingers through his hair and replied: "I could have wished to show him some kindness, though, indeed, he owes me much already. But if that is the case I had better keep my wine. And you have rested quite long enough here!"

The driver wrathfully roused his hapless gang to proceed on their way across the desert and onward to the mines.

Joshua now walked with a bowed head. His spirits rebelled against the ill-fortune which had led him to this pass, driven across the desert, far from his people and his father, who must be in great danger at this decisive and fateful crisis. Under his guidance the Hebrews might perhaps have found a way of escape! He clenched his fists with rage to think that his will as well as his body was in chains; and yet he would not lose heart; and each time that his reason told him that his people were lost, that they must perish in this contest, his own name—the new name bestowed on him by God—sounded in his ears, and his hatred and scorn for everything Egyptian, fanned into life by the young officer's base conduct, flamed up afresh.

His whole nature was in violent revolt, and as the driver marked his burning cheeks and the lurid light in his eye, he thought that even this strong fellow had become a prey to the fever to which so many prisoners fell victims on their way.

When, at sundown, the melancholy train encamped for the night in the heart of the desert, Joshua's spirit still seethed and surged within him, and the scene around him matched well with the tumult in his soul. Again the black clouds came up from the sea on the north wind, which howled, and shrieked, and whirled clouds of burning sand over the prisoners as they lay, till the lightning and thunder broke over them with a deluge of rain. A thick layer of sand for their coverlet, pools and rivulets were now their bed. Their keepers had bound them together by the arms and legs, and as they stood, shivering and dripping, they still held the ends of the ropes; for the night was as black as the fuel of the fires the storm had extinguished, and

who could have followed a runaway through such darkness and such weather?

But Joshua had no thoughts of flight. While the Egyptians whimpered and quaked, believing that they heard the angry voice of Set in the thunder, and while blinding sheets of flame flared among the clouds, he felt the near presence of that jealous God, whose rage he shared, whose hatred was as his own. Here he stood, the witness of His All-destroying power, and his breast swelled with pride as he said to himself that he had been called to wield the sword of the Lord of Lords.

CHAPTER XX.

THE storm which had risen at nightfall was still sweeping over the peninsula. High waves beat in the central lakes, and the Red Sea, which formed two creeks from the south, like the horns of a snail, was tossing wildly. Further north likewise, where Pharaoh's army had just encamped under shelter of the Southern Migdol, the strongest of the Etham frontier fortresses, the air was filled with sand by the storm; and in the quarters of the king and his nobles hammers were kept constantly at work, driving the tent pegs deeper into the ground; for the brocades, cloth and linen, of which Pharaoh's wandering residence and its surroundings were formed, were so beaten by the wind that they threatened to pull up the poles which supported them.

Black clouds hung in the north, yet the moon and stars were often visible, and distant lightning frequently illuminated the darkness. But dews of heaven still seemed to shun this rainless tract of land, and fires burnt in every direction round which thick circles of soldiers were gathered, and, like a living screen from the storm, crowded together for protection. The men on watch had trying work, for, in spite of the north wind, the air was stifling, and continually blew gusts of sand full in their faces.

At the most northern gate of the camp only two sentries walked to and fro, keeping a sharp lookout, but they were sufficient; for in consequence of the bad weather it was a long time since anyone had appeared to demand either admission or exit. At last, three hours after sunset.

a slender lad, half boy, half youth, appeared. He went, with steady step, up to the watch, and, showing him a messenger's token, asked the way to Prince Siptah's tent. He looked as if he had had a difficult journey; his thick black hair was disheveled, and his feet covered with dust and caked in mud. Yet he roused no suspicions, for his manner was independent and free, his messenger's pass in perfect order, and the letter which he bore clearly directed to the prince; a scribe of the granary who was sitting at the next fire, with other officers and vice-commandants, confirmed the fact.

Since the youth's appearance pleased most of them, and as he came from Tanis and perhaps brought news, he was invited to take a place at the fire and to share their meal; but he was in haste.

Thanking them, he refused, answered their questions shortly and quickly, and asked one of the company to be his guide. Immediately one of them put himself at his disposal. But he was soon to learn that it was not easy to achieve seeing a member of the royal household; for the tents of Pharaoh, his relations and dignitaries stood apart in the very heart of the camp, enclosed by the shields of the heavily armed foot-soldiers, and when he tried to pass in he was referred from one to another, and his messenger's token and the prince's letter were repeatedly examined. His guide was also dismissed, and in his place an official of high rank, known as "the eye and the ear of the king," came forward, and began to meddle with the seal of the letter, but the bearer very decidedly demanded the missive back; and directly he had it in his hand once more he went towards two tents, standing side by side and shaken by the wind, which were pointed out to him as those of Prince Siptah and Kasana, Hornecht's daughter, for whom he also inquired. A chamberlain came out the prince's tent, to whom he showed the letter he bore, requesting him to conduct him to his lord; but the official having desired him to hand the letter to him instead of to the prince, Ephraim, for he it was, consented to do so on condition of the chamberlain's forthwith procuring him admission to Kasana's presence.

The steward seemed most anxious to get the letter into his own hands. After he had examined Ephraim from top to toe, he asked him whether Kasana knew him, and when

the other answered in the affirmative, and added that he brought a verbal message for her, the Egyptian smiling said, " Good, then ; but we must protect our carpets from such feet, and you seem to me altogether exhausted and in need of refreshment. Follow me ! "

Thereupon he led him into a little tent, before which an old slave and another, who was still almost a child, sat by the fire concluding their late meal with a bunch of garlic.

On seeing their master they sprang up ; he ordered the old man to wash the messenger's feet, and the young one to fetch, in his name, meat, bread and wine from the prince's tent. He then took Ephraim into his own tent, which was lighted by a lantern, and asked him how it was that he, who had looked so little like a serf or a common fellow, had such a forlorn appearance. Then the messenger answered that he had on his way bound up the wounds of a severely injured man with his upper garment, so the steward at once reached towards his packages and handed him a wrapper of fine linen.

Ephraim's reply, which was very near the truth, was given with such promptness, and sounded so genuine, that it was believed ; and the steward's kindness so overwhelmed him with gratitude that he made no objection, when, with a practiced hand, and without damaging the seal, he pressed the flexible roll of papyrus, bent the separate layers apart, and, peeping in the opening, acquainted himself with the contents of the letter. At the same time the burly courtier's eyes glistened brightly, and it seemed to the youth that the man's face, which at first had appeared to him with its comfortable fullness and rounded smoothness the mirror of great good nature, had become like that of a cat.

As soon as the steward had finished this operation, he begged the boy to rest himself thoroughly, and he did not return until Ephraim had bathed and stood with the new linen cloth round his loins, his hair anointed and scented, looking in the mirror, and in the act of putting a broad gold hoop round his arm.

He had hesitated for some time, as he knew he was about to face great dangers ; this bracelet, however, was his only valuable possession, and he had taken great trouble during his captivity to keep it hidden in his loin-cloth. It might yet render him good service, but if he wore it it

would attract attention to his person and increase his risk of being recognized. But the image he saw reflected in the mirror, his vanity, and the wish to find favor in Kasana's eyes triumphed over prudence, and the costly ornament was soon shining on his arm. The chamberlain gazed with amazement at the transformation of the unkempt messenger in a proud looking youth, and the question rose to his lips whether he were some kin to Kasana, and when Ephraim replied in the negative, he asked to what family he belonged.

At this, Ephraim stood for some time with downcast eyes, and besought the Egyptian to excuse him from replying till he should have spoken to Kasana. The other shook his head doubtingly as he looked at him, but he urged him no further, for what he had discovered from the letter was a secret which might cost all who knew it their life, and the handsome young bearer must surely be the son of some great man implicated in the plot of his master, Prince Siptah.

The stout, well-fed courtier shivered at the thought ; and it was with a sympathetic qualm that he looked at this blooming flower of humanity, so young to be mixed up in such perilous schemes. His lord had so far only hinted at the secret to him, so he could still cut himself adrift from sharing his master's destiny. If he parted from him, he might look forward to an old age of ease ; but if he clung to him, and if the prince's plot should come to a good issue, to what heights might he not rise ! How terribly important was the choice which he, the father of a large family, was called upon to make ; the sweat stood on his brow, and he was quite incapable of clear reflection, as he conducted Ephraim to Kasana's tent and then hastened to his master's.

All was still in the slight erection of wooden poles and heavy, bright-colored stuffs which sheltered the fair widow. It was with a beating heart that Ephraim approached the entrance, and when at length he took courage and pushed aside the curtain which was pegged to the ground, the wind filling it like a sail, he saw a dark room opening on either hand into another. That to the left was as dark as the centre one ; but from the right, lights gleamed through the seams in the canvas.

The tent was one of the long flat-roofed shape, in three

compartments, such as he had often seen ; and in the room whence the light proceeded, no doubt, was she to whom he came. To avoid any further suspicions he must overcome his timidity, and he had already stooped to untie the knot by which the curtain was held to the peg in the ground, when that of the lighted compartment was raised, and a woman's figure came into the dark entrance-room.

Was it she? Should he venture to address her? Yes, he must.

He clenched his hands tightly, and with a deep breath collected his courage, as though he were about to rush upon a beast of prey prowling round a flock. Then he pushed the curtain aside and was met with a cry from the woman he had before observed ; and he soon recovered his courage, for it was not Kasana but the waiting woman who had come with her to see the prisoners, and had accompanied her to the camp. She recognized him, too, and stared at him as though he had risen from the dead. They knew each other well ; for, the first time he had been carried to Hornecht's house, it was she who had prepared his bath and laid balsam on his wounds ; and on the second occasion when they had been inmates under the same roof, she and her mistress had nursed him. For many an hour had they chatted together, and he knew that she was fond of him, for as he lay half conscious, half dazed with feverish dreams, she would soothe him with a motherly touch, and, as he grew stronger, was never weary of questioning him about his people, telling him that she herself was a Syrian, of kindred blood to the Hebrews. Indeed, his language was not altogether strange to her, for it was as a woman of twenty that she had been brought to Egypt with other prisoners by Rameses the Great. Ephraim, she would say, reminded her of her one son when he was younger. From this woman he had nothing to fear ; he seized her hand, and said in a low voice that he had escaped from his guards, and had come to ask counsel of her mistress and herself. The word "escaped" was enough to reassure the old woman, for spirits, as she understood the word, were wont to put others to flight, but not to flee. She stroked the lad's curls, and, before he had finished speaking she had left him, hurrying off into the other room to inform her mistress that he stood without. In a few minutes Ephraim was in the presence of the

woman who had become the guiding star and warming sun of his life. With flushing cheeks he gazed up at her lovely features, and although it stabbed him to the heart that, before she even vouchsafed him a greeting, she inquired whether Joshua were with him, he forgot that foolish pang as he noted with what kindness she looked at him. And when she asked the strong woman whether she did not think him looking fresh and well, and grown more manly, he felt as though he was really taller and bigger, and his heart beat higher than ever. She insisted on knowing all that had happened to his uncle, down to the smallest detail; then after he had done her bidding, and at last indulged his desire to speak of his own fortunes, she interrupted him to consult with the older woman as to how he might be sheltered from malignant eyes and fresh dangers; and the means were soon found.

First, with Ephraim's help, the nurse closed the first entrance to the tent as completely as possible, and she then showed him the dark room, into which he was to vanish as quickly and noiselessly as possible whenever she should give him a sign.

Kasana meanwhile had poured out a cup of wine for the returned wanderer, and when he came in again with the old woman, she bid him lie down on the giraffe skin at her feet, and asked him herself how he had got away from the watchmen, and what he looked to do in the future. She must tell him, in the first instance, that her father had remained at Tanis, so he need have no fear of being recognized and betrayed by Hornecht. It was easy enough to see and hear how glad she was at this meeting; nay, when Ephraim told her that it was in consequence of Prince Siptah's orders that the prisoners should be unfettered—which they owed solely to her—that he had been able to make good his escape, she clapped her hands like a child. But then her brow darkened, and she added with a sigh, that Joshua should see how much a woman, however weak, could sacrifice to attain the dearest wish of her heart. Ephraim's assurance, that before he himself stole away he had offered to release his uncle, met with its meed of kind words; and when she learned that Joshua had refused his nephew's help in order that he might not imperil the success of the plan he had suggested to him, she exclaimed to her waiting woman, with tears in her

eyes, that no one but he could act so nobly ; and she listened eagerly to the rest of his tale, interrupting him frequently with sympathetic questions.

So blissful a close to the fearful days and nights he had just passed seemed to him as a beautiful dream, a bewildering romance ; and he did not need the encouragement of the cup she diligently filled for him to make him tell his story with eager vivacity. With an eloquence altogether new to him he described how, in the ravine, he had slipped on a loose stone, and had fallen with it headlong to the bottom. There he had thought that all was lost, for soon after he had shaken himself clear of the rubbish in which he was buried to hurry down to the salt lake, he had heard the driver's whistle. However, from his childhood he had always been a good runner, and he had learned in his native fields how to read his bearings by the stars, so, without looking to the right hand or the left, he had flown on as fast as his feet would carry him to the south, always to the south. Many times had he fallen in the dark over stones or pits in the desert sand, but only to spring up again and hurry on, rush on, to where he knew that she, Kasana, was—she for whose sake he would unhesitatingly cast to the winds all that wise heads could advise—she for whom he was ready to give life and liberty.

How he found courage to make this confession he knew not. Nor was he sobered by the rap she gave him with her fan, or by the old woman's exclamation, "A boy like that!" No ; his beaming eyes only sought her gaze, as they had done before, while he went on with his story.

He had hurled the dog which had come up with him against a rock ; the other he had driven off by plunging a stone at him till he retreated whining into a thicket. He had seen nothing of any other pursuers neither that night nor all the next day. At last he reached a high road and came up with some country-folk, who told him which way the king's army had marched. Then, about midday, being overcome by fatigue, he had gone to sleep in the shade of a sycamore, and when he woke the sun was near sinking. He was dreadfully hungry, so he had pulled a few turnips in a field as he passed by ; but the owner had immediately come forward from a water course at hand, and it was with difficulty that he had escaped from his pursuit. During part of the next night he had kept to the high road, and

had rested at last by a well on the way, for he knew that wild beasts shun much frequented spots. After sunrise he had set forth again, following the road the army had taken, and had come upon its traces everywhere. Shortly before noon, when he was quite exhausted and sick with fasting, he came to a village lying close to the fertile tract watered by the Seti canal, and had considered whether it would not be well to sell his gold bracelet to purchase some good nourishment, and keep some silver and copper coin for future need ; but he had feared being taken for a thief and cast into prison again, for the thorns had been his raiment, and his sandals had long since dropped from his feet. He had thought that his misery must move even the hard-hearted to pity, so he had knocked at a door and begged, bitter as it had been to him. However, he got nothing from the peasant but a scornful admonition that such a strong young fellow as he might work for his living, and leave begging to the weak and old. A second had threatened him with a thrashing ; however, when he had gone some way further, feeling very crestfallen, a young woman, who had seen him at the niggard's door, came after him and put a cake of bread with a few dates into his hand, hastily telling him that the village had been heavily taxed in the course of Pharaoh's progress, or she would have given him something better. No banquet had ever before tasted so sweet to him as this unlooked-for gift, which he eat by the next well ; but he did not confess to Kasana that it had been embittered by the doubt as to whether he should obey Joshua's counsel and return to his own people, or follow his heart's desire which drew him to her. He had started again, still undecided, but fate seemed to have taken the matter into her own hands. After he had walked on about half an hour longer, on reaching the edge of the desert he had come upon a youth of about his own age, sitting by the way side and moaning as he held one of his feet in both hands. He had gone up to him at his call, and to his surprise had recognized him as Hornecht's runner and messenger, with whom he had often spoken.

" Apoo ! our nimble Nubian ? " interrupted the lady ; and Ephraim went on to tell her that this messenger had been sent to carry a letter to Prince Siptah in all haste, and the swift-footed lad, who was wont to outrun his master's horses, would have flown like an arrow, and have reached

his destination in two hours, if he had not trodden on a fragment of broken glass, a bottle crushed by some chariot wheel, and the cut was dreadfully deep.

“And you helped him?” asked Kasana.

“Could I do otherwise?” was the answer. “He had half-bled to death already, and was as pale as a sheet. So I carried him to the nearest canal and washed the gaping wound, and applied some ointment he had with him.”

“I put it in his pocket a year ago, in a small pot,” said the nurse, who, being easily moved, was wiping her eyes; and Ephraim confirmed the fact, for Apoo had mentioned it with gratitude. Then he went on:

“And I tore my tunic into strips, and bound it up as best I might. But he urged me all the while to make haste, and held out the token and the roll which his master had entrusted to him, and, knowing nothing of the misfortunes which had befallen me, he charged me to carry the letter to the prince in his stead. Oh! how gladly I undertook to do so, and the second mile was not ended when I reached the camp. The letter is in the prince’s hands and here am I. I can see by your face that you are well pleased. As for me—so happy as I am to sit here at your feet and gaze up at you, so thankful as I am to you for having listened to me so patiently, surely no one ever was in this world! And if they put me in chains I will bear it quietly if only you remain kind. My woes have been so many! I have neither father nor mother—no one to love me. Only you. I love none but you, and you will not repel me, will you?”

He spoke the last words like one in a frenzy. Carried away by his passion, and incapable, after the terrible strain of the last days and hours, of governing the overwhelming storm of his feelings, the lad sobbed aloud. He was scarcely past childhood yet, he had only himself to trust to, he had been torn and severed from all that had ever upheld and controlled him, and, like a young bird taking refuge under its mother’s wings, he hid his face in Kasana’s lap, weeping violently.

Deep compassion came over the tender-hearted young woman, and her eyes, too, were moist. She gently laid her hand on his hair; and as she felt the shudder which ran through the boy’s whole frame, she raised his head in both hands, kissed his forehead and cheeks, and smiling through tears, as she looked into his face, said:

“ You poor, foolish boy ! Why should I not be kind, or ever repel you ? Your uncle is the man dearest to me in the world, and you are like his son. To serve him and you I have already consented to do that which I had always utterly loathed, refused. But now, come what may, and whatever others may think or say of me, I will not care if only I can succeed in doing that for which I will give my life and all I hold most dear ! Only wait, poor, vehement boy,” and again she kissed his cheeks. “ I shall find a way for you, too ! Now, enough of this.”

She spoke firmly, and the words were enough to check the excited lad's excited mood. But suddenly she sprang up, crying in terrified haste : “ Fly, fly, begone instantly ! ”

A man's footstep approaching the tent and a warning word from the waiting woman had brought the brief command to Kasana's lips, and Ephraim's keen ear told him what had roused her fears, and drove him forthwith into the dark chamber, where he could satisfy himself that a moment's hesitation would have betrayed him. The curtain of the tent was lifted and a man walked straight through the anteroom to the lighted apartment where Kasana—for that, too, he could hear—greeted some new guest only too warmly, and as though surprised at his coming so late.

The waiting woman snatched up her own mantle to throw over the lad's bare shoulders, and she whispered to him : “ Linger near the tent sometime before sunrise, but do not come in till I call you if you love your life. You have neither father nor mother, and my child Kasana—a loving heart is hers, a heart of gold—she is the best of all that is good ; but whether she is fit to guide a foolish scapegrace who burns for her like dry straw is quite another matter. As I listened to your story I thought of many things, and as I mean well by you I will tell you something : You have an uncle who is the noblest of men. I know what men are, and so far my Kasana is right. Do his bidding, it will be for your good. Obey him ! And if his orders take you far from here and from Kasana, so much the better for you. We walk in dangerous places, and if it were not for Joshua's sake I should have done everything in my power to hold her back. But for him—well, I am an old woman, but for that man even I would go through fire and water. I grieve more than I can say for

that pure, sweet child, and for you who are so like what my own son was ; but I say once more, obey your uncle, boy, or you will come to an evil end, and that would be a pity indeed !”

Then, without waiting for a reply, she pushed him towards one of the openings in the canvas wall of the tent, and waited till Ephraim had wriggled out. Then she dried her eyes and went back into the lighted room as though by chance ; but Kasana and her belated visitor had matters to discuss which allowed of no witness, and her “ dear child ” only suffered her to light her own little lamp at the three-armed candelabrum, and then sent her to bed.

She submitted ; but in the darkened room, where her bed stood not far from her mistress’, she lay down, and then, covering her face with her hands, wept in silence.

CHAPTER XXI.

EPHRAIM crept round the tent he had quitted, pressing one ear against the canvas wall. He very cautiously undid a few stitches in one of the seams, and so could see as well hear what was going on in the lady’s sitting-room. The storm kept every one within shelter who was not compelled by service to turn out, and Ephraim had the less reason to fear discovery because the spot where he crouched was in deep shade. The old nurse’s cloak was wrapped about him, and though a shudder again and again ran through his young limbs, it was bitter grief that caused it and anguish of soul.

He saw Kasana’s head resting on the breast of a prince, a great and powerful lover, and the capricious false one did not even forbid the bold suitor when his lips sought hers for the kisses he desired. She owed no faith to Ephraim indeed, but her heart was his uncle’s ; she preferred him above all men, she had declared herself ready to endure the worst to procure his freedom, and now he saw with his own eyes that she was false and faithless, and giving to another that which by right was Joshua’s alone. To Ephraim himself she had shown favor—the mere crumbs which fell from Joshua’s table, and even that, as he

confessed with a blush, was a robbery from his uncle ; and he felt himself injured, wounded and betrayed, and on fire with jealousy in behalf of his uncle, whom he honored, nay, and loved, though he had contravened his wishes.

And Joshua ? He, like Ephraim himself, and like that princely personage, like every one in short, must love her in spite of his strange demeanor at the wayside well ; it could not possibly be otherwise ; and she, safe from the vengeance of the unhappy prisoner, was abandoning herself with cowardly baseness to the caresses of another !

Siptah, as he had learnt from their last meeting, was his uncle's foe ; and for him, of all men, she was betraying the man she loved. Through the slit in the tent-cloth he could see all that went on within, but he closed his eyes to avoid seeing many things. More often, indeed, the odious spectacle riveted his gaze with a mysterious spell, and then he longed to tear the tent wider, to fell the loathed foe, and speak words of stern reproof to the faithless woman in Joshua's name. The fierce passion which had possessed him was suddenly turned to hatred and scorn. From the happiest of human beings, as he had deemed himself, he had become the most miserable ; such a fall from the highest bliss to the deepest woe, none before him, he believed, had ever known. The old nurse had spoken truly, there could be nothing in store for him at Kasana's hands but misery and despair. Once he had started to fly, but then the bewitching sound of her silvery laugh fell on his ear, and a mysterious power held him rooted to the spot to listen a little longer.

At first the rush of blood tingled so fiercely in his ears that he was quite incapable of following the dialogue within. By degrees, however, he had gathered the purport of whole sentences, and now he lost not a word that was spoken. It was indeed of the greatest interest, though it enabled him to look into an abyss which seemed to yawn at his feet.

Kasana by no means yielded to her audacious wooer on every point, but this only drew him on to insist passionately on her entire surrender, body and soul ; and what he offered in return was indeed the highest reward—a place as queen at his side on the throne of Egypt, for which he was plotting. That much he distinctly uttered ; but all

else was hard to follow ; for the vehement lover was in haste, and frequently interrupted his incoherent sentences to assure Kasana of his unalterable devotion, or to mollify her when the audacity of his pretensions roused her fears or her disgust. Presently he spoke of the letter which Ephraim had brought, and after he had read it aloud and explained it to her, the boy perceived, with slight shudder, that he himself had now become an accomplice in the most detestable of crimes. For a moment he felt prompted to betray the traitors, and deliver them into the hands of the sovereign whose overthrow they were plotting. But he cast this idea from him, and only indulged in the comforting reflection—the first that had come to him during this dreadful experience—that he held Kasana and her prince in his clutch like beetles on a thread. This raised his spirits and restored his lost confidence and courage. The baser the schemes he now overheard, the greater and more surely grew his recovered sense of the value of truth and right. He remembered likewise an admonition of his uncle's: "Give no man, great or small, cause to regard you with anything but respect, and then you may hold your head as high as the proudest hero in his purple tunic and gilt breastplate."

As he lay trembling with fever on his bed in Kasana's house he had repeated the words many times, but the miseries of captivity had banished it from his mind. Not till he found himself in the chamberlain's tent, when the slave had held the mirror that he might see himself bathed and anointed, had it recurred as a passing thought ; but now it wholly possessed his soul. And, strangely enough, the royal traitor within the tent wore, in fact, a purple tunic and gilt armor, and looked indeed a hero ; but he could not hold his head high, for the deed he purposed could only succeed in twilight secrecy ; it was like the work of the loathsome mole which turns up the earth in darkness. The hateful three, falsehood, treachery and perjury, were Siptah's tools, and she whom he had chosen to be his accomplice was the woman—at the bottom of his soul he was ashamed to own it—the woman for whose sake he had been ready to sacrifice all he held sacred, worthy and dear.

These hideous things, which he had been taught to flee from, were but the rungs of the ladder by which that wicked man hoped to mount to high estate. Ephraim saw it ; all the prince's plot lay before him as an open book.

The roll the lad had brought to the camp had contained three letters. One was from the conspirators in Tanis ; the others from Siptah's mother. She wrote that she looked for his speedy return, and informed him that Aarsu, the Syrian, the captain of the foreign troops, now in charge of the palace, and all in the women's house, were prepared to hail him king. When the high priest of Amon, who was at the same time the chief judge, high steward and keeper of the seal, should proclaim him, he would be king, and could mount the throne unopposed, for the palace was open to him. If Pharaoh should return, the body-guards were ready to take him prisoner and clear him out of the way—as Siptah, who did not love half measures, had secretly commanded, while Baie had voted for his being kept in mild captivity.

The only thing to be feared was the premature reappearance of Seti, Menephtah's younger son, now at Thebes ; for now that his elder brother was dead, he had become heir to the throne, and pigeons had arrived yesterday with letters announcing that he was on his way. Thus Siptah and the powerful priest who was to proclaim him must make the best speed they could.

The necessary precautions had also been taken to prevent any possible resistance on the part of the army ; as soon as the Hebrews were destroyed, the larger portion of the troops were to be withdrawn forthwith into the garrisons they had left ; the body-guard were attached to Siptah, and the rest, who would escort the royal party back to the capital, could, if it came to the worst, easily be overpowered by Aarsu and his mercenaries.

“ Nothing now remains for me to do,” cried the prince, stretching himself with evident enjoyment, like a man who had successfully achieved a difficult undertaking, “ but to make my way back to Tanis with Baie a few hours hence, to let myself be crowned and proclaimed in the temple of Amon, and finally make my entry into the palace of the Pharaohs. The rest is all a matter of course. Seti, who is called the heir to the crown, is as weak a creature as his father, and will bend to the accomplished fact, to necessity and force. The captain of the body-guard will take care that Menephtah never enters the palace again.”

The prince's mother had written a second letter addressed to Pharaoh himself, to justify Siptah and the high

priest in returning to the capital in all haste, without exposing themselves to the imputation of cowardice in leaving the army immediately before a battle. Although she had never in her life been in better health, she declared, with hypocritical prayers and lamentations, that her hours were numbered, and implored the king to release her son and Baie forthwith from their duties, that she might be allowed to bless her only child before she died. She had many sins on her conscience, and none but the high priest had it in his power to intercede for her for the mercy of the gods. Without his mediation she must depart in despair. This letter, too, the vile traitor had read, and had pronounced it a master-piece of woman's cunning, rubbing his hands with glee as he spoke.

Treason, murder, dissimulation, base deceit, a mockery of all the most sacred feelings, everything foul and mean, were to be Siptah's aids to mounting the throne, and though Kasana had wrung her hands and shed some tears when he told her that Pharaoh was to be put out of the way, she grew calmer as the prince represented to her that her own father approved of what he had decided on to save Egypt from the hand of the king who was bringing the land to ruin.

The letter from the prince's mother to Pharaoh—the mother who was spurring on her own son to ruthless crime—was the last thing Ephraim stayed to hear; for the young Hebrew, accustomed to regard the bond between parents and children as reverend and pure beyond all others, was moved by it to such a sudden frenzy that he raised his fist, and as he sprang away he muttered a word of scorn and abuse. Thus he did not hear how Kasana made the prince pledge his word that, if he rose to power, he would grant her her first request. It should cost him neither money nor lands, and merely afford her the privilege of showing mercy at the dictate of her heart, for events were impending which must provoke the wrath of the gods, and she only implored to be allowed to mitigate it.

Ephraim could not bear to see or to hear any more of this revolting scene. Now, for the first time, he began to understand what danger he had run of allowing himself to be drawn into this slough, and becoming a lost and reprobate wretch; but surely, he thought, he could never have been so base, so abominable as these two. Once more he

remembered his uncle's words, and he threw back his haughty head, and his deep chest swelled as though he would assure himself of his own unbroken strength; and he said to himself, as he drew a deep breath, that he was fit for better things than being wasted on a bad woman, even if, like Kasana, she were the fairest and most bewitching creature under heaven. Away, away! far from the snare which might have led him to murder and every kind of evil!

Fully determined to return to his own people, he made his way to the entrance to the camp; but he had gone only a few steps when he stopped, and a glance at the sky showed him it was not more than two hours past midnight. All was still. Only from the pen where the king's horses were enclosed he heard now and then the rattle of harness or the blow of a hoof. If he attempted at this hour to make his escape he must certainly be detected and detained; prudence enjoined him to curb his impatience for a little while, and as he looked about him his eye fell on the chamberlain's tent, from which the old slave came out to look for his master, who was still awaiting Siptah's return in the prince's quarter. This old man had been kind before to Ephraim, and he now with friendly urgency bid him enter the tent and rest, for youth, said he, requires sleep. Ephraim accepted the well-meant invitation, for he now began to feel how badly his feet ached; hardly had he stretched himself on the mat—the old slave having spread his own for him—when he felt as if his limbs were dropping off; however, he thought he should here have time and peace for reflection.

He began by thinking of the future and his uncle's injunctions. That he must forthwith rejoin his people was quite clear, and if they escaped alive from Pharaoh's host, let the rest do what they would, his first duty would be collect his herdsmen, his servants and his younger friends, and hasten at their head to the mines to strike off Joshua's chains, and conduct him home to his old father and his people who needed him so sorely. He fancied he could see himself with his sling at his girdle and a battle-axe in his hand marching on in front of the rest, when sleep overpowered him, and wrapped the weary youth in oblivion so deep and sweet that not even a dream approached his pillow, and the old slave had to shake him in order to rouse him at day-break.

The camp was already astir : tents were being taken down, asses and ox-carts loaded, horses combed and shod, chariots cleaned, weapons and vessels polished, and the first meal of the day distributed and eaten. Meanwhile trumpet-calls rang out on one hand, words of command on the other, and from the eastern side of the camp rose the chant of priests devoutly greeting the new-born god of day.

Active servants now brought out a gilt chariot in front of the splendid purple tent next to Kasana's, and another not less splendid followed. Prince Siptah and the high priest had received permission from Pharaoh to return to Tanis, at the desire of a dying woman. Shortly after Ephraim took leave of the friendly slave, charging him to return the cloak to Kasana's nurse, and to tell her that the messenger had followed her advice and his uncle's. Then he set forth on his journey.

He got out of the precincts of the Egyptian tents without let or hindrance, and when he found himself out in the desert he uttered the cry by which he was wont to collect his shepherds in the pastures. The call rang out across the wide plain, startling a sparrow-hawk which was spying the distance from the top of a rock, and as the bird soared up the lad felt as though, if he opened out his arms, wings must sprout strong enough to bear him through the air. Never had he felt so strong and agile, so light and free ; and if the priest could at this moment have asked whether he would become a captain over thousands in Pharaoh's army, he would certainly have answered, as he had done by Nun's ruined dwelling, that he asked no better lot than that of a shepherd, free to govern his herds and servants. He was an orphan, but yet he had his people to whom he belonged, and where they were was his home. Like a traveler who, after long journeying, finds himself near home, he now hastened his steps.

He had arrived at Tanis in the night of the new moon, and the full disk which he now saw paling in the dawn was the same as he had then gazed on ; but he felt as though years had elapsed between his leave-taking of Miriam and this day, for indeed a whole lifetime of new experience had been crowded into these few days. He had come forth as a boy ; he was returning a man to his own folk, and, thanks to the events of this one dreadful night, he was the

same as he had ever been, and could look boldly in the face of each one whom he loved and looked up to with reverence.

Nay, more. He would show the man whom he held high above all others that he, Ephraim, might carry his head erect. He would repay Joshua for what he had done for him, by being content to remain in bonds and fetters in order that his nephew might flee away as free as a bird.

He had walked above an hour when he came to a ruined watch tower. He climbed up it, and from thence he descried at no great distance, on the hither side of the hill of Baal-Zephon which he had long seen towering above the horizon, the gleaming waters of the northern arm of the Red Sea. The storm was lulled, still he could see from the swaying of the emerald surface that the sea was not yet calm, and a few black piles of cloud on the sky, which just now had been so clear, seemed to threaten a gathering storm again. He looked about him on all sides, wondering what the leaders of the people could be thinking of it; indeed, as Siptah had told Kasana, they purposed to encamp between Pihahiroth, of which he now saw the tents and huts close before him on the shore of the canal of Seti, and the hill of Baal-Zephon.

Had Siptah spoken falsely? No, indeed! The base traitor had this once departed from his habits. Between the village and the lake, where the wind was whirling thin pillars of smoke, his sharp eyes descried a multitude of white objects looking like a distant flock of sheep, and among and around them a strange stir and bustle on the sand. This was the camp of the Israelites.

How small the space appeared which parted him from them. But the nearer they seemed the greater was his anxiety, as he reflected that this vast multitude, with its women and children, its herds and tents, could never escape the mighty host which in a few hours must inevitably fall upon them. His heart swelled within him as he looked further afield; for neither to the east, where stretched a broad pool of water, nor to the south, where the waves of the Red Sea were surging, nor to the north, whence Pharaoh's army was marching down on them, was there any way to fly. To the west lay the desert of Etham, and if the wanderers turned thitherward they would soon be on Egyptian soil, and the exodus would

have been in vain. There was nothing for it but to give battle, and as he thought of it his blood ran cold, for he well knew the ill-armed, undisciplined forces of the Hebrews, half wild and refractory, half cowardly and contemptible, and he had seen the march past of the numberless and well-equipped Egyptian army, with its strong force of foot-soldiers and splendid war-chariots.

He now thought, as his uncle had thought, that the Hebrews were doomed to certain destruction, unless the God of their fathers should save them. Miriam had indeed many a time, and again just before his departure, praised that Almighty Lord and His glory with flashing eyes and inspired words; that God who had chosen his people above all other people. The words of the prophetess had filled his childish soul with vague terrors of this God's immeasurable greatness and awful wrath. He had found it easier to uplift his spirit to the Sun-god when his teacher, a kind and genial Egyptian priest, had led him into the temple at Pithom. As he grew older he had entirely ceased to feel the need of turning to any god in prayer; for he craved nothing, and while other boys were still obedient to their parents' will, the shepherds, who knew full well that he was the owner of the flocks they tended, had called him their lord, and, at first in jest but then in earnest, had done him service as their master; thus his independence had been early fostered, and he had grown to be but a wrong-headed lad. Healthy and strong, looked up to by men older than himself, he was wholly self-sufficient, and felt that others depended on him; and as there was nothing he liked so little as asking anything of any one, great or small, it disliked him to pray even to a God who was so far and so high above him. But at this moment, when the fearful fate impending over his people weighed so heavily on his heart, a sense came upon him that only this great and mighty God could deliver them out of their fearful and pressing peril; that none could withstand this vast host but only He in whose power it lay to break the heavens and the earth in pieces.

And what was he that the Most High, whom Miriam and Joshua had described as of such majesty, should care for him? But his people were many thousands, and God had not scorned to make them His own, and to promise them great things. They were standing on the verge of

destruction, and he, fresh from the evening's camp, was perchance the only soul who understood how great was their peril.

A conviction suddenly came over him that it was he, therefore, above all others, whose task it must be to warn the God of his fathers of the great danger which threatened His people, and to beseech Him to save them ; He, caring for the whole heaven and earth, the sun and the stars, had perhaps forgotten them. The lad was still standing on the top of the ruined tower, and from thence he uplifted his arms and face to heaven.

To the north he saw the dark clouds, which he had observed rising over the blue sky, suddenly part and roll asunder on either hand. The wind which had died away after sunrise now gained force and swiftness, and soon rose to a storm again. It swept across the isthmus in gusts which succeeded each other with increasing rapidity, carrying before it dense pillars of yellow sand.

He must cry aloud, very loud, if He whom he entreated was to hear him in high heaven, and with all the strength of his young lungs he shouted against the storm :

“ Adonai, Adonai ! Thou whose name is Jehovah, Thou great God of my fathers, hearken unto me, Ephraim, who am but young and of no account, and whom, inasmuch as I am but naught, Thou had not remembered. For myself I ask not. But the people whom Thou hast called Thine are in great straits. They have left their safe dwellings and good pastures by reason that Thou hast promised them a better and a fairer land, and that they trusted in Thee and in Thy word. And now the host of Pharaoh is drawing near, and it is so great that our people can never withstand it. Believe me it is so, Eloi, my Lord. For I have seen it, and have been in the midst of it, and as surely as I stand here I know that the Egyptians are too many for Thy people. Pharaoh's host will trample them under foot as the hoof of the ox tramples the grain on the threshing floor. And my nation, who are Thy people, are encamped in a place where the warriors of Pharaoh can cut them off from all sides, so that there is no way left them by which they may escape ; not one, for I have seen it from this spot. Hear me, O Adonai !—But canst Thou hear my cry, O Lord, in such a storm ? Yea, surely Thou canst, for Thou art almighty, and if Thou hear

me and understand, Thou mayest, if Thou wilt, behold with Thine own eyes that I speak the truth. Then remember, O Lord, and fulfill the promise Thou hast made to Thy people by the mouth of Thy servant Moses.

“I have seen treason among the Egyptians, and murder, and base cunning, and their doings have filled me, who am but a simple lad, with rage and horror. And how shouldst Thou, from whom all good things come, and whom Miriam names as Truth itself, deal with us even as those accursed ones do, and break Thy word and promise to Thy people who trust in Thee? I know, O Lord Most High, that this is far from Thee, and perhaps it is sin only to think of it. Hear me, Adonai! Behold and look to the north upon the tents of Egypt, which by this hour are leaving their camp and moving on; look to the south upon the peril of Thy people, and how that they have no way of escape, and save and deliver them by the help of Thy might and great wisdom; for Thou hast promised them a new land, and if they are utterly cut off how may they reach it?”

Thus he ended this guileless, untutored prayer, but it flowed from the depth of his heart.

Then he sprang away from the heap of ruins with wide leaps, across the desert at his feet, and ran on towards the south as swiftly as though he were again fleeing from captivity. He felt the rushing blast from the north-east driving him on, and thought how it would hasten the advance of Pharaoh's foot-soldiers. The leaders of his people did not know perhaps how vast was the host which threatened them, and under-estimated the danger of their position. But he saw it, and could give them the fullest information. But he must hasten, fly, and he felt as though in this race before the storm his feet had really got wings.

He had soon reached the village of Pihahiroth, and, as he fled through it without pausing for an instant, he perceived that man and beast had deserted the tents and dwellings. The inhabitants had no doubt found a place of refuge for themselves and their belongings from the coming army, or from the emigrant Hebrews. As he went on, the clouds grew darker and darker—and rarely indeed was the sky overcast here at mid-day—and the wilder blew the storm. His thick hair flew about his hot head, his breath came hard, still on he sped; he felt as if his feet scarcely touched the ground at all.

As he got nearer to the sea the blast howled and shrieked, the waves, lashed to fury, beat in thunder on the rocks at the foot of the hill of Baal-Zephon. Now, within a short hour after leaving the ruins, he had reached the first tents of the encampment, and the familiar cry of "Unclean!" as well as the mourning garb of the people, whose disfigured faces looked forth from the wreck of the tents beaten down by the wind, told him that he had come upon the lepers' quarters, placed by Moses outside the camp. Still, he was in such haste that he did not make a circuit, but ran straight on at his utmost speed. Nor did he pause till a tall palm tree, uprooted by the blast, came to the ground so close to him that its tuft of leaves swept him as it fell.

At last he was among the tents and penfolds of his own tribe, and many of these had likewise been overturned.

He inquired of the first man he recognized for Nun, the father of Joshua and of his deceased mother. He had gone to the seashore with Moses and the elders of the people, and Ephraim followed him thither, the moist salt air refreshing him and cooling his brow. Yet he might not immediately speak with him, so he collected his thoughts and reserved his breath, while he watched the elders who were in discussion with a party of gaily-clad Phœnician boatmen.

He, being so much younger, was forbidden to disturb the venerable leaders of the people in the council which evidently had reference to the sea, for the Hebrews were pointing to the head of the bay, and the Phœnicians waved their hands now towards the mountain and now to the sea, or the sky, or the north, whence came the still-increasing storm.

A jutting wall sheltered the party of elders from the hurricane, and yet they had great difficulty in keeping their feet with the help of their staves and the stone-work behind them.

At last the discussion came to an end; the lad saw the gigantically tall figure of Moses slowly and majestically go down to the edge of the sea with some other leaders of the Hebrews, while Nun, supported by one of his herdsmen, toiled back against the wind to the camp with what speed he might. He wore a mourning robe, and, whereas the others looked glad and hopeful as they parted, his handsome face, with its crown and beard of white hair, wore a

look of crushing and heart-breaking grief. When Ephraim spoke his name he raised his bent head, and, seeing the lad before him, tottered backwards with surprise and misgiving, clinging tightly to the stalwart arm which upheld him. News had been sent to him of his son's and his grandson's terrible fate from the freed slaves he had left behind him in Tanis. The old man had rent his garments, had thrown ashes on his head and put on mourning raiment, and broken his heart for his beloved and noble son and his promising young grandson.

Now Ephraim was before him in the flesh ; and when he had laid his hand on the lad's shoulder, and kissed him again and again, he inquired whether his son, too, was still in the land of the living and remembered him and his people. As soon as the youth had assured him that he did, Nun laid his arm across his shoulders that he, his own flesh and blood and no stranger, might shield him from the violence of the storm.

He had a solemn and imperative duty to fulfill, from which no man might hinder him, but when the eager youth shouted in his ear above the roar of the hurricane, as they went back to the camp, that he meant to gather together his shepherds and the young men of his tribe to rescue Hosea, who was now called Joshua, the patriarch's vehement vigor was stirred, and clasping his grandson to his heart he exclaimed that, old as he was, yet was he not too old to wield an axe and go forth with the young ones to deliver his son. And his eyes flashed through tears, while, with the arm that was free, he appealed to Heaven, crying :

“The God of my fathers in whom I have learned to trust watches over the faithful ! Do you see the sand over there at the head of the bay, the seaweed and shells ? Only an hour ago that was covered by water, foaming waves were dancing over the spot. That, boy, is the way deliverance lies ; if this wind holds, the tide will ebb further still, so the Phœnician seamen assure us. Their god of the north wind, they say, is favorable to us, and their youths have lighted a fire to the god up there on the heights of Baal-Zephon. But we know that it is another God who hath opened a way for us into the desert. We were in sore straits, my son !”

“Yes, grandfather,” cried the boy. “You were as a lion in a pitfall, and the Egyptian tent is mighty and unquarable ; every man of that host have I seen march past,

from the first even to the last. I flew as fast as my feet might bear me to tell you all how many heavy troops, archers, horses and chariots."

"We know it, we know it," interrupted the old man. "But here we are!" and he pointed to a tent completely blown in, which some serving men were endeavoring to prop up, and close to it sat a very old Hebrew in a litter, Elishama, the father of Nun, wrapped in many robes.

Nun eagerly spoke a few words to him, and led Ephraim forward. And then, while the lad fell on his great-grandfather's neck to be caressed and embraced, Nun spoke with youthful spirit to the herdsmen and servants:

"Let the tent fall, men! The storm has only done your task for you! Wrap the canvas about the poles, load the carts and beasts. Hasten now, you Gad, Shammua, Jacob; help the others. The hour of our departing is at hand. Each man make haste to harness the beasts, to saddle and load the asses with all speed. The Lord hath opened a way for us. In the name of the Lord, and by the commands of Moses, each must make ready for departing. Every man keep to the old order. We march first at the head of the host; then come the other tribes, and after them the strangers; last of all the lepers and unclean. Rejoice, all ye people, for our God is working a great wonder, and making the sea dry land for us, His chosen people. Give thanks to Him while you labor, and entreat Him from the bottom of your hearts that He will ever protect us. He who would not perish at the edge of the sword, or be crushed under the wheels of Pharaoh's chariots, let him put forth his strength and forget to rest. We shall find rest as soon as we have escaped from this peril. Give me the tent cloth; I will roll it up myself. And do your part, boy. See the children of Manasseh yonder, they are packing and loading! Well done, Ephraim, you know how to use your hands! But there is yet much to be done. And my old head forgets. So much has come upon me at once. Here, Raphu, you have swift legs; I took it upon me to give warning in the camp of the strangers. Hasten to them, and bid them speed their departing, that they be not too far behind the people of Israel. Time is precious! O Lord, our God, shelter Thy people with Thy protecting hand, and drive the waters further and further back with the storm which is Thy

mighty breath! Pray, each one of you, in your heart, while you work. The Almighty and All-knowing God, who sees into your hearts, shall hear. That is too heavy a burthen for you, Ephraim; you will hurt yourself. No! The boy is a strong boy! Do as he does, and ye of Succoth, rejoice in the strength of your young master!"

The last words were addressed to Ephraim's shepherds, serving men and women, most of whom had greeted him in the midst of their toil, had kissed his hand or his arm, and been glad at his home-coming. They were packing and loading, folding and fitting, and getting the beasts together which had been scared by the storm with many blows and much outcry.

The men of Succoth were zealous to imitate their young master, those from Tanis to serve their master's grandson; the other herd-owners and humbler folk of the tribe of Ephraim, whose tents had clustered round that of Nun, their elder, were all no less eager; and yet it was some hours before all the tents, the house-gear and the victuals for man and beast had found a place in the carts or on the beasts of burden, and the old, the sick, and the feeble were laid in litters and chariots once more.

The wild wind now and then brought the sound of Moses' deep voice, or Aaron's lighter tones, to the spot where the Ephraimites were busy. Neither they nor the sons of Judah needed this to spur them; for Hur and Nahshon commanded these last, and by the side of Hur stood Miriam, his newly-wedded wife. With the other tribes and the strangers it was otherwise; and the stiff-necked and cowardly conduct of their leaders had resulted in much misery and confusion.

CHAPTER XXII.

It had been found to be impossible to break through the frontier lines of Etham and follow the nearest road to Palestine in a north-easterly direction; and the second plan proposed by Moses, that they should march round Migdol of the South, had likewise failed, for spies had reported that the garrison there had been strongly reinforced. Hereupon the multitude had assembled round the

man of God, and had declared that sooner would they return home with all their families, and appeal to Pharaoh's mercy, than suffer themselves, their wives and their children to be butchered.

For many days it had been necessary to keep them back, but when fresh messengers brought word that Pharaoh was running down on them with a mighty host, the time seemed to be at hand when the Hebrews, who were now in the greatest peril, must be urged to force their way onward. Moses had exerted the full weight of his commanding individuality, and Aaron all the powers of his persuasive eloquence, while old Nun and Hur had striven to infuse some of their own fiery spirit into the rest. But the terrifying tidings had broken the last remnant of courage and faith in most of the people, and they had already determined to send word to Pharaoh of their repentance ; but the messenger whom they had despatched turned back, declaring that the approaching army had orders not to spare a single Hebrew, but to teach even those who should pray for mercy at the point of the sword how Pharaoh would punish those who, by their magic arts, had brought death and misery on so many Egyptians. Thus had they learned too late that their return would lead them to destruction no less surely than a bold advance. But when, on this, the fighting men led by Hur and Nun had proceeded almost as far as Migdol of the South, they had turned and fled at the loud blast of the Egyptian trumpets, and by the time they returned to the camp, weary, dispirited and wroth, fresh and exaggerated reports of the might of Pharaoh's host had been brought to the Hebrews, and mortal fear and despair had fallen on even the bravest. Exhortation was cast to the winds ; threats were laughed to scorn ; and the rebellious multitude had forced their leaders onward till they had reached the shores of the Red Sea, and its deep green waters compelled them to give up all further flight to the southward. So the people had encamped between Pihahiroth and Baal-Zephon, and here, once more, their chief had called upon them in the name of the God of their fathers. In the face of certain destruction, from which no human power could save them, they had been brought to lift their eyes to Heaven again ; and in the soul of Moses pity and sympathy had revived more strongly for the hapless and much-tried people who had

come forth at his bidding. During the past night he had gone up into the mountain of Baal-Zephon, and there, amid the roaring of the storm and hissing flare of the lightning, he had sought and found communion with the Lord. And he had not wearied laying before Him the evil flight of his people, and beseeching Him to deliver them.

In that same hour had Miriam, the wife of Hur, gone down to the sea-shore to entreat the Lord likewise, under a solitary palm tree, for still she felt herself His chosen handmaid. She besought Him for the women and children, whose trust in Him had brought them to this pass. And she would fain have prayed for the friend of her youth who was now pining in fearful captivity ; but as she fell on her knees she could only say in a timid and broken voice :

“Forget not Thou Hosea, whom I at Thy word named Joshua, albeit he hath been less obedient to Thy call than Moses, my brother, or Hur, my husband ! Forget not, either, young Ephraim, the grandson of Thy faithful servant Nun.”

Then she went back to her husband's tent, a chief's tent, while many a humbler man and many a poor terrified woman of the people, outside their wretched shelter or lying on a thin mat wet with tears, uplifted an anxious heart to the God of their fathers, and commended to His care those whom they loved best. Thus, in this night of sorest need, the camp was a temple in which high and low, chief and mother, master and slave, nay, even the afflicted leper, sought and found the Lord.

At last the morning had dawned when Ephraim had spoken his childlike prayer, shouting it down the storm, and the sea was beginning to retire.

Then, when they beheld with their own eyes the miracle which the Most High had wrought for His chosen people, the most despairing and fearful became so many glad and hopeful believers. Not among the sons of Ephraim only, among all the tribes, nay, and the strangers and unclean, their newly-awakened and joyful confidence moved each one to prepare with all his strength for further journeying ; and for the first time the multitude assembled without strife or jealousy, without fighting, curses, and tears.

After sunset Moses, staff in hand, and Aaron, singing and praying, led the way to the head of the gulf. The storm, which was raging as wildly as ever, had swept back

the waters, and bore down the flames and smoke of the torches which were carried at the head of each tribe, from north-east to south-west.

Next to the two great leaders, on whom every eye was fixed with eager anticipation, Nun marched with the children of Ephraim. The sea-bottom on which they trod was firm damp sand on which even the cattle could safely cross as on a smooth highway, gently sloping towards the sea. Ephraim, who was regarded by his elders as the future head of his tribe, had, by his grandfather's desire, undertaken to be careful that the train of men and beasts should not come to a standstill, and to this end he had been entrusted with a chief's staff. The fishermen who dwelt in the huts which clustered at the foot of Baal-Zephon agreed with the Phœnician seamen in saying that as soon as the moon had reached the zenith the waters would rise again to their old place, so no delay could be allowed. The lad gloried in the storm, and as his hair blew about his face, and he fought against the wind while he hurried to and fro in fulfillment of his task, this felt to him as a foretaste of the great enterprise he had in his mind.

Thus matters sped through the darkness which quickly followed on the twilight. The strong smell of the fish left on dry land was pleasanter to the youth, who now felt himself a man indeed, than the sweet fragrance of nard in Kasana's tent. Once the thought of her flashed through his mind; but indeed, during these times, he had had no time to think of her. His hands were quite full; here the seaweed must be cleared aside which a wave had left in the way; there the ram of a flock which hesitated to set foot on the moist ground must be seized by the horns and dragged forward, or the oxen and beasts of burthen driven through a pool they were shy of. Many times he had to lend a shoulder to lift a heavily laden cart of which the wheels had sunk in the soft sand, and when, just as they were starting on this strange and momentous journey, even on the Egyptian shore, a dispute arose between two herdsmen as to which should have the lead, he promptly settled by lot which was to go forward and which to follow. Two little girls were crying and refusing to cross a pool while their mother's arms were occupied with her infant; he picked them up with swift decision and carried them

across the shallow lakelet ; and when a wheel came off one of the wagons, he immediately had it dragged out of the way, and by the light of the torches he made some of the serfs who were least heavily loaded carry each a sack or a bale, nay, and even the pieces of the broken vehicle. He had comforting words for weeping women and children, and if the flare of a torch showed him the face of some youth of his own age, whose aid he hoped to secure for liberating Joshua, he hinted to him in a few spirited words that he had a bold deed in prospect which he proposed to achieve with the help of his friend.

The incense bearers, who had hitherto led the way, on this occasion closed the march, for the wind blowing from the north-east would have driven the smoke in the face of the people. They stood on the Egyptian shore, and soon all the multitude had passed them by, excepting only the strangers, and the lepers, who came last of all. The foreigners were indeed a motley host, consisting of Asiatics of Semitic blood, who were fleeing from the forced labor and cruel punishments which were inflicted on them by the law of Egypt ; of dealers, who had found buyers for their wares among the thousands of wanderers, and even of Shasoo shepherds who had been hindered from crossing the frontier on their return home. With these Ephraim had much trouble, for they refused to leave the dry land until the lepers had been enjoined to remain at a greater distance from them ; but even they were brought to submission by Ephraim, with the help of the chief of the tribe of Benjamin, which marched last in front of them ; for he warned them of the prophecy of the Phœnicians and fishermen, that the moon as it sank would bring the sea back to its old bed. Finally, he persuaded the leader of the lepers, an intelligent Egyptian, who had been a priest, to maintain at least half the distance that was demanded.

Meanwhile the tempest continued to rage with increasing fury ; the roar and long-drawn shrieks of the wind, mingling with the thunder of the breakers and the duller moan of the surf, drowned the shouts of command, the wailing of the women, the bellowing and the bleating of the trembling beasts and the whining of the dogs. Ephraim's voice was audible only to those nearest to him ; many torches were extinguished, and the rest kept alight with difficulty. At length, when for one short space he had been walking

behind the last of the lepers, going slowly to recover his breath and get a little rest, he heard his name called from the rear, and, turning round, beheld an old playmate who was returning from spying the enemy, and who, seeing the leader's staff in the lad's hand, shouted in his ear with panting gasps that Pharaoh's chariots were coming on in the van of the Egyptian host. He had left them by Piha-hiroth, and if they had not waited to let the other troops come up with them, they might at any moment overtake the fugitives. Thereupon he again pressed forward to reach the leaders of the multitude. But Ephraim stood still a moment in the middle of the way with his hand held to his brow, and great anxiety came down on his soul. He knew full well that the approaching army would overrun the women and children whom he had just seen in all their pathetic terror and helplessness, as a man treads down a file of ants; and again, all his impulses urged him to prayer, and from the depths of his oppressed heart the imploring cry went up into the night—

“Eloi! Eloi! great God on high! Thou knowest, for I have told Thee, and Thine all-seeing eye must behold, in spite of the blackness of the night, how sorely Thy people are beset whom Thou hast promised to lead into a new land. Remember Thy word, O Jehovah! Be gracious unto us, God Almighty! Our foe is upon us with irresistible might! Stay his steps! Save us! Deliver the women and the children! Save us, and be merciful unto us!”

As he prayed, he had fixed his eyes on high and had espied the ruddy blaze of a fire on Baal-Zephon. This had been lighted by the Phœnicians to propitiate the Baal of the north wind in favor of the kindred race of Hebrews, and against the hated Egyptian nation.

This was friendly; but he put his trust in another God, and as he glanced again at the vault of heaven, over which the black rack raced and gathered and divided again, and swept to and fro, he descried, between two parting clouds, the silver beam of the full moon already at its meridian. And fresh terrors came upon him, for he remembered the predictions of the weather-wise seamen. If the flood should at this moment return to its bed, his people were doomed; for, to the north of the gulf, where deep pools lay amid rocks and slimy mud, there was no escape. If

within an hour the waters should rise, the seed of Abraham would cease from the face of the earth, as writing on a wax tablet vanishes at the pressure of a warm hand.

But was not this people, doomed to destruction, the same which the Lord had called to be His own? And could He give them into the hand of the enemy which was His enemy also?

No, a thousand times no!

And the moon, which was to cause the disaster, had but a short time since aided his flight and been his friend. He could only hope and believe, and cling to his trust in God.

And as yet nothing was lost, not a single soul. If it came to the worst, the whole nation might not be destroyed; his own tribe, which led the way, least of all. By this time many must have reached the further shore; more, perhaps, than he thought; for the little bay was narrow, and even the lepers, the last of the multitude, had already gone some distance over the moist sand.

He lingered behind every one to listen for the coming of the enemy's chariots. On the shore of the gulf he laid his ear to the ground; and he could trust the sharpness of his hearing, for in this attitude he had often detected the distant tramp of beasts that had gone astray, or, when out hunting, had heard the approach of a herd of antelopes or gazelles.

He, being the last, was in the greatest danger, but what matter for that? How gladly would he have given his young life to save the rest!

Since he had carried a chief's staff he felt that he had taken upon himself the duty of watching over his people; so he listened and listened, till at last he perceived a scarce audible thrill in the earth and then a faint rumbling. This was the foe; this must be Pharaoh's chariots; and how swiftly were the proud steeds rushing on!

He started to his feet as though a whip had stung him, and flew onward to overtake the rest.

How oppressively sultry the air had become, in spite of the raging gale which had extinguished so many of the torches! The clouds hid the moon, but the dancing fire on the highest peak of Baal-Zephon shone broader and brighter. The sparks which it cast up flew scurrying to westward, for the wind was veering to the east. No

sooner did he perceive this than he hastened back to the youths who carried the censers behind the procession, and commanded them, in breathless haste, to refill the copper vessels, and take care that the vapor rose thick ; for he said to himself, that the wind would blow it into the faces of the horses and make them refractory, or stop them.

No means seemed to him too humble, every moment gained was precious, and as soon as he had seen the smoke from the censers was spreading in choking clouds over the track left by the advancing multitude he ran on again, warning the elders, as he came up with them, that Pharaoh's chariots were not far behind, and that the people must hasten their march. Forthwith the hosts on foot, the bearers, leaders and herdsmen, collected their strength to proceed faster ; and although the wind was every moment more decidedly against them, hindering their progress, they battled with it valiantly, and the fear of their pursuers doubled their energies.

The lad was like a sheep-dog watching and driving the flock, and the chiefs of the tribes looked kindly on him wherever he was to be seen ; and as he made his way among the marching host, fighting onwards against the blast, the east wind brought a strange cry to his ears as the reward of his efforts. The nearer he came to it the louder it rose, and the more sure he was that it was a shout of triumph and gladness, the first that had been raised by Hebrew voices for many a long day. It revived the youth like a cool draught after long thirst, and he could not refrain from shouting aloud, and hailing those behind with a cry of " Saved, saved ! "

Several of the tribes had already reached the eastern shore of the gulf, and it was they who sent the shout of joy which, with the beacon fires they lighted along the shore, gave the rear of the host fresh courage, and renewed their flagging strength. By the light of the blaze he saw the majestic figure of Moses on a hillock by the shore, stretching out his staff towards the waters ; and this image was stamped on his mind, as on that of every soul present, great and small, more deeply than any other, and inflamed the confidence in his heart. This man was verily the friend of God, and so long as he should hold up his staff the waves were spell-bound, and the Lord, by His servant, forbade them to return !

Ephraim need no more appeal to the Most High ; this was in the hands of His great and sublime servant. But his own lesser duty of urging on one and another to the goal he still must fulfill.

Back he flew to the lepers and the incense-bearers, and to each division he shouted aloud : " Saved, saved ! Hasten forward ! The rod of Moses holds the waters back ! Many have reached the shore ! Praise the Lord ! Forward, forward, and you too may join the song ! Fix your eyes on those two red fires ! They were kindled by those who are delivered ; between them stands the servant of the Lord uplifting his staff."

Then he again laid his ear to the ground, kneeling on the wet sand, and he heard quite near the rattle of wheels and the heavy tramp of horses. But even while he listened the sound gradually ceased, and he heard nothing but the howling of the storm and the ominous beating of the wild waves, or a cry now and then borne down on the east wind.

The chariots had reached the shore of the dry bed of the gulf, and paused some little while, hesitating before they started on so perilous a passage ; then suddenly the Egyptian war cry rang out, and again he heard the rolling wheels. It came on, more slowly than before, but yet faster than the Israelites could march.

For the Egyptians, too, the way lay open ; but, though his people had but a small start, he need no longer fear for them ; all was not lost ; those who had reached the shore could scatter themselves during the night among the mountain solitudes, and ensconce themselves in spots where no chariot nor horse could pursue them. Moses knew the land in which he had long dwelt as a fugitive ; the only thing now was to warn him of the approach of the foe. So he charged a comrade of the tribe of Benjamin with the message, and the distance was no longer very great, while he himself still staid behind to watch the coming of the host. Without stooping to listen, and in spite of the gale which blew the sound from him, he could already hear the clatter of the chariots and neighing of the horses. The lepers, however, who likewise heard the noise, bewailed and wept, fancying themselves already trodden under foot, or swallowed by the cold dark waters ; for the way was fast shrinking, and the sea was greedy to recover the

ground it had abandoned. Man and beast were forced to march in a narrow file, and while the hurrying troops packed closer and closer they also stretched longer, and precious moments were lost. Those who walked on the right-hand side were wading through the encroaching waves, in haste and terror, for already behind them they could hear in the distance the Egyptian words of command.

But the enemy was evidently delayed, and Ephraim easily understood what caused their diminished speed. The ground grew softer at every step, and the narrow wheels of the war chariots must sink deep in it, even to the axles.

Under cover of the darkness he crept back as near as he dared to the pursuing host, and he could hear now an oath and now an angry order to use the lash more freely ; and at last one driver saying to his neighbor :

“What cursed folly ! If they had suffered us to set out before noon instead of waiting till the omens had been read and Amon solemnly installed in the place of Baie, it would have been an easy matter enough, and we should have trapped them like a covey of quails. The high priest has shown his valor on the field before this, and now he gives up the leadership because a dying woman had touched his heart !”

“Siptah’s mother !” another put in. “Still, you are right ; twenty princesses ought not to have turned him from his duty to us. If he had staid by us we should not have had to flay our jades alive, and at an hour, too, when any prudent captain leaves his men to rest by the camp-fires over their supper and their game of draughts. Go to the horse’s heads, man ! we are stuck in the sand again !”

Thereupon a loud outcry arose behind the foremost chariot, and Ephraim could hear another voice exclaiming : “Get on there, if the horses die for it !”

“If retreat were possible,” said the chief captain of the war chariots, a relative of Pharaoh’s, “even now I would turn about. But as it is we should all tumble over each other. So forward, cost what it may ! We are close on their heels. Halt ! Halt ! Curses on that pungent smoke ! Ah ! wait, only wait, you dogs ! As soon as the road opens out a little we will get round you, and may the gods shorten my life by a day for every soul I leave alive ! Another torch out ! I cannot see my hand before my face. A

beggar's stick would be more to the purpose than a commander's staff."

"And a gallows' rope about our necks instead of a gold chain," cried another. "If only the moon would come out! It was because the horoscope promised that it would shine full from evening till dawn that I voted for the late march, turning night into day. If only it were not so dark I——"

But the sentence remained unfinished, for a blast, rushing down from the south-eastern gorges of Baal-Zephon like a roaring beast of prey, swept over the speakers, and a leaping wave wetted Ephraim through and through. He shook back his hair and dried his eyes as he recovered his breath; but behind a loud cry of terror went up from the Egyptians, for the surge that had but drenched him had swept the foremost chariot into the sea. At this the lad began to be alarmed for his people, and he flew forward; but as he started a flash of lightning showed him the gulf, the mountain, and the shore. The thunder did not immediately follow, but the storm now came nearer; the lightnings, instead of cutting zigzag across the sky, flared in broad sheets through the darkness, and before they died out the deafening crack of the thunder echoed among the bare crags of the mountain-cliffs, and rolled in deep, angry waves of sound to the shore and the head of the bay. Sea and land, man and beast, all was flooded with the dazzling glare each time the destroying clouds discharged their bolts; the surging waves and the air above them gleamed in sulphurous yellow, through which the lightning blazed as through an olive-tinted glass wall. Now, too, Ephraim thought he discerned that the heaviest clouds were coming up from the south and not from the north; and presently, by the lightning's gleam, he saw that behind him, here a refractory team were plunging into the waves, there one chariot was overturning another, and beyond these again several were locked together to the destruction of the drivers and men at arms, while they checked the progress of those which followed.

Still, on the whole, the enemy was advancing, and the space dividing the fugitives from the pursuers grew no wider. However, the confusion which prevailed among the Egyptians was by this time so great that the cries of terror of the fighting men and the encouraging shouts of

the drivers waxed louder and louder, in the intervals between the maddening roar of the thunder. But, black as were the storm clouds to the south, fiercely as the wind raged, the darkened heavens shed no water, and, though the pilgrims were wet, it was not with rain, but with the sparkling waves which darted higher and higher every moment, washing up further and further over the dry sand in the bay. The path was narrowing, the passing of the multitude was at an end. The blaze of the beacons still guided the frightened rear to the hoped-for goal, reminding them that there stood Moses with the staff lent him by God. Every step brought them nearer.

Presently a shout of triumph proclaimed that the tribe of Benjamin had reached the shore, though they waded through the foaming fringe of waters for some little distance. It had cost them unheard-of efforts to save the cattle from the rising tide, to drag on the loaded carts, and keep the flocks together ; but now they all stood in safety in dry land. Only the strangers and lepers remained to be rescued. The lepers, indeed, had not flocks nor herds, but the strangers had many, and the storm so terrified the people, as well as the cattle, that they dared not plunge into the water, which was now ankle deep. Ephraim, however, reached the land, and called to the herdsmen from the shore to follow where he had passed, and under his guidance they drove the herds forward. This was successful ; the last man, and the last head of cattle, reached the land of safety under the raging storm, and amid loud shouts of joy. The lepers were forced to wade through waves up to their knees and even to their girdles, and before they had landed the gates of heaven were opened and the rain fell in torrents. But they, too, were safe, and though many a mother, who had been carrying her little one in her arms or on her shoulder, fell on her knees on the shore ; though many a hapless wretch who had been helping his sturdier fellow-sufferers to drag a cart through the yielding sands, or wade through the surf with a litter on his back, felt his head throb with fever ; still, they, too, had escaped destruction.

They were to await further orders beyond a grove of palms which stood on some rising ground about a group of wells not far from the shore. The tribes had gone further inland, to proceed on their way at a given signal ;

this was to take them in a south-easterly direction into the mountain, where inhospitable rocks prohibited any pursuit by a regular army or war chariots.

Hur had gathered his men about him, and they stood armed with spears, slings, and short swords, ready to fall on the foe who might venture to set foot on land. Men and horses should be cut down and the chariots piled into a high barrier, so as to erect a difficult obstacle in the way of their pursuers. The beacons on the shore were so diligently fed and screened, that neither the rain nor the blast would extinguish them. They were to light the herdsmen who were prepared to attack the chariots, and old Nun, Hur and Ephraim stood at their head. But it was in vain that they waited for the pursuers, and when the youth was the first to see, by the glare of the beacon-fires, that the way by which the fugitives had come was now one with the broad level of the sea, and that the smoke was driving to the north instead of the south-west—it was about the hour of the first morning watch—a shout of triumph burst from breasts overflowing with thankfulness and joy: “Look at the flames! The wind has changed; the sea is being carried northwards! The waters have swallowed up Pharaoh’s host!”

At this there was silence for a while in the multitude, and then, suddenly, Nun’s loud voice was heard: “He is right, my children! Vain is the strength of man! O Lord God! How terrible and fearful are Thy judgments on Thy foes!”

Here he was interrupted by a loud outcry. But by the wells, where Moses, greatly exhausted, was leaning against a palm-tree with Aaron and many others about him, the fact which Ephraim had first discerned was now observed by the rest; the glad and terrible tidings, incredible but true, flew from mouth to mouth, and each minute confirmed their certainty. Every eye glanced skywards; the black clouds were steadily sailing away to the northward. The rain was ceasing; instead of the angry flashes and roar of thunder, a few pale gleams lighted up the isthmus and the northern lakes, and to the south the sky was clearing. At last the low moon looked out between the banks of cloud; its peaceful ray silvered the tall flanks of Baal-Zephon and the shores of the gulf, now bathed once more in dashing waves. The roaring and shrieking blast

sank to a murmuring breeze from the south, and the waters, which had been as a raging monster, besieging the rocks, now lay quivering with broken strength at the stony base of the mountain.

The sea spread a shroud, dark for a time, over those hundreds of corpses ; but the pale moon, ere it set, took care that the watery grave of a king and so many great personages should not lack a splendid pall. His radiance poured down on the waves that hid them, decking them with a glorious embroidery of diamonds in silver setting. Whilst the east grew bright and the sky was red with dawn the tents were pitched ; yet there was little time for a hasty morsel. Shortly after sunrise the chief called the wandering people together, and as soon as they had assembled at the springs Miriam swung the tambourine, shook the circle of bells, and struck the calf-skin till they sounded far and wide, and as she paced forth with a light step, the women and maidens followed her, keeping rhythmical time with the dance ; and she sang :

“ I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

“ The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation : he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation ; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

“ Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea : his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

“ The depths have covered them : they sank into the bottom as a stone.

“ Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power : thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

“ And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee : thou sentest forth thy wrath which consumed them as stubble.

“ And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

“ The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil ; my lust shall be satisfied upon them ; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

“ Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them ; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

“ Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods ?

“Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?

“Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed : thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.”

Men and women alike joined in when she repeated the cry : “I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

This song and this solemn hour were never forgotten by the Israelites ; and each one was full of his God, and of glad, thankful hope for happier days.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE song of praise had died away and the storm had long since ceased ; yet the morning sky, which had been red at dawn, was again covered with grey clouds, and a strong wind still blew from the south-west disturbing the lake, and shaking and rocking the crowns of palms which stood by the wells.

The rescued people had extolled the Most High, and even the coldest and most perverse had joined in Miriam's hymn of praise, but, as the procession of dancers approached the sea, many would have gladly left the ranks and have hastened to the strand where many things attracted them. Hundreds had now betaken themselves to the shore, where the waves like generous robbers disgorged and washed up on to the sand that which they had engulfed during the night.

Nor did the women even allow the wind to hinder them, for covetousness and revenge, the most powerful instincts in the human breast, drew them to the shore.

Some new object appeared every moment to excite their greed ; for here lay the corpse of a warrior, and there his overthrown chariot in the sand. From this, if it had been the possession of a great man, they tore the silver or golden ornaments ; from the owner they took his short sword or battle-axe out of his girdle, and men and women of the common class, slaves and slave women of the Hebrews, and the strangers, robbed the bodies of their clasps and

bracelets, which were of precious metal, or tore the rings from the swollen fingers of the drowned.

The ravens which had followed the wanderers, and which had disappeared during the storm, now returned, and were striving, screeching against the wind, at least to maintain a place on the booty, the scent of which had attracted them.

But far greedier than they, were the dregs of the wandering host, and when the sea threw a costly article on shore a wild cry was raised, and hard blows exchanged. The leaders themselves kept back, for they considered that the Hebrews had a right to the spoil; and if one of them tried to prevent gross covetousness the people refused to obey him.

What the Egyptians had so lately brought upon them was so dreadful that it never entered the minds of the best of them to restrain their thirst for revenge. Moreover, grey-bearded men of high position, and women and mothers, whose appearance bespoke a kindly disposition, drove back the few unfortunates who had succeeded in reaching the strand on the wreckage of the war-chariots and baggage-wagons. With shepherds' crooks and travelers' staves, knives and axes, or by throwing stones and spiteful words, they forced them to release their hold on the floating wood; and the few who were still on land were driven by the furious mob back into the sea which had spared them in vain.

Their wrath was so great, and revenge such a sacred duty, that none dreamed of the respect, compassion and consideration due to misfortune; not a word that could hint of magnanimity or pity, or even of the profit that might be gained by saving the rescued to be slaves, or as prisoners of war to be ransomed.

"Death to the arch-enemy!"—"Destruction fall on them!"—"Away with them!"—"Give them as food to the fishes!"—"You drove us and our children into the sea, away with you into the salt waves!"

These were the cries that were raised on every side and which no one checked, not even Miriam and Ephraim, who likewise had gone down to the shore to witness the tragedy that was being enacted there.

Though the maiden was now the wife of Hur, her demeanor and character had been very little altered by her marriage. The fate of the people and her relations with

her God, whose prophetess she felt she was, were still her highest thought ; and now that all she had hoped and prayed for was being fulfilled, now that she had given expression to the feelings of the faithful in song, marching in front of the thankful multitude, she considered she attained the summit of her existence.

Ephraim first had reminded her of Joshua, and while she spoke with him of the prisoner she walked proudly along like a queen, and answering the greetings of the people with majestic dignity. Her eyes sparkled with happiness, and her face wore only for a few minutes an expression of pity when the youth told her of the hardships he had endured with his uncle. Of course she still remembered the man she had loved, but he was no longer essential to the high aim of her life.

Ephraim had just mentioned the lovely Egyptian woman who loved his uncle, and at whose petition the chains had been taken off the prisoners, when a loud cry was raised on a part of the shore where a great crowd had collected.

Howls of rage and cries of joy went up together, obviously caused by the fact that the sea had thrown up something particularly valuable on land. Curiosity attracted them both to the spot ; and as Miriam's proud dignity caused the people to stand aside, she soon caught sight of the body of a traveling chariot which had lost its wheels, and of its pitiable contents. The linen canopy which had screened it was torn away, and lying on its floor were two elderly Egyptian women ; a third, much younger, lay against the back seat of this singular vehicle, which had thus become a boat. The first two lay dead in the water that covered the bottom of the carriage, and several Hebrew women were in the act of tearing off the costly ornaments from the throat and arms of one of them. The younger woman had escaped death by a wonderful chance, and now she was offering her very precious jewels to the Hebrew women. At the same time, with pale, quivering lips and slender, half-benumbed hands, she was promising the robbers, in a soft, harmonious voice, to give them all she had, and a handsome reward in money as well, if they would spare her life. She was still so young, and she had been kind, very kind, to a Hebrew. If they would but hear her. This petition sounded affecting, though it was interrupted so frequently with curses and groans that little

of it was audible. Just as Miriam and Ephraim reached the shore she screamed aloud, for a brutal woman tore the gold snake from her ear. The Egyptian girl's cry of anguish struck the youth like a sword thrust, and the color left his face as he recognized Kasana's voice.

The corpses by her were those of her nurse and of Baie's wife.

Ephraim, almost beside himself, thrust aside the men who separated him from the victim on one side and hastened towards the remains of the chariot; sprang into the sand bank at the foot of which the vehicle was stranded, and cried, with burning cheeks and impetuous passion :

“Back ! Woe to those who touch her !”

But a Hebrew woman, the wife of a brickmaker, whose child had died in frightful convulsions on the journey through the sea, had already snatched the dagger from Kasana's girdle and had stabbed her in the back, with the cry : “That's for my little Ruth ! Wretch !”

She raised the bloody poignard for a second blow ; but before she could strike her enemy again, Ephraim rushed between them and wrenched away the knife. Then, standing in front of the hapless creature, he shouted in loud menace : “Murderers and thieves ! If one of you dares to touch her, his blood shall mingle with that of this woman !” With these words he fell on his knees by the side of the bleeding victim, and, finding that she had lost consciousness, he lifted her in his arms, and carried her to Miriam.

The startled plunderers for a few minutes suffered him to do as he would, but before he had gained his end, a cry was raised of : “Vengeance, vengeance ! We found the woman, and the body is ours alone.” “How dare the haughty Ephraimite call us robbers and murderers ?” “When there is a chance of shedding Egyptian blood, it shall flow !” The Lord our God spares not, nor do we !” “Seize him !” “Seize the girl !”

But the lad paid no heed to this outbreak of rage till Kasana's head was resting on Miriam's bosom, where she was sitting on a sandhill near at hand, and then, as the angry crowd rushed upon him, the women outstripping the men, he once more flourished his dagger, crying : “Back ! Hold off ! I tell you once more. If there are any men here of

Ephraim or Judah, let them come to my side, or to Miriam's, the wife of their chief! Well done, my brethren, and woe to him who lays a hand on me! Vengeance, do you say? Are you not avenged by that hyæna which has murdered this poor defenceless creature? Your victim's jewels? Well, well; they are yours, and I will give you my own into the bargain, so long as you leave the wife of Hur free to care for the dying woman!"

He bent over Kasana, took from her person all she had about her of pins or rings, and placed them in the greedy hands stretched out to receive them. Then he took the broad gold band from his own arm, held it up, and cried: "This is the promised ransom. Go back quietly and leave this woman to Miriam, and you shall have it to share among you. If you insist on blood, come on—but then, I keep the bracelet!"

These words did not fail in their effect. The angry women looked first at the heavy, broad gold band, and then at the splendid youth, and the men of Judah and Ephraim who had rallied round him; and then gazed inquiringly at each other. At last the wife of a foreign trader cried out: "Give us the gold, and we will leave the wounded darling to the chief's son!"

The rest agreed to this decision, although the furious brickmaker's wife, who meant to have done a deed pleasing in the eyes of her god by avenging her child, and had, in consequence, been accused as a murderess, still threatened Ephraim with frenzied gestures till she was dragged away to the shore by the crowd who hoped to find fresh booty there.

Through all the tumult Miriam, without a qualm of fear, had examined and bound up Kasana's wounds with a skillful hand. The dagger, a gift in jest from Prince Siptah, that his fair one might not go forth to battle unarmed, had inflicted a deep stab under one shoulder, and she had lost so much blood that the feeble flicker of life seemed to die out at every breath. But she still lived, and she was carried into Nun's tent, as being the nearest at hand.

The old chief had just been giving out weapons to the herdsmen and youths gathered together by his grandson to go forth to liberate his beloved son, and had promised himself to join the expedition, when the melancholy party reached the tent. If Kasana had admired the noble

old man, so had Hur felt very kindly towards Hornecht's lovely daughter in the by-gone years at Tanis. They had never met without she giving him some pretty greeting, and he would reply to her : " The Lord bless thee, child ! " or, " A happy day for an old man when he meets so sweet a maid ! " Many years ago, while she still wore the curls of a very young girl, he had even given her a lamb with especially silky, snow-white wool, after he had concluded a bargain with her father, exchanging some corn from Hornecht's land for steers of his own famous breed. And all his son had ever told him of Kasana had tended to enhance his regard for her. She seemed in his eyes the most lovable of all the maidens of Tanis, and if she had been the child of Hebrew parents it would have rejoiced him to see her married to his son.

To find his favorite again in so pitiable a plight was so great a grief to the old man that the tears ran down on his snowy beard, and his voice shook when he saw the blood-stained bandage about her shoulder. When she was laid on his couch, and Nun had placed his medicine chest at the prophetess' service, Miriam desired the men to leave her alone with the sufferer ; and when she called them back into the tent, she had revived Kasana with some drug and bound her wound with greater care. With her hair smoothly arranged and the blood all washed away, she lay between fresh linen sheets like a sleeping child, hardly looking as if she had attained woman's estate. And she still breathed, though the blood had not returned to her lips or cheeks, and it was not till she had again swallowed the mixture which Miriam had prepared for her that she opened her eyes.

At the foot of the bed stood the old man and his grandson, and each would fain have asked the other how it came to pass that he could not refrain his tears as he looked into the face of this stranger.

The conviction which Ephraim had so unexpectedly gained, that Kasana was base and false-hearted, had revolted him, and frightened him back into the right way which he had left. Nevertheless, he had kept all he had overheard in the tent locked in his own heart, and when he had told his grandfather and Miriam that Kasana had interceded kindly for the prisoners, and both had desired to learn more from him, he had felt as a father might who had

witnessed the crime of a beloved son, and not a word of the horrors he had heard passed his lips. Now, he was glad he had kept silence ; for in spite of all he had seen and heard, this pure and lovely creature was surely incapable of anything dishonorable.

Old Nun had never ceased to think of her as the sweet child he had known so well, the apple of his eye and joy of his heart. He looked down on the quivering features with tender pity, and when at length she opened her eyes, he smiled at her with fatherly affection. The light in her eyes showed that she, too, at once recognized him and Ephraim, but when she tried to nod her head to them she was too weak. Still, her expressive face confessed her surprise and pleasure ; and when Miriam, for the third time, offered her the draught, and moistened her brow with some strong essence, she looked from one to another with her large eyes, and seeing their curious gaze she was able to say in a low voice : " These wounds ache so, and death—— Shall I die ? " They glanced inquiringly at each other, and the men would very gladly have concealed the dreadful truth, but she went on : " Oh, let me know ; tell me the truth, I pray you ! "

And Miriam, who was kneeling on the ground by her side, found courage to reply : " Yes, poor, young thing, the wound is deep ; but all my art may do to save you shall be done, to preserve your life as long as possible. "

The words were spoken kindly and compassionately, and yet the prophetess' deep voice seemed to jar on Kasana's ear ; her lips curled pitifully while Miriam spoke, and when she ceased the sufferer closed her eyes and large tears flowed down her cheeks.

Deep and anxious silence reigned till she opened her eyes once more, and fixing them sadly on Miriam's face asked, as if in amazement at something strange, " You, a woman, are learned in the leech's art ? "

To which Miriam replied : " My God hath bidden me to care for the sufferers among my people. "

At this the dying woman's eyes sparkled uneasily, and she exclaimed in a stronger voice, indeed with a vigor which surprised her hearers : " You are Miriam, the woman who sent for Joshua to go to her ; " and when Miriam replied unhesitatingly and simply : " As you say, " Kasana went on : " And you are, indeed, of great and

majestic beauty, and must be capable of great things ! He obeyed your call, and you—you could nevertheless marry another ?”

And again the prophetess answered, but in a gloomier tone : “ As you say.”

Then the dying woman closed her eyes again, and a strange covert smile parted her lips.

But this was not for long ; she became uneasy and restless. The fingers of her little hands, her lips, even her eyebrows, were never still, and her smooth narrow brow was furrowed as though she had something weighing on her brain. At length the trouble which disturbed her peace found utterance, and she said in quavering accents :

“ You are Ephraim, whom he loved as a son, and you are Nun, the old man his father. There you stand, and you will live, while I—Oh, and it is so hard to leave the light of day. Anubis will lead me before the judgment seat of Osiris, my heart will be weighed, and then——” She shuddered violently, opening and closing her trembling hands ; but she soon recovered herself, and began to speak once more. But Miriam positively forbade her as it must hasten the end.

At this Kasana collected all her strength and exclaimed quickly, and as loudly as she could, glancing at Miriam from top to toe : “ So you would hinder me from doing what I must do ? You !” There was an accent of contempt in her tone ; but she no doubt felt that she must husband her strength, for she went on more calmly, and as if speaking to herself : “ But I cannot depart thus—not thus ! How it happened—why I did it all—I must confess ; and I will not complain if only he may know how it came to pass. Oh, Nun, good old Nun, who gave me a lamb when I was yet but a child—I loved it so—and you, Ephraim, my boy, I will tell you everything.”

A painful cough here checked her utterance ; as soon as she had recovered her breath she turned to Miriam again and went on, in a voice so full of bitter aversion that it startled those who knew her kindly nature : “ It is you—you, tall woman with a man’s voice, and the learning of a leech—you who beguiled him from Tanis, and from me. He went and came and did your bidding. And you—you became another man’s wife—it must have been after his coming ; yes—for when Ephraim brought your

message he spoke of you as a maiden. Whether it was a grief to Joshua I know not. But another thing I know, and that is that I have somewhat to confess before it is too late. And none may hear it but those who love him, and I—do you hear?—I love him more than all else on earth! You! you have a husband, and a God whose bidding you zealously obey—as you yourself have said. What is Joshua to you? I beg you to leave us. Very few have I met in my life to whom I could not feel kindly, but you I—I cannot love, I know not why,—and if you remain near me I cannot speak—and I must—and it hurts me so to speak! But before you go—you are a physician—tell me one thing: I have so many things to say to him before I die—will it kill me if I speak?”

And again the prophetess found no reply but her brief, “As you say,” and her tone was one of stern warning.

Hesitating between the duty she owed to the sufferer as her physician, and her desire not to contravene the wishes of a dying creature, she glanced at old Nun, and reading in his face a command to yield to Kasana’s wish she bent her head and quitted the tent. But as she stood outside the poor soul’s bitter words come home to her, and spoil the day that had begun so gloriously, aye, and many an hour after; and to the last she could never explain to herself how it was that in the presence of that hapless, dying woman a feeling had possessed her that she was the smaller, the inferior creature.

As soon as Kasana found herself alone with the grandfather and grandson, and Ephraim had fallen on his knees by the bedside, while the old man, after kissing her brow, stood with his hoary head bent to hear her low tones, she began again:

“Now I am easier. That tall woman—her knit black brows—her eyes as dark as night—they are fiery indeed, and yet so cold . . . that woman . . . Did Joshua love her, father? Tell me. I do not ask out of idle curiosity.”

“He honored her,” replied the old man in some trouble, “as do all our people. She is of a lofty spirit, and our God vouchsafes to her to hear His voice. But you, sweet one, were dear to him even as a child; that I know.”

A slight shudder ran through her frame. For a short space she closed her eyes and a blissful smile lighted up her face. This lasted so long that Nun thought that

death had already claimed her, and he leaned over her, listening to her breathing, with the draught in his hand. She did not seem to see him; but when at last she looked up again, she put out her hand for the cup, drank from it, and then went on: "I felt as though he were there before me—Joshua himself. He wore his warrior's dress, as he did the first time he took me on his arm. I was but a little child, and I was afraid of him because he looked so grave, and my nurse had told me that he had slain many enemies. But I was happy when he came, and when he went away I was sad. And years went on, and my love for him grew as I grew. My young heart was so full of him, so full . . . Yes, even when I was compelled to marry another, and after I was a widow." The last words were scarcely audible, and she rested a while before she went on: "Joshua knows it well—only he does not know how anxious I was when he was in the field, and how I longed for him till he came home again. At last, at last, he returned, and how glad I was to see him once more! But he himself! That woman—Ephraim told me—that tall, proud woman bid him go to Pithom. Yet he came back from thence, and then, O Nun. That was hardest of all to bear—he refused my hand when my father offered it. That—ah, how it hurt me! I can no more—give me the cup again."

Her cheeks had colored slightly as she made this painful confession; and the old man, perceiving how quickly the efforts she was making were bringing her to the end, begged her to be silent. But she insisted on making use of what little time remained to her, and though a piercing pain and tormenting short cough forced her to press her hand to her bosom she went on:

"Then I hated him; but not for long; and I never loved him more than when I went after the hapless prisoner—you know, boy. And then came the dreadful, horrible time, the shameful things—but he must know it all that he may not despise me if he ever hears. I never knew my mother, and there was no one to warn me . . . Where shall I begin? Prince Siptah—you know him, father—the bad man who will soon be lord over Egypt. My father is in a plot with him. Great gods! I can speak no more!"

Terror and despair were painted in her face; but Ephraim broke in and confessed with tearful eyes and a

trembling voice all he had overheard by her tent that night, and she confirmed it with assenting glances. When at last he spoke of the high priest Baie's wife, whose body had been thrown up on the strand by Kasana's side, she interrupted him in a low voice, saying, "She devised it all. She wanted her husband to be supreme in the land, and govern even Pharaoh, for Siptah is no king's son."

"Aye," said the old man, only anxious to stop her speaking and to help her to tell all she wished to make known, "and as Baie raised him up, so can he overturn him. He, even more surely than his predecessor, will be the tool of the man who has made him king. I know Aarsu, the Syrian, and, if I am not deceived, the time is coming when he will aim at seizing the reins of power in Egypt, torn as it will be by internal divisions, though he and his mercenaries have so far helped others to snatch them. But you, child, what prompted you to follow the army and that profligate traitor?"

Kasana's eyes gleamed more brightly again, for the question led directly to the matter of which she desired to speak, and she replied as clearly as her failing strength allowed, "It was for your son's sake—for love of him—to procure his release. Only the evening before I had refused positively to go with Baie's wife. But when I had seen Joshua once more by the well, and he—ah, he was so kind at last, and kissed my brow! And I saw him in misery—alas, poor heart! I saw the best of men doomed to perish in disgrace and sickness. And when he went onward with chains on his feet it suddenly struck me."

"Then, brave, foolish, misguided child that you are, you determined to win the devotion of the future king in order to secure the release of your friend, my son?"

The dying woman smiled and said softly, "Yes, yes; for that and that alone. And I loathed the prince. And the disgrace, the shame—horrible, horrible!"

"So it was for my son's sake that you endured it all," cried the old man interrupting her, and her hand which he pressed to his lips was wet with his tears, while she turned to Ephraim and sighed: "And I thought of this lad, too. He is so young and the mines so terrible."

Again she shuddered. The boy covered her hand with kisses while she looked tenderly in his face and his grandfather's, and added: "Now all is well, and if the gods grant him freedom——"

Here Ephraim broke in, "We are setting forth this very day for the mines. I and my comrades and my grandfather will drive his keepers to the four winds——"

"And he shall learn from my own lips," said Nun, "how truly Kasana loved him, and his whole life will be too short to thank her for such a sacrifice."

His voice failed him. But every trace of trouble had vanished from the dying woman's face, and she lay for some time gazing upwards in silent contentment. But then, by degrees, an anxious frown came on her brow, and she softly gasped out: "It is well—yes, all is well—but yet one thing. My body, unembalmed—with no holy amulets——"

And here Nun again interrupted her, saying: "As soon as we have closed your eyes I will deliver it, safely wrapped, to the Phœnician seaman who is close at hand, that he may convey it to your father."

She tried to turn her head to thank him with a loving glance; but suddenly she clutched at her throat with both hands, dark blood rose to her lips, a bright flame tinged her cheeks and faded to dead white, and after a short and painful struggle she sank back. Death had laid his hand on the loving heart, and her face wore the look of a child's whose mother has forgiven it some fault, and kissed it before it fell asleep.

Nun closed her eyes, weeping as he did so; Ephraim, deeply moved, kissed the drooping lids; and after a few moments' silence the old man said: "I trouble myself very little about the life beyond the grave, of which even Moses knows nothing; but one who lives as she has lived must always survive in the faithful memory of those whom she loved; and she has done her part, it seems to me, to attain immortality. We will dispose of her body according to our promise, and then set forth to prove to him for whom Kasana gave all she had to give, that we love him no less well than the Egyptian woman."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE prisoners were making their way but slowly to the mines. Never in all his experience had the leader of the gang known a worse journey through the desert, more luckless in every way, or so beset with mishaps and hindrances.

One of his "moles," Ephraim, to wit, had made his escape; he had lost one of his faithful hounds; and after his gang had been terrified and drenched by such a storm as scarcely befell once in five years in all that thirsty tract, another overtook them on the following day—the same in which Pharaoh and his host had perished—even more violent and persistent than the first. The tempest had stopped their march, and after this second deluge some of his prisoners and men had sickened with fever from sleeping on the wet ground in the open air. Even the Egyptian asses, unaccustomed to the rain, had suffered from the wetting, and the best had been left to die on the way.

At last they had been compelled to bury two of their comrades in the sand, and three more were so ill that they must be mounted on the asses that were left; thus the prisoners were forced to carry the provisions with which the beasts had been laden. In all his twenty-five years' experience such a thing had never before happened to their guide, and he looked forward to severe reproof at home.

All this had a bad effect on the man's temper, though he was commonly regarded as the most lenient of his tribe, and Joshua, as the accomplice of the audacious rascal whose escape was the beginning of all these vexations, was the chief victim of his wrath. Angry as he was, the leader of the gang might perhaps have dealt more mercifully with him if he had bewailed his lot like the man next behind him, or cursed as loudly as his companion in chains, who spent his breath in threats of a time coming when his sister-in-law would be in attendance on Pharaoh, and she would find some way to punish the man who had ill-treated her dear sister's husband.

But Joshua had made up his mind to take all the rough driver and his men could do to him with as calm submission as the scorching sun which had tortured him many a time ere this during his marches across the desert, under arms ; and his manly spirit and strong will helped him to keep this resolution. When the driver loaded him with a monstrous burthen, he collected all the strength of his powerful muscles and tottered forward under it without a rebellious word till his knees gave way ; and then his tyrant would fly at him, snatch a few bales from off his shoulders, and declare he knew all the wickedness of his heart, and that all he hoped for was that he might have to be left on the way and so bring his driver into further trouble ; but he would not let his prisoners cheat him of their lives when hands were needed in the mines.

Once the man inflicted a deep wound ; but he was immediately most anxiously careful that it should be healed ; gave him wine to strengthen him, and delayed the caravan for half a day that he might rest.

He had not forgotten Prince Siptah's promise of a splendid reward to the man who should bring him news of his prisoner's death ; but he was an honest man, and it was this very promise which prompted him to watch with special care over Joshua's life ; for the consciousness of having neglected his duty for any personal profit would have spoiled his appetite for meat, drink and sleep, the three blessings he most prized. Hence, though the Hebrew had much to suffer, it was not beyond endurance ; and it was a real pleasure to be able to lighten the woes of his weaker comrades by exerting his own great strength.

He had resigned his fate to the God who had called him to serve Him ; but his service, he knew, was something more than mere pious trust ; and day and night his mind was set on flight. But the fetters which linked him to his fellow-victim were so firmly riveted, and so carefully examined and hammered night and morning, that any attempt to escape must only have ended in more cruel misery.

The prisoners were conducted first across a hilly country and then towards a long range of mountains lying in front of them, till they reached a desert tract where weather-worn boulders of sandstone stood up at intervals from the rocky ground.

On the fifth evening the gang stopped to rest by a lofty mountain which nature seemed to have piled up out of flat layers of stone ; and at sunrise, on the sixth morning, they turned off down a valley leading to the mines.

They had overtaken no one since, on the first day, they had come up with a messenger from the king's treasury. They had, on the other hand, met several small caravans, conveying malachite, turquoises and copper to Egypt, as well as the green glass manufactured in the neighborhood of the mines.

Among a party whom they met at the opening of the gorge into which they diverged on this last day, were a married couple, on their way homeward, having been pardoned by the king. The driver pointed to them, to raise the spirits of his exhausted "moles," but the sight of them had quite an opposite effect ; for the man's unkempt hair was already grey, though he was hardly past thirty, his tall figure bent and haggard, and his bare back striped with many scars and clotted blood, while his wife, who had shared his fate, had gone blind. She sat huddled on an ass in the brooding melancholy of mania ; and although the prison gang, as they marched past, loudly broke the silence of the desert, and her hearing was as sharp as ever, she paid no heed to them, but stared unmoved into vacancy.

The sight of these hapless wretches held up his own hideous fate as clearly as a mirror before Joshua's eyes ; for the first time he groaned aloud, and clasped his hands over his face. This the driver noticed, and touched by the horror of a man whose powers of endurance had till now seemed indomitable, he cried to him : "But they do not all return like this ; no indeed, not like this !"

"Because they are even more utterly wretched," he thought to himself, "but that poor fellow need not know that. Next time I come this way I will remember to ask for Joshua, for I shall be curious to know what will become of such a bull of a man. The strongest and most determined often are the quickest to perish."

At this he flourished his whip over the heads of his gang as if he were driving a team of horses, without touching them, however. Then he pointed to a cloud of smoke rising from behind a wall of rock on the right hand and said •

“There are the smelting furnaces! We shall be in by mid-day. There is no lack of fires here to cook our lentils, and a bit of sheep’s flesh into the bargain; for we are keeping the kind god’s birthday, the Son of Ra. Long may he live! Hail and good health to him!”

For half an hour longer they toiled along the dry bed of a torrent, with high banks on each side; after the storm a roaring mountain stream had rushed down this gully to the lower ground, and even now a few pools were exhaling their moisture. When the melancholy train had made their way round a steep shoulder of rock, on the top of which stood a small Egyptian temple to Hathor and a considerable number of grave-stones, they found themselves close to a bend in the ravine which led to the gorge where the mines lay.

Flags were waving from tall masts in front of the temple, in honor of Pharaoh’s birthday; and when presently a noise came up from the valley, usually so silent, of shouts, and tumult, and clatter, the driver expressed his opinion that the high festival was being kept by the prisoners with unwonted jollity, saying so to the other guards who had paused to listen.

So they moved forward without delay; but no man held up his drooping head, for the noon-day sun was so relentlessly cruel, and the sides of the ravine, dazzling with the glare, poured down such fierce heat, that it seemed as though they were striving to outdo the smelting furnaces.

Though so near their journey’s end the wanderers tottered forward as if in sleep, and one alone held his breath with excitement. As a war horse harnessed to a plough arches his neck, and dilates his nostrils, while the fire sparkles in his eye, so had Joshua drawn up his stooping form in spite of the heavy sack across his shoulders, and his flashing gaze turned to the spot whence the uproar came which the driver supposed to be loud revelry. But he, Joshua, knew better. He could never mistake the sounds which he heard. It was the battle-cry of Egyptian troops, the trumpet call to summon them to arms, the clatter of weapons and shouting of hostile parties.

Ready at once for swift action, he addressed his comrade in chains and whispered his commands: “The hour of release is at hand. Keep your eyes open, but follow me blindly.”

At this the other, too, was greatly excited, and no sooner had Joshua looked down the ravine than he said: "Now. Be ready!"

The first glance into the little gorge had revealed to him a figure standing on the top of a cliff, and a noble head framed in white hair. It was his father. He would have known him among ten thousand, and from a much greater distance. But he looked away from that beloved face for a moment to glance at the driver of the gang who stood still, startled and speechless; and then, thinking that a mutiny had broken out among the state-prisoners, with quick presence of mind he cried in harsh accents to his subordinates:

"Get behind our prisoners and kill any one who attempts to escape." But hardly had the men done his bidding and gone to the rear, when Joshua whispered to his companion: "Now, down with him!"

With these words the Hebrew, who, with his fellow captive, was at the head of the file, rushed on the driver, and Joshua had seized his right arm and the other man his left, before he was aware of it.

He was a stalwart fellow, and rage doubled his strength; he struggled wildly to free himself, but Joshua and his comrade held him in a grip of iron.

One glance had been enough to show the captive warrior which way he must go to reach his own people. It would have to pass a small force of Egyptian bowmen who were shooting their arrows at the Hebrews on the opposite side of the ravine; but the enemy would not dare to turn on them, for the sturdy form of the slave driver served to screen them both, and he was easily recognizable by his dress and weapons. "Hold up the chain with one hand," said Joshua to his accomplice. "I can hold our living shield. We must get up the shoulder of the hill crab-fashion."

His companion obeyed, and when they came within arrow-shot length of the foe they held their prisoner first on one side, and then, walking backwards, between themselves and the Egyptians. Thus Joshua, shouting in ringing tones: "The son of Nun is returning to his father and his people!" made his way, step by step, towards the Hebrew fighting men.

None of the Egyptians who recognized the captain of the

prison-gang had dared to let fly a shaft at the escaped prisoners ; and now, from the top of the slope which the fettered couple were climbing backwards, Joshua heard his name called in joyful accents, and at the same moment Ephraim and his company of youthful combatants came flying down the hill to meet him.

To his astonishment the warrior saw in the hands of every son of his people a large shield as of an Egyptian foot-soldier, a sword, or a battle-axe. But many still wore at their girdles the herdsman's sling and bag of pebbles.

Ephraim was their leader, and before he greeted his uncle, he ranged his men in two ranks like a double wall between Joshua and the enemy's archers. Not till then did he give utterance to the joy of meeting ; and another glad greeting followed his, for old Nun was safely led to the wall of rock under cover of those large Egyptian shields which the sea had cast on shore ; and then, under shelter of the cliff, strong hands filed off the fetters which bound Joshua and his comrade, while Ephraim, aided by a few others, bound the driver captive. The unfortunate officer had given up all resistance and let them do what they would, passively resigned. Before they tied his hands behind his back, he only begged to be allowed to wipe his eyes, for the tears were coursing each other down the stern man's cheeks and on to his grey beard ; tears of vexation at finding himself outwitted and overpowered, and unable to fulfill his duty.

The old Hebrew clasped his redeemed and only son to his heart with passionate affection. Then, releasing him from his embrace, he stepped back a few paces, and would never have tired of feasting his eyes on Joshua, and of hearing that, faithful to his God, he would henceforth devote himself to the service of his people.

But it was not for long that they might allow themselves to revel in the joy of this happy meeting ; the battle was still to be won, and Nun, as a matter of course, transferred his command to Joshua.

With thankful gladness, and yet not without a pang of regret, Joshua heard of the end which had overtaken the fine army among whose captains he had long been proud to reckon himself ; and he rejoiced to learn that another company of armed shepherds had gone under the leadership of Hur, Miriam's husband, to surprise the turquoise

mines at Dophka, at about an hour's march further to the south. If they were victorious they were to rejoin the young men under Ephraim before sundown.

These ardent spirits were burning to fall upon the Egyptians once more ; Joshua, who was prudent, and who had reconnoitred the foe, had, indeed, no doubt that they would succumb to the fierce herdsmen who far outnumbered them. But he was anxious to avoid bloodshed in this fight which was being waged for his sake, so he desired Ephraim to cut him a plummy leaf from the nearest palmtree, borrowed a shield, and went forward alone to speak with the enemy, waving his symbol of peace. The chief body of the Egyptians were guarding the entrance to the mines, and, recognizing the token which invited a parley, they desired their captain to meet Joshua. This officer was nothing loth to grant the Hebrew an interview, but he would first make himself acquainted with the contents of a letter which had just been delivered to him, and which must contain evil tidings, for that much could be gathered from the messenger's demeanor, and from a few broken but ominous words which he had murmured to his fellow Egyptians.

While some of Pharaoh's soldiers fetched refreshment for the exhausted and travel-stained runner, listening with horror to the tidings he panted out in hoarse accents, the officer read the letter.

His brow darkened, and when he had ended he clutched the papyrus fiercely in his hand, for it announced nothing less than the destruction of the army, the death of Pharaoh Menephtah, and, moreover, that his eldest surviving son had been proclaimed and crowned as Seti the second ; an attempt on the part of Prince Siptah to possess himself of the throne having completely failed, this prince had fled to the marsh-lands of the Delta, and the Syrian, Aarsu, after deserting him and ranging himself on the side of the new king, had been raised to the command of the whole army of mercenaries. Baie, the high priest and supreme judge, had been deprived of his offices by Seti II., and banished from court. Those who had conspired with Siptah were condemned, not to the copper mines, but to the gold mines of Ethiopia. It was also reported that several women attached to the family of the fugitive usurper had been strangled, certainly his mother. Every

fighting-man who could be spared from the mines was to return forthwith to Tanis, as there was need of men for the newly-constituted legions.

These tidings produced a great effect ; for, after Joshua had communicated to the Egyptian captain the fact that he, too, knew of the destruction of the Egyptian host, and expected fresh reinforcements in a few hours, who had, meanwhile, been sent to reduce Dophka, the Egyptian surrendered to his imperious tone, and only sought favorable terms and leave to depart. He knew only too well how weak was the forces in charge of the turquoise mines, and he could look for no succor from head-quarters. Besides this, the person of the envoy captivated his confidence, so, after many excuses and threats, he confessed himself satisfied with Joshua's permission to withdraw the garrison unharmed, with their beasts of burthen and provisions for the journey. This, to be sure, was not to be granted till they had laid down their arms and shown the Hebrews every entrance to the mines where prisoners were working.

The young Hebrews proceeded forthwith to disarm the Egyptians, who were more than twice their number, and many a veteran's eye was moist, while many an one broke his spear or nicked his arrows, cursing and swearing the while ; and some of the older men who had formerly served under Joshua, and now recognized him, raised their fists and railed at him for a traitor.

It was always the refuse of the troops which was sent on service in this wilderness ; most of the men were stamped with traces of evil living, and their faces were hard and cruel. On the banks of the Nile, those were carefully chosen who made ruthless brutality to the helpless their duty.

At last the mines were opened, and Joshua himself seized the miner's lamp and made his way into the sweltering galleries where the state prisoners, naked and loaded with fetters, were hewing out the copper ore. From a distance he could hear the swallow-tailed picks hacking at the hard rock. Then the miserable wailing of men and women in torment fell on his ear, for barbarous drivers pursued them into these depths and goaded the idlers to bestir themselves.

This morning, as being Pharaoh's birthday, they had all

been driven to the temple of Hathor, up on the cliff, to pray for the king who had cast them into this uttermost wretchedness ; and they would have enjoyed a respite from labor till next morning if it had not been for the unexpected arrival of the chief overseer which had compelled them to return underground. Indeed, even the women were all employed in digging, though, as a rule, their tasks consisted only in crushing and sifting the ore which was used in the manufacture of glass and of dye stuffs.

When the victims heard Joshua's footstep echoing from the bare rock-wall, they feared lest some new torment should be coming upon them, and their cries and lamentations were heard on all sides. But the deliverer had soon reached the first of the toilers, and the glad tidings, that he had come to put an end to their wretched lot, were soon repeated to the furthest depths of the caverns. Wild shouts of joy filled the galleries long used to wailing and tears ; but loud cries for help, gasping, groaning and a death-rattle also fell on Joshua's ear, for one hot-headed victim had turned on the driver of his gang and killed him with a blow of his pick. His example fired the vengeance of the others, and before they could be stopped the rest of the overseers had met the same fate. Not without defending themselves, however, and many a prisoner lay dead by the corpse of his tormentors.

In obedience to Joshua's call the liberated throng at length made their way out to the light of day. Wild and harsh indeed were their shouts, mingling with the clatter of the chains they dragged behind them. And the most hard-hearted among the Hebrews, when they saw this troop of despairing wretches in the broad sunshine, shrank from the sight. Many of these hapless creatures had, in former times, enjoyed every earthly blessing in their own homes, or in the king's palace ; had been loving fathers and mothers ; had rejoiced in their power for good, and had had their part in all the fruits which culture could bestow on a gifted people ; and now their weak and blood-shot eyes, though they glittered at first with the tears brought into them by the sudden change from the night of the caverns to the glare of the mid-day sun, presently flashed with a wild and greedy gleam like those of starving owls.

In their first bewilderment and consternation at the

amazing change in their fortunes they tremulously struggled for composure, and suffered the Hebrews, at Joshua's bidding, to file off the fetters from their ankles ; but they soon caught sight of the disarmed soldiers and overseers, who were ranged under a wall of rock under the eye of Ephraim and his followers, and a strange impulse came over them. With a yell and a shriek for which there is no name, and which no words could describe, they tore themselves away from the men who were trying to remove their chains, and without a word or a sign of mutual agreement, rushed with a common instinct, heedless of their metal bonds, on the helpless wretches. Before the Hebrews could stay them each fell on the one who had treated him most cruelly ; and here a famished creature gripped the foe who had been his master by the throat, while there a herd of women, stripped of all clothing and horribly disfigured by want and neglect, flew at the man who had most brutally insulted, beaten and injured them, and wreaked their long-repressed fury with tooth and nail. It was as though a sudden flood of hatred had broken down the dam and was ravening unchecked for its prey.

There was a frantic attack and defense, a fearful and bloody struggle on the shifting red sandy soil, an ear-splitting chorus of shrieks, wailing and yells ; indeed it was hard to distinguish anything in the revolting medley of men and women, which became more and more intricately tangled as it was aggravated on one side by the wildest passions and a desire for revenge which was sheer blood-thirstiness, and on the other by the dread of death and strenuous instinct of self-defense.

Only a few of the prisoners had held back, and even they shrieked encouragement to the rest, reviled the enemy with excited vehemence, and shook their fists. The rage with which the released victims now fell on their tormentors was as unmeasured as the cruelty under which they had suffered.

But it was Joshua who had disarmed the tyrants ; they were therefore under his protection. He ordered his men to separate the combatants, and if possible without bloodshed ; this was no easy matter, and many a fresh deed of horror was inevitable. At last it was done, and now it could be seen how strangely passion had lent strength to the most exhausted and wretched, for, though no weapons

had been used in the struggle, not a few corpses lay on the arena, and most of the guards and overseers were bleeding from ugly wounds.

When peace once more reigned, Joshua demanded of the captain of the little garrison a list of the prisoners in the mines ; but he himself was wounded, and pointed to the clerk of the works who had not been laid hands on. He who had been their leech in case of need, and had always treated them kindly, was a man of some age who had known sorrow himself, and knowing what suffering means had always been ready to alleviate it in others.

He very willingly read out the names of the captives, among whom were several Hebrews, and after each had answered to the call, most of them expressed themselves ready to go with the departing tribes.

When at length the disarmed soldiers and guards set forth on their homeward way, the driver who had brought Joshua and his fellow-prisoners to the mines went up to old Nun and his son with a crestfallen air, and begged to be allowed to remain with them ; for no good could be in store for him at home, and in all Egypt there was no god so mighty as their God. He had not failed to observe that Joshua, who had himself once been the captain of thousands, had ever in the greatest straits uplifted his hands to that God, and such fortitude as the Hebrew had shown he had never before seen. Now, indeed, he saw and knew that that mighty God had overwhelmed Pharaoh and his host in the sea in order to save His people. Such a God was after his own heart, and he desired nothing better henceforth than to abide with those who served Him.

Joshua gladly consented to his joining himself to them, and it was found that there were fifteen Hebrew prisoners, among them, to Ephraim's great joy, Reuben, the husband of Miriam's devoted and heart-broken ally, Milcah. His reserved and taciturn manner had stood him in good stead, and the hardships he had endured seemed to have had little effect on his strong frame.

A triumphant sense of victory and the joy of success had come over Ephraim and his youthful army ; but when the sun had set, and no sign yet appeared of Hur and his followers, Nun began to feel some alarm. Ephraim had just declared his intention of sallying forth with some of his comrades in search of tidings, when a messenger arrived

announcing that Hur's fighting-men had lost courage on beholding the efficient defense of the Egyptian stronghold. Their leader had vainly urged them to storm it ; they had shrunk from the venture, and if Nun could not go to their support they must retire ingloriously.

It was at once determined to succor the timorous troop. The Hebrews set forth in high spirits, and on their march through the refreshing night Ephraim and Nun related to Joshua how Kasana had been found and had died. All she had desired them to tell the man she loved they now made known to him, and it was with deep emotion that the soldier heard it all, marching on in silent thought till they reached Dophka, the valley of the turquoise mines, in the midst of which towered the fortress, surrounded by the huts of the captive miners.

Hur and his men remained in ambush in an adjoining valley, and when Joshua had told off all the Hebrew force into several divisions, assigning a task to each, at day-break he gave the signal for the onslaught. The little garrison was overpowered after a short struggle, and the fortress seized. The Egyptians were disarmed, as those at the copper mines had been, and sent homewards. The prisoners were released, and the lepers, whose encampment was in another valley beyond the mines—and among them those who had been sent hither by Joshua's desire—were permitted to follow the conquerors at a fixed distance.

Joshua had succeeded where Hur had failed, and before the younger men departed with Ephraim, their leader, old Nun called them together, and with them returned thanks to the Lord. Those likewise who were under Hur's command joined in the thanksgiving, and when Joshua presently appeared Ephraim and his comrade hailed him with loud acclamations.

“Hail to our captain !” was shouted again and again as they went on their further way. “Hail to him whom the Lord hath chosen to be His sword ! Him will we follow and obey ; through him our God shall give us the victory !”

Hur's followers also joined in the cry, nor did he forbid them ; nay, he had thanked Joshua for storming the stronghold, and expressed his gladness at seeing him free once more.

When they set forth, Joshua, as the younger, drew back to let the elder man take the lead ; but Hur had begged

Nun, who was much older than himself, to march at the head of the little host, although, after the escape of the people on the shore of the Red Sea, he had been named the chief captain of the Hebrew fighting-men by Moses and the elders of the tribes.

Their way led them first through a level valley. Then they mounted and crossed a pass over the ridge, this being the only road by which there was any communication between the mines and the Red Sea. The rocky scene was wild and desolate, the path steep and hard to climb. Joshua's aged father, who had spent his life in the plains of Goshen and was unaccustomed to mountain-walking, was carried by his son and grandson amid much glad shouting from the others ; and Miriam's husband, who led his men in the rear of Ephraim's troop of comrades, as he heard their joyful cry climbed after them with a bowed head and eyes fixed gloomily on the ground.

At the top they were to rest, waiting for the main body of the Israelites who were to be led through the desert of Sin towards Dophka.

From the top of the pass the victorious troop looked out for the wandering tribes, but as yet nothing could be seen of them. But as they gazed back on the mountain path by which they had come, the scene was so grand and beautiful that it attracted every eye. At their feet lay a cauldron-shaped valley enclosed by high precipices, ravines, peaks and pinnacles, here white like chalk, there raven-black, grey and brown, red and green, growing as it were from the sandy base and pointing to the deep-blue heaven, the vault of dazzling light that bent over the desert unflecked by a cloud.

All was barren, desolate, silent, dead. Not a blade, not the humblest growth clung to the sides of the many-colored cliffs which shut in the sandy abyss. No bird, no worm nor beetle even stirred in this still region hostile to life. The eye could nowhere see anything to suggest human existence, or the tilth and handiwork of man. God, it seemed, had created this grand scene, unfit for any earthly being, for Himself alone. The man who made his way into these wilds trod a spot which the Most High might have chosen for retreat and rest, like the silent and unapproachable inner sanctuary of the temple.

The younger men had gazed speechless on the wondrous

picture at their feet. Then they lay down on the ground, or did their best to be serviceable to old Nun, who loved the companionship of the young. He was soon reclining in their midst under a hastily contrived awning, and relating with sparkling eyes his son's achievements as captain of the Egyptians.

Joshua and Hur, meanwhile, were standing together on the highest point of the pass and gazing down into the desolate valley of rocks, which, surrounded by columns and pillars of God's own hewing, and vaulted over by the blue dome of heaven, appeared to each as the most stupendous of temples.

The elder kept his eyes fixed gloomily on the ground; but suddenly he broke the silence, saying: "It was at Succoth that I built an heap and cried upon the Lord to be witness between us two. But in this place, and in this stillness, it seems to me that we are certain of His Presence without sign or token." He raised his face to heaven and went on: "And I lift up mine eyes to Thee, Adonai; I send up my humble words to thee, O Jehovah, Thou God of Abraham and our fathers, that Thou mayest again be witness between me and this man whom Thou calledst to be Thy servant and the sword in Thy right hand!"

He spoke the words loudly, with eyes and hands upraised to Heaven. Then he turned to his companion and said with solemn gravity:

"And I ask thee, Joshua, son of Nun, dost thou remember the witness borne by thee and me by the stone at Succoth?"

"I do remember it," was the answer. "And in bitter ill-fortune and great dangers I have learnt what the Most High requires of me. I am ready to devote such strength of soul and body as He hath vouchsafed to me to Him alone, and to His people, which is my people. Joshua, henceforth, be my name. I ask no further help, neither from the Egyptians nor from any other strange folk, for it was the Lord our God who gave me this name by the mouth of thy wife."

Hereupon Hur broke in with earnest words:

"This is what I looked to hear; and inasmuch as in this place also the Most High is a witness between me and thee, and heareth our present speech together here, lo, I fulfill that which I have vowed. The elders of the tribes, and

Moses, the servant of the Lord, called me to be chief captain over the fighting-men of Israel. But now thou art Joshua, and hast sworn to serve none other but the Lord our God. Likewise I know that, as the captain of our host, thou canst do greater things than I, who have grown grey tending herds, or than any other Hebrew, be he who he may ; therefore do I perform my vow made at Succoth. I will require of Moses, the servant of the Lord, and of the elders of the people, that they give thee the office of captain of the host. I leave the governance in thy hands ; and inasmuch as I know that the Lord readeth the heart, I hereby confess that I had evil thoughts of thee in mine. But for the good of the people I will forget all strife between us, and I give thee my right hand in token thereof !” He held out his hand as he spoke, and Joshua grasped it, replying with generous frankness :

“ These are the words of a man, and so likewise shall mine be. For the people’s sake, and the cause we both serve, I accept the offered sacrifice. And inasmuch as you solemnly called the Lord to witness, who likewise heareth me, I will speak the truth in everything. The office of captain of the host of Israel which you will lay upon me, I was called to by the Lord Himself. The call came to me by the mouth of Miriam, your wife, and mine it is by right. Yet, that you should be willing to yield your own dignity to me, I take as a noble deed ; for I know full well how hard it is for a man to resign power, more especially in favor of a younger man who is not dear to his heart. This you have done, and I thank you. And I, too, have had evil thoughts of you, for through you I lost another blessing which a man finds it harder to give up than his office—the love of a woman.”

Hereupon the blood mounted to Hur’s face, and he exclaimed : “ Miriam ! I never forced her to marry me. Nay, without my paying for her even, after the manner of our fathers, she became my wife of her own free will.”

“ I know it,” replied Joshua calmly. “ Still, another than you had loved and wooed her longer and more fervently, and the fires of jealousy burn fiercely. But have no fears. If you were now to get a bill of divorce and bring her to me, that I should open my arms and tent to her, I should say : ‘ Wherefor, have you done this thing to yourself and to me ? ’ For I have just now learnt what the

love of a woman is and can do, and I was mistaken when I believed that she loved me as hotly as I loved her. Yes, and in the course of my wanderings, with fetters on my feet, in grief and misery, I vowed to myself that I would devote all that is in me of the fire and force of love to no single creature, but all to my people. Not even the love of woman shall ever turn me away from the great duty I have taken upon me. And as for your wife, I am as a stranger to her, unless it be that she sends for me, as a prophetess, to declare to me some new purpose of the Lord."

And he, on his part, held out his hand, and as Hur took it, a noise came up from the troop below, calling on the head of the house of Judah and their newly-chosen captain, for messengers were climbing the mountain-slope, waving and pointing to the mighty clouds of dust which swept in front of the coming multitude.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE wanderers came nearer and nearer, and several of the young fighting-men hastened forward to meet them. They were no longer the jubilant host who had joined triumphantly in Miriam's hymn of praise; no, they came slowly, mournfully and deviously towards the mountain's foot. They had to climb the pass from the steepest side; and how the bearers groaned, and the women and children wailed; how bitterly the drivers cursed as they urged the beasts up the narrow, precipitous path, and how hoarse were the voices of the men, parched with thirst, as they set their shoulders to a cart to help the brutes that pulled it!

These hordes, who, but a few days since, had so thankfully hailed the saving mercy of the Lord, looked, to Joshua's eyes, like a beaten army. The way by which they had travelled from their last resting-place, the camp by the Red Sea, had been rough and waterless; and to a people who had grown up in the fertile plain of Lower Egypt, it had been severe indeed and full of horrors. It had led them into the heart of the barren highlands; and at every step their eyes, wont to gaze on wide and luxuriantly green pastures, had fallen on narrow gorges and a naked

wilderness. After passing the entrance to the Baba valley, as they made their way along it through the desert of Sin, they had seen nothing but ravines hemmed in by cliffs. A high mountain of the hue of death towered in awful blackness above the rust-brown crags close at hand, and the rocks had seemed to the wanderers like monstrous piles raised by human hands; the layers of square blocks built up at equal distances stood open to the sky, and it might have been fancied that the giant workmen, whose hands had aided the Architect of the world, had been dismissed before finishing their task, which in this solitude need fear no prying eye, and which seemed not intended to be the dwelling of any living creature. Walls of granite, brown and grey, rose on each side of the path; and in the sand which covered it lay heaps of fragments of red porphyry and coal-black stones, looking as if they had been broken by the hammer, or like chips of slag cast out from the smelting furnace. Strangely-shaped masses of gleaming green rock enclosed the small cauldron-shaped valleys of the higher ground, which opened endlessly one out of another. The mounting path cut them across, and many a time, as the pilgrims entered one of these circular gorges, the fear came upon them that the cliff beyond would compel them to return. Their complaints and murmurs had been heard, but presently the gap had come in sight through which they reached another rocky amphitheatre.

On first quitting the encampment by the Red Sea they had frequently passed clumps of acacia, and patches of a fragrant desert-herb which the beasts had eaten with relish; but the further they went into the stony wilderness the drier and hotter was the sandy soil, and at last the eye vainly sought a tree or a green thing.

At Elim they had found sweet wells and the shade of palms, and at the encampment by the Red Sea there had been well-filled tanks, but in the desert of Sin they had found no waters to quench their thirst withal, and by mid-day it seemed as though malicious demons had cut off all shade from the walls of rock, for in these cauldrons and bowls of stone everything was scorching glare, and there was no shelter anywhere from the burning sun. The last of the water they had brought with them had been distributed to man and beast at their last halting place, and when the host set forth again in the morning, not a drop could be

found to assuage their raging thirst. Then the old unbelieving spirit of discontent and rebellion had again come over the Israelites. There was no end to the curses on Moses and the elders who had brought them out of the well-watered land of Egypt to such torment as this. However, when at last they had climbed the pass over the ridge, their parched throats were too dry for any loud utterance of complaint and cursing.

Old Nun's messengers, and the youths sent to meet them by Ephraim and Hur, had already announced to them that the smaller party had won a victory and set Joshua and the rest of the prisoners free; but their exhaustion was so complete that even these glad tidings had affected them but little, and brought no more than a faint smile to the men's bearded lips, or a transient gleam of extinct brightness to the women's dark eyes. Miriam even, with Milcah, had remained with her tribe, and had not, as was her wont, called the women together to return thanks to the Almighty.

Reuben, the husband of her melancholy young companion, whose dread of disappointment would not even now allow her to indulge in her new-born hope, was a silent, uncommunicative man, and the first messenger did not know for certain whether he were among the prisoners who had been rescued. Milcah, nevertheless, became greatly excited, and when Miriam desired her to have patience and be still, she ran from one to another of her companions and besieged them with questions. And since they could give her no information as to the fate of him she loved and had lost, she broke into loud sobs and fled back to the prophetess. From her, indeed, she got small comfort, for Miriam, looking forward to hailing her husband as conqueror, and receiving the friend of her childhood rescued and safe, had fallen into a brooding and anxious mood; it seemed as though some heavy burthen weighed on her soul.

As soon as he learnt that the attack on the mines had proved successful and that Joshua was free, Moses had quitted the host of the Hebrews. He had been told that the Amalekites, a warlike race inhabiting the oasis at the foot of Mount Sinai, were making ready to hinder the advance of the exiles across their palmy and fertile island in the desert. He had therefore set out with a handful of picked men, to make his way across the range and recon-

noitre the enemy, purposing to rejoin the Israelites between Alush and Rephidim, which lay in the valley next before the oasis.

Abidah, the chief of the tribe of Benjamin, with Hur and Nun, on their return from the mines, as the heads of the tribes of Judah and Ephraim, were to fill his place and that of his companions.

Now, as the multitude came nearer to the pass they must climb, Hur and some of the freed men went forward to meet them; one, especially, outstripping the rest, Reuben, namely, Milcah's husband. And she on her part had recognized him from afar, as she sped down the hillside, and, in spite of Miriam's remonstrance, hurried forward as far as to the midst of the tribe of Simeon, which marched ahead of their own. And there, the sight of their meeting had uplifted many a dejected soul; and when at length, clinging closely together, they hastened back to Miriam, as the prophetess gazed into her little friend's face she thought a miracle had been wrought, for the pale lily had been transformed to a blooming and glowing rose. And her lips, which for so long she had scarcely ever opened but for some request or brief reply, now were never still, for how much she wanted to know, how much she had to ask her taciturn husband, who had suffered such terrible things! They were a comely and joyful couple, and to them their path lay not over bare rocks and parceled desert-tracks, but through a land of spring-flowers where brooks murmured and birds sang.

And Miriam, who had done her utmost to cheer the pining girl, rejoiced at the sight of their happiness.

Soon, however, every gleam of glad sympathy faded from her face; for while Reuben and Milcah walked on winged feet, scarce seeming to tread the soil of the desert, she marched on with bowed head weighed down by the thought that she herself was alone to blame if no such happiness as theirs was in prospect for her at this hour. She told herself indeed that she had made a great sacrifice, pleasing in the eyes of the Lord and worthy of great reward, in refusing to hearken to the voice of her heart; but nevertheless she could not help remembering the Egyptian woman who had forbidden her to account herself as one of those who truly loved Joshua, and who herself had died so young for her love's sake.

She, Miriam, was alive ; she had killed the most ardent desires of her heart ; duty forbade her now to think with ardent longing of the man who lingered on the mountain-top, devoted wholly to the cause of his people and to the God of his fathers, a free and noble soul, the future leader perhaps of her nation's armies, and, if Moses would have it so, the first and most influential among the Hebrews next to himself—but lost, forever lost, to her. If only on that fateful night she had followed the leading of her woman's heart and not that imperious call which placed her above all other women, he would long since have clasped her in his arms as Reuben held his poor, weak Milcah, now so rich in joy and renewed strength.

What thoughts were these ! She must drive them down to the deepest recesses of her heart and destroy them utterly ; for her it was sin to long so passionately to see him again, and she wished that her husband were by her side to protect her against herself and the forbidden emotions of this dreadful hour. Hur, the prince of the tribe of Judah, was her husband ; not the Egyptian captain, the rescued captive. What could she henceforth have to do with this son of Ephraim whom she had cast off once for all ? Why should she now be aggrieved that he did not hasten to meet her ; why should she cherish in secret a foolish hope that it was some important duty which withheld him on the mountain ?

She scarcely saw or heard what was going on around her, and it was Milcah's cry of glad gratitude which warned her of Hur's approach. He had waved her a greeting from afar ; but he was alone, without Joshua ; and the fact that this was a pang to her—nay, that it went to her heart—enraged her against herself. She held her elderly husband in true esteem, and it was with no effort that she welcomed him with affection. He replied to her greeting with heartfelt warmth ; and when she pointed to the reunited pair and lauded him as a conqueror and the deliverer of Reuben and his many fellow-victims, he frankly confessed that the praise was not to him but to Joshua, whom she herself had called in the name of the Lord to be the captain of the army of Israel.

At this she turned pale, and, though the path led steeply upward, she pressed her husband with urgent questions. When she learnt that Joshua was resting on the ridge with

his father and the young fighting-men, and drinking wine, and that Hur had pledged himself to withdraw if Moses should appoint Joshua to be captain of the host, her knit brows darkened below her lofty brow, and with stern severity she replied :

“ You are my lord, and it ill-beseems me to resist your will, even when you so far forget what is due to your wife as to give way to the man who once dared to lift his eyes to her.”

Hur eagerly broke in :

“ But henceforth you are as a stranger to him ; and even if I should give you a bill of divorce he would no longer woo you.”

“ Indeed !” said she with a forced smile. “ And is it to him that you owe this announcement ?”

“ He has devoted himself body and soul to the welfare of the people and renounces the love of woman,” replied Hur.

But she exclaimed : “ Renunciation is easy when desire could bring nothing in its train but rejection and disgrace. It is not he, who in our day of greatest need sought help of the Egyptians—not he but you who ought to be captain over the fighting-men of Israel—you alone who led the Hebrews to their first victory at the store-house of Succoth, and whom the Lord Himself by His servant Moses, charged to lead the fighting-men of Israel !”

At this Hur looked in some uneasiness at this woman for whom a late but ardent love had glowed up in him, and seeing her bosom heave and her cheeks flush red, he knew not whether to ascribe it to the fatigue of climbing or the lofty ambition of her aspiring soul, which she had now transferred to the person of her husband.

He was, indeed, glad to think that she cared so much more for him than for the younger and more heroic man whose return caused him some anxiety ; still, he had grown grey in the stern fulfillment of duty, and what he thought it right to do no man could hinder his doing. To the wife of his youth, whom he had buried many years since, his merest sign had been a command, and from Miriam he had as yet met with no contradiction. That Joshua was the most fit to command the fighting-men was beyond a doubt, and he replied, panting somewhat, for he, too, found the ascent hard : “ Your high esteem honors

and pleases me ; but although Moses and the elders have promoted me, you must remember the Heap at Succoth, and my vow. I bear it in mind and shall abide by it."

She looked aside and said no more till they had reached the top.

The victorious youths hailed them from the summit with loud acclamations. The joy of meeting, the provisions they had won from the foe, and the good drink which was sparingly measured out to revive those who most needed it, raised the fallen courage of the exhausted wanderers, and the thirsty multitude shortened their rest on the ridge to reach Dophka all the sooner. They had heard from Joshua that they would find there not only some ruined tanks but also a hidden spring of whose existence he had been informed by the driver of the gang of prisoners.

Their way now lay down hill. Haste is the watchword when thirsty souls know that wells are within reach ; and soon after sunset they arrived in the valley of turquoise mines, where they encamped at the foot of the hill on which the now ruined stronghold and store-houses of Dophka had lately stood. The well, hidden in a grove of acacia sacred to Hathor, was very soon discovered. Fires were quickly lighted. The wavering hearts, which in the desert of Sin had sunk almost to despair, now swelled again with the love of life, with hope and thankful trust. The fine acacia trees indeed were felled to open a way to the spring whose refreshing waters worked the wondrous change.

Joshua and Miriam had met on the ridge, but had only had time for a brief greeting. Here, in the camp, they were thrown together once more.

It was already late, for the elders had held long counsel as to the measures to be taken for an unexpected attack on the Amalekites. Nun and Joshua had joined the assembly. The princely and reverend old man's son had been gladly welcomed, and his counsel, that they should form a vanguard of the younger men and a reserve of the older warriors, was readily agreed to ; they were also to send small parties of picked men to spy out the enemy. Joshua found himself in fact entrusted with everything appertaining to the conduct and safety of a considerable army. God Himself had chosen him to be their captain,

and Moses, by leaving him that warning word to be "steadfast and strong," had confirmed him in the office. Hur, likewise, who as yet held the post, was ready to resign it to him; and of a surety that man would keep his word, although he had not yet declared his purpose before the elders. At any rate Joshua was treated as though he were indeed the captain, and he felt himself their leader.

After the assembly of the elders had broken up, Hur had desired Joshua to accompany him to his tent, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour; and the warrior had consented, for indeed he desired to speak fully to Miriam. He would fain prove to her in her husband's presence that he had found the path which she had so zealously pointed out to him.

The tenderest passions of a Hebrew must be dumb in the presence of another man's wife. Miriam must know full well that he had nothing more to ask of her. Indeed, he had entirely ceased, even in his hours of solitude, to care or long for her. He confessed to himself that she was a grand and queenly woman, but now he felt a chill as he thought of that lofty dignity.

Nay, all her doings appeared to him now in a new light. When she greeted him on the hill-top with a cold smile he had felt convinced that henceforth they were strangers indeed; and as they sat by the blazing fire in front of the elders' tent, where they now met again, this feeling grew stronger and stronger.

Miriam had long since parted from Reuben and his Milcah, and during her solitary waiting many thoughts had crossed through her brain of what she would now make this man feel—the man to whom in an hour of strong excitement she opened the depths of her soul.

We are always most prone to be angry with those to whom we have done a wrong, and a woman holds the gift of her love as so great and precious that even the man she afterwards rejects is to think of her with gratitude for ever after. And Joshua had boasted that he had ceased to care for her whom he had once ardently desired, and who had confessed her love for him—yea, even if she were offered to him. Aye, and he had proved his words, for he had been content to wait with the others instead of coming to meet her.

At last he came, and with him her husband who was

so ready to make way for him. But she was still here to keep her eyes open in behalf of the too generous Hur.

The older man, to whose fate she had linked her own, and whose faithful devotion touched her deeply, should not be supplanted by any other man in the high place he filled by right; he must cling to it, if only because she did not choose to be the wife of any man who could not assert himself as the foremost of the Hebrews after her own brothers.

Never had this much-venerated woman, who for her part believed, too, in her own gift of prophecy, felt so bitter, so sore and indignant. She did not own it to herself, but it was as though the hatred which Moses had fired in her soul against the Egyptians, and which no longer had an outlet, needed some fresh object, and was now turned against the only man she ever had loved. But a true woman can make a show of friendship in word and demeanor to any one, excepting those she scorns, and Miriam received her belated guest with haughty but gracious condescension, and begged him to give her further details as to his captivity and release. But she called him by his old name of Hosea, and when he perceived that this was evidently intentional, he asked her whether she had forgotten that it was she herself who, as the messenger of the Most High, had bidden him henceforth to call himself Joshua. To this she replied—and her features assumed a sharper gravity of expression—that her memory was good, but that she would fain forget the time he referred to. He himself had rejected the name bestowed on him by the Lord, inasmuch as he had preferred to seek the favor of the Egyptian king rather than the help promised him by God. She, faithful to her old habits, should continue to call him Hosea.

The simple-hearted soldier was not prepared for such a hostile tone; however, he preserved a fittingly calm demeanor, and replied with composure that he would but rarely give her the opportunity of calling him by any name. Those who were his friends found no difficulty in learning to call him Joshua.

To this Miriam answered that she likewise would be willing to do so if her husband agreed and he himself insisted on it, for a man's name was but as a garment. With offices and dignities it was another matter.

When Joshua then declared that he had always believed that it was God Himself who had called him by the voice of His prophetess, herself, to be the captain of the hosts of Israel, and that he conceded to no man, save only to Moses, the right to deprive him of that office, Hur agreed with him and offered him his hand.

At this Miriam threw off the self-control she had hitherto preserved, and exclaimed with vehement defiance :

“ In this I am not of your mind. You evaded the call of the Most High ! Can you deny it ? And inasmuch as the Almighty found you at Pharaoh’s footstool, instead of at the head of His people, He deprived you of the office to which He had raised you. He, Himself, the Mightiest of Captains, commanded the wind and waves, and they swallowed up the enemy. I sang a hymn of praise to the Lord, and the people joined in my thanksgiving. And on that same day God called another man than you to be chief of the Hebrew host, and he, as you know, is my husband. And although Hur indeed has never learnt the arts of war, yet the Lord surely guides his arm ; and who is it that giveth the victory but the Lord Almighty ? My husband, I tell you once again—my husband alone is the captain, and though in his excess of generosity he forgets it, yet he will assert his right to his office when he remembers whose hand it was that chose him ; and I, his wife, life up my voice to bring it to his mind.”

On this Joshua turned to go, to put an end to this unpleasant discussion, but Hur, very wroth at his wife’s interference between men, held him fast, assuring him that he should abide by his renunciation. The wind might blow away a woman’s words of displeasure ; it must rest with Moses to declare whom the Lord had chosen to be captain of His people.

As he spoke Hur looked in his wife’s face with stern dignity, as warning her to reflect ; and this seemed to have had the desired effect. Miriam turned first pale and then deep scarlet, and she, too, detained their guest as though she desired to make amends, beckoning him with a trembling hand to come closer to her.

“ Yet one thing I must say,” she began with a deep breath, “ that you may not misunderstand me. I call every man my friend who devotes himself to the cause of Israel, and Hur has told me how much you purpose to sacrifice

to our people. It was your confidence in Pharaoh's clemency which came between us, and I know how to value your deep and decisive breach with the Egyptians. Still, I only truly understood the greatness of your deed when I learnt that it was not only life-long habit, but another and stronger tie that bound you to the foe."

"What is the aim of such a speech?" Joshua broke in, feeling quite sure that she was laying some fresh arrow to the bowstring intended to wound him. But she paid no heed to the interruption, and went on with a defiant sparkle in her eye which belied the moderation of her tongue:

"After the guidance of the Lord had saved us from the foe, the sea cast up on shore the fairest woman we had seen for many a day. I bound up the wounds inflicted on her by a Hebrew woman, and she then confessed that she was full of love for you, and with her dying breath spoke of you as the idol of her heart."

At this Joshua, deeply incensed, exclaimed:

"If this were all the truth, O wife of Hur, then my father would have told me an untruth. For, as I learnt from him, it was in the presence of those only who love me that the hapless woman made the last confession; not before you. And she was wise to mistrust your presence, for you would never have understood her!"

He saw a suspicious smile play on Miriam's lips, but he heeded it not and went on: "Your wit is—oh, ten times keener than that poor child's ever was. But in your heart, which once was open to such great things, there is no room for love. It will grow old and cease to beat before it has learned what love is! Yea, in spite of your flashing eyes I tell you this: you are indeed more than a woman; you are a prophetess, and I cannot boast of such grace. I am no more than a man, and understand the use of the sword better than looking into futurity, and nevertheless I can foretell one thing: you will cherish the hatred of me which burns in your soul. You will even light up the flame in your husband's heart and strive to fan it with the utmost zeal, and I know why! The fiery ambition which possesses you will not suffer you to be happy as the wife of a man who must stand second to any other. You refuse to call me by the name you yourself gave me. But if hatred and pride do not altogether choke the one feeling

which unites us, namely, our love of our people, the day will come when of your own free will you will approach me and call me Joshua, unbidden, out of the fullness of your heart."

With these words he bowed his head in brief farewell to Miriam and her husband, and disappeared in the darkness.

Hur looked after him gloomily, and spoke not a word till the footsteps of their departing guest had died away in the silence of the night. Till this hour he had always looked up to his wife with tender admiration, but now the wrath he had restrained with difficulty knew no bounds. With two long strides he came close to her; she was even paler than he, as she stood gazing into the fire like one distraught. His voice had lost its rich metallic ring, and sounded harsh and thin as he said: "I was so bold as to woo a maiden who believed herself nearer to God than other women, and now she is mine she makes me repent of my audacity!"

"Repent?" She paused with white lips, and as she looked up at him, a defiant glance sparkled in her black eyes. He seized her hand with so firm a grip that it hurt her, and went on as he had begun: "Yes, you make me repent of it. Shame on me if I suffer this hour of degradation to be followed by such another!"

She tried to wrench her hand free but he would not surrender it and went on: "I wooed and won you to be the pride of my house. I believed I was sowing honor, I have reaped dishonor—for what deeper disgrace may befall a man than that the wife should have the mastery and dare to wound the heart of his friend, whom hospitality should protect, with hostile words. A woman, such as you are not, a simple, right-minded wife, who could look back on her husband's past life and think not merely of how he may gain promotion because she desires to share his greatness—such a wife would not need to be reminded that Hur, the man who is your husband, has earned dignities and honors enough in the course of a long life to be able to lay down some portion of them without losing by it. Not he who is chief in command, but he who does most from self-sacrificing love of his nature, is the greatest in Jehovah's sight. You crave to stand aloof and be honored by the crowd as the chosen handmaid of God. I do not forbid it so long as you do not forget what your duty as a

wife and mistress requires of you. To me, indeed, you also owe love, for you promised to love me on the day when we were wed: howbeit, the human heart can only give what it has to give; and Joshua is right when he says that the love which glows and gives warmth is far from your cold soul."

He turned his back on her and withdrew into the darkness of the tent; she remained standing by the fire, the flickering blaze lighting up her beautiful pallid features. She set her teeth tightly and clenched her hands over her heaving bosom as she gazed after her husband. He had stood before her in the consciousness of his dignity, grey-haired, tall and reverend, a worthy and princely leader of the people. Each of his words had pierced her heart like a spear thrust. The power of truth had weighed his speech, and had held up a mirror to Miriam which showed her an image from which she started in horror. Now she longed to hasten after him, and beseech him to give her again the love with which he had hitherto surrounded her; she, alone in the world, had gratefully acknowledged that she felt that she could fully return the precious boon, for she longed, ah, how ardently, to hear one kind and forgiving word from his lips. Her own heart seemed to her as a cornfield blighted by malignant mildew; withered, dried up and ruined, where all had been so fresh and blossoming.

Her thoughts flew to the rich arable of Goshen which, after bearing the richest crops, remained hard and parched till the river rose to soften it again, and bring the seed laid in its bosom to life and verdure. Thus was it with her; but she had cast the ripening ears into the fire, and willfully built up a dam between the beneficent stream and the dry land.

But there was yet time. She knew, indeed, that in one thing he was unjust, that she was a woman like any other, and capable of devoting herself with passionate ardor to the man she loved. It depended only on her to prove this to him and bring him to her arms. Just now, to be sure, he had a right to regard her as hard and unfeeling; for there, where love was wont to bloom, a bitter spring had risen which poisoned all it touched.

Was this the revenge taken by her heart whose ardent desires she had so heroically smothered?

God had scorned her most precious offering, it was impossible to doubt the fact. His presence no longer uplifted her soul in visions of glory, and she could hardly call herself His prophetess any longer. This sacrifice had led her, who was truthful, to falsehood; conscious of always desiring the right, she had hitherto lived at peace with herself; now she suffered tortures of unrest. Since that momentous step, nothing she cared for had smiled on her, who had been so full of hope. She who had never seen the woman for whom she need make way, had been sent from the presence of a poor dying stranger. She had always felt kindly to every one who loved her race and the sacred cause of her people, and now she had insulted one of their best and noblest champions with bitter wrath. The poorest serf's wife could win the husband who loved her to a closer union, and she had only estranged hers.

She had come to his hearth seeking only shelter from the cold, but she had found unexpected warmth, and his generosity and love had fallen on her aching soul like balm. He could not, indeed, give her back what she had lost, but he was a welcome substitute. And he now believed her incapable of a tender emotion; still, she must have love to live, and no sacrifice would be too great to win his back again.

But pride was no less a condition of her existence, and each time she made up her mind to humble herself and open her heart to her husband, a fear of degradation checked her; and there she stood, as though spell-bound, till the brands at her feet fell over and died out, and darkness surrounded her.

Then a strange fear fell upon her.

Two bats, which had come forth from the mines to flutter around the fire, flew close to her face with a ghostly stir. Everything prompted her to retire to the tent, to go back to her husband; and with sudden decision she went into the spacious room, lighted by a lamp. But Hur was not there, and a slave-girl who met her told her that he had said he would remain with his son and grandson till it was time to depart.

A sense of bitter woe fell upon her; she lay down to rest, more desolate and ashamed than she had ever felt since her childhood.

A few hours later the camp was astir, and when, in the

grey light of dawn, her husband entered the tent with a brief greeting, her pride once more uplifted its head and her reply was cold and demure.

He was not alone ; his son Uri followed him in. He looked graver, too, than usual, for the men of Judah had assembled at an early hour and besought him not to surrender the captaincy in favor of a man of another tribe than theirs.

This had come upon him as a surprise. He could only refer them to Moses, and the hope that their leader's decision might be given against himself grew keener as his young wife's resolute glance again roused his spirit to opposition.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WITH refreshed body and revived hearts the Hebrews set forth again early on the following morning ; and by this time, the little spring, which they had even dug deeper to promote its flow, was for the time exhausted. They cared the less that it refused to yield any water to carry on their journey, because they expected to find some wells at Alush.

The sun mounted the cloudless sky in radiant majesty. Its splendor exerted its stirring influence on the hearts of men even, and the rocks and yellow sandy soil shone as brightly as the blue vault above. The pure aromatic air of the desert, cooled by the hours of darkness, was so light that it was a pleasure to breathe, and walking was enjoyment.

The men showed firmer confidence, the women's eyes flashed more brightly than for some time past, for the Lord had shown once more that He was mindful of His people in their need ; and fathers and mothers looked proudly on their sons who had overpowered the enemy. In every tribe some one had been welcomed home who had been given up for lost, and it was a joyful duty to heal the injuries inflicted by the hard labor of the mines. Moreover, Joshua's deliverance was a cause of rejoicing, not alone among his own people, but throughout the multitude ; and by all, excepting those of the tribe of Judah, he was

now called by that new name, with full belief in the comforting promise conveyed by it. The young men who, under him, had put the Egyptians to rout, told in their tribes what sort of man Joshua was, how he thought of everything, and put every one in the very place where he could do best. The mere light of his eye as it fell on a man fired his warlike ardor ; the foe quaked only to hear him shout the battle-cry.

And those who spoke of old Nun, or of 'the noble lad, his grandson, did so with kindling glances. The high pretensions of the tribe of Ephraim had often been a source of disagreement, but on this occasion it was by common consent allowed to march first. Only the men of Judah were heard to murmur and complain. They must, no doubt, have some serious ground of discontent, for Hur, the prince of their tribe, and his wife walked on with bowed heads as if oppressed by a heavy burthen, and those who spoke with them had certainly better have chosen some other opportunity. So long as the sun's rays still fell aslant, there was a little shade cast by the sandstone peaks which hemmed the path in on both sides, or stood up in its midst, and when the sons of Korah began to sing a hymn, old and young joined in ; Milcah, no longer pallid, loudest and gladdest of all, and Reuben, her released and happy husband.

The children picked up the golden fruits of the colocynth, which fell from the now withered gourds above as if they dropped from heaven, and brought them to their parents. But they were as bitter as gall to eat, and a morose old man of the tribe of Zebulun, who kept some of the stout rinds to serve to hold salve, said : " Thus will this day be. It has a fair seeming ; but when the sun is high and we lack water we shall know its bitterness ! "

And his prophecy was only too soon fulfilled ; for the path, after leaving the region of sand, went on through rocky cliffs like walls of red brick and grey stone, up and up, now at an easy slope and now very steep ; the sun, too, mounted higher and higher, and the heat increased as the hours went on. Never had its arrows fallen more cruelly on the pilgrims, striking pitilessly on their unprotected heads and necks. Here an old man and there a young one sank to the ground under its fierce glow, or tottered forward like one drunk, supported by his neighbors and

clasping his hand to his brow. The blistered skin peeled off their faces and hands, and there was not one whose tongue and gums were not dried by the heat, or whose newly-found courage it did not quell.

The beasts toiled sullenly forward with drooping heads and heavy feet, or rolled rebelliously in the sand till the herdsman's thong compelled them to collect their strength for a fresh effort.

At noon the Israelites were allowed to halt, but there was not a hand-breadth of shade to give them the reprieve they sought; and those who threw themselves down on the ground found fresh torment instead of rest. Thus the hapless wretches of their own accord set forth again soon for the wells of Alush.

Until this day, as soon as the sun had passed the meridian and begun to sink towards the west, the heat had abated, and a fresher breeze had fanned their brows before the fall of dusk, but here the rocks for hours gave out the heat they had absorbed from the noon-tide sun, till at length a faintly cooler breath came up from the sea on the west. At the same time the vanguard, which, by Joshua's advice, marched foremost, halted, and the whole multitude came to a standstill. Men, women and children all fixed their eyes and pointed with hands, sticks and crooks to the same spot, for there, before them, a strange and novel spectacle attracted their gaze. A shout of amazement and delight broke from their parched and weary lips which had long ceased to stir for speech; it rapidly spread from one division to the next, from tribe to tribe, to the lepers that closed the train and the vanguard beyond. One and another elbowed his neighbor and whispered a name familiar to them all—that of the Holy Mountain where the Lord had promised to Moses that he would lead His people into a good and pleasant land flowing with milk and honey. None had told the weary multitude that this was the place, and yet they knew that they beheld Horeb and the peak of Sinai, the most sacred summit of this mass of granite.

Although but a mountain, yet was it the throne of the Almighty God of their fathers!

At this hour the whole sacred hill seemed, like the burning bush out of which He had there spoken to His chosen servant, to be steeped in fire. Its seven-peaked

crown towered from afar, high above the hills and vales that surrounded it, burning like an enormous ruby lighted up by a blaze of glory in the clouds.

Such a sight none of them had ever beheld. But the sun sank lower and lower, and disappeared in the sea which the mountain hid from their view ; the glowing ruby turned to solemn amethyst and then to the deep purple of the violet ; but the people still gazed spell-bound on the Holy Mount. Nay, even when the day-star had altogether vanished, and only its reflection bordered the edge of a long, level cloud with gleaming gold, they opened their eyes the wider, for a man of the tribe of Benjamin, his brain turned by the splendor of the scene, declared that they beheld the trailing mantle of Jehovah, and those about him to whom he pointed it out caught the pious rapture.

For a little while the pilgrims had forgotten thirst and exhaustion in watching the inspiring spectacle. But ere long their high enthusiasm was turned to the deepest discouragement, for when night fell, and after a short march they reached the wells of Alush, it was discovered that the desert tribe which had encamped here yesterday had choked the spring, which at best was but brackish, with stones and rubbish.

All the water they had carried with them had been used before reaching Dophka, and the exhausted spring at the mines had not sufficed to fill the skins. Thirst, which at first had only dried their gums, now began to burn their vitals. Their scorched throats could not swallow the solid food of which they had abundance. On every side there was nothing to be seen but heart-broken looks, and pitiable or disgraceful scenes. Men and women storming, cursing, weeping, and groaning, or else sunk in morose despair. Some, whose wailing infants clamored for water, had gathered round the choked well and were fighting for a spot on the ground where they hoped to collect a few drops of the precious fluid in a sherd. And the beasts lowed and bleated so miserably that it cut their drivers to the heart like a reproach.

Very few cared to exert themselves to pitch a tent. The night was so warm, and the sooner they went forward the better, for Moses had promised to join them again at a spot but a few hours further on. He alone could help

them; it was his bounden duty to save man and beast from perishing of drought.

If the God who had promised them such great things left them to perish in the wilderness with all their little ones, then the man in whose guidance they had put their trust was a deceiver, and the God whose power and mercy he was never weary of preaching to them was falser and feebler than the idols with heads of men and beasts whom they had worshiped in Egypt. Blasphemy and curses were mingled with threats, and when Aaron came forth to comfort the thirsty pilgrims with words of hope, many a clenched fist was shaken at him.

Even Miriam was presently forbidden by her husband to console the women with kindly speech, for a woman whose sinking child clung dying to its mother's dried-up breast had picked up a stone to fling, and the others had followed her example.

Old Nun and his son were more fortunate. They were both agreed that Joshua must fight whatever post Moses might desire him to fill; and Hur himself had led him forth to the fighting-men, who had hailed him gladly. The old man and his son both knew the secret of inspiring courage. They spoke to the men of the well-watered oasis of the Amalekites, which was now not far away, and reminded them that the Lord Himself had provided the weapons they held in their hands. Joshua assured them, too, that they far out-numbered the warriors of the desert-tribe. If their young men only showed themselves as brave as they had been at Dophka and the coppermines, by God's help they should win the victory.

Soon after midnight Joshua, after holding council with the elders, bid the trumpets sound to call the fighting-men together. He set them in ranks under the starlit sky, appointed a leader to each division, and impressed on each the hearing of the word of command he was to obey.

They came at the call, half perishing with thirst; but the fresh efforts to which their captain exhorted them wonderfully revived their fainting energies; as well as the hope of victory and a precious reward, a plot of land, namely, at the foot of the Holy Mountain, rich in wells and palms.

Among the youths came Ephraim, giving life to the

others by his own inexhaustible vigor. And now, when the captain, to whom God had already proved that He thought him worthy of the help which his name promised, addressed the men, bidding them put their trust in the Lord Almighty, it had quite a different effect from that produced by Aaron, whose admonitions they had hearkened to every day since they set out.

When Joshua had ended, a jubilant shout went up from many young throats though parched with thirst: "Hail to the captain! You are our leader; we will follow none other!"

Then he went on, gravely and decisively, to explain to them that he was prepared to show to the utmost such obedience as he required of them. He was ready to march as the last man in the lowest place, if it should be Moses' will.

The stars were still bright in a cloudless sky when a cow-horn called the Hebrews to set forth again. A runner had already been sent on to report to Moses of their evil plight, and Ephraim had flown after him as soon as he was free to do so. But throughout the morning's march Joshua kept his troops in strict order, as though an onslaught was to be expected. Meanwhile he took advantage of every minute to teach the fighting-men and their leaders something for the coming struggle, to note their behavior, and close up their ranks. He thus kept them on the alert till the stars began to pale.

Few indeed were the murmurs or complaints among the fighting-men, but rebellion, curses and threats were all the more rife among those who bore no weapons. Long before dawn the cry was heard, more and more often, of "Down with Moses! We will stone him when we find him!" And indeed their knees were failing them for weariness, and the misery of their wives and children was visible to every eye.

Not a few, indeed, picked a piece of rock from the path with a wild curse and flashing eye; and at last the fury of the multitude waxed so wild and reckless that Hur called a council of the better disposed among the elders, and they hastened on with the fighting-men of the tribe of Judah to protect Moses, if it should come to the worst, by force of arms against the rebels. Joshua took on himself the task of keeping back the mutineers, who with curses and threats

strove to outstrip the rest. When at last the sun rose in blinding splendor, the march was no more than a struggle onwards of enfeebled wretches. Even the men at arms tottered forwards half-paralyzed. Still, when the rebels tried to pass them, they did their duty and thrust them back with spear and sword. The valley along which they made their way was shut in on both sides by steep walls of grey granite which glittered and sparkled strangely as the slanting sunbeams fell on the fragments of quartz thickly imbedded in the primæval rock. By noon it would be scorchingly hot again between these steep cliffs, in some parts almost closing across the path; as yet, however, they lay in morning shade. And the beasts, at any rate, found refreshment, for among the rocks in many places a succulent aromatic plant afforded them pasture, and the shepherd boys, taking off their loin cloths, filled them with the fodder in spite of their own exhaustion, to offer it to their famishing favorites.

Thus they struggled on for less than an hour, when suddenly a loud shout of joy rang out, spreading from the foremost in the van to the last man in the long train. No one had been told in so many words to what it owed its origin, but every one knew it must mean that they had come upon fresh water. Then Ephraim came flying back with the glad tidings, and what a miracle it worked on the exhausted wanderers!

They pulled themselves up as though they had already emptied the brimming jar at a deep draught, and struggled forward at double speed. The ranks of fighting-men now no longer hindered them, but hailed those of their tribe who hastened past them with glad greetings.

Soon, however, the hurrying tide stopped of its own accord; for at the spot where refreshment was to be found the foremost came to a standstill, and behind them the whole multitude were checked more effectually than by moats and walls. The toiling pilgrims had become a vast, disorderly crowd, filling the whole valley. At last men and women turned back carrying well-filled water jars in their hands or on their heads, beckoning joyfully to their friends with words of encouragement, and making their way through the throng to their own families; but the precious fluid was snatched away from many before it could be conveyed to its destination.

Joshua and his troop had made their way to the immediate vicinity of the wells, to keep order among the thirsty people. However, for some little time there was nothing for it but patience, while the mighty men of the tribe of Judah, who, with Hur at their head, had been the first to reach the spot, wielded their axes, and strove with levers hastily made out of the trunks of acacia trees to clear away the huge boulders which strewed the path, and open up the way to the spring which leapt forth from several rifts in the rock.

At first it had flowed among a chaos of moss-grown blocks of granite ; but presently they succeeded in directing the flow of the precious fluid, and in checking the water by forming a sort of tank where even the cattle could drink. Those who had filled their jars had caught the water in its overflow from the hastily-contrived dam. Now the men whose duty it was to watch the camp kept the throng off, so as to give the water time to settle and clear in the large new basin which it filled with amazing rapidity.

In sight actually of the blessing for which they had so loudly clamored, it was easy now to have patience. They had found the treasure ; all that was necessary was to husband it. Not a word of discontent or complaint or reviling was now to be heard ; many indeed looked abashed and ashamed on this new mercy from the Most High.

Loud and jubilant voices were heard far and wide, shouting and talking ; but the man of God who knew every rock and valley, every pasture and spring of the hills of Horeb better than any one, and who had again been the instrument of such great blessing to his people, had retired into a neighboring ravine, as if seeking refuge there from the thanks and acclamations which rose louder and spread further every moment, seeking peace and silence above all things for his deeply-agitated spirit.

Presently hymns of thanksgiving to the Lord were to be heard from the Hebrew multitude, who, refreshed and revived, and overflowing with gratitude, were pitching their camp with as much hope and confidence as ever they had known. The sound of song, of happy laughter, jests and encouraging cries, formed an accompaniment to the work of putting up tents, and the encampment was rapidly effected, as rapidly as if it had been raised from the earth by a magic spell.

The eyes of the young men flashed with martial ardor, and many a beast shed its blood to make a feast.

Mothers, after doing their part by the hearth and in the tent, led their little ones to the spring to show them the spot where Moses with his staff had pointed out the spring bubbling through the rift in the granite. Many men likewise stood with hands and eyes raised to Heaven round the place where Jehovah had shown such grace to His people, and among them were not a few of those murmurers who had picked up stones wherewith to stone the servant of God. None doubted that they here beheld the result of a great miracle. The elders impressed on the little ones that they should never forget this day or this water, and an old grandmother was wetting her grandchildren's brows at the brink of the pool to ensure divine protection for them for the rest of their lives.

Hope, thankfulness and the glow of trust prevailed on all hands; even the fear of the hostile Amalekites had vanished, for what ill could come to him who put his trust in the mercy of so omnipotent a Protector.

Joy was absent from one tent alone, and that the finest of them—the tent of the head of the tribe of Judah. Miriam sat among her women after distributing the mid-day meal in silence to the men overflowing with grateful enthusiasm; she had heard from Milcah's husband Reuben that Moses had made Joshua captain of the Hebrew tent in the presence of all the elders. Hur, her husband, she also was told, had expressed himself ready and glad to renounce the dignity in favor of the son of Nun.

The prophetess had not chosen to join in the people's song of praise; when Milcah and her women had besought her to go with them to the well, she had bidden them go without her. She was now expecting her husband, and wished to meet him alone; she must show him that she desired his forgiveness. But he did not come; for, after the council of the elders had broken up, he remained with the new captain to help him to arrange his men, and this he did as a subordinate, obedient to Hosea, who owed his call and his name of Joshua to her.

Her waiting women, who had gathered about her, were busy spinning; but she could not endure this humble toil, and while she sat with idle hands staring into vacancy the

hours went slowly indeed. And at the same time her purpose of humbling herself before her husband grew feebler. She felt impelled to pray for strength to bow before the man who was in truth her master; but the prophetess, usually so apt at fervent prayer, could not find the right vein of devotion. If now and then she succeeded in collecting her thoughts and uplifting her heart, something disturbed her. Every fresh report which was brought to her from the camp added to her displeasure. When at last dusk was falling, a messenger came desiring her to have no care for the men's evening meal, which had already been long prepared and waiting; Hur, with his son and grandson, were about to accept the bidding of Nun and Joshua to share theirs.

At this she felt it hard to restrain her tears, and if she had suffered them to flow unchecked they would have been the bitter drops of wrath and wounded pride, not tears of distress and regretful longing.

During the hours of the evening watch the warriors all marched past her, and from rank to rank the cry re-echoed of "Hail to Joshua!" And those who repeated the watchword, "Steadfast and strong," did so in honor of the man she once had loved, but now hated as she confessed to herself. None but the men of his own tribe had honored her husband with a special cry. Was this their gratitude for the generosity which had led him to abdicate the post, to which he alone had a right, in favor of a younger man? It cut her to the heart to see her husband so deposed; but it wounded her yet more to find that Hur could thus abandon his lately wedded wife.

The evening meal at the door of the Ephraimites' tent was a long one. A little before midnight she sent her serving-women to bed, and lay down herself to wait till her husband should return, to confess to him all that had troubled and angered her, and what she most desired.

She thought that it would be easy to keep awake when she was in such anguish of mind; but the great fatigues and strain of the last few days and nights had told upon her, and, in the midst of a prayer for humility and the love of her husband, she was overcome by sleep. At last, at the hour of the first morning watch, when day was just beginning to break, she was startled from her slumbers by the sound of the trumpets giving warning of immediate danger.

She rose quickly, and, glancing at her husband's couch, saw that it was empty ; still it had been used, and on the sandy soil—for mats were spread only in the living-room—she saw the traces of Hur's footsteps by her own bedside. He must have stood close by her, and perhaps, while she slept, have gazed tenderly down on her face.

This was indeed the truth ; her old slave-woman told her so unasked. For after she had roused Hur she had seen him carefully shading the lamp while he looked on Miriam's face, and bent over her for some minutes, as though he would have kissed her.

This was good hearing, and rejoiced the lonely wife so greatly that she forgot her usual calm dignity and pressed her lips to the wrinkled brow of the little bent old woman, who had done service of yore to her parents. Then she hastily bid her maids to braid her hair and dress her in a holiday robe of light blue which Hur had given her, and hastened forth to take leave of him.

Meanwhile the troops had formed in order. The tents were being struck, and Miriam sought her husband for a long time in vain. At last she found him ; but he was deeply engaged in talk with Joshua, and, as she caught sight of the captain, the prophetess shuddered with a sudden chill, nor could she persuade herself to address the men.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A HARD battle must be fought, for, as the spies reported, the Amalekites had been joined by other desert-tribes. Nevertheless, the Israelites were still almost twice their number ; but how far inferior in warlike skill were Joshua's troops to their opponents, inured to battle and ambush. The foe came up from the south, from the oasis at the foot of the Sacred Mountain which was the primæval home of their race, their foster mother, their beloved, their all, and to them well worth shedding the last drop for.

Joshua, now the captain, recognized by Moses and all the people as leader of the Hebrew fighting-men, led his newly-formed army to the widest portion of the valley, as this allowed him to take the utmost advantage of their superior numbers. The camp was removed by his orders,

and pitched in a narrower place at the northern end of the valley of Rephidim, in which the struggle must be fought out, as this made it easier to defend the tents. He left the command of the camp and of the men told off to protect it to the prudent care of his father.

He had wished to leave Moses and all the elders of the tribes safe within the precincts of the camp, but their great leader had gone forward with Hur and Aaron, and climbed a peak of granite where they could look down upon the fight. Thus the fighting-men could see Moses and his two companions on the cliff which commanded the top of the valley, and feel assured that the servant of the Lord would not cease to beseech Him to spare them and give them the victory. But every simple man in that host, and every woman and old man in the camp, in that hour of peril turned to the God of their fathers, and the rallying-cry chosen by Joshua, "Jehovah, our Refuge," bound the hearts of the warriors to the ruler of the battle, and reminded the most faint-hearted and unskilled among the fighting-men that he could not take a step nor deal a blow, but the Lord would mark it.

The trumpets and cow-horns of the Hebrew host rang out louder and louder, for the Amalekites were pouring down on the level ground which was to be the field of battle.

It was a strange scene for such a struggle, such as no experienced captain would ever willingly have chosen, for it was shut in on both sides by steep grey cliffs of granite towering up to heaven. If the foe should win, the camp, too, must be lost, and any benefit to be derived from knowledge of warfare must here be displayed within the smallest conceivable space. To circumvent the enemy or surprise him in flank seemed quite impossible; but even the rocks were turned to account by the leader, for wherever it was possible he had made his best slingers and archers climb up them to no great height, and instructed them to watch for a sign at which they should mingle in the fight.

At the first glance Joshua perceived that he had not overrated the foe, for those who began the battle were bearded men, with clearly cut, manly faces, out of which their black eyes glowed at the enemy with wild and blood-thirsty hatred. And every man, like their leader himself, a grey-haired man of many scars, was spare and supple of

limb. They wielded the curved sabre, the javelin of heavy sharpened wood, and the lance ornamented with a tuft of camel's hair, like practiced warriors, and the war-cry rang out loud, cruel and death-defying from the deep hearts of these men, who felt that they must die or see their dearest possession in the hands of the enemy.

At the first onslaught Joshua led forward the men whom he had armed with the large Egyptian shields and lances, and these, fired by their valiant leader, made a good stand, particularly as the narrow defile into the field of battle hindered their wild opponents from taking full advantage of their superior numbers. But when the men on foot presently withdrew, and a troop of warriors or dromedaries rushed down on the Hebrews, many of them were scared at the strange sight of these creatures, known to them only by description. They cast away their shields and fled with loud outcries, and wherever a gap was made the riders drove in their dromedaries and thrust down at the foe with their long sharp javelins. At this the herdsmen, unused to such an attack, thought only of saving themselves, and many turned to fly, for sudden terror seized them as they saw the flaming eyes, and heard the shrill, malignant cry of the enraged Amalekite women, who had rushed into the fight to add fuel to their husbands' courage and terrify the enemy. They held on to the humped brutes by leathern straps hanging down from the saddle, which they clutched in their left hands, and allowed themselves to be dragged whithersoever the riders went. Hatred seemed to have steeled each female heart against fear of death, compassion and womanly feeling; and the hideous cry of these Megaeras broke the spirit of many a brave Hebrew.

But no sooner did their captain see them give way than he took advantage of the disaster, and bid them retire and allow the savage foe to enter the valley; for he said to himself that the superior numbers of his men could be turned to better account as soon as they had the opportunity of pressing on the foe from both flanks as well as in front, and when the slingers and archers could take their part in the fight.

Ephraim and the bravest of his comrades, who remained with him as runners, were now sent back to the northern end of the valley, to tell the leaders of the ranks posted there what Joshua proposed, and to order them to advance.

The swift-footed shepherd lads vanished as nimbly as gazelles; and it soon was seen that their captain had hit on the right plan; for no sooner had the Amalekites reached the middle of the valley than the Hebrews fell upon them from all sides; several who were bravely rushing forward fell in the sand as they brandished the sword or spear, hit by a round pebble or a sharp arrow from sling or bow.

Moses, meanwhile, kept his place on the cliff overlooking the battle-field, with Aaron and Hur. From thence he watched the fight in which he, who had grown grey in peaceful pursuits, could take part only with heart and soul. Not a movement, not a sword raised or dropped among friends or foes, escaped his keen eye; but when the fray had fairly begun, and the captain, with wise forethought, had opened a way for the enemy into the midst of his own fighting-men, Hur exclaimed to the grey-headed man of God: "My wife, your sister's lofty spirit has indeed discerned the truth. The son of Nun belies the call of the Most High. What is this? We are the superior force, and yet the enemy makes his way unhindered into the very heart of our host. As the waters of the Red Sea stood aside at the word of the Lord, so do our ranks,—and, as it would seem, by their leader's bidding."

"Only to swallow up Amalek as the waves of the sea swallowed up the Egyptians," was Moses' reply.

Then he lifted up his hands to Heaven and cried:

"Look down, Jehovah, on Thy people, who are in fresh straits. Strengthen the arm and give sight to the eyes of him whom Thou hast chosen to be Thy sword. Send him the succor Thou didst promise him when Thou didst name him Joshua instead of Hosea! And if Thou dost no more suffer him to prove himself steadfast and strong as beseems the captain of Thy choice, then do Thou, with the hosts of Heaven, set Thyself at the head of Thy people that they may put their enemies to flight!"

Thus the man of God besought the Lord with hands lifted on high, and ceased not to entreat Jehovah and cry to Him whose mighty will ruled His people; and presently Aaron whispered to him that the foe was hard beset, and that the courage of the Israelites was proving itself nobly. Joshua was now here and now there, and the ranks of the enemy were visibly thinner, while those of the Hebrews

seemed to multiply. And Hur confirmed this report, and added that the untiring zeal and heroic contempt of death of the son of Nun were beyond all praise. He had, as at that moment, felled one of the wildest of the Amalekites with his battle-axe.

At this Moses breathed more freely. His arms fell by his side, and he eagerly watched the course of the fight which was surging and raging, tossing and waving at his feet.

The sun had by this time reached its noon, and shone down on the combatants with scorching fires. The grey granite walls of the valley glowed with intenser heat every hour, and the sweat had long since stood on the brows of the three men on the rock. What, then, must the heat be below, adding to the labor of struggling and wrestling? How sorely must the wounds ache of the bleeding wretches lying there in the sand!

Moses felt it all as though he himself were suffering it, for his immovably steadfast soul was rich in compassion, and he bore this people, who were of his own flesh and blood, and for whom he lived and labored, in his heart as a father does his child. The wounds inflicted on his brethren pained him; yet his heart beat high with proud gladness as he beheld how those whose cowardly subjection had but a short while since so greatly fired his wrath had learned the arts of attack and defence. Now one band of young Hebrews after another rushed on the enemy with loud cries of "Jehovah, our Refuge!"

In Joshua's proud, heroic form he saw the posterity of Israel as he dreamed and hoped it might be, and he now no longer doubted that the Lord had indeed called Joshua to be the captain of his people. Rarely had his large commanding look flashed more brightly than at this moment.

But what was that?

A cry of horror broke from Aaron's lips, and Hur started to his feet and gazed anxiously towards the north; for from the spot where the people's tents were pitched came a fresh battle-cry, mingling with loud and lamentable shrieks, not, as it seemed, from the men alone but from women and children. The enemy had surprised the camp.

A troop of the Amalekites had been detached from the main body long before the battle had begun, and had

made their way round by a mountain defile, known only to themselves.

At this Hur thought of his young wife, and a vision rose before Aaron's mind of Elisheba, his faithful spouse, of his children and grandchildren ; and both with beseeching eyes dumbly entreated Moses to allow them to fly to the rescue of those dearest to them ; but the austere chief refused, and kept them with him.

Then, again, standing up, he raised his heart and hands once more to Heaven. With fervent prayer he cried to the Lord, and ceased not his entreaties ; as the minutes went on the more ardent was his beseeching, for all that the Hebrew host had won they now seemed to be losing. Every glance at the battle-field, everything his companions told him, while, with spirit uplifted to the Lord his God, he stood blind and deaf to the scene below, added to the burden of his woes.

Joshua had placed himself at the head of a strong party of men and withdrawn from the fray, and with him were Bezaleel, Hur's grandson, Aholiab, his favorite comrade, young Ephraim and Reuben, Milcah's husband. It was with a heart full of blessing that Hur had marked them retire, for they could only have quitted the fight in order to succor the camp. He listened with eager ears to the sounds from the north, as though he divined how deeply he was interested in the broken cries and lamentations which came up from the tents on the breeze.

Old Nun had taken up arms against the troop of Amalekites who had fallen on the camp and had fought valiantly, but when he perceived that the men whom Joshua had left under his command could no longer stand against the onslaught of the foe, he sent to crave reinforcement of the captain. Joshua forthwith entrusted the further conduct of the battle to Nahshon, the second chief of the tribe of Judah, and to Uri, the son of Hur, who had distinguished himself by his courage and forethought. and hastened with other chosen men to help his father.

He had not lost a moment, and yet the fight was already decided by the time he reached the scene of the struggle ; for, as he approached the camp, the Amalekites had broken through his father's line of defence, and cut him off from the tents on which they were rushing.

First, then, Joshua rescued the brave old man from the

foe, and next he had to drive the sons of the desert away from the camp; this gave rise to a sharp struggle, man to man, and hand to hand, and he himself could be in but one spot at a time, and must need leave it to the younger fighting-men to act for themselves, each in his own place.

Here, too, he raised the cry, "Jehovah, our Refuge!" and rushed, shouting these words, into Hur's tent, which was the first to be seized by the enemy, and round which the battle was fiercest. Many corpses already strewed the ground at the entrance, and furious Amalekites were struggling with a party of Hebrews, while from within came wild screams of terror.

He sprang across the threshold with winged feet, and beheld a spectacle which filled even the unflinching man with terror, for, on the left of the large room it formed, Hebrews and Amalekites were rolling on the blood-stained mats in a furious struggle, white on the right he saw Miriam and her waiting women, whose hands the men of the desert had tied. The men had meant to carry them off as precious plunder, but an Amalekite woman, frenzied with hatred, revenge and jealousy, and eager to sacrifice the strange woman to the flames, was blowing the brands on the hearth, and, by waving the veil she had snatched from Miriam's head, had fanned them to a considerable blaze.

A fearful tumult filled the confined space as Joshua rushed into the tent; on one side the yells of the struggling men, while on the other the prophetess' women set up a succession of loud shrieks for rescue and deliverance as soon as they saw him coming. Their mistress, as pale as death, knelt at the feet of the Amalekite chief, whose wife was threatening them with death by fire. She stared at their deliverer as though a spirit had started out of the earth before her eyes, and the scenes which followed stamped themselves on Miriam's memory as a series of horrible and disconnected, but never-to-be-forgotten images.

First, the Amalekite chief who had bound her was a strange but heroic figure. With his swarthy skin and high hooked nose, he resembled an eagle of his native mountains; his beard was black, his eyes were aflame. But ere long he was to measure his strength with another—with the man who once had been dear to her heart. She had often com-

pared him with a lion, but never had he seemed more like the king of the desert.

They were both mighty men and strong. No one could have predicted which of them must yield to the other, which must win the victory; and it was her fate to witness the struggle, for already the fiery son of the desert had shouted his war-cry and rushed upon the more cautious Hebrew.

That no man may live if his heart stops beating for so much as a minute every child must know, and yet Miriam was certain that hers had stood still, rigid and turned to stone, when the lion rushed into peril to destroy the eagle, and the Amalekite's bright knife flashed forth, and she saw the blood flowing from her champion's shoulder.

But then her heart began to beat again, nay, and faster than ever before, for suddenly the lion-hearted warrior, whom she had so lately hated with such hatred, was once more, as by a miracle, the friend of her childhood again. Love had waked up with the sound of trumpets and cymbals, and marched in triumph into her heart, lately so desolate and forlorn. All that had held them apart was suddenly forgotten and buried, and never were more fervent appeals addressed to the Most High than in the brief prayer which went up from her agonized soul. And as her pleading was fervent, so was it immediately answered, for the eagle was down and his soaring for ever ended under the superior strength of the lion.

All was dark for a while before Miriam's eyes, and it was as in a dream that she felt the cords which bound her wrists and ankles cut by Ephraim. Then she soon recovered consciousness, and beheld at her feet the bleeding corpse of the vanquished chief, and in other parts of the tent many bodies and wounded men, among them several of her husband's slaves. By them, stalwart and victorious, stood the brave fighting-men of her nation, with the noble and reverend figure of Nun, and Joshua, whose wounds his father was binding up.

This task she felt should have been hers, and hers alone; and deep grief and burning shame came over her as she remembered how greatly she had sinned against this man. She knew not how she could repay him, on whom she had brought such deep sorrow, all she owed him. Her whole heart longed to hear some word of forgiveness from his lips,

and she went towards him on her knees across the blood-stained ground ; but the prophetess eloquent lips were dumb ; she could not find the right word, till suddenly the imploring cry rose loud from her oppressed breast : “ Joshua ! O Joshua ! I have sinned against you indeed, and will repent of it all my life long, but do not scorn my thanks. Do not repel me from you, and, if you can, forgive me ! ”

She could not have uttered another word ; but then—and this again she never forgot—his eyes had overflowed with scalding tears, and he had raised her from the ground with irresistible strength, and yet with a hand as gentle as a mother’s when her child has had a fall, and from his lips came mild and friendly words, promising full forgiveness. The mere pressure of his hand was enough to show her that he was no longer wroth with her, as she heard his assurance that the name of Joshua could not fall more sweetly on his ear from any lips than from hers.

Then with the cry “ Jehovah, our Refuge ! ” he turned from her ; but his clear shout, and the enthusiastic battle-cry of his followers rang in her ears long after.

At last all was still once more, and she only knew that never before nor after had she wept so passionately or so bitterly as in that hour. Moreover, she had made two solemn vows to the God who had called her to be His handmaid. But the two men whom they most concerned were meanwhile in the thick of the tumult of battle.

One had led his men back from the rescued camp to meet the foe once more ; the other, by the side of the leader of the multitude, was watching the varying movements of the still furious fight.

Joshua found his followers hardly pressed. In one place they were giving way, in another they were making but a half-hearted stand against the sons of the desert. Hur, too, was looking down with increasing and double anxiety on the course of the battle, for in the camp he pictured his wife and father in peril, and below him his son. His fatherly heart quaked when he beheld Uri giving way, but when he made a fresh onslaught, and by a well-directed attack broke the ranks of the enemy, he held up his head again, and longed to be able to shout a word of praise that he could hear. But what ear could be sharp enough to hear a single voice above the clatter of weapons and mingled

battle-cries, the shrieking of the women and the wailing of the wounded, the surly grunting of the camels, the blare of trumpets and horns?

And now the foremost of the Amalekites had forced their way, like the thin end of a wedge, into the furthest ranks of the Hebrews. If they should succeed in breaking open a gap for those behind them, and effect a junction with those who had attacked the camp, the battle was lost and the fate of the Israelites was sealed; for still another horde of Amalekites were in reserve at the southern end of the valley, who had not yet had any fighting, and who seemed to be intended to protect the oasis from the foe in the last extremity.

But here was a fresh surprise.

The men of the desert had made their way so far forward that the slingers and bowmen could scarcely hit one of them, and if these were not to remain idle they must be ordered down to the scene of the struggle.

Hur might have called in vain to Uri to remember these men and give them some fresh occupation, but suddenly a youth made his appearance, coming from the end by the encampment, a lad as nimble as a mountain-goat, scrambling and leaping from crag to crag. As soon as he reached the first man he spoke to him, gave a signal to those beyond, who again repeated it to the next, and finally they all descended into the valley and climbed the western cliff as far as a spot where some men were standing; there they vanished as utterly as though the rocks had swallowed them. The youth who led the slingers and bowmen was Ephraim. A patch of shadow on the face of the rock was, no doubt, the opening into a ravine, and through this the men were to be led whom Joshua had sent for to succor the camp. So thought Hur, and not he alone but Aaron likewise, and again Hur began to doubt whether the Lord were indeed with Joshua, for the men who were to be of use at the tents were lost to the troops which it was now the duty of his son and of his comrade Nahshon to command.

The fight round the camp had already lasted above an hour, and Moses had not ceased to beseech the Lord with hands uplifted to Heaven, when the Amalekites made a great rush forward. At this the leader of his people collected all his strength for a new appeal to the Almighty; but he was

much exhausted, his knees shook and his weary arms fell by his sides. But his spirit had all its fire and his heart all its fervent desire not to cease from entreating Him who is the Ruler of battles. The leader of his people must not be idle during the struggle, and his weapon was prayer. Like a child which will not cease from beseeching its mother till she has granted him that which it unselfishly demands for its brethren, Moses importuned the Almighty, who had hitherto shown Himself to be a Father to him and the Hebrew folk, and saving them as by a miracle from the greatest perils.

But his frame was faint, so he called on his companions, and they pushed forward a block of stone on which he might sit, while he besieged the heart of the Lord with more and yet more prayers. There he sat ; and when his weary limbs refused their service his soul still answered to his call, and went up as in a flame to the Ruler of the destinies of man. But his arms grew more and more feeble, and dropped at last as if weighed down by heavy masses of lead, although it had for years been his habit to raise them heavenwards when he cried fervently to God on high.

This his comrades knew, and they thought they had perceived that, as often as their great chief's hands sank, the sons of Amalek gained some new advantage. Then they diligently held up his arms, the one on the right hand and the other on the left ; and although the mighty man could no longer appeal to Heaven in intelligible words, and his giant's frame swayed to and fro, and more than once he felt as though the stone on which he sat, the valley below him and the whole world were in movement, still his eyes and hands were raised on high.

Not for an instant did he cease calling on the Most High till, on a sudden, from the camp there came up glad shouts of victory, which echoed loudly from the rocky walls of the gorge. Joshua had returned to the field of battle, and at the head of his troops rushed on the enemy with irresistible fury.

From this moment the struggle assumed a new aspect. The decision, indeed, was still doubtful. Moses, supported on either side, dared not cease to uplift his heart and his hands, but at last, at last, the final struggle was over. The ranks of the Amalekites gave way, and presently they fled,

broken and panic-stricken, to the northern pass by which they had entered the valley. And even from thence the cry came up from a thousand throats: "Jehovah, our Refuge!" "Victory! Victory!"

At this the man of God let his arms fall from the supporting shoulders of his companions, stood up, tall and strong, crying with renewed and wonderfully revived energy: "I thank Thee, my God and Lord! Jehovah, our Refuge! Thy people are saved!" But then his sight grew dark from exhaustion.

However, he presently looked up again, and saw Ephraim pressing close on the Amalekites, who had taken their stand at the southern defile, with his slingers and bowmen, while Joshua drove the main body of the desert-tribes backwards towards their vanquished brethren.

The captain had heard from a deserter of a pass by which good climbers could reach a gorge leading out on the northern end of the battle-field, and Ephraim, in obedience to his command, had led the archers and slingers along this difficult path, and fallen on the rear of the last band of the enemy who could still have made any stand. Thus attacked from both sides, their ranks thinned, and their courage quelled, the sons of Amalek gave up the struggle; and now it was seen how these children of the desert and dwellers among the highlands could use their legs, for at a sign from their leader they first killed their dromedaries, and then fled in all directions like feathers scattered by the wind. They climbed steep cliffs which looked inaccessible to man like the nimblest lizards, on their hands and feet; but a great many escaped by the ravine which the deserter had betrayed to Joshua.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE larger half of the Amalekites lay dead or wounded on the field of battle, and the Hebrew captain knew that the other desert tribes who had joined them had, as was their custom, abandoned their slain, and would retire to their own haunts. At the same time it was not impossible that despair might give the fugitives courage not to allow their oasis to fall into the hands of the Hebrews without a final contest.

However, Joshua's men were too much exhausted for it to be possible to lead them any further at this moment. He himself had lost some blood from several slight wounds, and the great exertions of the last few days had made their mark even on his iron frame.

Besides this, the sun, which had not long risen when the strife began, was already sinking to rest, and if they were to force their way through to the oasis it would not be advisable to do battle in the dark. What he and, even more, his brave followers most needed was rest till the next day's dawn.

All about him he saw none but glad faces, beaming with proud self-reliance, and when he dismissed the ranks to retire to the camp and rejoice with those dear to them over the victory, the troops, which had marched past wearily and slowly, broke out in shouts of joy, as clear and glad as though they had quite forgotten the fatigues which had bowed their heads and weighted their feet.

"Hail to Joshua! Hail to the Conqueror!" re-echoed from cliff to cliff long after the last of the troops was lost to sight. But more clearly still did the words ring in his heart in which Moses had thanked him, for they had been: "Verily as the sword of the Most High, steadfast and strong, hast thou fought the fight. So long as the Lord is thy Helper and Jehovah our Refuge, we need fear no enemies!"

He fancied he still could feel on his brow and head the kiss of the great leader, the man of God, who had clasped him to his heart before all the people, and it was not a small thing to control the violent agitation which disturbed him at the end of this all-important day.

A strong desire to stand clear in his own eyes before mingling with the jubilant throng, or meeting his father, to whom a share in every great emotion that stirred his soul was due, prompted him to linger on the field of battle. This was now a scene where gloom and horror held sway, for those who lingered here besides himself were detained by death or mortal wounds.

The ravens which had followed the pilgrims were soaring above the bodies, and already venturing to settle on the rich banquet spread before them. The scent of blood had brought the beasts of prey out of their coverts in the hills

and rocks, and their greedy howl or bark was to be heard on every side.

Then when darkness followed on dusk, lights began to flit about over the blood-drenched ground. They guided the slaves and those who missed one dear to them to discriminate between friend and foe, the wounded and the dead; and many a cry of anguish from those who were badly hurt rose up amid the croaking of the birds of prey and the yells of the ravening jackals and hyænas, foxes and tiger-cats.

But Joshua knew the horrors of a battle-field and feared them not. Leaning against a rock he saw the same stars rise as had shone on him outside his tent in the camp by Tanis, when he stood divided against himself, face to face with the hardest decision in his life. Since then a month only had gone by, but that short space of time had witnessed an incredible change in his whole inner and outer life. All that had seemed great and splendid to him that night, as he sat outside the tent in which Ephraim lay in his fever, all that he had then deemed worthy of his most strenuous effort, now lay far behind him, vain and worthless. He cared no longer for the honors and dignities with which the caprice of the weak and arbitrary king of a strange nation could make him great and rich. What to him now was the well-armed and disciplined army among whose captains he had numbered himself with such glad pride?

He could scarcely believe that there had been a time when he had aspired to nothing higher than to command more and yet more thousands of Egyptian soldiers; when his heart had beat high at the prospect of a new title or a mark of honor conferred by men whom, for the most part, he could not regard as worthy of his esteem. He had looked for everything from the Egyptians, for nothing from his own nation. For that night in the camp he had thought with repulsion of the great mass of the people who were of his own blood, as miserable slaves, perishing in degrading servitude. He had looked down in his pride even on the noblest of them, for they were but herdsmen, and as such held in contempt by the Egyptians whose feelings he shared.

His own father, indeed, was an owner of beasts, and though he held him in high veneration, this was in spite of

his position, this was because his whole nature commanded respect, because the vigorous old man, with youthful fire, won the love of all men, and, above all, that of his grateful son. He had never ceased to acknowledge him gladly, but in all other matters he had striven so to conduct himself among his brethren in arms that they should forget his origin, and regard him in all respects as one of themselves. His ancestress, Asenath, the wife of Joseph, had been an Egyptian, and of this he had always been proud.

But now—to-night?

Now he would have made the man who called him an Egyptian feel his wrath; and all which, at the last new moon, he would have cast from him and hidden away as though it were a disgrace, at this next new moon, which, like the last, rose in a star-lit sky, made him hold his head high with pride and joy.

How grand a thought it was that he had a right to pride himself on being what he was! What a standing lie, what an infinite treason would his life and doings as an Egyptian captain appear to him now! His upright spirit rejoiced in the consciousness that this was an aid to that unworthy denial and concealment of his own blood. He felt with glad thankfulness that he was one of the people whom the Most High had chosen before all others; that he belonged to a congregation of whom, even the humblest, nay, and every child, lifted up his hands in prayer to the God whom the loftiest spirits among the Egyptians veiled in the narrowest mystery, because they thought the common folk too weak and too dull-witted to stand before His might and greatness, or to comprehend them.

And this, the One and only God, before whom the motley crowd of Egyptian gods sank into nothingness, this God had chosen him, the son of Nun, out of the thousands of the nation, to be the leader and protector of His chosen people, and had given him a name, pledging Himself to be his Helper. To obey his God and to devote his blood and life, under His guidance, to His people, seemed to him as lofty an aim as any man ever kept in view. His black eyes flashed more brightly as he thought of it. His heart seemed too small for all the love with which he would now make up to his brethren for his shortcomings towards them in former years.

He had, indeed, lost a noble and lovely woman whom

he had hoped to win, and she was the wife of another ; but this did not at all trouble the happy enthusiasm which possessed his soul ; he had ceased to desire her for his own, high as her image still stood in his heart. At this moment he thought of her with calm gratitude ; for, as he confessed to himself, his new life had begun on that decisive night when Miriam had set him the example of sacrificing everything, even what she held dearest, for God and the Hebrew people.

In so far as the prophetess had sinned against him he had blotted it all from his memory, for he was wont to forget when he had forgiven. At this moment he felt only how much he owed her. Like some noble tree uplifting its head to heaven, where two hostile countries join and touch, so he stood between his former and his present life ; and although love was laid in a grave, still he and she could never cease to strive hand in hand for the same end, and to walk in the same way.

He looked back once more on the period which he had just passed through, and he could say to himself that in a very short time, and under his leadership, a crowd of wretched serfs had become valiant warriors. They had already learned to obey promptly in the field, and to be justly proud of victory. And every new success must improve them. To-day, even, it seemed to him not merely desirable but perfectly possible to conquer a new country at their head, a home which they would love and call their own, where they might dwell in freedom and welfare, and become such men of valor as, by good training, he hoped to make them.

Thus, among the horrors of the battle-field, under the moonless night, gladness, as the radiance of day, shone in his soul, and with the words, " God and my people ! " and a thankful upward glance at the starry vault, he quitted the corpse-strewn valley of death with a triumphant step, as though he were marching over palms and flowers cast in his victorious path by a thankful throng.

CONCLUSION.

IN the camp he found all astir. Fires were blazing in front of the tents, and around them sat joyful groups, while many a beast was slain, either as a thank-offering or for an evening feast. Wherever Joshua went he was hailed with glad acclamations ; but he failed to find his father, for Nun had accepted Hur's bidding, and it was outside his tent that the son embraced the old man, radiant with thankful pride. And the belated guest was welcomed by Miriam and her husband in a way which gladdened his heart ; Hur gave him his hand with hearty frankness, while she bowed reverently before him, and her eyes beamed with joy and gratitude.

Before he sat down, Hur led him aside, ordered a slave who had just slaughtered a calf to divide it in two parts, and, pointing to it, said :—

“You have done great things for the people and for me, son of Nun, and my life is too short for the gratitude you have laid on me and on my wife. If you can forget the bitter words which troubled our peace at Dophka—and you say you have forgotten them—let us henceforth dwell in unity as brothers in one cause, and stand up for each other in joy and sorrow, in peril and in need. The captaincy henceforth belongs to you alone, Joshua, and to none other ; and the people all rejoice thereat, and, most of all, so do I and my wife. And if you share my desire that we should henceforth live in the bonds of brotherhood, come with me, and after the custom of our fathers we will walk together between the two halves of this slaughtered beast.”

And Joshua gladly did his bidding ; Miriam was the first to join in the loud approval which old Nun began, and she did so with ardent vehemence ; for it was she who, after humbling herself before her husband, whose love she had now quite won back, had suggested to him to invite Joshua to this treaty of brotherhood which was now ratified. All this had cost her no pang ; for the two vows

to which she had pledged herself after that the son of Nun, whom she now was ready to call Joshua, had saved her from the hand of the foe were about to be fulfilled, and she felt that it was in a happy hour that she had made them.

The feeling, new to her, that she was a woman even as other women are, gave to her whole person a gentleness which had hitherto been foreign to her, and this won her the love of her husband, whose full worth she had learnt during the bitter time when he had opened his heart to her.

At the very hour when Hur and Joshua were sealing the bond of brotherhood, another faithful pair had met again whom sacred duty had torn asunder, for while the friends were still enjoying their meal in front of Hur's tent, three persons desired permission to speak with Nun, their lord and master. These were the old freed woman, who had remained behind in Tanis, with her daughter and Asser, from whom Hoglah had parted to stay with her feeble parents.

Old Eliab, the father, had soon died, and then the mother and daughter had set forth to follow their people through unspeakable fatigues, the old woman riding her husband's ass. Nun received the faithful souls with joy, and in the same hour gave Hoglah to Asser to wife. Thus this blood-stained day had brought blessing to many; and yet it was fated to end with a harsh discord.

So long as the fires blazed in the camp there was always some stir going forward, and throughout their wanderings hither no evening had passed without some quarrel and bloody fray. Wounds and death-blows had been the frequent result when one who had been insulted revenged himself on his adversary, when some dishonest rascal had seized the property of another, or refused to fulfill the obligations he had contracted.

In these cases it had often been a hard matter to make the peace and bring the criminal to a reckoning, for the refractory refused to acknowledge any man, be he who he might, as a judge over them. Those who fancied themselves injured banded together with others, and tried to right themselves by force.

On this festive evening Hur and his guests at first heard only such a noise as every one was accustomed to hear. But presently, when besides the wild uproar a glare of light flared up close to them, the chiefs began to fear for

the safety of the camp, so they rose up to put an end to the turmoil, and found themselves in the presence of a spectacle which filled some with rage and horror and others with grief.

The triumph of victory had turned the heads of the multitude. They felt prompted to give expression to their gratitude to the god, and with a vivid remembrance of the horrible worship of their native land a party of Phœnicians among the strangers in the camp had lighted a great fire to their god Moloch, and were almost in the act of flinging an Amalekite into the flames as an offering pleasing in his eyes. Close at hand the Israelites had set up a clay image of the Egyptian god Set, which one of his Hebrew devotees had brought with him as a charm to protect his family, placing it on a tall pillar of wood. Hundreds were dancing round it, and singing in triumph. Their worship could not have been more fervent, nor the rapture of their souls more eager, if they had desired to pay the God of their fathers the thanksgiving which was His due.

Soon after his return to the camp, Aaron had assembled the people to sing praises and glorify the Lord; but the need for seeing an image of the God to which they might uplift their souls after the manner to which they had so long been accustomed had proved so strong in many of them that the mere sight of the clay idols had sufficed to bring them to their knees, and turn their hearts from the true God.

At the sight of the worshipers of Moloch, who had already bound their victim, ready to cast him into the flames, Joshua was very wroth, and when in their darkness they refused to hear him, he bid the trumpet sound, and by the help of the young fighting-men, who obeyed him blindly, and to whom the strangers were anything rather than dear, he drove them without bloodshed back to their own quarter of the camp.

The Hebrews yielded to the urgent exhortations of old Nun, Hur and Nahshon, and repented of their sin, which was aggravated by ingratitude. But even they took it amiss when the fiery old man broke the images they prized so dearly, and if it had not been for the love they bore his son and grandson, and for the honor due to his white hairs, many a hand would have been lifted against him.

Moses had retired into solitude, as was his wont, after

each peril, which by the grace of the Almighty came to a good issue ; and the tears rose to Miriam's eyes when she thought of the grief it must cause her noble brother to hear the tidings of such a falling away and such deep unthankfulness. A dark shadow had fallen even on Joshua's glad and confident mood. He lay sleepless on a mat in his father's tent, looking back on the past. His warrior's soul was strengthened by the thought that a single almighty and unerring Power ruled the universe and the lives of men, and required unfailing obedience from all created things. Every glance at the order of nature and of life showed him that all things depended on one infinitely great and mighty Being, and rose up, moved, or lay down to rest at sign from Him. To him, the captain of a puny army, his God was the supreme and wise Captain, the only Leader who was always sure of the victory. How great was the sin of insulting such a Lord, and of going after strange gods in return for his mercies ! And this was what the Israelites had done before his very eyes ; and as he recalled to his memory the doings which had compelled his intervention, the question arose in his mind, how might they be protected against the wrath of the Most High, and how could the eyes of the darkened multitude be opened to His wondrous heart and soul-inspiring greatness ?

But he found no answer and saw no remedy, as he pictured to himself the perversity and rebellious spirit prevailing in the camp, which threatened to bring evil on his people.

He had succeeded in reducing the fighting-men to obedience. As soon as the trumpet sounded, and he made his appearance in battle-array at the head of his troops, their stiff-necked will gave way to his. Was there nothing, then, which, in the peaceful round of every-day life, could keep them within the bounds which, under Egyptian rule, made life safe for even the humblest and weakest, and protected them against the high-handed and powerful ? Meditating on these things, he watched till dawn was near, and as the stars began to set he sprung up and bid the trumpets sound ; and to-day, as yesterday, they assembled without a murmur, and in full numbers. He was soon marching at the head of his troops through the narrow gorge, and after they had gone forward for about an hour, in silence and in darkness, they were

refreshed by the cooler air which precedes the day. Dawn began to spread in the east, the sky grew paler, and the glowing splendors of sunrise solemnly and grandly rose above the majestic mass of the Holy Mountain. It lay spread out before the pilgrims, almost tangibly close and clear, with its brown crags, precipices and ravines; towering above them rose its seven-peaked crown, round which a pair of eagles were soaring, their broad wings bathed in a golden glory, in the light of the new-born day.

And again, as at Alush, a pious thrill brought the marching host to a standstill, while each one, from the first to the last, raised his hands in silent adoration and prayer.

Then the warriors went on with hearts uplifted, one gaily calling to another in glad excitement as some pretty little brown birds flew to meet them, twittering loudly, an assurance that fresh water must be near. Hardly half an hour further on they saw the blue-green foliage of a tamarisk-brake, and above it tall palms, and heard at last the sweetest sound that ever falls on the listening ear in the desert, the babbling of a running stream. This encouraged them greatly, and the mighty form of the peak of Sinai,* its heaven-kissing head veiled in blue mist, filled the souls of these men, dwellers until now in the level meads of Goshen, with devout amazement.

They now proceeded with caution, for the remnant of the stricken Amalekites might be lurking in ambush. But there was no foe to be seen or heard; and the only traces the Hebrews found of the sons of the desert and their thirst for revenge were their ruined houses, the fine palms felled and prone, and the garden-ground destroyed.

They were forced to clear the slender trunks out of their path that they might not check the advance of the Hebrew multitude; and when this task was done, Joshua went down through a defile leading to the brook in the valley, and up the nearest boulder of the mountain, to look about him, far and near, for the enemy.

The mountain-path led over masses of granite veined

* Now called Serbal; not the Sinai of the monks which, in my opinion, was not supposed to be the mountain of the law-giving till the time of Justinian. A full exposition of the view that Serbal is the Sinai of Scripture, which was first put forward by Lepsius, and in which other writers agree, may be found in a volume, entitled (in German), "Through Goshen to Sinai," by Dr. G. Ebers.

with green diorite, rising steeply till it ended high above the plain of the oasis, at a plateau where, by a clear spring, green shrubs of delicate mountain-flowers graced the wilderness.

Here he paused to rest, and looking round he discerned in the shadow of an overhanging rock a tall figure gazing at the ground.

It was Moses.

The course of his reflections had so completely rapt him from his present surroundings that he did not perceive Joshua's approach, and the warrior reverently kept silence for fear of disturbing the man of God, waiting patiently till he raised his bearded face, and greeted him with dignity and kindness.

Side by side they gazed down into the oasis and the desolate rocky ravines at their feet. Even a tiny strip of the Red Sea, which bathes the western foot of the mountains, gleamed like an emerald in the distance. And their talk was of the people, and of the greatness and power of the God who had brought them so far with such wondrous works; and as they looked to the northward they could see the endless train of the pilgrims, slowly making their way along the devious way of the defile towards the oasis.

Thus did Joshua open his heart to the man of God, and told him all he had thought and wondered during the past sleepless night, finding no answer.

The prophet listened to him with composure, and then replied in a deep hesitating voice and in broken sentences:

"Insubordination in the camp—yes; it is ruining the people. But the Lord of Might has left it in these hands to dash them to pieces. Woe to those who rebel. That Power, as stupendous as this mountain, and as immovable as its foundation rock—they must feel it!" Here the angry speech of Moses ceased. After they had stood for a while looking into the distance, Joshua broke the silence by inquiring: "And what is that Power called?"

And the answer came clear and strong from the bearded lips of the man of God: "The Law," and he pointed with his staff to the top of the peak.

Then, with a gesture of farewell, he quitted his companion.

Joshua, still looking out, perceived some dark shadows moving to and fro on the yellow sand of the valleys.

These were the remnant of the Amalekites seeking a new spot where they might dwell.

For a short time he kept his eye on them, and when he had assured himself that they were moving away from the oasis, he returned pensive to the valley.

“The Law,” he repeated to himself again and again.

Yes, that was what the exiles lacked. Its severity might be the one thing capable of forming the tribes which had fled from bondage into a nation worthy of the God who had chosen them before all the other peoples of the earth.

Here the captain's reflections were broken off, for the voices of men, the bellowing and bleating of herds and flocks, the barking of dog and the noise of hammers came up to him from the oasis. The tents were being pitched, a work of peace in which his aid was not needed. He lay down in the shade of a thick tamarisk shrub above which a tall palm towered proudly, and thankfully stretched his limbs in the consciousness that henceforth the people would be amply cared for, in war by his good sword, in peace by the Law. This was much, this raised his hopes; but no—this could not be all, could not be the end of everything. The longer he meditated, the more deeply he felt that this did not satisfy him for the mass of beings down there whom he bore in his heart as his brethren and sisters.

His broad brow darkened again, and, startled out of his rest by these new doubts, he sadly shook his head. No, and again no! The Law could not afford the people who had grown so dear to him all he desired for them. Something else was needful to make their future lot as noble and fair as he had dreamed it might be on his way to the mines.

But what was that something, what was its name?

And now he began to rack his brain to find out; but while, with closed eyes, he allowed his thoughts to wander to those other nations whom he had seen in war and in peace, to discover what the one thing was still lacking to the Hebrew folk, sleep fell on him, and in a dream he saw Miriam and another lovelier form resembling Kasana as he had often seen her flying to meet him, a pure and innocent child, and after her ran the white lamb which his father had given his favorite years since. The two figures each offered him a gift, and bid him chose one or the other.

In Miriam's hands was a heavy gold plate, and on the top of it in letters of flame he saw written, "The Law." She held it forth to him with gloomy gravity. The child offered him a drooping palm-leaf, such as he had often carried in token of truce.

The sight of the table of the law filled him with pious awe ; but the palm branch waved invitingly in his eyes, and he seized it quickly. Hardly had he grasped it when the figure of the prophetess vanished into thin air, like a mist wafted away by the morning breeze. He gazed in anxious surprise at the spot where she had stood, amazed and uneasy at the strange choice he had made, though feeling that he had decided rightly.

Then he asked the child what her gift might signify to him and the people. At this she signed to him, pointing to the distance, and spoke three words, in a gentle sweet voice which went to his heart. But strive as he might to seize their meaning he could not succeed, and when he desired the vision to interpret them he awoke at the sound of his own voice, and made his way back to the camp, disappointed and puzzled.

In later days he often sought again to remember these words, but always in vain.

The whole force of his body and soul he devoted to the Hebrew folk ; but his nephew Ephraim, as a powerful prince of his tribe, well worthy of the honor he achieved, founded a house in Israel. Through him old Nun saw great-grandchildren growing up who promised enduring posterity to his noble race.

The rest of Joshua's active life, and how he conquered a new home for his people, is a well-known tale.

And there, in the land of promise, many hundred years later, was another Joshua born who brought to all mankind the gifts which the son of Nun vainly sought for the children of Israel. In the three words spoken by the child, and which the captain of the host failed to interpret, were "Love, Mercy and Redemption !"

THE END.



THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE.

THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE spring of 1574 A. D. had come earlier than usual in the Netherlands. The sky was blue, gnats sported in the sunlight, white-winged butterflies clung to the fresh, golden-hued flowers, and near one of the canals which cut the broad plain stood a stork snapping after a bulky frog: the poor fellow was soon struggling in the red bill of his enemy. One gulp—the lively leaper had disappeared; his captor had spread his wings and flown upward. Over gardens and orchards filled with blossoming trees and surrounded by beds of flowers laid out after an exact pattern, over gayly painted summer-arbors, and the city, with its fortresses and towers, over the narrow houses, with their high, pointed gables, the neatly kept streets bordered on either side by elms, poplars and linden, by the willows in their fresh spring green, flew the bird. At last he dropped upon the ridge-pole of a tiled roof into his strongly built nest.

After generously making over his booty to the brooding mother-bird, he perched himself upon his right leg and looked down reflectively over the city whose red tiles lay glittering beneath him on the velvet carpet of the green meadow.

For many years he had known fair Leyden, the glory of Holland, and was familiar with the various branches of the Rhine, which divided the city into numerous islands, and was spanned by as many stone bridges as there are days in five months of the year; but truly, since his last flight southward, it was greatly changed. What had become of the gay pleasure-houses and fruit-hedges of the citizens? Where were the wooden frames over which the weavers were accustomed to spread their many-colored fabrics? Whatever vegetable growth or breast-high structure built by human hands had broken the uniformity of the plain outside the city walls and fortresses had utterly disappeared. And beyond these, in the fowler's favorite resort, strange brown and black circles seemed sown on the meadows.

In October of the previous year, soon after the stork had left the land, a Spanish host had encamped here, and only a few hours before the return of the winged wanderer on this first day of spring, the besiegers of Leyden had given over their fruitless effort.

The sterile spots in the midst of the luxurious verdure marked the place of their camp, and the black lines their extinguished fires.

The threatened citizens breathed freely again. The busy, easy-going population had straightway forgotten their annoyance—for the early spring was very lovely—and never does existence seem more desirable than when surrounded by the delights of that season.

A new and better time seemed to have opened, not only for nature, but for man. The troops stationed within the city for its defense, and whose experience there had been dismal, had received their discharge two days before, and gone out amid song and demonstrations of joy. The carpenter's ax now glistened in the sunshine before the red walls and towers and gates, to repair and to reconstruct; the cattle pastured peacefully again around the city walls; the neglected gardens were diligently prepared for planting the seed. Upon the streets and in the houses a thousand hands were now busy, which until very lately had been occupied with weapons of defense upon the walls and towers; and old people sat quietly before the doors, warming their backs in the sunshine.

On this 18th day of April, one could see in Leyden but few discontented faces, though many impatient ones. He who wished to find the latter had but to enter a room of the High-School building, where now, as noon approached, many a boy looked more eagerly through the open windows than toward the lips of his teacher.

But on one side of the large hall, where the older boys were assembled, no such feeling was manifest. The sun shone upon their books and copies, the spring called them as enticingly as the others, but a mightier influence held their youthful spirits. Forty bright eyes were fixed intently upon the face of a bearded man who was addressing them. Even the wild Jan Mulder had dropped the knife, with which he was carving the excellent representation of a ham upon the desk before him, to listen.

As the hour of noon struck from St. Peter's Church, close by, and also from the tower of the state house, the smaller boys rushed noisily from the building.

But, strangely enough, the patience of the older ones was

not exhausted. They must certainly be listening to something outside the ordinary range of their school exercises. The man who stood before them was not their usual teacher, but the town clerk, Van Hout, who had for to-day taken the place of the master and preacher, Vertroot, detained by sickness.

During the striking of noon-day, he had closed his book, and now said: "*Suspendo lectionem*. Hey, Jan Mulder, how would you translate my '*suspendere*'?"

"To hang," answered the boy.

"To hang!" laughed Van Hout. "You, perhaps, on a hook; but why hang a lesson? Adrian van der Werff—"

The person addressed rose quickly and said: "'*Suspendere lectionem*' means to break up the hour."

"Good; and if we wished to hang Jan Mulder, how would you express that?"

"*Patibulare, ad patibulum*," cried all the scholars.

The features of Van Hout, just now relaxed by a smile, became grave. He drew a deep breath, and said: "'*Patibulo*' is a bad Latin word, and your ancestors who occupied these seats understood its significance even less than you. Now every child in the Netherlands knows it; for Alva has impressed its meaning upon us. More than eighteen thousand brave citizens have come to the gallows through his '*ad patibulum*.'"

With these words he drew the girdle closer about his black waistcoat, stepped nearer to the foremost row of benches, and bending his stout body, said, with deepening emotion:

"This is enough for to-day, boys. It will be no matter if you forget the word we have just learned. But there is one thing you must keep in memory. The fatherland above all else! Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans will not have died in vain, so long as there are men ready to follow his example. Your turn will come. I am not given to boasting, and only say the thing that is true. We Hollanders have fifty times three hundred martyrs ready to come forward for the defense of our native land. Stormy times develop firm men, and boys also. Ulrich yonder, at the head of this class, would do honor to his nickname '*Löwing*.' 'Here Persian and there Greek' was the word in olden time; but our cry is: 'Here Netherlands and there Spain!' And truly the proud Darius never raged in Greece, as King Philip in Holland. Among the flowers which bloom in the human heart the Spanish have sown hatred—the poison-hemlock—I feel it within my own heart, and so do you; and we shall continue to recognize it. But do not misunderstand me. 'Here Spain, there

Holland!' is the cry; and not 'Rome against the Reformation!' Every faith may be right in the sight of the Lord, if a man be striving honestly and earnestly to follow Christ. At the throne of Heaven, the question will not be whether a man is Papist, Calvinist, or Lutheran, but what has he done, and what tried to do? Respect every man's faith; but you have a right to despise him who makes common cause with the oppressors of his fatherland. Now let us all pray silently, and then go home."

The scholars rose. Van Hout wiped the perspiration from his forehead and said, timidly, while the boys were gathering up their books, and pens, and pencils, as if excusing himself to his own thoughts:

"What I have said to you does not exactly come under the head of school exercises; but though you may occupy these benches a while longer, boys, you will sooner or later be called on to act as combatants in this strife. Löwing, please remain; I have something to say to you."

The master slowly turned his back, and the boys rushed into the open air.

In a corner of the open space behind St. Peter's Church, seldom disturbed by passers-by, but where the sound of music from the organ inside came as an appropriate accompaniment, they stopped to hold a council respecting a common game for the afternoon. After the speech just heard from the secretary, it was only natural that this game should be a contest. So that the only question before this impromptu council was as to the arrangement of details.

It was quickly decided that instead of Greeks and Persians, the contestants should personate patriots and Spaniards. But when the burgomaster's son, Adrian van der Werff, a boy of fourteen years, tried to divide the host, and in a rather authoritative manner ordered Paul van Swieten and Klaus Dirkson to personate Spaniards, a violent opposition arose; and the unfortunate circumstance became apparent that no one was willing to take the part of Spanish or Italian soldiers. Each boy wished some one else to play Castilian, but to fight himself under the flag of the Netherlands. But friend and enemy belonged this time to the same group, and the heroic courage of the Hollanders needed the actual presence of Spaniards to rouse its enthusiasm.

The youthful spirits soon became excited; the cheeks of the contestants began to glow—here and there fists were raised threateningly, and it became evident that instead of battling the enemies of their country, a cruel civil war was portending.

And, in truth, these merry fellows were poorly qualified to play the part of the gloomy, obstinate soldiers of King Philip.

Among them all one could find very few with brown, and only one with black hair and dark eyes. This was Adam Baersdorp, whose father, like Van der Werff's, was one of the patriotic leaders. When he, too, declined to play the Spaniard, some one cried out:

"So you do not wish to? Yet my father says yours is half a Glipper,* and a whole Papist, besides."

At these words young Baersdorp flung his books to the ground, and rushed, with doubled fist, upon his accuser. But Adrian van der Werff stepped quickly between them, exclaiming: "Shame on you, Cornelius. If any other one here so disgraces himself, I shall stop his mouth. Catholics are Christians as well as we. You have just heard that from the secretary, and my father says the same thing. Will you play Spaniard, Adam? Yes or no?"

"No," answered Adam, decisively. "And if any one again—"

"You can quarrel afterward if you wish," broke in Adrian, and good-humoredly gathered up the books of the excited Baersdorp and handed them to him, saying, with decision: "I am Spanish to-day. Who will join me?"

"I, and I, and I, in spite of all," cried one after another, and the division would in this way have been quietly concluded, had not the attention of the boys been attracted in a new direction.

A young gentleman, followed by a black servant, came along the street, directly toward the group. He also was a Netherlander, yet had little in common with the school-boys, except age, a red and white complexion, and haughty blue eyes. Every step bore witness that he felt himself important, and the negro in gay livery who walked behind, carrying a few articles just purchased, ludicrously imitated his gait. His head was thrown back further than his master's, whose free motion was hindered by a stiff Spanish ruff.

"There comes Wibisma, the monkey," said one of the boys, pointing.

All eyes turned toward the new-comer, and examined with a kind of scorn his velvet hat adorned with a plume, the stuffed and quilted waistcoat of red satin, the broad puffing of his short brown breeches, and the scarlet silk stockings that clung to his well-shaped legs.

* Name given to those sympathizing with Spain.

“The monkey,” repeated Paul van Swieten. “He follows the cardinal, and affects red.”

“And as Spanish as if straight from Madrid,” cried another; while a third added:

“The Wibismas were certainly not here while bread was scarce among us.”

“The Wibismas are all Glippers.”

“And they presume to strut around here in velvet and silk,” said Adrian. “Just look at the black fellow, whom the red-legged stork has brought to Leyden.”

A loud laugh ran through the group; and when he came nearer, Paul van Swieten asked, in a nasal tone: “How did deserting suit, and how are all things in Spain, Herr Glipper?”

The youth tossed back his head, and the negro followed his example, when Adrian cried in his ear:

“Little Glipper, tell me—for how many pieces of silver did Judas sell his Lord?”

The young Matenesse van Wibisma made an involuntary motion, but controlled himself, until Jan Mulder stepped in his way, holding his cloth cap, adorned with a cock’s feather, under his chin like a beggar, and with mock humility asked: “Please give me a penny to buy an indulgence for our tom-cat, Herr Grandee; he stole a calf’s leg yesterday from the butcher—”

“Out of the way,” cried the exasperated youth, and tried to push Mulder aside with the back of his hand.

“Don’t touch him, Glipper!” exclaimed the boys, with threatening gestures.

“Then let me alone,” answered Wibisma. “I sought no quarrel with any one—least of all, with you.”

“Why not with us?” asked Adrian, vexed by the cool contempt of the last words.

The youth turned away, shrugging his shoulders. But Adrian cried out: “Because the fine dress of Spain suits you better than our waistcoats of Leyden cloth—”

Here Adrian stopped, for Jan Mulder slipped behind the youth, and struck down his hat with a book, and cried out, while Nicolas van Wibisma was trying to free his eyes from the covering:

“Now the hat is firm, Herr Grandee; you might keep it on in presence of the king.”

The hands of the negro were filled with packages, and the nobleman did not summon him to help, knowing his cowardice, and feeling himself strong enough alone.

There was a costly clasp upon the hat which he had received

as a gift upon his seventeenth birthday, but he quite forgot this as he threw it one side and doubled his arms as for a wrestling match, asking, with glowing cheeks, and in an emphatic tone: "Who did that?"

Jan Mulder had slipped back into the circle of his companions, and instead of coming forward boldly, said, with a laugh: "The challenger, Glipper. We want to play blind-man's buff."

Nicolas could no longer restrain himself, and addressed the crowd in his wrath as "cowardly beggars."

Scarcely had he uttered the word, when Paul van Swieten flung his grammar, bound in swine's leather, at the breast of Wibisma.

His example was followed by others, and books flew from all directions at the legs and shoulders of the young nobleman. Bewildered, and covering his face with his hands, he retreated to the wall of the church and stood ready to plunge upon his enemies. The stiff Spanish ruff fettered him no longer. He looked his antagonists boldly in the face, stretched his limbs, strengthened by the presence of much knightly exercise, and, with a true Netherland oath, sprung upon Adrian, who chanced to be nearest.

After a short struggle the burgomaster's son was lying on the ground—but now the other boys, who had not ceased the cry of "Glipper!" laid hands upon the youth as he knelt above his victim.

Nicolas turned bravely, but the odds were against him. Losing self-control, he drew a dagger from his girdle. Two of the spectators threw themselves upon him and succeeded in wrenching away the weapon, which fell upon the pavement. But in its fall, the sharp edge scratched the arm of Paul van Swieten, and blood began to flow.

Up to this time the notes of the organ within the church had been heard above the cries of the boys and the terror-stricken howl of the negro. But the music suddenly ceased; the musician appeared at a side door, and with one glance took in the situation, and understood the cause of the tumult which had disturbed his practice. At first he was frightened, but his handsome face, framed in by a full beard, soon wore a smile, yet the words and gestures by means of which he separated the contestants were earnest.

The school-boys were well acquainted with Wilhelm Corneliussohn, and the dozen years of difference in age gave him the right to interfere. No hand was raised against Nicolas, but all gathered round the musician to enter accusation and to excuse themselves.

Paul van Swieten's wound was slight, though he stood a little apart from his comrades, binding a strip of linen around the burning spot in the flesh; but curiosity as to the issue of the contest was stronger than his care for the wound.

When the work of the peace-maker was nearly accomplished, Paul van Swieten cried out in a tone of warning to his comrades, pointing at the same time in the direction of the school-house: "There comes Herr van Nordwyk. Let the Glipper go, or there'll be trouble," and ran quickly around the church. Several boys followed, but the new-comer, before whom they were retreating, had a good pair of legs, and knew how to use them.

"Stop, boys," he cried, in a commanding tone. "What is going on here?"

Every one in Leyden respected this brave and cultivated young nobleman, so the boys who had not followed Paul immediately stopped where they were until Herr van Nordwyk came up.

With a peculiar sparkle in his shrewd eyes, and a fine smile, he cried out: "What has happened here, Master Wilhelm? Is the utterance of the disciples of Minerva not in harmony with your organ-practice, or has—but, by all the colors of the rainbow, this is Matenesse, the young Wibisma. And how the fellow looks! A brawl in the very shadow of the church—and you here, Adrian! and you, Master Wilhelm!"

"I have just separated them," answered the latter, carelessly, straightening his cuffs the meanwhile.

"Gently, I suppose, but with emphasis, as at the organ," replied the officer, with a laugh. "Who began the quarrel? You, Nicolas, or the others?"

Nicolas, agitated, angry, and ashamed, could find no words in which to reply. But Adrian, stepping forward, said: "We have been wrestling. Do not condemn us for it, Herr Janus!"

Nicolas gave his antagonist a look of gratitude. But Herr van Nordwyk, Jan-van der Does, or, by the scholarly title he himself preferred, Janus Dousa, was not satisfied with this representation, and cried out: "Patience! patience! Your appearance is suspicious, Master Adrian; come nearer, and tell me '*atrekeos*,' the exact truth of this affair."

Adrian did as he was bidden in a fair and honorable manner, neither overstating nor withholding the actual facts.

"Hem!" exclaimed Dousa, after the boy had finished. "It is a bad case. Neither party is free from blame. Your cause would appear better without that knife, my fine young man; and as to you, Adrian, and you, you chubby-cheeked clowns,

who— There comes the rector. If he catches you, you will see nothing beyond four walls this fine day. I should be sorry for that.”

The “chubby-cheeked clowns” understood his significant gesture, and scampered around the church without waiting to take leave, like a flock of pigeons pursued by a hawk. As soon as they disappeared, the officer came nearer to young Nicolas, saying: “This is a bad affair. But what is right for them is fair for you, too. Go home as quickly as possible. Are you the guest of your aunt?”

“Yes, sir,” answered the youth.

“Is your father also in the city?”

He was silent.

“Then he does not wish to be seen?”

Nicolas nodded, and Dousa added: “Leyden is open to all Hollanders, even to you. But if you will go about as the page of King Philip, and your old comrades choose to show their contempt, you must take the consequences. There lies your dagger, my young friend, and your hat. Take them both, and remember that such a weapon is no plaything. In one thoughtless moment many a one has ruined his whole life. The superior numbers pressing upon you may excuse you in this case. But how can you go home now, in this torn waist-coat, without disgrace?”

“My cloak is in the church,” said the musician. “I will give it to the youth.”

“Good, Master Wilhelm,” answered Dousa. “Wait here till it comes, my young man, and then go home. I wish the time might return when your father would care for my greeting. Do you know why it is no longer agreeable to him?”

“No, sir.”

“Then I will tell you. Because he likes Spain and I remain a Netherlander.”

“We are Hollanders as well as you,” returned Nicolas, with glowing cheeks.

“Hardly,” said Dousa, carelessly, laying his hand upon his sharp chin, and was trying to add a kinder word, when the youth cried out, passionately:

“Herr van Nordwyk, take back the ‘hardly.’”

Dousa looked surprised, and a smile came to his lips as he replied:

“You please me, Master Nicolas, and I shall rejoice if you prove yourself a true Hollander. But here comes Master Wilhelm with the cloak. Give me your hand—no, not this, the other.”

Nicolas hesitated, but Janus took the right hand of the boy in both his own, and bending his stately figure, whispered in his ear, so lightly that the musician could not hear:

“Before we separate, take this word from one who means well toward you. Chains, even though they be golden, drag downward; but freedom gives wings. You are pleased now with their glitter, but our swords are striking upon the Spanish chains, I believe, with good effect. Think upon my words, and, if you choose, repeat them to your father.”

Janus Dousa turned his back upon the youth, nodded to the musician, and went his way.

CHAPTER II.

THE young Adrian hastened up a street that had received its name from his ancestors. He gave little heed either to the lindens which lined it, whose green leaves were just bursting their buds, or to the birds, twittering as they built their nests in the hospitable branches; for his only thought was to reach home as quickly as possible. At one end of a bridge spanning the *Achtergracht*, he stood hesitatingly before a stately house, scarcely daring to raise the knocker and let it fall upon the polished plate beneath the bolt, for he anticipated no pleasant welcome. His waistcoat was out of order from wrestling with his stronger antagonist. The torn neck-gear had been removed to his pocket, and the new violet-colored stockings had fared so badly in their contact with the pavement as to show more of the knee than was quite agreeable to himself. The peacock's feather on his velvet cap might be replaced, but the damage to waistcoat and hose was far more serious.

The boy was sincerely sorry, for his father had strictly charged him to be careful of his clothes, in order to save the pennies; for there was scarcity at this time in the great house with its three doors, and the same number of gables, with their ornamental volutes—and its six windows in each story looking so proudly down upon the *Werff Street*.

The office of burgomaster brought in very little, and the trade in chamois and other skins, inherited from the grandfather, had fallen sadly behind, for the father had so many other interests—things that occupied not only his thoughts, his time and his skill, but every spare penny also.

So Adrian had nothing pleasant to expect from the father, and still less from *Frau Barbara*, his aunt. But the boy cared less for the displeasure of both these than for the reproachful look in the eyes of the young wife, whom for scarce twelve

months he had called "mother," and who was only six years his senior.

She never uttered an unkind word, but his waywardness or ill-humor vanished away before her beauty and her quiet, lady-like bearing.

Whether he loved her, he could scarcely have told, but she seemed to him like a good fairy of whom tales are told—he thought of her as being too tender and fine and gracious for a plain citizen's house. Her smile made him happy, and when she was sad, which was not often, his heart ached. Good heavens! surely she would not receive him kindly should she see his waistcoat, and the torn ruffles in his pocket, and the unfortunate stockings!

Then he heard a ringing of bells.

The meal-time had long passed, and the father never waited. Whoever came late must go without, unless, perchance, Aunt Barbara should take compassion.

But of what use this delay?

Adrian roused his courage, bit his lips, pressed his hand more firmly over the contents of his pocket, and let the knocker drop vigorously upon the plate beneath.

Trautchen, the old maid, opened the door, and in the dimly lighted entrance-hall, where the bales of leather were packed together, saw nothing of his disordered dress.

The dining-room was open, and, for a wonder, the meal stood untouched upon the table—the father must have been detained longer than usual at the court house. Adrian rushed hastily up the stairs to his little chamber under the gable, dressed himself neatly, and had taken his place at the table before the blessing had been asked. At some fortunate moment he hoped to persuade Aunt Barbara or Trautchen to repair the unfortunate garments.

Adrian began with a good appetite, but soon grew heavy at heart, for his father was silent and thoughtful, as during those days when the city was in danger from the besiegers.

The boy's young step-mother sat opposite her husband, and looked often into the earnest face of Peter van der Werff, hoping to meet a kindly glance. But after each vain attempt she would brush the golden blonde hair from her forehead and throw back her beautiful head, or bite her lip, as she looked down silently into her plate.

To the questions of Aunt Barbara: "What was done at the council?" "Has the money been collected for the new bell?" "Did you make over the lease of the meadow to Jacob van Sloten?" he gave short and evasive replies.

The firm man sitting at his table in silence, and with eyebrows drawn together, taking at first a few mouthfuls, and then nothing at all, did not seem like one swayed by idle caprice. While the family, including the servants, were still eating, he rose suddenly, and while pressing his folded hands upon his head, said, with almost a groan: "I can stay no longer. Please return the thanks, Maria. And Janke, go to the council house and inquire if the messenger is come."

The servant, who obeyed instantly, was a great, broad-shouldered Frisian, yet he reached only to the forehead of his master.

Without a parting salute, Peter van der Werff turned his back upon the company and opened the door into his work-room, locked it behind him, and took his seat before a great oaken writing-table, on which lay piles of papers and letters, held down by heavy leaden weights, and began to turn over the latest records. For a quarter of an hour he tried in vain to fix his attention upon what was before him. Then he crossed his arms for support over the open carved chair-back, and contemplated the wood-work of the ceiling. But in a few minutes he pushed the chair away with his foot and walked to the window, the small panes of which, in their casing of lead, in spite of their neatly polished faces, gave but narrow outlook upon the street. Yet the burgomaster seemed to find there what he sought, for he hastily raised the sash, and cried out to the servant who was approaching:

"Look up, Janke. Has he come?"

The Frisian shook his head—the window was closed again; but a few moments later the burgomaster seized his hat, which hung against the wall between a few horse-pistols and a simple stout sword, under the picture of a young woman, making the only break in the bare wall. The restlessness which tortured him made it impossible to remain longer in the house.

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

But as he was leaving the room he stopped thoughtfully, and then went back to the writing-table to sign a few papers which were needed at the council house, as he considered that it might be late before his return home.

While thus engaged, the door behind him opened softly, and the fresh sand upon the floor creaked under a light footstep. The young wife, twenty-four years younger, and with the air of a timid maiden, stood beside her husband, yet did not venture to claim his attention.

Quietly waiting until one paper was signed, she said, with a faint blush:

“It is I, Peter.”

“Good, my child,” he answered, shortly, turning to the next paper.

“Peter,” she cried again, more earnestly, yet still with timidity, “I have something to say to you.”

Van der Werff turned his head toward her with a kindly look, but answered:

“Now, child, you see I am very busy and just going out.”

“But, Peter,” she returned, something like anger sparkling in her eyes and a shadow of complaint in her voice, “we have not spoken together to-day. My heart is very full, and what I want to tell you may—that is, ought surely—”

“When I come home, Maria, not now,” said her husband interrupting her, in a tone half impatient, half imploring. “First the city and the land, then the love.”

Maria threw back her head and said:

“You have said that since the first day of our marriage.”

“And unfortunately it must remain so until the end is reached,” he answered with firmness.

The blood rose to her delicate cheek, and with quickened breath she said, quickly, yet with decision:

“Truly I have learned that word since your wooing, but I am my father's daughter, and never contradicted it; yet now it suits us no more, for it ought to run, ‘All for the land, and nothing at all for the wife.’”

Van der Werff laid down his pen, and turned square toward his wife. Her slender figure seemed to have grown larger, and tears were swimming in her proud blue eyes. She was a companion created by God expressly for him, and him alone, and his heart was moved. He stretched both hands toward the beloved being, saying, in a tone of heartfelt frankness:

“You know how it is; my heart is unchangeable, and better times are coming.”

“When will they come?” asked Maria, gloomily.

“Soon,” answered her husband, firmly—“soon; if all give willingly what the fatherland claims.”

With these words the young wife drew her hands away from those of her husband, for the door had opened, and Frau Barbara called from the threshold to her brother:

“Herr Matenese van Wibisma, the Glipper, is in the hall, and wishes to speak with you.”

“Show him up,” returned the burgomaster, in a tone of

annoyance. As they were again alone he asked his wife, quickly:

“Will you practice forbearance, and help me?”

She nodded, and tried to smile, yet he saw that she was not satisfied, and, since that gave him pain, he extended his hand once more to her and said:

“Better times will come, in which I shall be more to you than to-day. What did you wish to say to me?”

“Whether you know or not, it has nothing to do with the state.”

“But for yourself. Raise your head, and look at me. Be quick, love, for they are already on the stairs.”

“It is not worth saying. Just one year ago— To-day we ought to celebrate our wedding—”

“Our wedding-day!” he exclaimed, clapping his hands. “Surely this is the 17th of April, and I had forgotten it!”

He drew her affectionately toward himself as the door opened and Adrian led the baron into the room.

Van der Werff bowed politely to this unusual guest, and said to his wife, who retreated, blushing:

“My heartiest congratulations! I will come to you afterward. Adrian, we celebrate to-day our wedding festival, as you know.”

The boy was slipping quietly out, for he suspected that this visit of the titled man foreboded nothing of good for himself. In the hall he stopped thoughtfully for a moment, then seizing his cap, devoid of a feather, hastened out. There he found his school comrades drawn up in order of battle with sticks and staves. He was eager to have his share in the sport; yet at this moment he slipped away unobserved by them into the Zyl court, thence to follow the course of a canal that extended to the river Rhine, sometimes stooping, sometimes on his knees. So soon as he had filled his cap with the white, blue, and yellow flowers, he sat down upon a stone and tied them into a nosegay, with which he ran back to the house.

On a bench near the door sat his little six-year-old sister, with the maid. He gave her the flowers, which till now he had hidden behind him, saying: “Take them, Elizabeth dear, to the mother. This is her wedding-day, and you must give her, too, congratulations from both of us.”

The child rose, and the old servant said:

“Dear Adrian, you are a good boy.”

“Do you mean so?” he asked, all the sins of the forenoon recurring to his thoughts. But unhappily he could not feel penitent; and his eyes had a roguish sparkle as he touched the

shoulder of the woman, and whispered in her ear: "There has been some hair pulled to-day, Trautchen. Under the bed in my room are my waistcoat and stockings. No one can mend as well as you."

The maid raised her finger threateningly, but he turned nimbly and ran out by the Zyl door, this time to lead the Spanish against the Netherlanders.

CHAPTER III.

THE burgomaster resigned his chair to the nobleman, while he himself leaned, half sitting, against the writing-table, listening impatiently to his guest.

"Before I speak of weightier things," began Herr Matenesse van Wibisma, "I wish to appeal to you, as a man of uprightness, against the injustice shown my family in this city."

"Go on," begged the burgomaster, and the knight related shortly, and with unconcealed wrath, the experience of his son near St. Peter's Church.

"I will acquaint the rector with this vexatious affair," answered Van der Werff, "and the offender shall be dealt with according to law and equity. But forgive me, noble sir, if I ask whether it be known what started the quarrel?"

Herr Matenesse van Wibisma looked astonished, and answered proudly:

"You have heard my son's account of it."

"One should in justice hear both sides," returned Van der Werff, carelessly. "That is an old Netherlandish custom."

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

"All our boys do the same, whether called Leendert, or Adrian, or Gerritt, and I suggest that you send your young gentleman to the examination in the school."

"That will not happen," returned the knight, with decision. "Had I thought this a matter belonging to the rector, I should have sought him and not you, Herr Peter. My son has his own tutor, and he was not attacked in your school, which he has outgrown, being almost seventeen, but on the open street, for whose safety you as burgomaster are responsible."

"Very well, then, enter your complaint, lead the young man before the justice, summon your witnesses, and let the law take its course. But, sir," added Van der Werff, controlling his impatience, "were you not once young yourself? Have you entirely forgotten the quarrels under the castle? What pleasure could it give you to see these unlucky wights

put into the dungeon for a couple of days in this pleasant weather? The prisoners will find some amusement inside as well as outside, and their parents will be the only sufferers."

The last words were so friendly and good-humored that they did not fail of their effect on the baron. He was a man of hasty temper, but whose agreeable and genuinely Netherlandish features expressed anything but harshness.

"If you speak in such a tone," he answered, laughing, "we shall the more easily come to an agreement. But let me say this: had the quarrel risen in sport or boyish dispute, I would not waste my words; but when the children take upon themselves to attack with violence and contempt those who differ from them in opinion, it should not pass without reproof. The boys shouted that silly word after the young gentleman—"

"It is certainly a disgrace," broke in Van der Werff; "a very ugly name by which our people designate the enemies of their freedom."

The baron rose, and stood erect before the burgomaster.

"Who has told you," he cried, striking upon his broad breast, covered with a quilted silk doublet, "that we are indifferent to the freedom of Holland? We wish as earnestly as you do to restore it to the states, but in other and more gradual methods than the Orange—"

"Whether your ways are crooked or straight," returned Van der Werff, "this is not the place to discuss. But this I know: they are by-ways."

"They ought to lead to the heart of Philip, your king, as well as ours."

"Yes, if he only had that which we in Holland call a heart," returned Peter van der Werff, with a bitter smile.

But Wibisma threw back his head with a violent gesture, and said, as reproachfully:

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

"Baron Matenesse," answered Van der Werff, with intense earnestness of voice, straightening himself meanwhile, folding his arms, and looking the nobleman squarely in the eye, "I speak of the oppressor, whose bloody Council declares all Netherlanders, and you with the rest, criminals worthy of death, who through Alva, his destroying devil, has burned, hung, or beheaded ten thousand honest men, despoiled another ten thousand of their goods, and hunted them out of the land. I speak of the reckless tyrant—"

"Enough," cried the knight, laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword. "Who gives you the right—"

“Would you ask who gives me the right so to speak?” broke in Herr Peter, with a dark, searching look into the eyes of the baron. “I have no need to conceal it. This right came to me through the dumb lips of my brave father, beheaded for his faith—this right came through the arbitrary sentence, which, without any pretext of law, despoiled me and my brother of our estates—this right is mine through the broken oath of the Spaniards, the torn charter of our country, the needs of the poor, brave, abused people, who will go to destruction unless we rescue them.”

“You can not rescue them,” answered Wibisma, in a cool tone. “You will only plunge the reeling crowd more certainly into the chasm, and perish with them.”

“We have cast our lot. Perhaps we may bring rescue, perhaps we may go with them to destruction.”

“That you say, and yet you have just linked a young, love-wife to your fate.”

“Herr Baron, you have crossed my threshold as an accuser of the burgomaster, and not at all as a guest or a friend.”

“You are right; but I came in good faith to warn the chief magistrate of this fair and unhappy city. You have escaped one tempest, but new and more fearful storms are gathering about your heads.”

“We fear them not.”

“Not even now?”

“With good reason, less than ever.”

“Then you do not know that the brother of the prince—”

“Louis of Nassau attacked the Spaniards on the 14th, and our cause stands well.”

“In the beginning it certainly was not discouraging.”

“The messenger, who yesterday evening—”

“Ours came this morning.”

“This morning, do you say? Go on.”

“The army of the prince was beaten on the Mook Heath, and entirely scattered. Even Louis of Nassau was left there.”

Van der Werff clinched the writing-table, while the fresh color left cheek and brow, and with the faint question: “Is Louis really dead?” his mouth was painfully contracted.

“Dead,” answered the baron, firmly and sadly. “We were enemies, but Louis was a lordly youth. We bewail him together—”

“Dead! William’s favorite dead!” murmured the burgomaster, as in a dream. But he quickly roused himself, and said, firmly: “Forgive me, noble sir. The hours hasten. I must to the court house.”

“And there, in spite of my message, you will continue to uphold rebellion?”

“Yes, Herr, so surely as I am a Hollander.”

“Do not forget the fate of Haarlem.”

“I remember the resistance of its citizens, and the rescued Alkmaar.”

“Man, man,” cried the baron, “by all that is sacred, I entreat you to be advised by me!”

“Enough, Herr Baron, I must to the court house.”

“Only one word more. I know well that you call us ‘Glippers,’ ‘deserters,’ but, as I hope for God’s mercy, you misjudge us. No, Herr Peter, I am no traitor. I love this land, and the brave, industrious people, as warmly as you do, for its blood flows also in my veins. I have signed the compromise. Here I am baron. Do I look like a Judas or a Spaniard? Can you blame me that I hold to the oath I have taken? When have the Netherlanders sworn falsely? You, the friend of Orange, have promised to allow every man the right to his own faith, and I will not question it. I hold firmly to the old Church. I am a Catholic, and shall remain such. But in this hour I frankly confess that I hate, as you do, the Inquisition and the bloody deeds of Alva. They belong as little to our faith as the iconoclasm of yours. I love, as you do, the freedom of our home, and to win that back is my effort as truly as it is yours. But how can our little province withstand the mightiest kingdom of the world? Though we may conquer, once, twice, thrice, a stronger host will always take the place of the one that was beaten. We shall gain nothing by might, but much through submission and prudent negotiation. Philip’s treasury is empty, and he needs his troops elsewhere. Well, then, let us make use of his embarrassment, and compel him to restore freedom to every place that submits. And with the treasures we have laid by we will buy back out of his hand the rights he has gained by conflict. You will find me and my fellow-believers to have open hands. But your voice has great influence in the Council. You are the friend of Orange, and if you could persuade him—”

“To what, noble sir?”

“To make a treaty with us. In Madrid they appreciate his importance, and fear him. We would make full forgiveness for him and his comrades our first condition. King Philip, I know, would take him again into favor—”

“Into his arms, to strangle him,” returned the burgomaster, with emphasis. “Have you forgotten the false promises of pardon, the fate of Egmont and Horn, the noble Montigny,

and the other lords? They ventured, and found themselves in the den of a tiger. What we purchase to-day will surely be taken from us to-morrow, for what oath is sacred to Philip? I am no statesman, but this I know, were he to restore our rights, there is one liberty he will never permit—the one without which life is not worth living.”

“What is that, Herr Peter?”

“The one to believe what the heart prompts. According to your own estimates you mean honestly, noble sir; but you trust the Spaniard; we trust him not, and even if we could, we should be betrayed. You have nothing to fear for your faith; we have everything. You believe the number of troops, the power of gold, will insure success in the conflict; we comfort ourselves with the hope that God will help to final victory the just cause of a courageous people ready to suffer a thousand deaths for their freedom. That is my opinion, and that I shall assert in the Council.”

“No, Master Peter; no, you can not, and you dare not!”

“What I can do may be little, but what I dare is written within, and according to that I shall act.”

“So then you will follow your feelings instead of your judgment, and nothing but evil will come of it. Consider, man, the last hope of the Orange party has just been broken on Mook Heath.”

“True, my lord, and on that account we must use the moments not to talk but to act.”

“That I ought to say to myself also, Herr Burgomaster, for there are still many friends of the king in Leyden who must be persuaded not to follow you blindly to the sacrifice.”

At these words Van der Werff stepped a little backward, and said, coldly and in a tone of authority:

“As guardian of the safety of this city, I command you to leave Leyden immediately. If you are found within the walls after noon to-morrow, I shall order the officers to take you over the border.”

The baron left without a salute. So soon as the door closed behind him, Van der Werff flung himself into the arm-chair, and buried his face in his hands. When he rose again, great tear-drops had fallen upon the paper through his fingers. With a bitter smile he wiped the tears away, murmuring: “Dead! dead!” The image of the brave, heroic youth, the skillful mediator, the favorite of William of Orange was before him, and he could but ask what effect this fresh blow might have on the prince, whom he loved and revered as the savior of his land, as the wisest and most unselfish of men. William's

sorrow gave him as much pain as if it were his own, and the blow to their freedom must be heavy—it might prove fatal.

But he allowed only a short period to the indulgence of grief, for now the whole energy of his nature must be summoned to meet the emergency, to ward off the threatening consequences of Louis's defeat, and to contrive new materials for the conflict. With contracted eyebrows he walked thoughtfully up and down the apartment, and did not hear the opening of the door, or notice the entrance of his wife, until she came toward him, calling his name.

She held in her hand a part of the flowers sent her by Adrian, while the remainder were fastened to her dress.

"Take these," she said, holding out the nosegay. "Adrian, the dear boy, gathered them, and you know their significance."

He accepted the messengers of spring gladly, inhaled their fragrance, then clasped Maria to his breast, pressed a long kiss upon her brow, and said, sadly:

"This, then, is the celebration of our first wedding anniversary. Poor wife! Perhaps the Glipper was right, and it might have been wiser and better had I not linked your fate to mine."

"Peter," she cried, reproachfully, "why do you have such thoughts?"

"Louis of Nassau has fallen," he murmured gloomily; "his army broken."

"Oh! oh!" she cried, clasping her hands in terror; but he continued:

"It was our last venture. The treasury is empty, and where we can find fresh means—what may come now—I beg, Maria, that you will leave me alone. If we do not use the present, if we do not find the right way now, things will not, can not go well." With these words he flung the flowers on the table, seized a paper, and motioned her away.

The heart of the wife had been full as she entered the room. She had expected so much joy in this hour, and now she stood lonely, though so close beside him—helpless, ashamed, and wounded.

Maria had grown up in the midst of this contest for freedom, and knew how to appreciate the serious nature of the news he had just received. During the wooing, he had told her that she must expect a life of danger and disturbance at his side; yet she had joyfully gone to the altar with this brave fighter for the good cause, for she hoped to become the sympathizer in his cares and contests. And now? What could she be to him? What would he receive from her? What was he per-

mitting her to share of his anxiety even on their wedding-day? There she stood, with a heart that shrunk from saying she would as gladly help him to bear sorrow and privation as prosperity and honor.

So soon as he had found what he sought, he seized his hat, but noticing her pale face and disappointed look, his heart was touched—he longed to give expression to the great and warm love he felt; but in this hour, with the grief and the burden of care upon his heart, he could not. So he only held out both hands toward her, and said, heartily:

“Surely you know what you are to me, Maria, but if you do not, I shall tell you in the evening. I must go now while the members of the Council are together, or a whole day will be lost, and at this juncture we must save the moments. You see how it is, Maria.”

The young wife cast her eyes on the floor. She would gladly have flung herself upon his breast, but injured pride forbade, and some secret influence held back her hands, that she could not place them within his outstretched ones.

“Farewell,” she said, sullenly.

He cried, reproachfully: “Maria, this surely is not the day for pouting. Come, and show yourself my sensible wife.”

But she hesitated, and he, hearing four o'clock strike, which marked the time for the Council to disperse, left the room, without looking again toward her.

The nosegay lay still on the writing-table—she saw it, and with difficulty held back her tears.

CHAPTER IV.

A CROWD of citizens were gathered before the court house, for the news of Louis of Nassau's defeat had spread rapidly through the eighteen divisions of the city, and everybody wanted to learn the details, and to express his sorrow and anxiety, and hear what measures the Council would propose in the emergency.

Two messengers, alas! had confirmed the tidings brought by Baron Matenesse van Wibisma. Louis was dead, his brother Henry missing, and the army destroyed.

Presently the city clerk, Jan van Hout, who had instructed the school-boys on the same morning, appeared at a window, and spoke to the citizens of the blow struck at the freedom of the land, and exhorted them with pithy eloquence to uphold the good cause by the devotion of their lives and property. Loud applause followed this speech.

Gay caps and plumed hats were swung in the air, sticks and swords were flourished, and the women and children, who crowded in among the men, waved their handkerchiefs and made their shriller voices heard above those of the citizens.

The members of the valiant city guard had gathered to commission their captain to assure the assembled Council that the "Schutterig" would devote every drop of blood and all their worldly goods to William of Orange; and that they chose to die for Holland rather than live under the tyranny of Spain. Among them one could see many thoughtful and troubled faces; for these men, who filled their ranks according to voluntary choice, were strongly attached to the Prince of Orange. His sorrow touched them, and the needs of the land rent their hearts.

So soon as the four burgomasters, the eight sheriffs, and the members of the Council present showed themselves at the window, hundreds struck into the "Geusenlied,"* which had already been started by a few single voices; and as, with the going down of the sun, the easy-going people scattered and went away, singly, or by twos and threes, arm in arm, toward the houses of entertainment, in order, through a fresh drink, to strengthen their confidence in the coming of better days, and drive away some natural cares, one might have thought a victory were being celebrated in the market-place of Leyden and its neighboring streets. These patriotic cries, and the "Geusenlied" so vigorously poured forth, proved that these hundreds of Hollandish throats were in condition to rend the air with still more powerful tones.

This observation had been made by three well-dressed citizens walking through the street, past the Blue Stone; the eldest of whom said to his companions:

"Now they brag, and shout, and fancy themselves strong, but we shall hear a different song pretty soon."

"God forbid the worst!" exclaimed one of the others; "but the Spaniards are surely coming again, and in my district I know some who will not lend their voices for resistance."

"They are right, a thousand times right. Requesens is no Alva, and if we commend ourselves to the mercy of the king—"

"Then there would be no more blood spilled, and all would go for the best."

"I prefer Holland to Spain," said the third; "but after

* Beggars' Hymn.

Mook Heath the day for resistance is past. Orange may be a grand prince, but the shirt comes nearer to me than the coat."

"And, in fact, it is only for him that we are throwing our lives and goods into the game."

"So my wife said yesterday."

"He does not help the trade, at least. Believe me, many think as we do. Were this not so, that 'Geusenlied' would have been louder."

"For every three clever people there always five fools," said the older citizen. "I have been very careful to keep my mouth shut."

"And what is there so wonderful about this cry of freedom? Alva has burned the Bible readers, De la Mare hangs the priests. My wife likes to go to mass, but she goes secretly, as if doing something wrong."

"We stick to the old faith, too."

"It's faith here, and faith there," said the third speaker. "We are Calvinists, but I am tired of throwing my earnings into the jaws of Orange, and it can not give me pleasure to see the poles before the Cow Gate, where my stuff hangs, pulled down again, before the yarn has had time to dry."

"Let us only keep together," advised the elder. "The people do not trust themselves to say what they really think, and every ragged, penniless fellow wants to play hero. But I tell you, there are sensible men enough in each district, and even in the Council and among the burgomasters."

"Hush!" whispered one of the citizens, "there comes Van der Werff, with the city clerk and the young Baron van der Does. They are the worst of all."

The three so-named came along the street, conversing earnestly in low tones.

"My uncle is right, Master Peter," said Jan van der Does, the same tall man who in the morning had sent Nicolas van Wibisma home with such a good lesson.

"There is no other way. You must seek the prince and consult him."

"I must certainly, and will go early in the morning."

"Do not wait until morning," broke in Van Hout; "the prince travels rapidly, and if you do not find him in Delft—"

"Go on before me," begged Van der Werff. "You have the record of our session."

"I can not; but how is it that your good-will fails for the first time to-day?—you who are the friend of the prince."

"You are right, Jan, and ought to know what keeps me back."

“If it be anything in which a friend can help, here he stands,” said Herr van Nordwyk.

Van der Werff took cordially the hand he offered, and replied, laughing:

“No, Herr, no. You know my young wife. This is the anniversary of our wedding-day, and amid all the anxieties I disgracefully forgot it.”

“That is hard,” said Van Hout, softly. But he straightened himself directly, and added: “Yet, were I in your place, I would go, in spite of Mistress Maria.”

“Would you go on *this day*?”

“Yes, for to-morrow may be too late. Who can tell how soon our egress may be embarrassed, and before we come to extremities, we ought to know the intentions of the prince. He is the head, we are the hands. You, Herr, stand nearer to him than any of us.”

“God knows how gladly I would carry a good word to him in this sad hour, but to-day it can not well be. The messenger has ridden forward on my bay horse.”

“Then take my chestnut, which is swifter,” said Janus Dousa, and Van der Werff answered at once:

“Thanks, Herr, I will have it brought early to-morrow morning.”

A flush rose to the face of Van Hout as he cried out:

“Send *me* the chestnut steed, my friend, if the burgomaster permits.”

“No, send him to me,” broke in Peter, composedly. “What must be, must be. I ride to-day.”

Van Hout’s manly face glowed, and while he seized the hand of the burgomaster, said, in a tone of joy: “Thanks, Herr Peter, I meant no offense. You know my temper. If the time seem long to your young wife, send her to mine.”

“Or to mine,” added Dousa. “It is curious what a difference there is between the two words ‘may’ and ‘ought.’ The freer and better a man becomes, so much the surer is the first to become the servant of the second.”

“And yet I wager, Herr Peter, that your wife will change the meaning of those words to-day and believe that you have offended grievously against the ‘ought.’ These are bad times for the ‘may.’”

Van der Werff nodded acquiescently, and then in brief words recapitulated what he should say to the prince. Before his house the three men parted company.

“Tell the prince,” said Van Hout, as he took leave, “that

we are ready for the worst. We shall hold on and venture all."

Janus Dousa measured with his eyes the two men before him, his lip quivered, as was his habit when any strong emotion stirred him, and an expression of joy and confidence lightened his face, as he said:

"We three shall hold on, and stand firmly. The tyrant may break our necks, but he can never make them bow. Body and soul, money and goods—whatever is valuable, or dear, we resign all for this highest good."

"Yes," said Van der Werff, earnestly, and Van Hout added, with ardor:

"Yes, yes, and three times yes."

For a moment these men of united purposes held their hands clasped together. A silent oath bound them in that hour, and as then Herr von Nordwyk went one way, and Van Hout another, the citizens who met them fancied they had suddenly increased in stature.

Without any delay the burgomaster went to the room of his wife, only to learn that she had gone out with her sister. The maid brought in a light, and he examined the wards of his pistols, buckled on the old sword, and laid together a few necessary articles into the pockets of his saddle. Then he walked up and down, filled with thoughts upon his mission.

The steed of Herr van Nordwyk stamped impatiently on the pavement of the court, and the evening star shone over the roof.

When the burgomaster came out, he found only Adrian, but not his wife. So he commissioned the boy to give heartiest greeting to his mother, and say to her that he was forced to seek the prince immediately, on urgent business. The little Elizabeth was already in her night-dress; but the old servant brought her out in a feather coverlet, and he kissed the sweet face which smiled out of the singular wrapping, pressed his lips on the forehead of Adrian, and repeated the message for his wife, then rode off down the Marendorp Street.

Two women came toward him as he passed Saint Stephen's cloister, coming from the Rhineburg gate. He did not notice them; but the younger one threw back her head-covering to look after him, and seizing the wrist of her companion, said, quickly: "That was Peter."

Frau Barbara looked up and answered: "It is well that I am not timid. Let my arm go. Do you mean the rider just now trotting along St. Ursula's Lane?"

"Yes, it is Peter."

“Nonsense, child. The boy has shorter legs than that great camel, and Peter never goes out at this hour.”

“But it was he.”

“God forbid. At night one easily mistakes a linden for a beech. It would be fine in him not to come home to-night.”

Frau Barbara uttered the last sentence unguardedly, for she had up to this time shrewdly avoided the appearance of suspecting that all was not as it should be between Maria and her husband, although it was quite clear to her. She was a clever woman, who had known much of the world, and did not undervalue her brother's importance in public affairs; and even went so far as to believe that excepting the Prince of Orange, no person on earth could more skillfully lead the cause of freedom than Peter; but she felt that he did not treat his wife properly, and, as a just woman, silently took part against him.

For a time the two walked on in silence. At length the widow said: “Perhaps the prince has summoned Peter. At this time, and after such a blow, one can not tell. So you may have been right.”

“It was certainly he,” said Maria.

“Poor fellow,” returned her companion. “That must be a hard task for him. Much honor, much labor! But you have no reason to let your head droop, for your husband will return to-morrow, or the next day. But I—look at me, Maria, I walk straight through life, doing my duty cheerfully. My cheeks are red, I have a good appetite, and still I have been forced to give up all I held most dear. For ten years I have been a widow. My Gretchen has been married away from me, and Wilhelm I sent myself to sea with the ‘Beggars.’ Any hour may take him from me, for his life is one of danger. What has a widow, except her only son? And yet I gave him to his land. That is harder than to see a man ride off on his marriage anniversary, who surely has not gone for his own pleasure.”

“We are at home,” said Maria, knocking; and as Trautchen opened the door, Barbara asked: “Is your master at home?”

The answer was “No,” as she had expected. Trautchen brought in the supper, but conversation did not go beyond the necessary questions and answers.

After Maria had hurriedly asked the blessing, she turned to Barbara, expressing the wish to retire on account of headache.

“Go to rest,” answered the widow; “I shall sleep in the next room, and will leave the door open. In darkness and silence, strange fancies sometimes come.”

Maria kissed her sister with honest warmth, and laid herself

down; but she could find no sleep, and tossed restlessly from side to side until midnight. Hearing Barbara cough in the next room, she sat up and asked:

“Sister-in-law, are you asleep?”

“No, child; are you unwell?”

“Not that; but I am so troubled and tormented with bad thoughts—”

Barbara lighted a candle, and going into Maria's sleeping-room, sat down on the edge of the bed. It touched her heart to see this young, lovely being lying so troubled and lonely on her white pillow; and she could not refrain from stroking the hair away from her forehead, and kissing her fair cheek. Maria looked gratefully into her clear blue eyes, and said, imploringly:

“I want to ask you something.”

“Very well.”

“But you must answer me honestly.”

“That is asking a good deal.”

“I know that you are honest, but sometimes—”

“Out with your question!”

“Did Peter live happily with his first wife?”

“Yes, child, certainly.”

“Could you not have been mistaken?”

“Surely not, in this case! But why do you have such thoughts? The Scripture says: ‘Let the dead bury their dead.’ Now turn over and try to sleep.”

Barbara went back to her own room; but hours passed before Maria found the slumber she sought.

CHAPTER V.

ON the next morning two horsemen, in neat uniform, stood before a stately house on the Nobel Street, near the market-place, while a third led a couple of roan steeds of vigorous build up and down.

A stable-boy held by the bridle a long-maned, gayly adorned pony, evidently designed to carry the young negro who stood in the door-way, and with a frightful rolling of the eyes and gnashing of his white teeth kept back the street-boys who ventured too near.

“Why do they delay?” exclaimed one of the horsemen. “The rain will not wait long to-day.”

“That is certain,” returned the other. “The sky is gray as my old felt, and before we reach the forest we shall get it.”

“It is very misty already.”

"I do not like this cold, damp weather."

"Yesterday was much better."

"Buckle the flaps over the pistol-holsters more securely. The portmanteau behind the saddle is not straight. That is right. Did the cook fill the flask?"

"With brown Spanish. It is tucked in there."

"Then let it pour. If a man be wet inside, he can better bear outside dampness."

"Bring up the horses; I hear the gentlemen."

The horseman was not mistaken, for before his fellow had succeeded in bringing the larger roan to his place, the voice of Herr van Wibisma was heard issuing from the wide entrance-hall, as well as that of young Nicolas, his son. Both were exchanging words of leave-taking with a young girl whose voice was deeper-toned than that of the youth.

As the elder gentleman wound his hand in the mane of the steed, and raised his foot toward the stirrup, the girl slipped through the door, and, laying her hand on Wibisma's arm, said:

"Another word with you, uncle, but with you alone."

The baron, still holding his horse by the mane, replied, with a complaisant smile:

"If it be not too ponderous for the roan. A secret from such a mouth has weight."

With this he held his ear toward his niece; but she showed no inclination to whisper, for she came no nearer, but said, half aloud, in the Italian language:

"Please tell father that I can not stay here."

"But, Henrika!"

"Tell him I will do it on no condition!"

"The aunt will not let you go."

"Do not waste words. I shall not stay."

"I will communicate this to him, though in somewhat milder form, if you please."

"As you choose. Say, also, that I ask him to send for me. If he does not wish himself to enter this nest of heretics—for which I could not blame him—he can send horses, or the coach."

"And your reasons?"

"I will not burden you more heavily. Make haste, or the saddle will be wet before you are off."

"Shall I also promise a letter to Hoogstraten?"

"No. Such things need not be written. It is quite unnecessary. Tell my father I can not stay with aunt, and want to

go home. Adieu, Nico! The riding-boots, and green waist-coat are much more becoming to you than the silken finery."

And the girl threw a kiss to the youth, who had long ago swung himself into the saddle, and hastened back into the house. Her uncle shrugged his shoulders, mounted the horse, wrapped the dark-colored mantle more closely about his shoulders, nodded to Nicolas, and they rode forward together.

So long as their way led through the city streets, not a word was spoken; but at the gate, Wibisma said:

"Henrika is tired of Leyden, and wishes to go back to her father."

"It can not be very easy to live with aunt," answered the youth.

"She is old and sick, and her life is joyless."

"But she must once have been handsome, though now so different. But her eyes are like those in the portrait, and then she is so rich."

"That does not make one happy."

"But why has she never married?"

"It was certainly not the fault of the men," returned the baron, shrugging his shoulders."

"Why, then, did she not enter a convent?"

"Women's hearts are harder to understand than are your Greek books. That you will learn by experience. What took place between you and her as I came out?"

"There, just look," answered the boy, taking the bridle between his teeth and drawing his glove. "She put this ring on my finger."

"A noble emerald! She rarely parts with such things."

"At first she offered me another, saying it was to make up for the thumps I received yesterday for my loyalty to the king. Was not that droll?"

"More than droll, I should say."

"It was against nature to receive a gift as a reward for my bruises, so I quickly drew my hand back and said the Burger boys had taken yours home with them, and in return for that I would accept the ring."

"That was right, Nico."

"She said the same thing, laid the little ring back in the casket, found another, and here it is."

"A costly jewel," muttered the baron; and thought within himself: "This gift is a good omen. He and the Hoogstratens are her nearest heirs, and if that foolish girl does not stay with her, it may be—"

But his speculations were suddenly broken off, for Nicolas exclaimed:

"Here comes the rain! Does not the mist over the meadow yonder look as if the clouds had dropped from the sky? I am shivering with cold."

"Draw your mantle closer."

"How it rains and hails! One would believe winter were come again. The water in the ditches is black, and yonder—just look—what is that?"

Beside the road was a small tavern, before which stood a single tall elm, whose trunk, straight and bare as a mast, reached the roof before spreading into branches.

Upon one of the highest of these, still bare of foliage, was a flag in the colors of the House of Orange, and from another hung a great doll, looking like a man dressed in black. From a third there dangled an old hat, and on still another appeared a placard, on which, in great black letters, that the rain had already begun to obscure, was written:

" ' Long life to Orange and death to the Spaniard.'
Such is Peter Quatgelat's welcome."

This grotesquely adorned tree was an unattractive object in the cold gray fog of this April morning.

Near to this doll, which swung to and fro in the wind, the ravens had stationed themselves, and seemed to regard it as a hanging man. They must have been very stupid birds, for during all the years that the Spaniards had ruled in Holland, the places of execution had never been vacant. Perhaps they only croaked in vexation, still they remained on the tree.

There was something shocking and repulsive in this caricature of the gallows, especially as contrasted with the gay adornments; and one could but think also of the venturesome agility necessary in arranging it.

But Nicolas laughed aloud, and pointing upward, asked:

"What kind of fruit hangs on those branches?"

But in the next instant he felt himself shuddering, for a raven, perched upon the black figure, was pecking at it with his strong bill, and the two swung back and forth together like a pendulum.

"What does that mad thing signify?" asked the baron, turning to the servant who rode behind him—a bold and observant fellow.

"It's some kind of tavern sign," was the reply. "Yesterday, when the sun shone on it, it was comical; but to-day—b-r-r—it's ugly!"

The eyes of the nobleman were not sharp enough to make out the words on the placard; but as Nicolas read them aloud he inwardly uttered a curse, and turning again to the servant, asked: "And does that silly nonsense attract guests for this rascally landlord?"

"Yes, sir; and by my soul, yesterday, before the raven brood were there, it was devilish droll—one couldn't look at it without laughing. Half Leyden was out here—there was such a crowd, 'twas hard to get through. On the grass-plot yonder all was life and noise. Bagpipes and fiddles never ceased for a moment. And the jolly crowd shouted. My ears haven't got over it yet. 'Twas play and dance, play and dance. The young fellows flung their brown and blue and red-stockinged legs into the air, in answer to the fiddle, and the coat-tails flew. With a girl on one arm, and the beer-mug high over their heads, until the foam flew, all were whirling. They screamed and shouted as if every buttercup in the meadow had turned into a golden florin. But to-day— Sacred Florian! this *is* a rain!"

"It will be good for the things up there," cried the baron. "In such a torrent the tinder grows damp, or I would draw out the pistols and shoot down that shabby liberty-cap and the colored rags from that tree."

"Yonder was the dancing-place," remarked the servant, pointing to the trampled sod.

"These people are possessed, perfectly possessed!" exclaimed the baron. "To-day all dancing and jubilation; to-morrow the wind will shake the hat and the flag from the tree, and instead of the black doll, they'll come themselves to the gallows. Be quiet, roan! quiet! This half frightens the horse. Unstrap the portmanteau, Gerritt, and give a wrap to the young gentleman."

"Instantly, sir. But would it not be better that you go under shelter until the shower is over? Sacred Florian! Look at the ice in that horse's mane! The pieces are as large as a pigeon's egg. There are two horses already under the shed, and Quatgelat's beer is not bad."

The nobleman looked inquiringly at his son, who said: "Let us go in. We shall reach the Hague early enough. Only see how the poor Balthazar's teeth chatter. Henrika said he was only a white fellow painted black; but if she could see how fast the color holds in this weather, she would take the word back."

Herr van Wibisma turned his dripping, steaming, fright-

ened horse toward the shed, and after a few moments crossed the threshold of the beer-house in company with his son.

CHAPTER VI.

WARM air, saturated with the odors of beer and of cooking, met the senses of the travelers as they entered the low guest-room, dimly lighted on two sides by windows which were scarcely more than loopholes. The beer-house itself resembled the cabin of a ship. Floor, ceiling, the tables and chairs were of the same dark-brown wood, and the side walls were furnished with beds arranged like berths.

The host came forward to meet his guests with fawning obsequiousness, and led them to the open chimney-place, where a fire of peat was burning, which served the threefold purpose of warming the air, of partly lighting the gloomy space, and of roasting three fowls suspended about it on slender iron spikes.

As the new guests approached the fire, the old wife, who was watching the fowls, rose from her seat, letting a white cat slide from her lap to the floor; and the host flung some garments which were hanging upon a couple of chairs to dry to one side, putting in their place the dripping mantles of the baron and his son. While the elder Wibisma ordered a warming drink for himself and his company, Nicolas led the negro to the fire. The shivering fellow cowered near the ashes, holding now his wet feet, shod in red morocco, and now his chilled fingers toward the blaze. Father and son took their places beside a table, over which the maid spread a linen cloth.

The baron could scarcely refrain from calling their landlord—an obsequious, pock-marked dwarf, whose clothing was of exactly the same color as the wood-work of the room—to account for the odious decoration of the tree, but forbore, unwilling to enter upon a quarrel in such a place, especially because there sat near to his own table two citizens of Leyden, with one of whom he was acquainted.

When Nicolas looked around the room, he nudged his father, and asked, in low tones:

“Have you noticed the men yonder? The younger—the one just now raising the cover of his mug—is the organist who rescued me from the boys yesterday, and lent me his cloak.”

“The one yonder?” asked the baron. “He is a fine-looking young man, who might be taken for an artist, or something of that sort. Hey, landlord, who is the young man with

great eyes, and brown locks, talking with the fencing-master Allertssohn?"

"It is Herr Wilhelm, younger son of Cornelius, the tax-receiver—a player, or musician, as they call it."

"Eh, eh!" cried the baron. "His father was an old Leyden acquaintance. He was a good, a most excellent man, until this nonsense about freedom turned the heads of people. The young man has a very pleasant face. There is something pure in its expression; something that's hard to define. What do you think, Nico? Is it not like our holy Sebastian? Shall I speak to him, and thank him for his kindness?"

The baron did not wait his son's answer—whom he loved to treat as an equal—and rose at once to express his kindly feeling toward the musician; but an unexpected obstacle prevented the carrying out of this laudable intention. The man whom the baron had called Allertssohn became aware, to his great vexation, that the outside garments of the Glippers were hanging before the fire, while his own and that of his companion had been flung upon a bench, and, just as the baron rose, he pushed back his chair violently, leaning his arms on the edge of the table, and turning his martial countenance with abrupt jerks from the host to the nobleman, cried aloud:

"Peter Quatgelat—if you—who gave you, you shabby hunchback, the right to throw our cloaks into a corner?"

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

"Hold your tongue, you fawning sneak," thundered the other, in so loud a tone and in such excitement that the long gray mustache on his upper lip swayed back and forth and the beard on his chin trembled. "Hold your tongue. We know better. Court is paid here to noblemen's mantles. They are of Spanish cut, and very becoming to Glippers. Good Dutch cloth is thrown into the corner. Ho! ho! Brother Crooklegs, we'll have you out on parade."

"I beg you, noble captain—"

"I blow upon your 'noble;' you not-at-all-noble, you lump of clay! 'First come, first served,' is the law in Holland, and has been since the days of Adam and Eve. Prick up your ears, Crooklegs! If my 'noble' cloak, and that of Herr Wilhelm are not back in their old places before I count twenty, something will happen that you will not like. One—two—three—"

The landlord cast an anxious, questioning glance at the nobleman, and when he said distinctly, shrugging his shoulders, "Surely there is room for more than two cloaks before

the fire," Quatgelat took the over-garments of the Leydeners from the bench, and hung them upon two chairs, which he pushed up to the fire. While this was being done the fencing-master counted slowly. When he reached twenty the landlord had completed the task, but the excited captain gave him no rest, and said:

"Now for our reckoning, man. Wind and rain are not agreeable, but I know worse company. There's room enough before the fire for four cloaks, and in Holland for all the animals in Noah's Ark, except for the Spaniards and their confederates. Pfui, all my bile is disturbed. Come with me to the horses, Herr Wilhelm, or some misfortune will happen."

With these last words the fencing-master fastened his prominent eyes, which, even in commonest things, had the expression of looking at something remarkable, angrily upon the nobleman.

But he did not seem to notice the threatening words, and, as the fencing-master left the room, went quietly and with dignified bearing toward the musician, bowed politely, and thanked him for the kindness he had shown his son on the preceding day.

"You are certainly under no obligation to me," answered Wilhelm Corneliussohn. "I stood by the young man, because it looks badly to see one person attacked by many."

"Permit me to applaud your sentiment," returned the baron.

"Sentiment!" repeated the musician, with a slight smile, drumming on the table.

The baron followed silently for a little while the motion of his fingers, then, stepping nearer to the young man, asked: "Must then everything be dragged into this political quarrel?"

"Yes," answered Wilhelm, firmly, turning his face with a quick motion toward the elder man. "In these times, yes, and twenty times yes. It would not be well for you to discuss sentiments with me, Herr Matenese."

"Each one," returned the knight, "holds his own to be right, of course; but he should show respect to those of others."

"No, sir," broke in the musician. "In these days there is for us but one sentiment. I wish nothing to do with Hollanders who differ from us; not even to drink at the same table. Pardon me, sir, but my traveling companion is, as you have unfortunately learned, of irascible blood, and does not like to wait."

With that he bowed slightly, waved his hand to Nicolas, went to the fire-place and took the half-dried cloak on his arm, threw a gold piece on the counter, took a covered cage, in which birds were fluttering, into his hand, and left the room. The baron looked after him in silence. The simple, outspoken words and abrupt departure of the young man awoke within him painful emotions. He believed himself to be wishing the right, and yet, in this moment, the feeling would come that something like a stain rested on the cause he represented.

It is always easier to be sought than to be shunned, and so an expression of deep annoyance rested on the affable features of the nobleman as he turned again to his son.

Nicolas had not lost a word of the organist, and the blood had departed from his ruddy cheek, when forced to see that this man, toward whom his heart was strongly attracted, turned his back upon his father, as upon a dishonorable person, with whom he did not like to associate. The words of Janus Dousa on the day before returned with great force to his memory, and as the baron again took his place opposite, the boy raised his eyes to him, and asked timidly, but with a touching sincerity:

“Father, what does this mean? Are they then all wrong who prefer to be Dutch rather than Spanish?”

Wibisma looked at his son in astonishment and disapproval, and because he had felt his own confidence shaken even for a moment, and since a blustering word often renders good service where possibility or will is lacking to combat with reason, he cried out, more harshly than for years he had spoken to his favorite son:

“Are you, too, beginning to swallow the bait with which the Orange party entice simpletons? Another such word, and I will show you how one treats conceited young prigs. See here, landlord, what is that foppery out on the tree yonder?”

“The people, baron, the Leyden fools, not I, your grace, are to blame for that nuisance. When the soldiers who had been stationed in the city during the siege were discharged, they tricked out the tree in this disgraceful style. I keep this house as tenant of the elder Baron van der Does, and dare not have opinions of my own—for one must live—but so truly as I hope to die happy, I am loyal to King Philip.”

“Till the Leydeners come again,” returned Wibisma, bitterly. “Did you keep this house during the siege?”

“Yes, sir; the gracious Spanish lords found no fault with me, and if you do not despise the services of a poor man, my gracious sir, I am at your disposal.”

"So," murmured the baron, and looked attentively at the ugly figure of the landlord, out of whose small eyes glittered intense cunning. Then, turning to Nicolas, he said: "Amuse yourself with the blackbirds in the window yonder. I have something to say to our host."

The youth ran immediately, and while, instead of looking at the birds, he followed with his eyes the two men so ardently devoted to the liberty of Holland, as they rode along the road to Delft, he recalled the figure of the chains which drag downward, and in fancy he saw the glittering of that which King Philip had cast about his father. Involuntarily, he turned to look at him. He stood whispering with the landlord, with one hand on his shoulder. Was it right for him to hold such intercourse with a person whom at the bottom of his heart he must despise? Or must he really—and he shuddered, for the word "traitor," that one of the school-boys had shouted into his ear during the contest beside the church, came to his thoughts.

As the rain subsided, the travelers left the inn. The baron allowed the ugly landlord to kiss his hand at parting, but Nicolas would not permit his touch. During their ride to the Hague few words were exchanged between father and son.

But the organist and fencing-master on their way to Delft were less disposed to silence.

Wilhelm suggested modestly, as became the younger man, that his companion had given too lively expression to his hostile feelings toward Wibisma.

"You are quite right," returned Allertssohn, which name his friends shortened to "Allerts." "That blood! oh, that blood! You don't suspect, Herr Wilhelm. But we will let that go."

"No, go on, master."

"You will think no better of me if I do."

"Then let us talk of something else."

"No, Wilhelm. I am not ashamed of myself, and no one would take me for a timid hare."

The musician laughed, and exclaimed:

"You a timid hare! How many Spaniards has your Brescian sword brought down?"

"More stabbed than cut down, sir," answered the other. "Were the devil to challenge me I should ask: 'Foils, sir, or Spanish swords?' But there is one I am afraid of, and that is at the same time, my best and my worst friend, a Netherlander like you, and that you may know him, he is the man riding beside you. Yes, sir, when I am in a rage, when my

beard begins to tremble, then the little sense I have flies off as quickly as your doves do when you let them loose. You don't know me, Wilhelm."

"Is that so, master? How often then must one see you in command and visit you at the fencing-school?"

"Pshaw! there I am quiet as the water in yonder ditch; but when something goes against my inward convictions—how shall I explain it to you, shortly and concisely, without any figure of speech?"

"Go on."

"As, for example, when I must let pass the hypocrite we met, as if he were the Baron Upright."

"That vexes you greatly."

"Vexes? No. Then I am as savage as a tiger, and I dare not allow myself—Roland, my former self, who might well—"

"Master, master, your beard begins to tremble again?"

"What might the Glippers have fancied when their most noble cloaks—"

"The landlord had removed yours and mine with his own hand from the fire."

"What did I care? But the crook-legged monkey did it to flatter the Spanish sycophant. That enraged me—that I could not bear."

"You did not restrain your rage, and I was surprised to see how patiently the baron bore your invectives."

"That was just it, that was it," cried the fencing-master, and his beard began to tremble violently. "That was what drove me out of the den—that made me take to my heels. Roland, my former self—"

"I do not understand you, master."

"No? But how should you? I will explain myself. See here, young man; when you are as old as I am you will have learned by experience. There are few thoroughly sound trees in a forest, seldom a horse without defect, not many swords free from blemish, scarcely a man who has lived forty years without some secret grief. One gnaws slowly, another is a sharp torment—and mine—mine— Would you like to cast a glance in here?" The fencing-master struck upon his broad breast, and then, without awaiting the answer of his companion, went on: "You know me and my life, Herr Wilhelm. What I do is only knightly work. My whole being is devoted to the sword. Do you know a better weapon or a surer hand than mine? Are my soldiers obedient? Have I been careful of my own life in the conflict behind the red walls and towers

yonder? No, by my Roland, former self, no, and a thousand times no."

"Who denies that, Master Allerts? But tell me, what do you mean by the cry, 'Roland, my former self?'"

"Some other time, Wilhelm, but you must not interrupt me now. Hear rather the end as to where the worm hides within me. To repeat, what I do and practice is knightly work, yet when a Wibisma, who learned from my father to use the sword, meets me so inopportunately, and stirs all my bile, I ask what would he do were I to challenge him? He would only laugh and ask: 'What will the passage cost, Mr. Fencing-master Allerts? Have you well-polished rapiers?' Perhaps he would give no answer at all, and how he would act we have just had an example. His glance slipped by me like an eel, and he had wax in his ears. Whether I should revile, or a cur were barking at his heels, is all the same to him. Had only a Renneberg, or a Brederode been in my place, how quickly would the Wibisma sword have leaped from its scabbard, for he understands fighting, and is no coward. But I? No man likes to be slapped in the face, but so surely as my father was a good man, even the worst insult were easier to bear than the consciousness of being thought too mean even to offer an affront. You see, Wilhelm, when the Glipper looked beyond me—"

"Then your beard lost its composure."

"You joke, but you do not know—"

"Ah, Herr Allerts, I understand you well."

"Then do you comprehend why I took myself and my sword out of the way so quickly?"

"Perfectly, but I pray you to wait a moment. The doves in here are fluttering so anxiously they must want air."

The fencing-master drew rein, and asked, while Wilhelm took the dripping cover from the little cage, which he carried between himself and the neck of his horse:

"How can a man bother himself with such delicate creatures? But if you want to shorten the time given to music, for the sake of the feathered folk, then tame falcons; that is a knightly occupation and I can teach you."

"Leave my doves in peace," answered Wilhelm. "They are not so delicate as one might think, and in many a war, which is certainly chivalrous sport, they have shown themselves useful. Remember Haarlem. It is beginning to rain again. If only my cloak were not quite so scanty I should like to cover the birds."

“You do indeed look in it like Goliath in the garments of David.”

“This is my school-boy cloak; the other I lent yesterday to young Wibisma.”

“The Spanish green-peak?”

“I have already told you the squabble among the boys.”

“Yes, and the green monkey kept your cloak?”

“You brought me away, and would not wait. It was probably returned soon after we left.”

“And the gracious Herr expected thanks because the youth accepted it?”

“No, no, the baron expressed his gratitude.”

“But that does not make your cape any longer. Take my cloak, Wilhelm; I have no doves to shelter, and my skin is thicker than yours.”

CHAPTER VII.

A SECOND and a third rainy day followed the first. White fog and gray mist hung low over the meadows. The cold, damp, north-west wind drove the clouds together and darkened the heavens. Little streams descended from the steep roofs of Leyden to the streets; the water in the moats and canals became turbid and swollen to the very edge of the banks. Dripping men and women hastened past one another without any exchange of greeting; while even the pair of storks pressed closer together in their nest, with a memory of the warm south, and mourning their too early return to the cool and damp plains of Holland.

People of gloomy temperament were anxious as to what might be coming. As the fresh blades in the grain-fields, so did fear grow in the hearts of many citizens. Conversation, which sounded anything but hopeful, was heard in some of the beer-shops; while in others, continued resistance was denounced as folly, or actual desertion of the cause of the prince and of liberty was demanded.

Whoever in these days sought a joyous face in Leyden might look long in vain. Least of all was it to be expected in the house of the Burgomaster van der Werff.

Three days had now passed since the sudden departure of Peter. Yes, it was almost noon of the fourth, and still he had not returned, and no word of explanation, or of friendly remembrance had been received by his family.

Maria had arrayed herself in a dress of some light-blue fabric, with Mechlin lace in the square neck, for this was a

favorite dress with her husband, and to-day she felt sure he would come. The spray of wall-flower on her breast had been cut from the growing plant in the window of her chamber, and Barbara had assisted in the dressing of her abundant hair.

It wanted but one hour of noon when the slight, delicate figure of the young wife entered the work-room of the burgo-master, with a white dusting-cloth in her hand. She went first to the window, over the panes of which the rain was falling in manifold serpentine streams, to press her face against it, and to look down into the deserted street. Water stood between the smooth red bricks of the pavement. A porter, clattering along in heavy wooden shoes—a maid, with head closely wrapped, hurried swiftly past; a cobbler's boy, with a pair of tall boots over his shoulder, sprung from puddle to puddle, carefully avoiding the dry spots—but no rider was in sight. It was unnaturally still on the street, and in the house she heard only the pelting of the rain. Without first hearing a hoof-beat, Maria dared not expect her husband, but she did not peer into the distance. She only looked down dreamily into the street, and at the incessant rain.

The room had been carefully warmed for the return of a drenched traveler, but through the cracks in the window-frames Maria felt the draughts of cold air. She shivered, and as she shrunk back into the half dim space, it seemed to her that it would always remain in twilight—that there could be no more clear sunshine.

Some little time elapsed before she remembered her object in coming to the room. But then she passed her duster over the writing-table, the piles of papers, and whatever else the room contained.

At length she came to the pistols, which Peter had not taken upon his journey. Over these hung, at a considerable height, the portrait of her husband's first wife. This was in greater need of the improving hand than the weapons, for Maria had always shrunk from touching it. To-day she summoned her courage, and placing herself in position to see it distinctly, she gazed with intentness at the youthful features of the woman with whom Peter had been happy. She felt herself strangely attracted by the brown eyes which looked from the pleasant face.

Yes, the woman above there seemed contented, almost arrogantly so.

How much more, perhaps, had Peter given his first wife than he had to her? This thought cut her to the heart, and without moving her lips, she put a series of questions to the

dumb portrait, which looked down upon her with an expression of such serene satisfaction from its plain frame. Once the full lips seemed to quiver and the eyes to move. A cold tremor seized her blood, and she felt frightened, but still could not tear herself away from the picture. With wide-open eyes she stared upward, motionless, but with quickened breath and keener gaze.

Upon the high forehead of the departed Eva lay a shadow. Had the painter intended thus to represent a faint expression of trouble or anxiety? Or was it only a gathering of dust? She drew a chair before the picture and placed her foot upon the seat. In doing this she was obliged to lift her dress. Blushing as if some other than the painted eye looked down upon her, she drew it modestly over the white stocking, and sprung with a quick motion into the chair. Now she stood eye to eye with the portrait, and carried the cloth in her trembling hand over the forehead of Eva, and wiped the shadow from the rosy flesh. She blew the dust from the frame and the canvas, and noticed the signature of the artist, to whom the painting owed its existence.

“Artjen, of Leyden,” was the name, and his careful hand had finished with punctilious exactness the minutest details. She recognized the silver chain and the blue turquois on the plump neck—for Peter had given her these when a bride, and she had worn them at the altar—but the little cross of diamonds suspended from the middle she had never seen. The gold buckle at Eva’s girdle had belonged to herself since her last birthday, but the dull points were so badly bent they would scarcely pierce the thick ribbon.

“*She* had all these things when they were new,” said Maria to herself. “But what do I care for the ornaments? It is the heart—the heart. How much love did she leave in Peter’s heart!” Involuntarily these words repeated themselves over and over to her inward ear, and she was forced to exercise much self-control not to weep.

“If he would only come!” was the loud cry in her heavily foreboding heart.

Without her notice the door opened. Barbara entered and called her name with a kindly reproof. Maria was startled, and said, blushing:

“Please give me your hand. I want to get down. I have finished. The dust was a disgrace.”

As she again stood upon the floor, the widow exclaimed:

“Hear me, sister-in-law—hear me, child—” Barbara was interrupted by a loud knocking at the house door, and Maria

hurried to the window, where she was followed by the widow, who, after a hasty glance into the street, exclaimed:

“That is Wilhelm Corneliussohn, the musician. He has been to Delft. I heard this from his mother. Perhaps he brings news from Peter. I will send him up to you, but he shall first tell me his errand below. If you want me, you will find me with Elizabeth. She is flushed, and has pain in her eyes. She may have some eruption, or a fever.”

Barbara left the room. Maria pressed her hand over her flaming cheeks and walked slowly up and down until there was a knock on the door, and the musician entered. After the first words of greeting, the young wife asked:

“Did you see my husband in Delft?”

“Yes, indeed,” answered Wilhelm; “on the evening of day before yesterday.”

“Then tell me—”

“Instantly. I bring you a whole package of messages. First from your mother.”

“Is she well?”

“Yes, well and cheery. So, too, is the worthy Doctor Groot.”

“And my husband?”

“I found him with the doctor. Herr Groot sends you his best wishes. There was a musical entertainment at his house, both yesterday and the day before. He has always the latest Italian novelties, and if we only had those motets—”

“Afterward, Herr Wilhelm. First you ought to tell me what my husband—”

“The burgomaster came to the doctor with a commission from the prince. He was in haste, and he could not wait for the singing. It went off finely. And you need have no doubt as to the tabulature. If only you, with your excellent voice—”

“I beg you, Master Wilhelm.”

“No, worthy lady, you should not hesitate. Herr Groot said that when you were a girl, no one in Delft could carry the tenor like you, and if you and the noble Frau van Nordwyk, and Herr van Aken’s eldest daughter—”

“But, dear Master Wilhelm,” cried Maria, with growing impatience, “I am not asking about your motets and tabulatures, but after my husband.”

Wilhelm looked into the face of the young wife, half astonished and half frightened. Then he shook his head, laughing at his own awkwardness, and said, with good-natured penitence:

“It is true that little things appear unduly important to us when our own souls are filled with them. One word about your absent husband would be more acceptable to your ears than all my music. I should have thought of that sooner. But now—the burgomaster is well, and has much intercourse with the prince. Yesterday forenoon, before he left for Dortrecht, he gave me this letter, and charged me to place it in your hands, with his warmest greeting.”

With these words, Wilhelm gave her a letter, which she took quickly from his hand, saying:

“Do not be affronted, Herr Wilhelm, but we will discuss your motet to-morrow, or at any other time which may suit you; but to-day—”

“To-day you must give your time to this letter,” broke in Wilhelm. “That is only natural. The messenger has discharged his commission, and the music-master will try his fortune with those notes at another time.”

As soon as the young man had gone, Maria went to her own room, and sat down by the window to open with hasty hand the letter of her husband and to read:

“MY BELOVED AND FAITHFUL WIFE,—Master Wilhelm Corneliussohn, of Leyden, will deliver this letter. I am well, but it was a sore trial to leave you on the anniversary of our wedding-day. The weather is very unpleasant. I found the prince in deep affliction, but we do not give up hope, and if the dear God help, and each one does his duty, all may yet be well. I must go to-day to Dortrecht. What I have to do there is important. Have patience, for it may be yet several days before I can return home.

“Should any messenger from the Council inquire, give him the papers which lie on the right-hand side of my writing-table, under the smaller leaden tablet.

“Greeting to Barbara and the children. If money is needed, ask Secretary von Hout for the balance of accounts due to me; he knows about it. Should you feel lonely, visit his wife, or Frau van Nordwyk. They would be glad to see you. Buy flour, butter, cheese, and smoked meats whenever there is opportunity. One knows not what may come. Take counsel of Barbara! Trusting in your obedience,

“Your faithful husband,

“PETER ADRIANSSOHN VAN DER WERFF.”

Maria read this letter at first hurriedly, then slowly, scanning sentence by sentence. Disappointed, grieved, wounded, she refolded it, and—she knew not why—snatched the wall-

flowers from her dress, and threw them into the box of peat beside the chimney.

Then she opened her chest, and taking from it a neatly carved casket, she placed it upon the table, opened, and laid the letter of her husband inside. Long after it had found its place among the other papers, Maria stood in the same spot, gazing thoughtfully at the contents of the box. At length she laid her hand on the cover to close it, but still delayed, and took up a package of letters which, with a few gold and silver coins, gifts of her god-parents, some modest trinkets, and a withered rose, lay at the bottom.

Thereupon she drew a chair to the table and began to read. The writing of these letters she knew well.

They had been written by a noble and promising youth to her sister, his betrothed bride, and were dated at Jena, where he had gone to pursue his legal studies. Every word breathed the ardent longing of the lover, every line expressed the passion which filled the heart of the writer. Sometimes the prose of this young scholar, who, as a pupil of Dr. Groot in Delft, had learned to love her sister while scarcely more than a child, rose to quite exalted strains. While she read, Maria recalled the lovely face of Jacoba and that of the enthusiastic bridegroom. She remembered the joyous wedding, and the impetuous young nobleman, the gifted friend of her brother-in-law, who had come into Holland as his groomsman, and who, at parting, had given her the rose lying now in her treasure-casket.

No voice had ever rung so musically in her ears, and from no other mouth had come such poetical language. Never had eyes so brilliant looked into hers as those of this young Thuringian nobleman.

After the wedding, Georg van Dornburg had returned home, and the young married pair went to Haarlem.

She had never heard again from the stranger, and the voices of her sister and her brother-in-law were soon hushed forever. Like most of the residents of Haarlem, they had met death through the Spanish destroyer at the capture of this noble but hapless city. Nothing remained of this dear sister but her own faithful memories and the letters of her betrothed bridegroom.

These spoke *love*—the true, exalted love, which can speak with an angel's tongue, or move mountains. There lay her husband's letter. Poor epistle! She avoided opening it again as she replaced the treasured mementoes in the casket; and yet her heart beat high as she thought of Peter. She knew,

too, that she loved him, and that his faithful heart belonged to her. Still, she was not satisfied or happy, for he showed her only tenderness, and a sort of fatherly affection, and she wanted to be loved in another way.

The pupil, yes, the friend of the learned Groot, who had grown up in familiar intercourse with cultivated men, and the enthusiastic patriot, was conscious that she was capable of being far more to her husband than he asked of her.

She had not expected gushing sentiment or high-flown compliments from this earnest, practical man, but she had believed he would understand and appreciate all that was high and noble in her, and permit her to share his struggles and be the companion of his thoughts and feelings. That it had proved otherwise was freshly evident from the barren letter just received. He had been a trusted friend of her father, who was no more among the living. Her deceased brother-in-law also had attached himself with all the enthusiasm of youth to Van der Werff, the matured champion of freedom. When he had spoken of him to Maria, it had been in terms of warmest love and admiration.

Soon after the decease of her father and the violent end of the youthful pair, Peter had come to Delft, and had expressed his sympathy, and offered consolation in such hearty, vigorous words, that they had seemed an anchor to hold her soul firm in this time of need.

The brave Leydener came often to Delft, and was always a guest in the house of Dr. Groot. While the gentlemen consulted together, Maria was permitted to fill their glasses and hear their discussions.

Words flew back and forth, and often seemed to her neither clear nor wise, but those of Van der Werff were always sensible, and a child might have understood his direct, plain speech. He seemed to her like an oak-tree among swaying willows. She had been aware of several journeys that he undertook, at the peril of his life, in the service of the prince and for the cause of his country, and had awaited their result with an anxious heart.

More than once in those days had the thought occurred to her that it would be delightful to be borne through life on the strong arms of this steadfast man; and when the strong arm was offered, she had accepted it as gladly and proudly as the squire whom a king summons to be dubbed a knight. As she now recalled those past days, how vividly rose the memory of the hopes which filled her soul as she followed him to Leyden.

Her newly wedded husband had promised, not a May month,

but a full summer and autumn, at his side. Now she recalled this figure of speech, and the entirely different experience which the union with him had brought to this day.

Storm, tumult, conflict, an endless alternation from laborious work to excessive weariness—this was his life, his being, the life he had called her to share, without allowing her any part in his cares and labors.

This must not, could not, go on. All that had made life fair in the house of her parents utterly failed here. Music and poetry, which had elevated her nature there, refined conversation in which her spirit had developed—they could not be found here. Barbara's good sense could not make up for their loss. She would willingly have given up all for the complete love of her husband; but how could that be secured?

With bitter emotions she replaced the casket in the chest, and obeyed the call to dinner, but found at the great table only Adrian and the servants, for Barbara was with Elizabeth.

Never before had she realized herself so desolate, so isolated, so useless. What could she do here? Barbara ruled in kitchen and cellar, while she—she only stood in the way of her husband's duties to city and to country.

Such were her thoughts, when she again heard the knocker at the house door. Looking from the window she saw the physician. Elizabeth had grown worse, and she, her mother, had not even inquired for the little one.

"The children, the children!" she exclaimed to herself; "I promised Peter to treat them as if they were my own;" and her heart grew lighter as she added: "I will fulfill what I have undertaken."

In joyful excitement, she went to the dimly lighted sick-room, closing the door hastily as she entered. Dr. Bontius looked up with a warning glance, and Barbara said: "Gently, gently; Elizabeth has fallen asleep."

Maria approached the bed, but the physician motioned her back with the question:

"Have you had the purple fever?"

"No."

"Then you ought not to come again into this room. Where Barbara is nurse no other help is needed."

The burgomaster's wife made no reply, but returned to the passage. Her heart was unutterably heavy, for she seemed a stranger in the house of her husband. She longed to be in the open air, and winding a wrap about her head, she descended the stairs, to find the odor of leather rising from the bales piled in the broad hall of the lower floor, which before

she had scarcely noticed, quite intolerable. She longed for her mother, her friends in Delft, and the quiet, pleasant home. For the first time she ventured to call herself unhappy, and while with downcast eyes making her way through the street, against the wind, contended in vain against some mysterious power which forced her to ask why all had resulted so different from her hopes and anticipations.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER the musician left the house of the burgomaster, he went to that of the aunt of the young Baron Matenesse van Wibisma, to get the cloak which had not yet been returned to him. He was not over-fastidious about his dress, yet felt glad that the rain was keeping people at home, for the outgrown garment at present upon his shoulders was far from attractive.

Of this he was specially conscious in the spacious vestibule of the spinster Hoogstraten, where the steward Belotti received him as condescendingly as though he were a beggar. But the Neapolitan, whose use of the vigorous Dutch sounded like the hoarse rattling of a singer who had taken cold, struck a different note when Wilhelm quietly explained to him in good Italian the purpose of his coming. The arrogant manner of the servant dissolved instantly under the pleasant sound of his mother-tongue—transformed into active and ready devotion. He was now disposed to talk with Wilhelm about his home, but the latter gave him a brief command to fetch the cloak. Belotti led him politely into a small room at the side of the large vestibule, removed his cloak, and ran upstairs.

As the moments went by, and at last a full quarter of an hour had passed without the appearance of either servant or cloak, the young man lost his usual patience, and thrummed on the leaden window casement, which was in threatening peril when the door opened. Wilhelm was conscious of this, yet kept on thrumming with increased vehemence in order to show the Italian that he was tired of waiting. But his fingers were quickly withdrawn when the clear, girlish voice behind him said, in excellent Dutch:

“Have you finished your battle-song, sir? Belotti is bringing your cloak.”

Wilhelm had turned around, and looked in utter surprise and bewilderment into the face of the young lady of noble rank who stood before him. The features were not strange—still, the years do not make even a goddess younger and the

daughters of men increase in stature—but the lady he thought he saw before him was one well known in Rome, and never forgotten. Yet she must have been older and taller than the girl who so much resembled her, and who seemed to find no amusement in the surprised and searching glance of the young man; for she nodded to the steward with a proud gesture, and said in Italian: “Give the gentleman his cloak, Belotti, and say that I came to ask pardon for your negligence.”

Henrika van Hoogstraten turned to leave after uttering these words, but Wilhelm took two quick steps after her, and cried:

“Not so, noble lady; I am the one to ask pardon. But if you have ever been surprised by a resemblance—”

“Anything but looking like other people,” cried the girl, with a gesture of scorn.

“Ah, fraulein, and yet—”

“Let it pass,” broke in Henrika, in so irritated a tone that the musician looked at her in surprise. “One sheep looks like every other, and out of a hundred peasants twenty will have the same face. All wares sold by the dozen are cheap.”

As soon as Wilhelm heard some reasons brought forward, he recovered his usual quiet manner, and answered, modestly:

“But nature sets the most beautiful things in pairs. Think of the eyes in the face of the Madonna—”

“Are you a Catholic?”

“A Calvinist, noble lady.”

“And devoted to the cause of the prince?”

“Say rather to the cause of liberty.”

“That accounts for the thrumming of the battle-song.”

“It was at first a gentle gavotte, but impatience quickened the time. I am a musician, lady.”

“But probably no drummer. Alas for the window-panes!”

“It is an instrument like any other, and in playing, people of our sort try to give exact expression to what we feel.”

“Accept my thanks for not having broken them to pieces.”

“That would not have been harmonious, fraulien, and art ceases when discord begins.”

“Do you consider the song which was inside your cloak—it fell upon the ground and Nico picked it up—to be harmony or discord?”

“This one, or that?”

“I mean the ‘Beggar’s Song.’”

“It is wild, but no more discordant than the roaring of a storm.”

“It is repulsive, coarse, exasperating.”

“I consider it strong and of impetuous power.”

“And this other melody?”

“Spare me your opinion. I have myself composed it. Do you read music, noble fraulein?”

“A little.”

“And has my attempt displeased you?”

“Not exactly; but I find doleful strains in this choral, as in all the Calvinistic hymns.”

“That depends upon how they are executed.”

“They seem arranged for the voices of shop-keepers' wives and washer-women in your chapels.”

“Every song, if it be sincerely felt, will give wings to the soul of the simple folk who use it, and what thus ascends from the inmost depths of the heart, to the dear Lord unto whom they are addressed, will not displease Him. And then—”

“Go on.”

“And if these notes are worthy of preservation, it may prove that some time an incomparable choir—”

“Will sing them under your leadership, do you mean?”

“No, fraulein; they have fulfilled their mission when once executed in a noble manner. I might well desire to be among the singers, but this wish stands far behind the other.”

“How modest!”

“I believe myself to have anticipated the best reward in their creation.”

Henrika looked at the artist with interest, and said, with a softer inflection: “I am sorry for you, master. I will not deny that your melody pleases me; it speaks to the heart in many places, but how they will spoil it in your churches! Your heresy destroys art. The works of the great painters are to you an abomination, and music, which has attained such excellence in the Netherlands, will soon meet no better fate.”

“I dare believe the contrary.”

“You are wrong, master, you are wrong; for if your cause conquer—which may the Virgin forbid!—there will soon be nothing in Holland but warehouses, workshops, and barren meeting-houses, from which at length all singing and organ music will be banished.”

“Far from it, fraulein. Athens became the home of art only after securing its liberty through the Persian war.”

“Athens and Leyden!” she exclaimed, with scorn. “Owls there are, to be sure, in the tower of Pancratius. But where shall we find the Minerva?” While Henrika laughed, rather than spoke, these words, a shrill female voice was heard calling her name for the third time. She broke off in the midst of her sentence to say: “I must go. I will keep these notes.”

“You will honor me by accepting them, and will you allow me to bring others?”

“Henrika!” sounded again from the staircase, and she answered, hastily: “Trust whatever you please to Belotti; but soon, as I shall not be here much longer.”

Wilhelm looked after Henrika. She moved as rapidly and with the same self-possession, through the broad hall and up the stairway, as she had exhibited in her speech, and again he was vividly reminded of his friend in Rome.

The eyes of the old Italian also followed Henrika, and as she disappeared at the last turning of the stairs, he shrugged his shoulders, and, turning to the musician, said, with an expression of respectful sympathy: “Something is wrong with the fraulein—always in a passion, always like a loaded pistol, and then that terrible headache. It was not so before we came here.”

“Is the fraulein suffering?”

“My lady will not acknowledge it,” replied the servant. “But what we see, the waiting-maid and I, that we see—changing from red to white, no rest in the night, and scarcely eating so much as a chicken’s wing and a leaf of salad.”

“Does the physician share your anxiety?”

“The physician? Doctor Fleuriel is no longer here. He moved to Ghent when the Spaniards took possession, and since that my gracious lady allows only the barber, who can open a vein. The physicians here are all devoted to the Prince of Orange, and are heretics. There is the call again! I will send the cloak to your house; and if you ever feel like amusing yourself with my language, knock at the door. These calls—these unending calls! The fraulein suffers from them too.”

When Wilhelm returned to the street he found it raining only slightly. The clouds were scattering, and from one patch of blue sky the sun shot fiery beams into Nobel Street. A rainbow appeared above the roof, but to-day the musician had no eyes for its beauty. The hot sunlight on the wet street gave him no pleasure. These acute rays gave no hope of continued fair weather; “they drew rain.” All that surrounded him seemed confusion. A fair image, preserved in the most sacred shrine of memory, and which he only allowed himself to gaze upon at rare moments, seemed crowded upon by another. His real diamond was in danger of being exchanged for a stone of whose worth he knew nothing. Into the old pure harmony another note had been introduced, similar, and yet of feebler melody. How could he now recall the image of Isa-

bella without thining of Henrika? At any rate he had not heard the fraulein sing, and so the remembrance of Isabella's songs was undisturbed. He blamed himself because, yielding to an emotion of vanity, he had promised to send other songs to this proud girl of Spanish sympathies.

He had met Herr Matenese van Wibisma rudely, on account of his opinions, but sought to press himself upon one who derided what he held sacred, because she was a woman, and it was sweet to hear his creations praised by fair lips. "Hercules throws down the club, and seats himself beside the distaff when Omphale beckons; and the fair Esther and the daughter of Herodias" came involuntarily to his thoughts. He was greatly disturbed, and longed for his quiet chamber in the gable, beside the dove-cote.

"Something unpleasant has happened to him in Delft," thought the father.

"Why does he not relish the roast flounders to-day?" asked his mother, as he sat with them at the table.

Each was conscious that something weighed upon the pride and darling of their house, but did not inquire into the "what" and the "how"; for they new the moods which sometimes held him by the half day.

After Wilhelm had fed his doves, he went to his chamber, and for awhile walked restlessly up and down. There he seized his violin, and made a medley of all the tunes he had learned from Isabella. Seldom did his music alternate so rapidly between storm and pathos; and his mother, who was in the kitchen, hearing it, drove the twirling-stick faster and faster, then plunged into the tough dough, and muttered, as she rubbed her hands upon her apron: "How it moans and shouts! May it relieve him, for God's sake; but catgut is dear, and it will certainly cost him a couple of strings."

Toward evening Wilhelm was compelled to take part in the drill of a shooting company to which he belonged. His troop was ordered to mount guard at the Hoogewoort Gate. As he marched with them through Noble Street, he heard the low clear voice of a woman singing in the Hoogstraten house. He listened, and shuddering to notice how much Henrika's voice—for she alone could have been the singer—was like Isabelle's, he commanded the drummer to beat the drum.

On the next morning, a servant from the Hoogstraten house brought a note to Wilhelm, requesting him in brief words to appear in the Noble Street, exactly at two o'clock, neither earlier nor later. He did not wish to say "yes;" he could not say "no," and so betook himself to the place at the proper

time. Henrika awaited him in the side room, near the entrance. She was more serious than the day before, while deeper shadows under her eyes and the glowing red of her cheeks reminded Wilhelm of Belotti's anxiety for her health.

After exchanging civilities, she said, abruptly: "I must speak to you. Sit down. Briefly, the manner of your meeting me yesterday awakened some strange thoughts. I must strongly resemble some woman whom you met in Italy. It may perhaps be one very nearly related to me, of whom I have lost trace. Answer me honestly, for I am actuated by no idle curiosity. Where did you meet her?"

"In Lugano. We traveled together to Milan, and afterward I found her in Rome, and for months saw her daily."

"Then you must have known her well. Do you find the same resemblance upon meeting me a second time?"

"It is most striking."

"Then I must have a double. Is this land her home?"

"She called herself an Italian, but she understood Dutch, for she often turned over my books, and followed the conversations I held with young artists from my own land. I believe she is a German of noble family."

"Probably an adventuress. And her name?"

"Isabella—but I think no one has the right to call her an adventuress."

"Was she married?"

"There was something matronly in her majestic bearing, still I never heard her speak of a husband. The old Italian woman, her duenna, always called her Donna Isabella, yet she had scarcely any more knowledge of her antecedents than I."

"Was that good or evil?"

"Nothing at all, noble lady."

"And what did she do in Rome?"

"She practiced the art of song, of which she was mistress. But she had not ceased to study, and made great progress in Rome. I was permitted to instruct her in the science of counterpoints."

"Did she appear in public as a singer?"

"Yes, and no. A foreign prelate of high rank was her patron, and his recommendation opened all doors—even the Palestrina. Prominent parts in the church music were intrusted to her, and she did not refuse to sing in noble houses, but never for pecuniary profit. I know this, for she would not allow any one else to play her accompaniments. She liked my playing, and so through her I was introduced into the houses of many people of rank."

“ Was she rich?”

“ No, fraulein. She had handsome dresses and brilliant jewels, still was forced to economize. From time to time she received money by way of Florence, but the gold pieces slipped easily through her fingers; for, though she lived unpretentiously, and eat scarcely enough to sustain a bird, while her delicate health called for more substantial nourishment, yet she was lavish to extravagance when she saw poor artists in need; and she knew most of them, for she did not hesitate to sit with them at their wine in my company.”

“ With painters and men devoted to music?”

“ Mere artists of high character. At times she surpassed them all in her overflowing good humor.”

“ At times?”

“ Yes, only at times; for she had periods of despondency; but as rain and sunshine on an April day, so complete despair alternated with light-hearted mirth.”

“ A strange being. Do you know what became of her at last?”

“ No, fraulein; one evening she received a missive from Milan, which must have brought bad news, for the next day she vanished without a word of farewell.”

“ And did you not attempt to follow her?”

Wilhelm blushed, and said, constrainedly:

“ I had no right to do so; and soon after she went away I fell sick—sick almost unto death.”

“ Did you love her?”

“ Gracious fraulein, I must beg you—”

“ You loved her! And did she love you in return?”

“ We met only yesterday, Fraulein Hoogstraten.”

“ Pardon me! But if you regard my wishes, we have not seen each other for the last time, although my double is certainly some other than the lady I had in mind.”

“ I hope to meet you again. As you perceive, that calling never ends. You have wakened an interest in your singular friend, and at some other time must tell me more of her. Only this question: Can I, as a modest girl, speak of her with you without shame?”

“ Certainly, unless you object to a lady who has no other protector than herself.”

“ And you—do you not forget yourself?” cried Henrika, and left the room. The musician walked thoughtfully homeward. Was Isabella a relative of this fraulein? He had acquainted Henrika with most of the external circumstances familiar to himself, and had already perhaps given her the same

right to consider Isabella an adventuress which had been assumed in Rome. This word pained him, and the question of Henrika if he loved the stranger seemed intrusive and unbecoming. Yes, he had been ardently attached to her; it had been a sore trial to be nothing more to her than a companion and trusted friend. It had cost him conflict enough to hide his sentiments; he would certainly have declared them, but for the fear of rejection and of ridicule. The old heart wounds bled afresh as he recalled the time when she left Rome so suddenly, without a word of leave-taking. After a long and severe sickness, he had returned pale and with clipped wings to his home—and many weary months passed before he found again any true joy in his work.

At first her memory had stirred only emotions of bitterness, but now, through quiet and persevering effort, he had succeeded, not in forgetting, but in extracting the sting from the pure and choice delight of remembrance. To-day, the old struggle began anew, but he was not disposed to surrender, and he did not forbid himself to call up Isabella's image, in its full glory, before his soul.

Henrika went back to her aunt, deeply moved. Was this adventuress of whom Wilhelm had told her, the only being whom she loved with the full intensity of her ardent nature? Was Isabella her lost sister?

There was much against the supposition, still it might be possible. She tormented herself with questions, and the less quiet allowed her by her aunt, so much the more insupportable grew the pain in her head, and the more distinctly she felt that the fever, against whose depressing influence she had struggled for many days, would overmaster her.

CHAPTER IX.

ON the evening of the third day following Wilhelm's interview with Henrika, he chanced to pass the Hoogstraten house. Before reaching there he had seen two men, preceded by a servant with a lantern, crossing the causeway toward the house. Wilhelm became attentive to their movements. The servant lifted the knocker. As light from the lantern fell upon their faces, he saw that they were strangers. The elder, a man of small, elegant figure, wearing a pointed hat and short black velvet mantle, was the Abbe Picard, a gay Parisian, who had come to Leyden ten years before to teach French in aristocratic families. He would also have been Wilhelm's instructor, but that his father, the court tax-collector, would

have nothing to do with the witty abbe, who was reported to have left his beloved France on account of some dishonorable transactions, and Herr Cornelius suspected him of being a Spanish spy. The other gentleman, a gray-headed man of medium height and excessive corpulence, and whose fur-bordered cloak had consumed much cloth, was Signor Lamperi, an agent of the great Italian house of Bonvisi, in Antwerp, who came to Leyden every year with the storks and swallows for a few weeks of business, and as an inexhaustible retailer of jokes was a welcome guest in every drinking-shop.

A third gentleman joined the two latter before they entered the house, preceded by two servants carrying lanterns. A broad mantle enveloped his stately figure, and he, too, stood on the threshold of old age. This man was no stranger to Wilhelm, for the popish Monseigneur Gloria, who frequently came to Leyden from Haarlem, was a patron of music, and had given him valuable letters of recommendation on his return from Italy, in spite of his heretical opinions.

Wilhelm passed the house as the door closed upon these three gentlemen. The steward Belotti had told him on the previous day that Henrika seemed very unwell; but the entrance of visitors suggested probable improvement. The first story of the Hoogstraten house was brilliantly lighted; in the second, a faint, steady gleam appeared at one window, but she for whom it was burning sat uneasily, with feverish cheeks and eyes, beside a clumsy table, pressing her forehead against the marble. Henrika was entirely alone in this wide, lofty apartment. Behind curtains of heavily gilded brocade stood her bed, a huge structure of astonishing breadth. The other articles of furniture were large, and of faded splendor. Every chair and table might have been taken as relics from a banqueting-hall. Nothing necessary was wanting in the room, yet there was no air of comfort, and nothing to suggest that it was occupied by a young girl, except a large gilded harp, lying on a stiffly cushioned couch, near the fire-place. Henrika's head was burning, while her feet were chilled as they rested on the gayly decorated stucco of the floor, unprotected by a carpet, although her lower limbs were warmly wrapped.

Soon after the three men had entered the house of her aunt, a female figure ascended the stairs leading from the first to the second story. Henrika's excited senses perceived the light fall of the velvet shoe and the rustling of the silken train, long before the person approaching reached her room, and with quickened breath she sat erect. A wrinkled hand opened the door without knocking, and the old Fraulein van Hoogstraten

stood before her niece. 'This superannuated dame must once have been handsome, but at this time her appearance was peculiar and unpleasant. Her meager, stooping figure was arrayed in a long-trained dress of rose-colored silk, while the small head was lost in the ruff, a lace tower of monstrous proportions. Over her sallow neck, exposed by the cut of the waist, hung long chains of pearls and precious stones, and above the artificial red blonde Venetian curls waved a bunch of feathers set off by a knot of light-blue velvet. Heavy perfumes loaded the atmosphere about her person, which perhaps were oppressive to her own senses, for the large glittering fan she carried was kept in perpetual motion, and became violently accelerated when Henrika, in answer to her curt, "Quick, quick!" said decisively: "No, aunt."

The old lady could not have mistaken the refusal, yet she only repeated, "Quick, quick!" in more emphatic tones, adding, as an important reason: "The monseigneur has come, and wants to hear you."

"I am much honored," replied Henrika; "but how often do I need to repeat that I shall not go?"

"May one ask why not, my fairest?"

"Because I am not in condition for your society, because my head aches and my eyes are burning, because I can not sing to-day, and because—because— I beg you, leave me in peace."

The old lady dropped her fan, and answered, coolly:

"Were you singing two hours ago, or not?"

"Yes."

"Then the headache is not very bad, and Denise can dress you."

"If she comes I shall send her away. When I tried the harp a little while ago, it was in the hope that it might drive away the pain. It did relieve me for a few moments, but now it throbs harder than ever."

"Mere subterfuge!"

"Believe what you choose. And if I were at this moment sound as a squirrel in the forest, I would not go down to your gentlemen. I shall stay here. Now you know. You have my word for it, and I am a Hoogstraten, as well as you."

Henrika had risen, and a glowing fire flashed in the eyes that met her tormentor. The old lady set her fan again in motion, and her protruding chin trembled. She said, shortly: "Your word of honor! Then you will not?"

"Certainly not," replied the girl, with disrespectful emphasis.

“Every one wants his own way,” said the old woman, turning toward the door. “What is too pronounced, is too pronounced. Your father will not thank you for this.”

With these words Fraulein Hoogstraten gathered up her long train and approached the door. There she paused and glanced once more inquiringly toward her niece. Henrika certainly remarked the hesitation of her aunt, but turned her back deliberately without regarding the covert threat.

As soon as the door closed, she sunk back into her chair, leaned her head again upon the marble, and remained thus a long time. Then she rose as suddenly as though in answer to a pressing call, flung back the cover of her trunk, and heaped the various articles of apparel which came in her way upon the floor, rising again only when she had found a few sheets of writing-paper, brought with other possessions from her father's castle.

As she rose from the kneeling posture, a dizziness seized her, but she resolutely kept her footing and laid her paper, with a note-book and a large inkstand which had stood in the room for several days, upon the table and sat down before it. Leaning back in her chair, she began to write. The book which served as a desk, lay upon her knee, and the writing-paper on the book. With the creaking and hesitating goose-quill she made large, stiff characters on the white paper. Henrika was not unused to writing, but to-day it must have been a hard task, for her forehead was dripping with perspiration, her lips drawn in by pain, and so often as she finished a few lines her eyes would close, or she took long draughts from the water-pitcher at her side.

The silence reigning in this great room was frequently broken by sounds that rose from the dining-room. Clinking of glasses, shrill tittering, loud, deep laughter, single strains of a dissolute love-song, patriotic cheers, and then the sharp crash of breaking glass came confusedly to her ears. She could not avoid hearing these sounds, but they irritated her, and she ground her white teeth together. Still, she did not lay aside her pen.

That which she wrote was in disjointed, almost incomprehensible sentences, and without apparent connection.

Sometimes there were long gaps, then she repeated a single word two or three times. The letter might have been written by an insane person, yet from every line and pen-stroke breathed the same passionate longing.

“Away from here! Away from this woman, and this house!”

The letter was addressed to her father, whom she begged to deliver her from her present position, to come and take her away, or to send for her.

Her uncle, Matenesse van Wibisma, she said, must have been a careless messenger. He had himself probably enjoyed the evening receptions which were loathsome to her. She declared her determination to go out into the world, searching for her sister, should her father insist on her remaining here. Then followed a description of her aunt and her aunt's manner of life. The picture of her days and nights in this house was a confused mixture of great and small trials, and set off in glaring colors the humiliations to which she had been exposed.

There had often been carousing and wanton frivolity. Henrika had been forced into the society of her aunt's guests—elderly French and Italian men of loose morals.

While describing these assemblies, the blood mounted more hotly into her already flushed cheeks, and the pen-strokes became longer and less intelligible. The stories of the abbe, which amused her aunt, and at which the Italian screamed, and the monseigneur smilingly condemned with a light shake of the head, were so shamefully bold that she would have felt herself defiled in repeating them.

Was she a modest girl or not?

Rather would she die of hunger and thirst than be again in such company. When the dining-room was empty, other exorbitant demands were made upon Henrika, for then the aunt, who could not bear to be left alone, was sick and wretched, and she was compelled to nurse her. That she gladly ministered to the suffering, she wrote, was proved by her efforts for the children sick of small-pox in the village; but when her aunt could not sleep, she must keep watch beside her, hold her hand, and listen to her moaning, whining, and praying, or cursing of herself and the treacherous world, sometimes until the morning dawned. She had come into this house strong and vigorous, yet so much that was loathsome, irritating, and oppressive had been heaped upon her as to affect her health.

The girl wrote on until midnight, the characters gradually becoming more indistinct, the lines more crooked, and with the last words, "Oh, my poor head! You see I am losing my senses. Please, my dear, stern father, take me home. I have also perhaps heard something of Anna," her eyes grew dim, the pen dropped from her hand, and she fell back senseless into her chair.

And there she lay, until the last laugh and rattle of glasses

had died away in the room beneath, and the guests of her aunt had left the house. Denise, the maid, noticing the light in the girl's room, came in, and after a vain attempt to rouse her, called her mistress.

Following Denise up the stairs, Fraulein van Hoogstraten muttered, "How tedious! She has dropped asleep, and nothing more. Down-stairs with us she would have been wakeful and merry enough. Sluggish blood. 'People of butter,' King Philip used to say. That mad Lamperi was ill-bred this evening, and the abbe said things—things—"

Wine had sent its sparkle into the eyes of the old woman, and her fan waved rapidly back and forth, to cool her glowing cheeks. When she reached Henrika, she called to her, shook and sprinkled her from the smelling-bottle that hung at her belt. In spite of her efforts, her niece only murmured unintelligible words, and she ordered Denise to bring her medicine-chest. During the absence of the maid, Fraulein van Hoogstraten noticed Henrika's letter, and read page after page, with growing wrath; but at length threw it on the floor, and shook her niece to rouse her once more in vain.

Meanwhile Belotti, apprised of Henrika's condition, and because much devoted to this young lady, took upon himself the responsibility of sending for a physician, and in place of the exiled priest of the house, called the chaplain Damianus. Then he betook himself to the sick-chamber.

Before he crossed the threshold, the old dame called out:

"What do you say now, Belotti? Sickness in the house—that may be contagious. Perhaps even the plague—"

"It seems to be only a fever," returned the Italian, quietly. "Come, Denise. Together we can carry the young lady to her bed. The physician will come soon."

"The physician!" exclaimed the old dame, striking upon the marble with her fan. "Who permitted you, Belotti—"

"We are Christians," broke in the servant, and not without dignity.

"Very well," cried the old lady, "do what you will, call whom you please; but Henrika can not stay here. Contagion in the house—the plague—a black tablet—"

"Eccellenza disturbs herself quite unnecessarily. Let us first hear the opinion of the physician."

"I will not hear it. I do not want plague or small-pox. Go down directly, Belotti, and prepare the sedan-chair. The old cavalier chamber in the wing is empty."

"But, excellenza, it is musty, and so damp that the north wall is covered with mould."

“Then let it be aired and cleaned. What means this delay? You are to obey. Do you understand me, sir?”

“The cavalier chamber is not a fit place for the sick niece of my gracious lady,” answered Belotti, respectfully, but firmly.

“Is not? And what do you know about it?” asked the lady, contemptuously. “Go down, Denise, and send up the sedan-chair. Have you anything more to say, Belotti?”

“Yes, padrona,” answered the Italian, with a trembling voice. “I beg excellenza to discharge me.”

“Discharge you from service?”

“With excellenza’s permission—yes, from service.”

The old woman quailed a little, clasped her fan firmly with both hands, and said:

“You are squeamish, Belotti.”

“No, gracious lady; but I am old, and fear I may have the misfortune to fall sick in this house some day.”

The fraulien shrugged her shoulders, and turning to the maid, said: “The sedan-chair, Denise. You are discharged, Belotti.”

CHAPTER X.

A GLORIOUS morning followed the night in which sickness and suffering had found its way into the Hoogstraten mansion. The stork, now better satisfied with Holland, flew with a loud joyous clacking over the sunny meadows. It was one of those rare days in April that seem sent to prove that the widely sung praises of May, her successor, are too profuse, while her own charms are not sufficiently appreciated. April can boast of giving birth to the spring, while her blooming heir strengthens its vigor and unfolds its beauty.

It was Sunday, and whoever, on such a day, while the bells are ringing, strolls through the sunny paths of the flowery meadows, over which countless cattle, woolly sheep, and idle horses are grazing, and meets the peasants in their neat Sunday clothes with their wives, whose brightly polished bands of gold shine under their snow-white lace caps, solemn citizens in gala dress, and happy children released from school, might well fancy that nature also puts on a holiday suit of clear green and delicate blue, with flowers of fairer hue than she wears on the work-days. A festive spirit seemed to animate the citizens, who, either on foot or in great open wagons, or on the Rhine in gayly painted boats, were making excursions, to enjoy with wives and children the country bread, yellow

butter, and fresh cheese, milk and cooling beer during the leisure hours of the day of rest.

The musician Wilhelm had long ago finished his organ playing in the church; but instead of wandering with his comrades into the country, he devoted the hours of rest to longer journeys, such as render shoes quite unnecessary.

These led him on swift-winged flights beyond the level plains of his native land over the hills and valleys of Germany, and beyond the Alpine peaks into Italy. A place propitious for such forgetfulness of present surroundings and flight into the past stood ready. During his absence in Italy, his brothers Ulrich and Johannes, who were also musicians but who recognized without envy the superior gifts of Wilhelm, and were ready to assist him, had arranged and furnished for him a room in the narrow side of the steep roof, from which a broad door opened upon a small balcony. On this stood a wooden bench, where Wilhelm liked to sit and watch the flight of his pigeons, or gaze dreamily into the distance, or when disposed to work, listen to the tones which arranged themselves for his inward ear. A charming prospect offered itself from this highest point of the house which had an open situation; the view was almost as extensive as that from the top of the citadel—the old Roman tower in the heart of Leyden.

Like a spider in its web, Wilhelm's native city lay in the midst of the countless canals and arms of the sea that intersect the plain. The red brick walls, washed by a dark strip of water, encircled the charming place as a band surrounds the head of a maiden. And in a wider and more broken circle the redoubts and bulwarks resembled a garland of loosely woven thorns. Between the defensive works and the city walls browsed the cattle belonging to the citizens, and on the outer side lay villages and hamlets.

Looking toward the north, on this clear April day, one could distinguish the Haarlem Sea; on the west, beyond the leafy domes of the Haager forest, lay the dunes, which nature has heaped up to protect the land from the rushing waves. Firm and impregnable seemed this long chain of hillocks, opposing the inroads of the sea as Alfen, Leyderdorp, and Valkenburg, the three fortresses upon the Rhine, confront hostile armies.

The Rhine! Wilhelm looked down at the shallow, indolent stream, and likened it to a deposed king, who, having lost power and greatness, divides the possessions remaining to him among the little circle of his adherents.

The musician knew well the lordly undivided German Rhine, and often in fancy followed its course southward, but

oftener still a dream carried him in one mighty leap to the Lake of Lugano, that pearl of the Western Alps; and when he thought of that and the Mediterranean Sea, emerald green and azure blue and golden light shone before his inner eye, and in such hours all his musings were transformed into harmony and music. And then his journey from Lugano to Milan! Rude and overcrowded had been the vehicle which bore him to the city of Leonardo, but in it he had met Isabella.

And Rome! Rome! that noble, never-to-be-forgotten city, where one is lifted out of himself to gather vigor and spiritual power—but which makes us wretched with longing when it lies behind us.

By the Tiber, Wilhelm had first learned what true art, his own lordly art, was. A new world had here opened before him, in the society of Isabella; but a sharp frost had passed over the blossoms that had unfolded in Rome; he knew they were blasted, and could never come to fruit. Yet to-day he recalled her image in its fresh beauty, and, instead of a vision of lost love, he saw his gracious friend, and dreamed of a heaven blue as turquoise or cyanite; of slender columns and bubbling fountains, of olive groves and marble statues, of cool church aisles and glancing villas, of ardent eyes and sparkling wine, of enchanting choirs and Isabella's song.

The doves which cooed and clucked in the cote beside him, flying in and out, were now quite free to go and come as they pleased, for their guardian neither saw nor heard them.

The fencing-master, Allertsohn, came up the ladder to this watch-tower, but Wilhelm first noticed him when he stood at his side on the balcony, and greeted him with his deep voice. "Where have we been, Herr Wilhelm? In this cloth-weaving Leyden. No. More probably with the goddess of music on Olympus, or wherever she holds her court."

"Rightly guessed," replied Wilhelm, tossing back the hair from his brow. "I have been making her a visit, and she sends you her greeting."

"Give her mine in return," said the visitor; "but she is not one of my familiar acquaintances. Drinking suits my throat better than song. Will you allow me?"

The fencing-master took the beer-mug which the mother of Wilhelm freshly filled every day, and placed in the chamber of her darling, and took a long draught. Then wiping his beard, he said:

"That has done me good, and I needed it. The people wanted to go out for pleasure, and omit the drill; but we forced them to it, young Van Warmond, Duivenvoorde and I.

Who knows how soon we may have to show what we are able to do! By Roland, my former self! such imprudence is like a club, against which Florentine rapiers can do nothing, with their fine tierce and carte. My wheat has been beaten down by hail."

"Then let it be, and see if the barley and clover stand any better," answered Wilhelm, cheerfully; throwing some grains of wheat and oats toward a large pigeon that had alighted on the parapet of his watch-tower.

"It eats, and yet what is it good for?" cried Allertssohn, looking at the dove. "Herr van Warmond, a young fellow after God's own heart, has just brought me two falcons; would you like to see how I tame them?"

"No, captain; between my music and my doves I have enough to do."

"The long-necked one yonder is a ludicrous fellow."

"And where do you think he came from? There he goes now, with the others. Watch him a little, and then give me your opinion."

"Ask King Solomon; he was wondrously familiar with birds."

"Keep your eye on him, you will soon see."

"The fellow has a stiff neck, and carries his head pretty high."

"And his beak?"

"Curved, almost like a hawk's! Zounds! what is the creature trying to do with his sprawling toes? Look out, bandit! He'll peck your little doves to death. True as I live, the saucy thing must be a Spanish rascal!"

"You have guessed right. It is a Spanish dove, which has come to me; but I can not endure it, and drive it away, for I keep only a few pair of the same sort, and try to improve them. Whoever tries to raise several varieties in the same cote will accomplish nothing."

"That is worth thinking of. But I think you have not chosen the handsomest species."

"No, sir, what you see here is a mixture of carrier and tumbler; the breed of Antwerp carriers—bluish, reddish, mottled. I do not care for the colors, but they must have large wings, with broad quills on the flag feathers; above all, muscular strength. This one here—wait, I will catch him—is one of my best flyers. Just try to lift his pinion."

"God knows the little fellow has marrow in his bones! How the little wing pinches! the falcons are not much stronger."

"It's a leader, too, who can find the way alone."

"Why do you keep no white tumblers? I should think the eye might follow their flight longest."

"Because it is with doves exactly as with men. He who is conspicuous becomes a mark for envy and hostility, and birds of prey pounce first upon the white tumblers. I tell you, master, one with eyes in his head can learn much in a dove-cote about the descendants of Adam and Eve."

"There are quarreling and kissing up there just as in Leyden."

"Exactly the same, captain. If I mate an old dove with one much younger it seldom turns out well. When the male is in love, he knows how to make as many compliments to his sweetheart as the finest gallant to his lady-love. And do you know what the caresses mean? The wooer brings food to his darling, that means he tries to win her with gifts. Then comes the wedding, and they build a nest. If there be young birds, they feed them together in harmony. The aristocratic doves brood poorly, and we put their eggs under the commoner varieties."

"Those are the noble ladies who have nurses for their babies."

"Unmated doves often make trouble among the mated."

"Accept the lesson, young man, and beware of becoming an old bachelor. I have nothing against the girl, though, who remains unmarried, for I have found many lovely good souls among them."

"So have I, but some poor specimens also, just as it is here in the dove-cote. In general, my pets make happy marriages; but if it does come to separation—"

"Which of them is to blame?"

"In nine cases out of ten it is the little wife."

"By Roland, my former self! it is exactly so among men," cried the fencing-master, clapping his hands.

"What is this about your Roland, Herr Allerts? You promised me lately—but who is coming up the ladder?"

"I hear your mother."

"She brings a visitor. I know that voice, and yet—wait, it is the steward of old Fraulein von Hoogstraten."

"Of Nobel Street? Let me go, Wilhelm, for this Glipper set—"

"Wait a little; there is room for only one on the ladder," said the musician, holding out his hand to help Belotti up the last round into his room.

"Spaniards and Spanish sympathizers," muttered the fenc-

ing-master as he went out, crying, as he descended the ladder: "I will stay below until the air is pure again."

The handsome and usually smooth face was covered to-day with a stubby beard, and the old man looked troubled and worn, as he began to tell Wilhelm what had occurred in the house of his mistress since the previous evening.

"Hot-blooded people," said the Italian, "may grow weaker with advancing years, but not more serene. I could not stand by and see the poor angel, for she is not far from the throne of the Virgin, treated like a sick dog who is driven out into the court-yard; so I took my leave."

"That does you honor, but just now is a little out of place. And have they really carried the young lady into the damp room?"

"No, sir. Father Damianus came and made the old *excellenza* understand what the Holy Virgin expects from a Christian, and when the *padrona*, in spite of this, tried to carry out her will, the holy man spoke in such sharp and severe language that she yielded. Now the *signorina* lies in her bed, with glowing cheeks and wandering words."

"And who nurses her?"

"It is on account of the physician that I came to you, sir, for Doctor de Bont, who came without delay, when I called him, was treated so badly by the *excellenza* that he turned his back upon her shortly, and told me at the house door he should not come again."

Wilhelm shook his head, but the Italian went on:

"There are other physicians in Leyden, but Father Damianus says De Bont, or Bontius, as they call him, is the most skillful and scientific of all, and since the old *excellenza* herself had an attack about noon, and certainly can not be so soon out of her bed, the way is free, and Father Damianus said he would go for Doctor Bontius, if necessary. But since you are a native of the city, and not a stranger to the *signorina*, I would spare the father the refusal he might receive from an enemy of our holy Church. The poor man has enough to bear from scoffers and good-for-nothing boys when he goes through the streets with the consecrated host."

"But, you know, any interference with the practice of his calling is strictly forbidden."

"Yet he can not show himself on the street without being derided. Neither of us can change the world, my dear sir. So long as the Church held the power in her hand, she burned and quartered you, and now that you have it, our priests are scorned and persecuted."

“Against law and order of the magistrates.”

“You can not restrain the people, and Father Damianus is a lamb who bears all patiently—just as good a Christian as many saints to whom candles are consecrated. Do you know the doctor?”

“A little, by sight.”

“Oh, then, go to him, sir, for the sake of the young lady,” cried the old man with much feeling. “It is in your power to rescue a human life, a fair young human life;” and tears glittered in his eyes.

As Wilhelm laid his hand upon his arm, and said kindly: “I will try,” the fencing-master called at the door: “Your conference continues too long for me. I will come another time.”

“No, master, come up a moment. This man here has come for the sake of a poor, sick girl, who is now lying helpless and alone, for her aunt, the old Fraulein van Hoogstraten, has driven Doctor de Bont from her bedside because he is a Calvinist.”

“From the bedside of a sick girl?”

“It was contemptible enough, but now the old lady herself has been taken down.”

“Bravo!” cried the fencing-master, clapping his hands. “If the —— (God save us!) is not afraid of the woman, and wants to fetch her, I’ll pay the post-horses. But the girl—the sick girl?”

“This man here is begging me to persuade De Bont to visit her again. Are you on friendly terms with him?”

“I was, Wilhelm—I was; but—last Friday we had a sharp contest about the new steel cap; and now the learned demigod will expect apologies from me; but—to sound retreat—that is not in my line.”

“Oh, dear sir,” cried Belotti, with touching earnestness. “The poor child lies helpless in a high fever. If Heaven has blessed you with children—”

“Hush, old man,” returned the fencing-master, stroking the gray hair of Belotti, in a friendly manner. “My children are surely nothing to you, but we will do what we can for the sick girl. Farewell, till we meet again, sirs. By Roland, my former self! what may one not live through? Hemp is still cheap in Holland, and yet such a monster lives in the very midst of us to be as old as a raven!”

With these words he descended the ladder, and took his way along the street, thinking over what he could say to Dr. Bon-tius, with a look on his face as if he had wormwood in his

mouth; yet his eyes and bearded lips smiled. His learned friend made the apology easy, and when Belotti reached home he found the doctor at the bedside of the sick girl.

CHAPTER XI.

DAME ELIZABETH VAN NORDWYK and the town secretary's wife, Dame van Hout, had each separately pressed the burgo-master's wife to go with her into the country and enjoy the fine spring Sunday; still, and in spite of Barbara's persuasion, the young wife could not be induced to accept their invitations.

Eight days had passed since her husband's departure—eight days that had dragged their weary length from morning till night as dully as the torpid stream in one of the ditches that intersect the Dutch fields creeps down to join the river. Sleep loves to visit the pillow of youth, and it had returned even to hers; but with the dawn her discontent came back, her unrest, and the unsatisfied craving to which sleep had brought a merciful truce. She felt that this was not as it should be, and that her father would have blamed her if he could have seen her thus.

There are some women who are ashamed to wear rosy cheeks and to own to a frank enjoyment of existence—who cherish a dismal satisfaction in the sense of grief and suffering. But Maria was assuredly not one of these. She would thankfully have been happy, and she left no means untried to recover her lost cheerfulness. With the honest purpose of doing her duty she went back to Lisa's bedside, but the child was fast recovering, and always called for Barbara, Adrian, or Trautchen as soon as she found herself alone with Maria. Then she tried to read, but the few books she had brought from Delft she knew too well, and her thoughts would wander into their own channel before she could fix them on the old familiar page. Wilhelm had brought the new motet, and she tried to sing it through; but music requires the whole heart and mind of those who would benefit by its gifts, and refused to afford her either consolation or pleasure while her spirit was absent, busied with other things.

When she helped Adrian with his tasks her patience failed much sooner than it had been wont. On the first market-day she sallied out with Trautchen, to obey her husband's commands and to make purchases; and while she moved among the crowd from place to place, where the different wares and provisions were put out for sale—here meat, there fish, here again vegetables—while on every side the venders called and

clamored to her: "Here, dame, this way;" and "Here, dame, I have the thing you want!"—she forgot for the time the trouble that weighed upon her. With revived energies she set to work to taste meal and pease and smell at dried fish; and felt it a point of honor to select them well; Barbara should see she knew how to market. The crowd was dense in every part, for the town authorities had issued a proclamation that, in view of the threatening danger, every household should lay in an abundant stock of provisions on every market-day; but even those who were buying up food stuffs with a view to retailing them later, made way for the burgomaster's pretty young wife, and this flattered and pleased her.

She returned home with a bright face, happy to have done her best, and went straight to Barbara in the kitchen. Peter's kind-hearted sister had of course observed how heavy the poor young wife's heart was, and she had been glad to see her set out on her marketing expedition. Choosing and chaffering would divert her thoughts from their melancholy channel. But the prudent housewife (who credited Maria with every virtue but the capacity for shrewd and careful housewifery) took the precaution of warning Trautchen not to lay in too great a stock of provisions. When the demand on a market is double and treble the supply, prices rapidly rise, and thus it came to pass that, when Maria told the widow how much she had paid for this or that necessary article, Barbara could do nothing but exclaim: "But, child, that is dreadfully dear!" or: "Such prices will make beggars of us!"

These exclamations—most of them, under the circumstances, wholly unreasonable—annoyed and hurt Maria; still peace with her sister-in-law was dear to her; hard as it was to submit to injustice, it was not in her nature to express her vexation in angry words, and it would have been a painful effort. So she only said, with some irritation: "I can only beg you to ask other people what they had to pay, and then scold me if you think it just!"

And with these words she left the kitchen.

"But I am not scolding you, child!" cried Barbara.

But Maria would not hear. She hastily went upstairs, and locked herself into her own room. All her satisfaction was dashed again.

On Sunday she went to church. After dinner she filled a linen satchel with small provisions for Adrian, who was going on a boating excursion with some friends, and then she seated herself by the window in her own room. Well-dressed citizens—among them several members of the town council—came

down the street with their wives and children in Sunday array. Young girls with flowers in their tuckers passed in twos and threes over the bridge across the Gracht to join the dancers at a village outside the Zyl Gate. They walked primly along in silence, and with downcast eyes; but many a cheek was tinged with a blush, and more than one rosy mouth parted in an irresistible smile, when the young men who followed in the wake of the demure damsels—as gay and devious themselves as the gulls that flutter after a ship—broke out into some saucy jest, or whispered a word to one which no third person was meant to overhear.

Each and all, as they streamed toward the Zyl Gate, seemed careless and content; and it could be seen in every face that all looked forward to happy hours out in the sunny fields and under the open sky. Even to Maria the pleasure that attracted them seemed sweet and desirable; but what part had she with these gay folks—she with an aching heart among strangers? The shadows of the houses seemed to her darker than usual, the air of the town more oppressive; and she felt as if the spring had come for all men, great and small, old and young, excepting herself alone.

The masts and trees by the banks of the Achter Gracht were already beginning to cast longer shadows, and the golden mist that hung above the roofs was taking a tender pink tinge, when Maria heard approaching hoofs. She drew herself stiffly up and her heart beat violently. She would receive Peter somewhat differently from her wont; she must be frank with him and show him what she felt, and that matters could not go on in this way; and she was still seeking words in which to express what she had to say when the horse stopped before the door. She went to the window and saw her husband fling himself from the saddle and look eagerly up at her room. She would not send him a greeting, but her heart drew her to him; all discontent, every grudging thought was forgotten, and with winged steps she flew along the corridor to the head of the stairs. He had come into the hall, and she called his name.

“Maria, child, is that you?” he cried out, and, trembling like a lover, he rushed up the stairs, met her on the top step, and clasped her with passionate tenderness to his heart.

“At last, at last, I have you again!” he said, joyfully, kissing her eyes and soft hair. She had clasped her arms tightly round his neck, but he gently released himself, and while he held her in his own he asked: “Are Barbara and Adrian at home?”

She shook her head. He smiled, and stooping down lifted

her up like a child, and carried her into his study. Just as some fine tree standing by a burning house is caught at last by the flames, though men have tried to save it by pouring cold water over it, so her cherished determination to receive him coolly was vanquished by the warmth of his affection. She was heartily happy to have him near her again, and quite ready to believe him when, with tender words, he told her how bitterly he had felt their separation, how much he had missed her, and how her image had always stood plainly before his fancy, though generally he had no capacity for recalling an absent face.

How warmly, how convincingly, he could assure her of his devotion! She was still a happy woman, and she did not try to restrain the full expression of her happiness.

Adrian and Barbara soon came in, and then, at supper, how much there was to tell! Peter had had many adventures on his journey, and had come home with renewed hopes; the lad had done well at school, and Elizabeth's illness was already a danger of the past which had ended well. Barbara was radiant with satisfaction, for everything seemed to be on the happiest footing between her brother and his wife. So the sweet April evening passed happily by.

The next morning, as Maria plaited her hair with black velvet ribbons, she felt glad and thankful, for she had found courage to tell Peter that she longed to have a greater part in his anxieties than he had hitherto allowed her, and he had met her with full consent. Now, she hoped, a broader and worthier life was about to begin for her; to-day he was to tell her all he had arranged and carried out with the prince at Dortrecht, for till this moment not a word on this subject had passed his lips.

Barbara, who was bustling about the kitchen, and just then trying to capture three young fowls with a view to their instant execution, granted them a brief respite, and even threw a handful of barley into the coop, as she heard her sister-in-law come singing down the stairs. The fragmentary bars of Wilhelm's new madrigal sounded as sweetly in her ears, and as full of promise, as the song of the nightingale when the husbandman first hears it after a long winter. Spring-time had come into the house again, and her kind round face shone smiling and unclouded out of her big cap, like a sunflower in the midst of its green leaves, as she exclaimed to Maria:

"This is a good day for you, child; we will melt down the butter to keep, and salt the bacon."

It sounded as pleasant as an invitation to Paradise, and Maria gladly helped in the work, which they began without

delay. When the widow's hands were busy her tongue was never still, and her curiosity was not a little excited as to what might have passed between Peter and his young wife.

She soon skillfully brought the conversation round to the returned traveler, and then, as if by chance, out came the question:

"And has he given you any sufficient reasons for setting out on his wedding-day?"

"Of course I knew he could not stay."

"Of course not—of course not! But if you make yourself out green the goats will eat you. It does not do to put up with too much from a man. Give and take, I say. An injustice done you is as good as hard cash in married life, and you ought to get a good calf for your money."

"I do not want to drive a bargain with Peter; and if one thing and another did weigh on my mind, after such a long separation I was glad to forget it."

"A damp truss of hay is enough to spoil a whole stack, and when a hare has got into your cabbage-garden you had better catch it. You should never nurse up a thing that worries you, but have it out in broad daylight. That is what a man has a tongue for, and yesterday was the day when you ought to have made a clean breast of everything that troubled you."

"But he was so glad to get home; and, besides, what makes you think I am unhappy?"

"Unhappy? Who said so?"

Maria colored, and the widow took up a knife and opened the hen-coop.

Trautchen was helping the two housewives in their work in the kitchen; but she was often interrupted, for the door-knocker never rested that morning, and the visitors must have brought anything rather than pleasing news to the burgomaster, for his deep, angry tones were often audible even in the kitchen.

His longest interview was with the town clerk, Van Hout, who came to him not merely to learn his news and report progress, but with a serious list of complaints to make. It was a singular scene when these two men, who so far exceeded their fellow-citizens not only in physical presence and in moral dignity, but in enthusiastic devotion to the cause of freedom, mutually expressed and explained their views and their common sense of dissatisfaction. Van Hout, fiery, eager, and imaginative, led the duet; Van der Werff, deliberate and reticent, took the second with anxious earnestness.

There was much dissatisfaction among the elders and authorities of the town, the wealthy old families and the great weavers and brewers; for with them life, possessions, and position were more precious than religion and liberty; while the poor man, who painfully earned bread for his family in the sweat of his brow, was cheerfully resolved to shed his blood and sacrifice his all for the good cause. Thus there were endless difficulties to be met and dealt with. Every shed or scaffolding, the tenter-frames and wood-work of all kinds which might serve to shelter or conceal a man, must be laid level with the earth, as already every garden-house and building near the city walls had been razed to the ground. A great deal of newly erected wood-work had indeed been removed, but the richer owners were those who held out longest against laying the ax to them. New earth-works had been begun round the strong fort of Valkenburg, but part of the land which the laborers had to dig out belonged to a brewer, who asked enormous compensation for the injury to his fields. During the former siege, which had been raised in March, paper money had been issued—circular pieces of pasteboard—with the lion of the Netherlands on one side, and the motto: "*Hæc libertatis ergo*;" and, on the other, the arms of the city, with the words: "*Gott behüte Leyden*" (God protect Leyden). This paper coinage ought to have been by this time exchanged for metal money or an equivalent in corn, but certain well-to-do speculators had chosen to hold over a quantity of the pieces, and were trying to force up their value.

Demands of every kind and from all sides were made on the burgomaster's time and attention; and at the same time he had his own interests to consider, for all intercourse with the outer world might at any moment be cut off, and it was indispensable that he should settle a variety of matters with his business agent in Hamburg. He must in any case lose greatly, but he would leave nothing undone to secure what might yet be saved for his wife and children.

These he now saw but seldom; he thought he had amply redeemed the promise he had made to Maria on his return home, when he shortly answered her questions, or, of his own accord, briefly informed her:

"We had warm work to-day at the town hall;" or, "The exchanging of the siege tokens has given rise to greater difficulties than we had expected."

The kindly craving for confidence given and received was unknown to him; and his first wife had been perfectly content and happy when, in peaceful times, he had sat silent by her

side, called her his dearest treasure, played with his children, or praised her *waffles* and the Sunday joint. His trade in leather and public affairs had been his business; the kitchen and the nursery had been hers. What they had in common was the certainty of each other's affection, their children, and the respectability, dignity, and ownership of the house.

Maria wanted something more, and he was very ready to give it, but when in the evening she pressed the overtired burgomaster with questions which he was accustomed to hear only from men, he put her off till easier times for the answers, or even fell asleep in the middle of her eager questionings. She saw how overburdened he was—how unrestingly he toiled; but why, then, did he not throw some of the labor and care on to other shoulders?

One fine day he went with her out into the country. She took the opportunity of representing to him that he owed it to himself and to her to allow himself more rest. He listened to her patiently, and when she had come to an end of her entreaties and warnings, he took her hand in his, and said:

“You have seen Master Marnix St. Aldegronde, have you not? and you know all that our cause owes to him. Do you know his favorite motto?”

She bowed her head, and answered, softly: “*Repos ailleurs.*”

“We can rest elsewhere,” he repeated, gravely.

She shivered, and withdrawing her hand from his arm, she could not help thinking: “Elsewhere! not here, then—that is plain. Peace and happiness can not dwell here!” She did not speak the words, but she could not get them out of her head.

CHAPTER XII.

THE Nobel Street was still enough in those early days of spring, and the house of the Hoogstratens was stillest of all. The road-way in front of it had been strewn with straw and sand, in obedience to Dr. de Bont's orders and those of the old lady's business adviser, for she was very ill. The windows were closely curtained, and a pad of cloth had been tied under the door-knocker. The door itself was left ajar, and close within sat a servant to give information to all who should call or ask admission. It was a morning early in May, when Wilhelm Corneliussohn and Janus Dousa turned into the Nobel Street. The two men were in eager conversation, but as they

approached the sand-strewn spot they at first lowered their tones, and presently were silent.

“This is the carpet spread for the feet of the all-conqueror Death,” said the baron; “let us hope he will only lower his torch once before this house, and that he may confer the honor on the old woman, little as she is worthy of it. Do not stay too long in the infected house, Master Wilhelm.”

The organist softly opened the door; the servant bowed to him without speaking, and went at once to call Belotti, for the “player” had already been more than once to call upon the steward. He went into the little room where he was accustomed to wait, and there, for the first time, he found another visitor, and certainly in a strange position. Father Damianus was sitting in an arm-chair, bolt upright, but with his head sunk on one side, and fast asleep. The priest was a man of nearer forty than thirty, and his face, which was fringed with a thin, light-colored beard, was as pink and white as a child's. A scanty line of pale-yellow hair edged his wide tonsure, and the sleeper's fingers, which had dropped on to his lap, held a rosary of olive-wood beads, browned by incessant use. A sweet and gentle smile curved his half-open lips.

“This mild-looking saint in his womanly robes does not look as if he had much grip in him,” thought Wilhelm. “And yet his big hands are horny, as if they had done some hard work.”

When Belotti came into the room and saw the sleeping priest, he carefully pushed a cushion under his head, and beckoned to Wilhelm to follow him out into the hall.

“Let us leave him to get a little rest,” said the Italian. “He had been sitting by the padrona's bedside since midday yesterday till about two hours ago. Most of the time she knows nothing of what is going on around her, but whenever she recovers consciousness she asks for spiritual consolation. Still, she will not receive the last sacraments, for she will not admit that she can be near her end. Every now and then, when the pain is worst, she asks in the greatest alarm whether everything is ready in case of need, for she is terrified at the thought of dying without extreme unction.”

“And how is Mistress Henrika?”

“A very little better.”

At this moment the priest came out of the side room; Belotti reverently kissed his hand, and Wilhelm bowed respectfully.

“I fell asleep,” said Damianus, simply, but in a less deep voice than it was natural to expect from his stalwart build and

broad chest. "I will read mass, visit my sick, and return as soon as possible. Have you thought better of it, Belotti?"

"It is of no use, father; it will not do. I gave notice to quit on the first of May; this is the eighth, and here I am still—I would not leave the house, for I am a Christian! But now, the ladies have a good doctor to take care of them; Sister Gonzaga knows her duties; you yourself deserve a place among the martyrs in Paradise for your devotion to them; so I may tie up my bundle and be off without having a sin on my conscience."

"No—do not go, Belotti," said the priest, earnestly, "or, if you persist in going your own way, at least do not boast of being a Christian."

"You will stay," cried Wilhelm, "if it is only for the sake of the young lady whom you love so well."

Belotti shook his head, and answered calmly:

"No, master, you can add nothing to what the reverend father put before me yesterday. My mind is made up, and I shall go; but, as I value your good opinion and the reverend father's, I would beg you to do me the favor of listening to what I have to say. I have seen two-and-sixty years, and an old horse and an old servant stand a long time in the market waiting for a buyer. In Brussels I might find a place where a Catholic steward was needed who knows his business, but my old heart longs to see Naples once more—I can not tell you how wearily. You, young master, have seen our blue sea and sky; and I long for them, no doubt, but still more for other and smaller things. It has been a great happiness to me that I have been able to speak my own tongue to you, Master Wilhelm, and to you, reverend father; but there is a country where every one speaks as I do. There is a little village at the foot of Vesuvius—merciful Heaven! why, many a man might be afraid to stay in it, even half an hour, when the mountain grumbles and thunders, and ashes fall in showers, and hot lava in fiery streams. Well, the houses there are not so neatly built, and the window-panes do not shine so clean as they do here in your country. I am almost afraid that there is hardly a pane of glass in all Resina, but the children do not freeze there any more than they do with you. Lord! what would a Leyden housewife say to our village street? Poles covered with vines, branches of fig, and washing of all colors on the roofs, out of the windows, and all over the rickety balconies; orange and lemon-trees loaded with golden fruits in the little garden-plots, where there are no straight paths and neatly edged beds. Everything grows higgledy-piggledy, anyhow.

And the boys, in their rags, which no tailor ever darned or patched, scramble about on the white walls that hedge in the vineyards; and the little girls, whose mothers sit combing their hair outside the front door, are not so pink and white and spick and span clean as Dutch children, and yet I should like to see their little brown faces and black heads once more, with their bright, dark eyes; and I long to end my days in the tumble-down old home among my nephews and nieces and relations, in the warm sunshine, free from toil and care."

The old man's cheeks glowed as he spoke, and his black eyes flashed with a fire which till now the cold northern air and long years of servitude seemed to have extinguished. Then, as neither the priest nor the organist at once spoke when he paused, he went on:

"Monseigneur Gloria is going to Italy at once, and I can go with him as courier as far as Rome. Thence I shall easily reach Naples, and I can live there at ease on the interest of my savings. My future master starts on the 15th, and by the 12th I must be in Antwerp, where I am to join him."

The priest and the musician glanced at each other. Wilhelm had not the heart to oppose the steward's purpose, but Damianus did not hesitate; he laid his hand on the old man's shoulder, saying:

"If you stay here only a few weeks longer, Belotti, you will win the only real peace—I mean the peace of a good conscience. Those who are faithful unto death are promised the crown of life. When these evil times are past and over you will easily find means of making your way homeward smoothly and pleasantly. We shall meet again at noon, Belotti; if before that my aid is needed, send for me; old Ambersius knows where to find me. The blessing of God be with you—and if you will accept it at my hands, with you too, Master Wilhelm."

The priest left the house, and the steward said, with a sigh:

"So he will force me, willy-nilly, to do as he wishes. He abuses his power over men's souls. I am no saint, and what he expects of me—"

"Is what is right," interrupted Wilhelm, boldly.

"Ah! but you do not know what it is to throw away the fondest hope of a long and troubled life, as if it were no more than an old shoe. And for what, I ask you, and for whom? Do you know my mistress? I tell you, master, I have gone through things in this house, and seen things your young spirit can not even dream of, and could never conceive of as possible.

But the young mistress—you are in love with her, Master Wilhelm? Am I right or no?"

"No, you are mistaken, Belotti."

"Really, truly? Then, for your sake, I am glad; for you are an humble artist, and the signorina bears the proud name of Hoogstraten, which is saying everything. Do you know the young lady's father?"

"No."

"There is a race—a race! Did you ever hear the history of our signorina's elder sister?"

"Had Henrika an elder sister?"

"Yes, master, and when I remember her—Picture to yourself our signorina exactly, only taller, more stately, and handsomer."

"Isabella!" exclaimed the musician. A suspicion which had haunted him ever since his conversation with Henrika seemed suddenly confirmed as fact; he seized the steward's arm so hastily and unexpectedly that the old man shrunk back as the musician exclaimed:

"What do you know of her? I entreat you, Belotti, tell me everything."

The old man glanced toward the stairs, and then, shaking his head, replied:

"There is some mistake. There never was an Isabella in the family to my knowledge; but I am at your service all the same. Call again after sundown, only do not expect to hear a pleasant tale."

Twilight had scarcely deepened into night when the musician betook himself again to the Hoogstratens' house. The little room was unoccupied, but he had not long to wait for Belotti. The old man set an elegant tray by the light on the table, with a flagon of wine and a glass; and when he had reported on the state of the two invalids, offered the musician a seat with elaborate politeness. Wilhelm having asked him why he had not brought a glass for himself too, he replied:

"I never drink anything but water—but I will take the liberty to sit down. The footman has fled from the house, and the whole day I am running up and down-stairs; it has tired my old legs till they ache, and there is no peace to be hoped for this night again."

The room was lighted by a single taper; Belotti, leaning far back in his arm-chair, slowly parted and raised his hands as he began: "Well, then—as I said this morning, the Hoogstratens are a strange race. In most places the children of the same parents often turn out very different; but in your little coun-

try, which has its own peculiar tongue, and a good many other things peculiar to it, besides—as you will not deny—every old family has its strongly marked individuality. I ought to know, for I have been in and out of many a noble house in Holland. Every race has its own spirit and its own peculiar ways. Even when, saving your presence, there is a crack in the upper story, it is seldom confined to a single member of a family. My mistress has more of her French mother's ways—But I was to tell you about the signorina, and I am wandering too far.”

“No, Belotti, not at all; there is plenty of time, and I am glad to hear all you tell me; but first you must answer me one question.”

“Eh, master, how red your cheeks are! You met my signorina in Italy?”

“I believe so, Belotti.”

“Ah, then, to be sure!—those who had seen her once did not easily forget her. And what is it you want to know?”

“First of all the lady's name.”

“Anna.”

“And not Isabella as well?”

“No, master; she was always called Anna.”

“And when did she leave Holland?”

“Stop—it was four years next Easter.”

“Is her hair black, brown, fair?”

“I told you, exactly like Mistress Henrika's. But what lady could not dye her hair black, brown, or fair? I think we should come straighter to the point if you would allow me to ask you a question. Has the lady of whom you speak a large half-moon scar close under her hair in the middle of her forehead?”

“That settles it,” said Wilhelm, starting up. “As a child she fell against some weapon of her father's.”

“Quite the contrary, sir. The Baron van Hoogstraten's pistol-butt struck his sweet daughter's face. How horrified you look! My God! I have seen worse things than that in this house. And now it is my turn again: In what town in Italy did you meet the signorina?”

“In Rome, alone and under an assumed name: Isabella—a Dutch girl! I implore you, Belotti, go on with your story; I will not interrupt you again. What could the child have done that her own father—”

“Of all the mad Hoogstratens, the baron is the wildest. In Italy you may have met his match; here in your country you would look a long time before you found such another whirl-

wind. Still, you must not think he is a bad-natured man; only a single word that goes against the grain, a mere sidelong glance is enough to put him beside himself, and then he will do things that a man repents as soon as they have happened. With regard to the scar on his daughter's face, it fell out thus: She was but a child, and of course she was not allowed to touch a gun with the tips of her fingers, still she would do it whenever she had a chance, and once a pistol went off and the bullet struck the baron's best hunting-dog. Her father heard the shot, and when he saw the dog lying dead, and the pistol at the child's feet, he snatched it up and hit her with the heavy butt end."

"A child—his own daughter!" cried Wilhelm, furious.

"Well, you see, there are various sorts of men," Belotti went on. "Some—and you no doubt are one of them—consider carefully before they speak or act; others think a long time, and when they have made up their minds there is a great flow of words but very little done; but a third sort—and the Hoogstratens at their head—head deep on deed, and when they reflect at all it is mostly when they have acted and done with it. Then if they find they have done wrong, pride comes in and forbids their confessing it, or making it good or retracting it. And so one misery is piled on another; but it does not hurt them, and what with wine and gambling, and tournaments and hunting, they soon forget it all. They have no lack of debts, but they leave it to the creditors to look after them, and they find places at court or in the army for their younger sons, who inherit no estate; for the girls, thank God! so long as they belong to our Holy Church there is no lack of convents; and then for boys and girls alike there is something to hope for from aunts and other relations who die childless."

"You paint the picture in dark colors."

"But they are the true ones, and exactly represent the baron; to be sure he had no need to keep his estates intact for a son, since his wife brought him no boys. He met her at the court of Brussels—she was a native of Parma."

"Did you know her?"

"She was dead before I entered the padrona's service. The two young ladies grew up without any mother. I have told how the baron could get into a passion even with them, but he was very fond of them, and could never make up his mind to let either of them go into a convent. Often and often he could not help feeling—at least so he used to say in conversation with my mistress—that there might be a more fitting home for a young girl of rank than his castle, where life was rough

enough in all ways, and at last he sent his eldest daughter to us. My mistress could not, as a rule, endure any young girl near her, but Mistress Anna was one of our nearest relatives; and I know that she had, in fact, invited her of her own free will. I can see her now—the signorina—as she was at sixteen; a sweeter creature, Master Wilhelm, my old eyes never saw before nor since; and yet she was never twice the same. I have seen her as soft as Flanders velvet, and then at other times she would storm and rave like one of your November storms here. She was always as lovely as a new-blown rose, and having been brought up by her mother's old waiting-woman—a native of Lugano—while the priest who taught her came from Pisa, and was famous for his knowledge of music, she spoke my language exactly like a Tuscan child, neither better nor worse, and was a proficient in music. Well! you yourself have heard her singing and her harp and lute playing; but you must know that all the ladies of the Hoogstraten family, with the single exception of my old mistress, have a particular talent for your art. In the summer-time we used to live in that pretty country house which was pulled down before the siege of the Dutch party—and very little right they had to do so in my opinion. There we had many grand visitors riding out to us; we kept open house, and where there is a well-spread table to be found, and a fair damsel, like our signorina, knights of every degree are sure not to be far off. Among them there was a certain very illustrious personage of middle age, the Marquis d'Avennes, whom the padrona expressly invited there. No prince could be more attentively received; but this was natural, as his mother was a relative of my mistress: you must know that on her mother's side she was of Norman extraction. The Marquis d'Avennes was a fine gentleman, and no mistake, still he was elegant rather than manly. Before long he was madly in love with Mistress Anna, and formally proposed for her hand. The aunt favored his suit, and the baron simply said: 'You have got to take him.' He would hear of no refusal. And indeed other fathers in his position do not ask their daughters' opinion when a suitable husband comes forward. So the signorina was betrothed to the marquis, but the padrona said very decidedly that her niece was too young to be married just yet, and she persuaded the baron—whom she could turn and twist as the shoeing-smith manages a foal—to put off the marriage till after Easter. During the winter they would see about the preparations; and the marquis had to accept the condition of waiting for another six months. He rode off to France again, with the betrothal

ring on his finger. His betrothed never shed the smallest tear at parting, and before the very eyes of her waiting-woman, who told me of it, she pulled off her ring and tossed it into her jewelry-tray. She did not dare to oppose her father, but she did not conceal her opinion of the marquis from her aunt, who, though she had favored the marquis's suit, let her talk as she pleased. There had been high words between the old lady and the young one many a time before that, and though the padrona had had good reason to clip the wild hawk's wings, and to teach her what was becoming in a noble's daughter, still the signorina was justified in complaining of all the exactions by which her aunt spoiled the happiness of her young life. It grieves me, master, to disturb the confidence of your age, but those who have kept their eyes open as they grow old, have seen men who take pleasure in tormenting their fellows—nay, to whom it is a necessity of existence. At the same time, it comforts me to believe that no one is spiteful for spite's sake; nay, I have often found that the worst impulses—how can I express it?—that the worst impulses proceed from their counterpart, the exaggerated practice of the noblest virtues of which they are, as it were, the wrong side, or the very mockery. I have seen green envy come of a noble ambition, base greed come of honest zeal, and mad hate come of tender passion. My mistress when she was young could love faithfully and truly; but she was shamefully betrayed, and now she is a prey to grudging spite, not against any particular person, but against life in general; and a noble spirit of constancy has been turned to an obstinate tenacity of her evil purposes. What I mean, and how it all happened, you will understand if you hear my story to the end. As winter came on, I was intrusted with the task of going to Brussels and there setting up a new house on the most splendid scale; the ladies were to follow me shortly. It is just four years ago. The Duke of Alva was then living at Brussels as viceroy, and that grand personage held my mistress in high esteem; indeed he had twice done her the honor of coming to visit her, and his chief officers were always in and out of our house. Among them was Don Luis d'Avila, a nobleman of an ancient house, who was one of the duke's prime favorites. He, like the marquis, was past his first youth, but he was a man of a very different stamp. He was tall, and as strong as if he had been made of hammered steel—a gambler, and at the same time a swordsman of irresistible skill, and desperately quarrelsome; still, there was something in his flashing eye and fine voice which had a mysterious charm and power over women. Dozens of adventures

attributed to him were told in the servants' hall, and half of them at least were founded on facts; that came to my certain knowledge at a later time. But you would be mistaken if you were to picture to yourself this heart-breaking lady-killer as a gay and curly hero of romance whom every damsel danced forth to meet, offering him her heart and her hand. Don Luis was a grave-looking man, with a pale face and short-cut hair, who never wore any but dark clothes, and whose sword-hilt even, instead of being of gold or silver, was of some black metal. He was more like an image of death than of love. Perhaps it was that which made him irresistible, for we are all born to death, and no suitor is so sure to win as he. My mistress was at first not disposed to like him, but that soon changed, and by the new year he was admitted to her little supper-parties. He came whenever he was invited, but he never had a word, or a look, or a greeting for the young mistress. It was only when the signorina sung to them that he would go up to her and make sharp remarks as to what he did not like in her performance. He often sung himself, and then he would commonly choose the same songs as the Lady Anna sung, as if to show her how much better he could do it. Thus things went on till the carnival. On Shrove Tuesday the padrona gave a splendid party, and I, as controlling all the servants, was standing just behind the signorina and Don Luis—the padrona had for a long time always given him the place next to her niece—when I noticed that their hands had met under the table, and remained clasped for some little time. This troubled me so much that I was hardly able to keep up the attention which was indispensable on such an occasion; and next morning, when my mistress sent for me to settle accounts, I considered it my duty to remark that, notwithstanding she was betrothed to the marquis, Don Luis d'Avila's courtship did not seem to be displeasing to the Signorina Anna. She let me speak to the end, but when I began to repeat some of the things that folks said about the Spaniard, she flew into a passion and showed me the door. A trusted servant often sees and hears more than his masters think, and I was on the best terms, too, with the padrona's foster-sister; she is dead now, but at that time Susanna knew everything that concerned my mistress. Things were evidently in a bad way for the marquis, away in France; for whenever the padrona spoke of him it was always with a laugh which we knew well, and which boded no one any good; still she frequently wrote to him and to his mother, and letters from Rochebrun came to us. To be sure, she and Don Luis had more than one private interview. Dur-

ing Lent a messenger came from the baron, with the announcement that on Easter-day he should arrive at Brussels from Haarlem, and the marquis from Château Rochebrun; and on Holy Thursday I was commanded to have the private chapel of the house decorated with flowers, to order post-horses, and what not. On Good Friday, on the very day of our Lord's crucifixion—I would to God that what I tell you were not the truth—on Good Friday the signorina was dressed very early in her bridal dress; Don Luis appeared, all in black, as proud and gloomy as ever, and before sunrise, by the light of tapers, on a cold, damp morning—it is as fresh in my mind as if it were yesterday—the Castilian was married to my signorina. The padrona, a Spanish officer, and myself, were the witnesses. By seven in the morning the coach was at the door, and after it was packed Don Luis gave me a little coffer to put into the carriage. I knew that chest well, and it was heavy; the padrona was accustomed to keep gold coin in it. By Easter-day all Brussels knew that Don Luis d'Avila had carried off the beautiful Anna van Hoogstraten, having met her affianced bridegroom at Hal on his way to Brussels, on the morning of that Holy Thursday—hardly twenty-four hours before the marriage—and run him through in a duel. How the baron stormed when he arrived is a thing never to be forgotten. The padrona refused to see him, and gave out that she was ill, but she was as well as she ever has been in these latter years of her life."

"And could you ever account for your mistress's mysterious conduct?" asked Wilhelm.

"Yes, master; the reasons were as clear as the day. But it is getting late—I must make my story short. Indeed I have not much to tell you as to the details, but it had all happened long before, when I was but a child. Susanna, it is true, told me a great deal that would be well worth repeating. My mistress's mother was a Chevraux, and the padrona herself had passed her years with her aunt on her mother's side, who spent every winter in Paris. It was in the time of his late majesty, King Francis, and, as you know, that great monarch was a gallant gentleman—a bold chevalier, of whom they used to say that he had broken as many hearts as he had lances. Well, my mistress, who at that time was young and handsome, was one of the ladies of the court, and the king had shown her many distinguished marks of favor. But the lady knew how to guard her honor, for she had before found her knight in the brave Marquis d'Avennes, to whom she was faithfully devoted, and for whom she spent many a night in bitter tears; for,

'like master like man,' and though for five years the marquis wore my lady's colors and did her the service of true knight, his eyes and his heart wandered far and wide. However, he always returned to his allegiance, and as the sixth year was approaching, the Chevraux family began to press the marquis to bring this game to an end and to think of marriage. The padrona began to make her preparations, and Susanna herself was present when she consulted the marquis as to whether she should keep her estates and castles in Holland or sell them. Still the wedding was put off. The marquis had to go with his regiment into Italy, and my lady lived in constant alarm on his account, for the French fared but badly in my country at that time, and news was often months in coming. At last, however, he came home, and there he found in the Hotel Chevraux a young cousin of the padrona's, whom he had left a child, just growing up into a lovely girl. The rest you can guess; the rosebud Hortense pleased the marquis infinitely better than the Dutch lady, who was now five-and-twenty. The Chevraux were noble, but desperately in debt, and the suitor, during his absence in Italy, had fallen heir to a splendid fortune from an uncle, so of course he did not ask in vain. My mistress returned to Holland. Her father challenged the marquis, but no blood was shed, and the Lord of Avennes was joined in holy matrimony to Hortense de Chevraux. It was their son who was Signorina Anna's helpless bridegroom. Do you see, Master Wilhelm? For half a lifetime she had nursed and gloated over her old grudge; to satisfy it she sold her own flesh and blood to that assassin, Don Luis, and in payment she was able to revenge herself on the mother, by the death of her only son, for the grief she had borne for years for her sake."

The musician rolled up the handkerchief with which he had wiped his brow into a tight ball, and then asked, gloomily:

"What did you ever hear of Mistress Anna after that?"

"But little," replied Belotti. "The baron cast her out of his heart even, and always called Henrika his only daughter. Happiness rarely seeks out those who are burdened with a father's curse, and it certainly never lighted upon her. Don Luis, they say, was degraded in military rank for some misdemeanor, and who knows what became of the poor, lovely girl! The Padrona used to send her money sometimes to Italy, through Signor Lamperi, and by way of Florence; but for the last few months I have heard nothing of her at all."

"One question more, Belotti," said Wilhelm. "After all that had happened to his elder daughter in your mistress's house, how could the baron trust Henrika also to her care?"

“Money—a mere question of money. To keep his castle and not to sacrifice his estates he sold his child. Yes, sir, sold her as if she had been a horse, and the baron did not part with her for nothing, I can tell you. Drink, master, you look but badly.”

“It is nothing,” said Wilhelm, “and the fresh air will do me good. Thank you for your story, Belotti.”

CHAPTER XIII.

DAME VAN DER WERFF, the burgomaster's wife, was busy on the afternoon of the sixteenth of May looking through the contents of certain cupboards and shelves. Her husband was at the town council, but he had told her that toward evening Master Dietrich van Bronkhorst, the prince's commissioner, the seigneurs of Nordwyk, uncle and nephew, Van Hout, the town secretary, and some other magnates of the city and friends of freedom, were to meet at his house for a private consultation. It was Maria's part to provide a good supper, with wine and all such necessaries.

This little excitement had cheered and brightened the young wife. It was delightful to have the opportunity for once of playing the hostess in something of the spirit of her early home; and how long it was since she had enjoyed the pleasure of hearing any earnest and purposeful talk! Visitors she had in plenty, to be sure; all the gossips and relations of her husband's family, who were civil to her, and who came to see Barbara, constantly begged her to make herself at home with them; but though many of them made friendly advances, and were women that she could not fail to respect for their estimable qualities, there was not one who attracted her warmer liking. Indeed, though there was little enough of amusement or variety in her life, Maria had a real horror of their visits, and endured them only as an inevitable evil. These worthy matrons were all very much older than herself; and as they sat there, eating cakes and fruit, and drinking spiced wine, spinning, knitting, or knotting—talking of the evil times of the siege, of nursing children and managing servants, of washing and of soap-boiling, or sitting in judgment on the numberless incomprehensible and never quite to be approved deeds which their neighbors' wives were supposed to have done, to be doing, or to be about to do—the young wife grew sick at heart, and her lonely bedroom seemed a peaceful haven of rest.

It was only when the woes of the country were discussed, and the sacred duty of enduring a second time, if need should be,

every pain and privation for freedom's sake, that she could find anything to say, and then she gladly listened to the stout-hearted dames, who, it was easy to see, were in earnest in all they said; but when mere idle chatter went on for hours at a time, it became at last positive suffering. Still, she dared not escape; she must sit it out till the last gossip had taken her leave, for Barbara had given her a friendly word of warning, when she had once or twice ventured to withdraw early, and had told her frankly that she had had some difficulty in defending her against the charge of pride, airs, and bad manners.

"Such neighborly chat," said the widow, "is cheering, and keeps up one's spirits; and those who choose to be the first to quit a party of friendly gossips may well pray God keep them from being ill spoken of behind their backs."

There was one woman in Leyden after Maria's own heart—this was the wife of Van Hout; but she was very rarely to be seen, for though she looked delicate and refined, she had to work early and late to keep her children and her house in order, for times were not easy with the town clerk.

However, on this May day Maria went with a lighter step and heart than for many a day past, first to the side-board shelves where the table crockery was arranged, and then to the cupboard where their silver plate was kept: and all the best of their household possessions were soon in their place, bright and shining, with not a speck of dust, on white linen-napkins trimmed with lace. She picked out what she needed, but a great deal of the pewter, glass, and earthenware was not at all what she liked; for it did not match, or had been replaced at hap-hazard, and in many articles there were dents, bends, or cracks.

When her mother had begun to buy her daughter's household chattels, Peter had expressed a wish that in these hard times the money might be laid by, and nothing bought that was not really necessary; his house, he said, was well supplied with every kind of furniture, and he would think it a sin to spend money on even a plate. And in point of fact there was nothing wanting on the shelves or in the cupboards, only she had not chosen it and brought it home herself—it was hers, no doubt, and yet it was not her very own; and the worst of it was that her eyes, accustomed to prettier and better things, could not be satisfied with these dull, scratched pewter plates, these coarsely and gaudily painted jugs, mugs, and cups. Even the glasses were too thick, and not to her mind; and as she looked them through, and selected what was necessary, she

could not help thinking of other young married women, her friends, who, with eyes glistening with pride and satisfaction, had displayed their shining new pewter and glass as if each piece were an elaborate and precious work of art. However, with what she had under her hand, she could contrive to lay her table prettily and neatly.

Before dinner she had gone with Adrian to their garden on the town wall and cut some flowers, and had gathered a bunch of tall grasses in the fields outside the gates. These gifts of the spring she had arranged with care in vases, mingling them with peacock's feathers, and she was pleased to see that even the clumsiest jar acquired a graceful aspect when she had wreathed it with creepers. Adrian looked on in astonishment; it would not have surprised him if under her hand the dingy dining-room had turned to a hall of crystal and mother-of-pearl.

Just as she had done laying the table Peter came in for a minute. Before his guests came he was going to ride out to the Fort at Valkenburg, with the Captain Allertssohn, Janus Dousa, and some others, to inspect the redoubts. As he passed through the dining-room he waved his hand to his wife, and, just glancing at the table, he said:

"All that set out was quite unnecessary, and above all the flowers. We are to meet for grave discussion, and you have laid a wedding-supper." But then, seeing Maria cast down her eyes, he added, kindly: "But have it so—I do not care," and quitted the room.

Maria stood undecided before her handiwork. Bitter feelings were rising up in her once more, and she had put out her hand to disarrange one particularly pretty nosegay, when Adrian looked up at her with wide eyes, and said, in an imploring tone:

"No, mother, do not—you must not; it looks so sweet and pretty."

Maria smiled and stroked the lad's curly head, then she took two cakes out of a dish and gave them to him.

"There," she said, "one for you and the other for Liesa; I will leave the flowers as they are."

Adrian ran off with the sweetmeats, while she looked at the table once more, and thought to herself:

"Peter never wants anything but just what is necessary, but that can not be everything in the world, or God would have made all birds with gray feathers."

She went to help Barbara in the kitchen, and when all was done went into her own room. There she rearranged her hair,

put a new starched ruff around her throat, and a neatly plaited lack tucker in the front of her bodice. Still, she kept on her every-day dress, since her husband did not wish that the meeting should have any aspect of festivity. Just as she was putting the last gold pin into her hair, and was wondering whether Councilor van Bronkhorst—as representing the Prince of Orange—or the venerable Baron of Nordwyk should fill the place of honor at table, Trautchen knocked at her door, and told her that Dr. Bontius wanted to speak to the master on business of pressing importance. The maid had informed the doctor that her master had gone out riding, but he would not be put off, and had said that then he would speak with the mistress.

Maria hastened to her husband's study; the physician seemed in a great hurry. Instead of any mere formal greeting, he simply lifted the gold knob of his cane to the brim of his hat—without which he never was seen, even by the side of a sick-bed—and asked, shortly and hastily:

“When will Master Peter return?”

“In about an hour,” said Maria. “Take a seat, doctor.”

“Some other time—I can not wait so long for your husband. But, after all, you might come with me without waiting for his consent.”

“No doubt; but we are expecting company.”

“Very true; if I find time I will come in again; but the gentlemen can get on without me, while you are absolutely indispensable to the poor creature I want you to come to.”

“But I do not in the least know of whom you are speaking.”

“No? Well, to a person who is sick and suffering, and that is enough for you to know at present.”

“And you think I could—”

“You could, more than you have any idea of. Barbara reigns in the kitchen, and besides, you ought to give succor to the sick.”

“But, doctor—”

“Make haste, I must beg of you, for my time is short. Will you be of use—yes or no?”

The door into the dining-room stood open; Maria glanced round at the neatly spread table, and all the pleasure she had hoped for this evening recurred to her mind. But as the physician turned to go, she held him back and said:

“I will come.”

Maria knew the ways of this abrupt but perfectly unselfish and learned man. Without waiting for his answer, she ran to

fetch her kerechief, and led the way down-stairs. As they passed the kitchen the doctor called out to Barbara:

“Tell Master Peter that I have carried off his wife to nurse young Mistress van Hoogstraten in the Nobel Street.”

Maria could hardly keep up with the doctor's hasty strides, and found it difficult to understand what he said, as he told her in fragmentary sentences that the whole “brood of Glippers”—the Hoogstratens—had left the town; that the old aunt was dead; that all the servants had fled for fear of the plague, of which there was not the smallest danger; and that Henrika was left lying there wholly deserted. She had had a severe attack of fever, but now for some days had been steadily mending.

“Misfortune,” said he, “has made itself at home in the Glippers' nest. The reaper conferred a boon on the old woman by carrying her off. The French waiting-woman, a feeble creature, held out bravely; but after sitting up a few nights she broke down, and would have been taken to St. Katharine's Hospital, but the old Italian steward, who is not a bad man, set his face against it, and had her taken to the house of a Catholic washerwoman, where he went, too, to take care of her. No one is left in the deserted house to attend to the young lady but Sister Gonzaga, a good little nun, one of the three sisters who are allowed to remain as inmates of the old cloister near your house; but the worthy old woman, as a crowning misfortune, this morning, while heating a bath, scalded her hand. The Roman Catholic priest has remained unharmed and faithful at his post; but what can he do in nursing a sick girl? You can see now why I came to fetch you. You can not, and ought not, to devote yourself permanently to nursing a stranger; but if this young girl is to continue to improve without a drawback, she must for the present see some face about her to which she may attach herself, and God has blessed you with just such a one. Let the sick girl see you and look at you; talk to her, and if you are the woman I take you for— But here we are at our journey's end.”

The air in the dimly lighted hall of the Hoogstratens was heavy with a strong musky odor. The doctor had announced the old lady's death at the town hall as soon as it had taken place, so an armed guard marched up and down the hall to keep watch, and he informed the doctor that the town clerk, Van Hout, had already been to the house with his subordinates, and had sealed up everything.

As they went up the stairs, Maria started and laid her hand

on her companion's arm, for through an open door on the first-floor she saw, in the dim light, a shape, an ill-defined form, moving about with strange gestures—now here, now there, first rising, and then stooping—and it was with an ill-assured voice that she inquired of the doctor, as she pointed to it with her finger:

“What is that?”

The doctor, like her, had stood still, and seeing the strange form to which she pointed, he himself started back a step. But the cool-headed man at once perceived the true nature of the bogey form, and going forward, he called out, smiling:

“What in the world are you doing there on the ground, Father Damianus?”

“I am scouring the boards,” said the priest, coolly.

“What will you do next?” said the doctor, indignantly.

“You are too good for house-maid's work, reverend father; besides, there is money enough in this house without any owner, and to-morrow we can find as many scrubbers as we can want.”

“But not to-day, doctor, and the young lady positively can not remain any longer in the room upstairs. You yourself prescribed sleep, and Sister Gonzaga tells me that there, with the body in the very next room, she will not close her eyes.”

“Then the lawyer's servants might have carried her, bed and all, into the old lady's sitting-room—that is a pretty room.”

“But that was sealed up, and so were all the other good rooms on this floor. The people from the town hall were very obliging, and they inquired for women to scrub, but the poor creatures are frightened at the plague.”

“That sort of panic grows like bind-weed,” said the doctor; “no one sows it, and when once it has taken root, who can eradicate it?”

“Not you nor I,” answered the priest. “Well, then, the young lady must be brought into this room; but it looked dreadfully uncomfortable, so I set to work at once to clean it. It will be the better for the invalid, and the exercise will do me no harm.”

As he spoke the priest rose, and noticing Maria, he went on:

“You have brought a new nurse for her? That is well. Sister Gonzaga needs no praise of mine, for you know her well; but I am quite sure that Mistress Henrika will not endure her much longer about her person; and so far as I am concerned, as soon as the funeral is over I must quit this house.”

"You have indeed done your part; but what do you mean with regard to Sister Gonzaga?" said the doctor, angrily. "She, poor old thing, even with her maimed hand, is far better than— What can have happened?"

The priest came close up to him, and with a hasty side glance at the new-comer he whispered:

"But she speaks dreadfully through her nose, and the young mistress told me that she could not bear to hear her talk—that I was to keep her out of the way."

Dr. Bontius stood thoughtful for a moment, and then he said:

"There are eyes which can not endure any bright light, and so there may likewise be certain tones which are intolerable to an over-excited ear. Now, dame, you have been kept waiting too long. Please to come with me."

It was by this time dark; the curtains had been drawn in the sick-room, and a little lamp burning behind a screen shed but a feeble light. The doctor went up to the bed, felt Henrika's pulse, prepared her in a few words to see the stranger he had brought with him, and then took the lamp to see how his patient was looking. Maria saw a pale, finely cut face, out of which gazed a pair of dark eyes, that looked all the larger and brighter from contrast with the sick girl's hollow cheeks and pinched features. As the old sister replaced the lamp behind the shade, the doctor said:

"Very good indeed. Now, Sister Gonzaga, go and lie down and change the bandage on your hand," and he beckoned to Dame Maria to come nearer. Henrika's face touched Maria strangely. She was handsome, no doubt, but the large eyes and firmly closed lips struck the young woman as singular rather than attractive. However, she obeyed the physician's orders, went up to the bedside, and said kindly that she had been glad to come to keep her company for a little while, and do anything she might wish. Henrika started up in bed.

"That is well!" she exclaimed, with a deep breath of relief. "Thank you, doctor; a human voice again at last! If you wish to please me, Dame van der Werff, you have only to go on talking to me—never mind what about. Please to come and sit down here. What with Sister Gonzaga's nursing, your voice and the doctor's—what shall I call it?—the doctor's encouragement, I shall find no difficulty in being nursed into sound health again."

"Very good, very good!" murmured the leech. "Our worthy Gonzaga's burns are not serious, and she will remain with you; but by and by, when it is time for you to go to sleep,

you shall be carried away from here. If you, Dame Maria, can stay here for an hour, that will be enough for to-day. I will go to your house and send the man to fetch you with a lantern."

When the two women were left alone, Maria said:

"You seem to care very much about the tone of a voice; I do so myself, indeed more than I ought. But then I have never gone through a very bad illness—"

"This is the first I have ever had," replied Henrika. "But now I know how it feels to be obliged to submit to whatever is done to you, whether you like it or not, and to feel twice as acutely everything that one most loathes. It is better to die than to live suffering."

"Your aunt is dead," said Maria, in sympathetic tones.

"Yes, early this morning. We had little in common but the tie of blood."

"Are your parents yet alive?"

"Only my father; but why do you ask?"

"He will be glad to hear of your recovery. Doctor Bontius says you will get perfectly well."

"I have no doubt of it," said Henrika, confidently; and then she went on in a low voice to herself, not heeding Maria: "There is one pleasant thing to look forward to. When I am well again I can— Do you love music?"

"Yes, sweet mistress."

"And not for a pastime merely, but because you feel that you can not live without it."

"You must keep quiet, mistress. Music! Yes, I believe my life would be much sadder than it is without it."

"Do you sing?"

"I seldom have the opportunity here, but as a girl, in Delft, we used to sing every day."

"You took the first, of course?"

"Yes, mistress."

"Oh! leave out mistress, and call me Henrika."

"With all my heart, if you will agree to call me Maria, or at any rate, Dame Maria."

"I will try. Do not you think we might practice a good many pieces together?"

Just now Sister Gonzaga came into the room and announced that the wife of the receiver-general, Cornelius van Nierop, had come to inquire whether she could do the sick lady any pleasure or service.

"What does she mean?" said Henrika, pettishly; "I do not know the woman."

“She is the mother of Wilhelm, the organist,” the young woman explained.

“Oh!” cried the girl. “May I have her in, Maria?” But Maria shook her head, and answered decidedly: “No, Mistress Henrika; more than one visitor at present would not be good for you, and besides—”

“Well!”

“She is a kind, true-hearted woman, but I am afraid her rough ways and heavy step and loud voice would do you no good. Let me go and ask her what she has come for.”

“Well, thank her kindly, and tell her to carry my remembrances to her son. I am not generally so susceptible—but I see you understand me, and such strong food, I believe, would hardly be good for me yet.”

Maria had executed her commission, and had been sitting for some time longer with Henrika, when Dame van Hout was announced; her husband, who had been present when the seals were put on the doors and drawers in the house of the dead, had told her of the forlorn position of the sick girl, and she had come to see in what way she might perhaps be of use to her.

“You might see her, no doubt,” said Maria, “for you could not fail to like her; but then, again, you have had enough for to-day. Now, try to sleep. I will go home with the town clerk’s wife, and I will come again to-morrow, and, if you would like it—”

“Come; oh, yes, come!” cried the girl. “But you had something else to say?”

“I would make so bold, Mistress Henrika; you ought not to remain in this dismal house; there is room and to spare in ours. Be our guest till the baron, your father—”

“Oh, yes! take me with you,” cried the convalescent, and her eyes glistened with eager tears; “take me away from this, only take me away—I will thank you as long as I live!”

CHAPTER XIV.

It was many weeks since Maria had run upstairs with so joyful a step. She could almost have sung for joy, but she was still a little uneasy, for perhaps her husband might not quite approve of her freedom in asking a stranger to his house, still more one who was sick, and an adherent of the Spaniards to boot.

As she passed the dining-room door, she heard the voices of men talking within. Peter was now speaking; his rich, deep

tones fell on her ear, and she said to herself that Henrika would like to hear them. In a few minutes she entered the room to welcome her husband's guests, who were also her own. Happy excitement, and her hasty walk in the still mild air of the May evening following a warm day, had colored her cheeks; and as she went into the room with a modest and respectful courtesy, through which her pleasure at receiving such worthy guests was very apparent, she looked so sweet and gracious a creature that none of the party could fail to be attracted by her. The elder Van der Does slapped Peter on the shoulder, and then clapped his hands together, as much as to say: "You have chosen well, my friend;" and Janus, the younger, gayly whispered to Van Hout, who, like himself, was a Latin scholar:

"Oculi sunt in amore duces."

Captain Allertssohn started to his feet and raised his hand in military salute while Van Bronkhorst, the prince's representative, expressed his sentiments in a courtly bow; Dr. Bontius smiled with the satisfied look of a man who has succeeded in a bold stroke of business; and Peter, proud and pleased, tried to attract his wife's attention to himself. In this, however, he could not succeed, for Maria, perceiving herself to be the center of so much observation, with a heightened blush cast down her eyes, while she said, with more decision than could have been expected from her bashful demeanor:

"You are heartily welcome, gentlemen; my greeting comes late, but I assure you it is from no lack of good-will that I did not offer it earlier."

"I can testify to that," said Dr. Bontius, rising and shaking Maria's hand more warmly than he had ever done before. Then, nodding to Peter, he said to the assembled party: "You will give the burgomaster leave of absence for a minute or two?"

He withdrew with the couple, and no sooner were they outside the door than he exclaimed:

"You have invited another guest into your house, Dame van der Werff! Not another drop of malmsey will I drink if I have guessed wrongly."

"How did you know that?" said Maria, gayly.

"I can read it in your face."

"And the young lady shall be heartily welcome for my part," added Peter.

"How do you know anything about it?" asked Maria.

"Well, the doctor did not keep his expectations hidden under a bushel."

“It is quite true; she is very ready to come to us, and to-morrow—”

“To-morrow! I will have her brought here this very evening,” said Van der Werff.

“This evening! nay, it is too late; by this time perhaps she is asleep; these gentlemen are here, and our spare bed—” Maria broke off, looking doubtfully and disapprovingly, first at the doctor and then at her husband.

“Make yourself easy, child,” said Peter. “The doctor has already ordered a covered litter from the hospital; Jan and a town sergeant will carry it; and Barbara, who has finished her work in the kitchen, is now actually arranging her own room to receive the sick girl.”

“Besides,” added the leech, “when she is here she will probably be able to sleep again. And her high-mightiness will infinitely prefer to be carried through the streets in the dark, and unrecognized.”

“Yes, yes,” said Maria, disappointed, “that is true, no doubt; but I had intended— It is not well to be in too great a hurry about anything.”

“But you are glad to have Mistress Henrika as our guest?” asked Peter.

“To be sure I am.”

“Then we will take no half measures, but do all we can for her, and do it at once. There is Barbara beckoning you. The litter is come, doctor; go and lead the procession, and God be with you; but do not let us have to wait for you too long.”

The burgomaster returned to his friends, and De Bont went down-stairs. Maria followed him; in the hall he laid his hand on her arm, and asked her:

“Now, would you like me to tell you once more what I think of you?”

“No!” said the young woman in a half-joking tone, through which, however, the disappointment she felt could be detected. “No! you have taught me that you are a man quite capable of marring some of my greatest pleasures.”

“I procure you others in their place,” said the physician, laughing, as he went down the steps.

The doctor was one of Van der Werff's oldest friends, and he had found much to object to in the burgomaster's marriage with a woman so much younger than himself, and in such evil times as these; but on this occasion he had been fully satisfied with the burgomaster's choice.

Maria returned to her guests, whose glasses she filled, and pledged them in wine, and she then went to her sister-in-law's

room to help to arrange everything for the best for the expected visitor. She did so with a good will, but she still felt as if she could have set to work with greater satisfaction early next morning.

Barbara's large and airy room looked out on the court-yard. Nothing could there be heard of the conversation in the dining-room, and yet the discussion was by no means devoid of excitement among men who, though the same purpose animated them all, were often disagreed as to the best ways and means of achieving a happy issue. There they sat, those brave sons of a narrow country, the stalwart leaders of a commonwealth, poor alike in numbers and in means of defense, but which had taken upon itself to defy the mightiest empire and the most powerful armies of that age. They knew full well that the clouds which for weeks had lowered in the distance were gathering faster and faster, and packing as they rose to hurl a fearful tempest upon Leyden. Indeed, Van der Werff had invited his colleagues expressly because a letter from the prince, addressed to himself and to Van Bronkhorst, contained the news that King Philip's regent had communicated to the Maestro del Campo Valdez his majesty's commands that Leyden should be a second time invested and reduced to subjection. They knew that William of Orange could not collect an army in less than a month at soonest, and bring it up to divert the besieging forces or to relieve the town; they had already learned how little they could count on the Queen of England and the Protestant princes of Germany, and the appalling fate of the neighboring town of Haarlem—a stronger place than Leyden—rose as a ghastly warning before their eyes. Still, they were conscious of suffering in a noble cause: they trusted confidently in the prince's good faith, heroism, and statecraft; they were ready to die rather than to sell themselves body and soul to the Spanish tyrant. Their faith, too, was strong and deep in the justice of God, and each felt a cheerful confidence in his own stanch manliness.

And verily the men who sat round that table, which a woman's hand had graciously decked with flowers, who proved so valiant in emptying the capacious glasses with heavy knobs on their ringed stems, that jar after jar of Van der Werff's malmsey and Rhine wine came up from the cellar depths—the men who hewed breaches in the towering pastries and substantial joints, more juicy and nutritious than any other pastures can produce—these men did not look as if pale terror had brought them together.

A hat is the badge of liberty, and a free man keeps his hat

on; so the burgomaster's guests sat at table with their heads covered: and how becoming to the venerable Lord of Nordwyk, with his hale, fresh face, and to the shrewd and thoughtful countenance of his nephew, Janus Dousa, were their tall, plaited bonnets of dark-red velvet, with a thick curled feather trimming; how handsome Jan van Duivenvoorde, the young Seigneur of Warmond, looked with his waving locks beneath his broad-brimmed hat, in which there waved a blue and orange ostrich plume—the colors of the prince! How full of health and of character were the faces collected round the table! Hardly one was devoid of a fresh, bright color; and robust vitality, clear, good sense, immovable resolve, and iron tenacity spoke in many a blue eye. Even the members of the Council, in their black dress, and who were well suited in their plaited ruffs or their smooth white neckcloths, did not look as if the dust of archives had dulled their vigor, while the mustache of one and the square or flowing beard of another gave them a manly aspect. Each was cheerfully ready to sacrifice himself and all he owned for a supreme moral gain, and yet each looked as though his foothold on life were steadfast and sure; there was no sign of over-exaltation in those wise and gravely thoughtful faces; a trace of it perhaps sparkled in the eyes of the young Lord of Warmond, and Janus Dousa's gaze now and then had an absorbed look, as if turned inward to seek some hidden vein of thought, and in such moments his sharply cut but irregular features acquired a singular charm.

The ponderous and overstout person of Van Bronkhorst usurped a large space; his body was indeed unwieldy to move, but in his round, closely cropped head sparkled a pair of prominent eyes, which announced indomitable obstinacy of purpose.

The brightly lighted table round which such a noble handful had met offered a gay and handsome show. The yellow buff jerkins worn by the Baron van Warmond, by Mulder, the colonel, and by Allertsohn, the captain of the town forces, and the gay hues of the silk scarfs they tied across them, with the bright red coat of brave Dirk Smaling, stood out in pleasing contrast to the black garments of Parson Verstroot, of the burgomaster himself, of the town clerk, and of their fellow-councilors. The purple suit of the prince's envoy, and the dark tints of the fur-trimmed cloaks worn by the Seigneurs of Nordwyk and Montfoort blended agreeably and harmoniously with the lighter and darker hues. All that was sad or gloomy seemed banished far enough from this motley-colored and ani-

mated assembly; their speech was free and eager, and their voices were steady and deep.

But the peril was already at their gates. Every day might bring the Spaniards down upon Leyden. Many preparations had already been made; the outworks of Alfen and the sluices of Gouda were defended by their English allies; the fort of Valkenburg had been strengthened and garrisoned by British soldiers; the town forces, the municipal watch, and the volunteers were all efficiently drilled. They did not wish to have any foreign troops inside the town walls, for during the last siege they had been more of a burden than a help, and a storming of the town, protected as it was by moat, ramparts, and bastions, was hardly to be feared.

What at this moment agitated the assembly most was a report brought to them by the town clerk. The wealthy Baersdorp, one of the four burgomasters of the town, and the greatest corn dealer in Leyden, had undertaken to purchase for the authorities a very considerable quantity of bread-stuffs. Several ship-loads of wheat and rye had been delivered by him on the previous day, but a quarter of the supplies ordered by him was still lacking. He frankly confessed that he had given no definite and final order for them, because he was expecting a fall in the price of corn in the Rotterdam and Amsterdam markets, the prospects of the harvest being particularly favorable, thinking, too, there would still be some weeks to spare before the town was again invaded.

Van Hout was furious, but two of the four burgomasters defended their colleague Baersdorp. The old Herr van Nordwyk agreed with the town clerk.

“With all due respect to your office, Master Peter,” he exclaimed, “your three colleagues are of that kind of friends to whom an open foe is far preferable.”

“The Herr van Noyelles,” interrupted Mulder, “wrote in his time to the prince himself a good and true word when he said that such men were only fit for the gallows.”

“And the gallows for them,” added Allertssohn, “so long as hempen rope and a traitor’s neck are made for each other.”

“Traitors! nay,” said Van der Werff, decidedly. “Call them dastardly if you will—say they are greedy and mean—but none of them is a Judas.”

“You are right, Master Peter, for that they are not, and perhaps even cowardice has no part in their conduct,” said the elder Van der Does. “Any one who has eyes to see and ears to hear, knows how the feeling tends among the men of the old city families, who were held over the font with the idea

that they must be future councilors; and I am not speaking of the Leyden men alone, but of those of Delft and Gouda, of Rotterdam and Dortrecht. Sixty out of every hundred bend with a good grace to Spanish tyranny, renouncing even their liberty of conscience, so long as their personal freedom and rights are guaranteed to them. Whether in church sermons are preached or masses chanted—whether they are governed by a Dutchman or a Spaniard—are secondary considerations. Of course, I except those who are present; you, my masters, would not be here if you were like-minded with those of whom I speak.”

“Thank you for that exception,” said Dirk Smaling; “but, with all respect for your judgment, you have painted them with dark colors. May I ask you, now, does not the nobility cling to its rights and liberties?”

“Undoubtedly, Master Dirk, though they commonly date from an earlier time than yours,” answered the other. “But, you see, the noble needs a sovereign; he is an extinct star when the sun that lends him light does not shine upon him. I, and all the nobles who with me have sworn allegiance to the Prince of Orange, feel that he and none other must be our central sun—he who is one of us, who knows us, loves us, and understands us; not Philip, who knows nothing of our minds and manners, who is a stranger in the land, and who abhors us. We will uphold William with life and land, for, as I have said, we need a sun—that is to say, a monarch. But the towns think that they can shine by their own light, and are in themselves stars to the world. They feel, no doubt, that in these evil days of warfare they need a leader, and that they can find none better, wiser, or more trustworthy than Orange; but if it should come to pass—and God grant it may—that the Spanish yoke should be broken, then even great William’s rule will seem burdensome and oppressive, for they themselves too greatly relish the game of governing. To put it shortly, the towns endure a monarch, the nobles gather round him and demand him. No good issue can come of it until nobles, citizens, and peasants alike learn to yield to him, and combine to fight under his captaincy for the chief blessings of life.”

“Very true,” said Van Hout. “The well-affected nobles, both here and in the other towns, may set the example; but the people—the poor and laboring population—who knew well enough, too, what it must cost them—who have, thank God, not yet lost their strong love for what you call the chief blessings of life—they only ask to be and to remain Dutch; they curse the Spanish butchers with genuine hatred; they insist on

-serving God as their spirit prompts them, and on believing what their heart dictates; they call the prince their Father William. Wait awhile. As soon as necessity presses, the poor and humble will stand firm, when the great and wealthy tremble and fall away and deny the good cause."

"They are to be trusted," said Van der Werff—"implicitly trusted."

"And knowing them as I do," cried Van Hout, "come what may, we shall tide through it by God's help."

Janus Dousa sat looking into his glass. Now, throwing his head back, he said, with a hasty movement of his hand:

"It is strange that these men, who fight a hand-to-hand battle with life, and whose uneducated minds move only in the groove traced by each day's needs, are the readiest to sacrifice their little all for spiritual blessings."

"True," said the minister; "'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' It is wonderful to see how the poor and unlearned are able to value the blessings of faith, freedom, and fatherland more highly than the vain goods of this world—the golden calf round which the nations crowd to worship."

"Well, the men of my standing are not being flattered this evening," said Dirk Smaling, "but I would ask you to consider this point in our favor. We are playing a dangerous game for high stakes; and those who possess most put the lion's share into the pool."

"Not so," interrupted Van Hout. "The highest stake that any of us can risk on the throw of the dice is life, and that is equally dear to both rich and poor. There are those who will hesitate to risk it—I will wager that I know them. They have no simple motto or humble sign over their door, but a haughty coat of arms. Wait a little while and we shall see."

"Wait and we shall see," said Van der Werff; "but at this moment there are more pressing things to attend to. The day after to-morrow is Ascension-day, and the great yearly fair will begin. Yesterday and the day before, more than one stranger with merchandise and peddler with his pack passed through our gates. Now, shall we allow the booths to be erected, or put off the fair till another time? If the enemy sweeps down upon us, there will be terrible confusion, and we may perhaps throw a valuable booty into his hands. I ask your opinion, masters all."

"We ought to protect the traders, and put off the fair," said Dirk van Montfoort.

"Nay, my lord," said Van Hout, "for if we forbid it we

deprive the smaller dealers of their little profits, and so damp their spirits beforehand."

"Let them have their festival," cried Janus Dousa. "We ought not to pay the coming misery the compliment of clouding the happy present by anticipating it. If you want to be wise, follow the counsels of my Horace."

"'Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof,' saith the Scripture," added the parson; and Allertsohn exclaimed:

"By Heaven! yes, my soldiers and the town watch and militia must have their procession round the town. In full glory of arms and armor, too, when bright eyes smile at them, old folks greet them, and children shout and run in front of them—that is when a soldier first learns to pride himself on the trade of arms."

So it was decided to let the yearly market take place.

While these and other questions were being decided in earnest conclave, Henrika had been comfortably and affectionately installed in Barbara's pretty room. When she was asleep, Maria once more went to see her guests; but she did not now join them at table, for by this time their faces were heated, and they no longer spoke in order, each in his turn, but each addressed the other confusedly, saying just what came first. Van der Werff was talking to Van Hout and the envoy as to the corn to be brought into the town; Janus Dousa and the Seigneur of Warmond were discussing a poem which Van Hout had recited at the last meeting of the literary society of the Rederyke; the elder Van der Does was disputing with the minister over the new church practices; and the brawny captain—in front of whom stood a vast drinking-horn that he had drained to the last drop—had leaned his forehead on Mulder's shoulder, and, as was his custom when wine had made him happy, shed a flood of bitter tears.

CHAPTER XV.

ON the following day, after the sitting of the council, Burgomaster van der Werff, Mr. Secretary van Hout, and a notary with two clerks, proceeded to the house in the Nobel Street, to settle matters as to the property of old Mistress van Hoogstraten. The elders of the town had decided to confiscate the deserted dwelling of the traitorous Glippers, and to apply the wealth it might contain to the uses of the common cause. The old lady's antagonistic sentiments were well known, and as her nearest relatives, the Barons van Hoogstraten and Mate- nesse van Wibisma, had been outlawed from Leyden, the town

had every right to administer the inheritance. It was quite to be expected that none but acknowledged Glippers would be mentioned in the will of the deceased, and if this should prove to be the case, the municipality would use the capital and estates, spending the interest until such time as the runagates might be brought to a better mind, and the authorities feel justified by their conduct in opening the city gates to them once more. Such of them as even then persisted in adhering to the Spaniards, and setting themselves against the cause of liberty, would sacrifice their share of the inheritance to the town forever. Such a procedure was nothing new, and King Philip had learned to practice it to his own benefit; for not only had the property of innumerable innocent and expatriated citizens, or voluntary exiles for the new form of faith been confiscated to his advantage, but even the possessions of many a good Catholic patriot. To men who had so long suffered as the anvil, it was a pleasant change to play the hammer: and if they did not always then show themselves moderate and dignified, they had the excuse of having suffered treatment a hundred times more rigorous and cruel at the hands of the Spaniards. It would have been unchristian to repay evil with equal evil; but hard blows were dealt, though only in return, it is true, for more deadly strokes, and the Glippers were not wantonly murdered.

At the door of the house of death the members of the town council found Wilhelm Corneliussohn and his mother, who had come once more to offer Henrika a friendly reception and shelter in their home. The worthy wife of the receiver-general, who at first had refused to extend any neighborly love to the Glipper's daughter, now was much aggrieved, when she had come on pious acts intent, to have missed the opportunity, and expressed her feelings to that effect in her own rough fashion.

In the hall stood Belotti, no longer in the splendor of silk hose and the satin-bordered cloth doublet of the house-steward, but in the plain dark dress of a citizen. He had told the musician and Peter that for the present he should remain in Leyden, as he could not reconcile it to his conscience to desert the sick waiting-woman Denise at such a pinch; but other things contributed to detain him, and above all—though he could not bear to confess it—the feeling, confirmed by the habits of years, of inseparable connection with the house of Hoogstraten. That his account-books were in good order, the *charge d'affaires* had duly certified, and had readily paid him his dues. His savings were safely laid out, and as he had

always been temperate, and had never touched the interest, it had accumulated with the capital to a handsome round sum. Nothing really held him to Leyden, but he felt he could not quit it till all had been finally wound up in the house over which he had ruled so long.

Every day he had inquired after the health of the two ladies, and after the death of his mistress, although Denise was by this time mending, he lingered in Leyden, regarding it as his duty to pay her the last honors at her funeral.

The town officials were well pleased to find Belotti on the spot. The notary had managed his little money matters for him for some time, and esteemed him as a thoroughly honest man; and he now desired him to serve as a guide to himself and his fellow officials. It was first of all necessary that they should find the old lady's will; it was certain that such a document must exist, for it had been in the notary's keeping up to the day following Henrika's first attack of fever, when the old lady, wishing to make some alterations in it, had asked for it back. He could give no information as to its contents, for it was not himself but his senior, who was dead, and whose business he had inherited, who had drawn up the document.

The steward led the gentlemen first through the dwelling-rooms and his mistress's little sitting-room, but though the desks, chests and cupboards were thoroughly searched, and they came upon letters, money, and valuables in numerous drawers and boxes, no will was found.

The men of law were of opinion that it might have been laid by in some secret drawer, and sent one of the clerks off to fetch a locksmith. Belotti let him go, but he was listening attentively the while to the low chant which fell upon his ear from his mistress's bedroom, where her body was still lying. That, he knew, was the place where the will was most likely to be found, but he was, above all, anxious to have the priests undisturbed in their office of prayer for his dead mistress. As soon as all was silent again he bade the gentlemen follow him. The lofty room with a coved ceiling into which he led them was full of incense. At the further end of it stood a large bedstead, above which a sort of tent of embroidered silk curtains rose as high as the ceiling; in the middle of the room was the bier on which lay the deceased lady, her face covered with a linen handkerchief trimmed with lace. Her slender but still plump hands were folded on her breast; between them was a much-worn rosary. A handsome coverlid concealed all her person, and on the middle of it lay a crucifix finely carved in ivory.

The visitors bowed in silence before the corpse as they and Belotti went closer, but at the sight of his padrona's hands, so long familiar to him, the poor old man's heart seemed to burst in a convulsive sob. He knelt down by the bier and pressed his lips to the cold, white fingers, while a warm tear—the only tear shed over this woman's death—fell on the hands now forever clinched and still. The burgomaster and his companions did not disturb him, but left him to press his brow to the wooden coffin and put up a short and silent prayer. When he had risen, and when an elderly priest in canonicals had left the room, Father Damianus signed to an acolyte who was standing with him in the background, and they, with Belotti's help, laid the lid upon the coffin. Then the priest said, turning to Van der Werff:

“We propose to carry the mistress to her grave at midnight, so that no scandal may arise.”

“That is well,” replied the burgomaster. “And, come what may, you may be sure we shall not expel you from the town. If, indeed, you prefer to join the Spaniards—”

But Damianus shook his head.

“No, master,” he interrupted, decidedly; “I was born in Utrecht, and I pray earnestly for the freedom of Holland.”

“Good, good!” cried the town clerk. “That is a good word—an admirable word. Give me your hand, Master Priest.”

“With all my heart; and so long as your motto ‘*Hæc libertatis ergo*’ does not degenerate into ‘*Hæc religionis ergo*,’ I shall never change that word.”

“A free country and liberty of conscience for all, including you and yours,” said the burgomaster—“that is what we aim at. Doctor Bontius has spoken of you to me, reverend sir; you cared bravely for the dead who lies here. Bury her after the manner of your Church; we have come to administer the worldly possessions she has left behind her. This little coffer perhaps contains her will.”

“No, master,” replied the priest. “When she first fell ill she opened the sealed document in my presence, and now and then, as she felt better, added a few lines to it. An hour before she died she desired that the notary should be fetched, but before it could be done she was gone. I could not stay constantly with the corpse, so I laid the deed in the linen chest; here is the key.”

The will was at once found. The burgomaster calmly opened it and read it aloud, while the notary and the town clerk looked over his shoulder. The property was to be divided

between certain churches and convents—in which masses were to be said for the soul of the testatrix—and her nearest relatives; Belotti and Denise were remembered with small legacies.

“As it happens,” cried Van Hout, “this document is a mere sheet of waste-paper.”

“It is of no value whatever,” added the notary, “since it was removed from my keeping for the declared purpose of being altered and nullified. But turn the sheet over, Master Peter. Here, on the back, there is a great deal more to read.”

The task before them was not a light one, for the sick woman had scribbled short notes all over the blank side of the paper, above and below, here and there, memoranda, as it seemed, for the drawing up of a fresh will. Quite at the top her trembling hand had drawn a cross, and beneath it the words, “Pray for us! Our holy Church is all in all.”

Lower down was written “Nico. I like the lad. The castle on the *Dunes*. Ten thousand gold gülden in money. To be settled on him alone. His father is not to touch it. Explain clearly why he is disinherited. Van Vliet of Haarlem was the man whose daughter my cousin had privately married and deserted, under miserable pretenses, to marry another woman. Though he may have forgotten it, it remains in my memory, and I wish him joy of it. Nico must mark it well; false love is poison. It has spoiled my life—spoiled it utterly.”

The word “spoiled” was written again and again, many times, and the last time, to finish the sentence, the sick woman had flourished her pen round it in curls and spirals. Down the right margin of the sheet were a series of short memoranda.

“Anna, ten thousand gülden. Settled on her, or they will fall into the hand of that bird of prey, D’Avila.

“Henrika three times as much. Her father may pay it out of what he owes me. Where he gets it is his affair. That will square accounts between us.

“Belotti has behaved badly. He is passed over.

“Denise may have what I intended for her.”

Then, in the middle of the sheet, was written in a large hand this sentence, with a sort of frame of double and treble strokes:

“The ebony casket with the arms of Hoogstraten and D’Avila on the top is to be sent to the widow of the Marquis d’Avennes. She is to be found at Château Rochebrun, in Normandy.”

The three men who had deciphered these notes looked at each other in silence, till Van Hout exclaimed:

“What a wild compound of spite and of womanly weakness! However hard and cold woman’s heart may seem, still you will always find frost flowers if no other blossom blows there.”

“I am sorry for young Mistress van Hoogstraten, who is now at your house, Master Peter,” said the notary. “It would be easier to strike fire out of rye-bread than to wring such a sum from that old ne’er-do-weel, the baron. The daughter comes off badly for the father’s sake—that I call true parental conduct.”

“And what may there be in the ebony casket?” asked the notary.

“There it stands,” said Van Hout. “Hand it over, Bellotti.”

“We must open it,” said the lawyer, “for perhaps she was trying to send her best things out of the country.”

“Open it, against the express wishes of the deceased?” asked Van der Werff.

“Certainly,” cried the notary. “We were sent here to take information as to the property she has left. The lid is locked down. Take a pick-lock, master; that will soon open it.”

But the plenipotentiaries found no valuables in the box—nothing but letters of various dates; and these were not many. Those at the bottom—old and very yellow—contained protestations of love from the Marquis d’Avennes; the later ones were short, and signed Don Luis d’Avila. Van Hout, who understood the Castilian Spanish in which they were written, read them hastily through. As he came to the end, he exclaimed, in wrathful excitement:

“Here we have the key to a piece of foul play! Do you remember the attention that was excited four years ago by a duel in which the Marquis d’Avennes fell a victim to a Spanish ruffian? In this letter the miserable braggart writes—but it is worth while to translate it to you. The first part of the note is of no importance, but here it begins: ‘And since I have now been so happy as to cross swords with the marquis and to kill him—not without peril of my own life—a fate which he seems to have richly deserved since he had so greatly incurred your displeasure, the conditions you imposed upon me are satisfied, and I hope to-morrow to receive from your favor my sweet reward. Tell Donna Anna, my adored bride, that as early as possible to-morrow morning I will lead her to the

altar, for the D'Avennes are an influential family, and my life will hardly be safe even to-morrow. For the rest, I hope I may count on the good feeling and generosity of my gracious friend.' ”

Van Hout tossed the paper on to the table. “Look,” he said, “what a pretty hand the villain writes! And, by God! the lady to whom this death-thrust was to be sent is no doubt the mother of the luckless marquis whom the Spanish assassin ran through the body.”

“Yes, master,” Belotti threw in; “I can confirm your suspicion. The marquise was the wife of the man who had broken faith with Mistress van Hoogstraten in her youth. She who lies there, at rest at last, saw many a sun rise and set before her revenge was complete.”

“Throw all the rubbish into the fire,” cried Van Hout, passionately.

“No,” replied Peter; “we will not send the letters away, but we will keep them among the archives. The mills of God grind slowly, and who can tell of what use these old letters may be yet?” Van Hout nodded assent, and said, as he put the papers in order again:

“I think that the fortune of the deceased lady must undoubtedly belong to the town.”

“The prince can settle that,” replied Van der Werff. “How long were you in your mistress's service, Belotti?”

“Fifteen years.”

“Well, remain a little longer in Leyden, for I believe that you may count on getting the legacy which she originally intended for you. I will represent your claims.”

Within a few hours after the nocturnal obsequies of the old lady, Baron Matenese van Wibisma and Nicolas, his son, made their appearance at the town gate, but they were refused admission, although they both craved it on the ground of their relative's death. Henrika's father made no such attempt, for he had ridden to Cologne a few days before to be present at a tourney.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON the 26th of May—Ascension-day—a joyous peal of bells rang out between noon and one o'clock announcing the opening of the great fair. The old procession round the outside of the town walls had long since given place to a church festival,

but the name of "Ommegang" * was still inseparable from the Ascension-tide Fair, and various little processions still took place at the opening of the annual market, even now that the reformed faith was in the ascendant. In Catholic times the cross had always been carried in a solemn procession through the streets, followed by the whole population of Leyden; but now the town banners and standards, with the colors of the House of Orange, led the van, followed by the nobles on horseback, the town officials in full dress, the ministers in long black robes, and the volunteers in their richest array of arms, the guilds with their emblems displayed on swaying poles and cross bars, and then the long and happy files of school-children. The very poorest managed to buy something new for the little ones on this day of the year, and the mothers never took greater pains in plaiting the little girls' long tails than for the procession at the Ascension Fair. Many a stuiver was spent—in spite of the hard times—out of a very scanty store, in buying fresh ribbons or new shoes for the children, or for smart-colored caps for the boys and brightly dyed hose. The cheerful spring sun shone again in the sleekly combed hair of the girls, while the tall lads, and even the little A B C boys, turned out smarter than the flowers in the Baron of Montfoort's garden, as the procession marched past it. Each one had stuck some greenery with the feather in his hat, and the smaller the little man the bigger his bunch was. There was no lack of busy chatter and joyful shouting, for every child as it passed its parents' house called to its mother—for the women stayed at home—to its grand-dame, to the servants; and as soon as one set up a shout a number of others joined in. Nor did their seniors keep silence when the procession came by the town hall, the school of arms, the guild-halls, or the residence of some popular favorite; and the general hubbub was increased and encouraged by the chiming of bells, the huzzas of the boatmen on the two branches of the Rhine and on the canals, the bands of town musicians at the corners of the streets, the rattle of musketry and the thunder of cannon which the constable of the town and his artillerymen were firing off from the Burcht. They were gay doings in the bright spring, and these jolly folks seemed to be cradling themselves in reckless security of enjoyment, prosperity, and peace. How blue the sky was! how warm and bright the sunshine!

Among the members of the town council, indeed, there were grave and anxious faces; but the trade guilds and bands of

* Omgang=Germ. Umgang—a march round.

children that followed them did not observe this, so the jollification went on without interruption till the churches had swallowed up the holiday-makers, and there, indeed, from the pulpits, words of earnest warning were spoken, apt to make many a soul pause to reflect.

But three tenses of life belong to man—the past belongs to old age, the present to the young, and the future to childhood. What did the youths and maidens of Leyden care on this great yearly fair day and holiday for the danger that was so close? Each one who could to-day coax a coin for a fairing out of parent or godfather—or, if not to-day, for the linen fair on Friday and the following days—nay, each one who had merely eyes to see with and ears to hear with and a nose to smell with, went wandering with others through the rows of booths, stood to stare at the camel and the dancing bear, or gaze into the open taverns, where not young men and maidens only, but their jolly elders swung round in the dance to the music of bagpipe, clarionet, and fiddle; or tasted spice-nuts and other sweetmeats with the attentive gravity of connoisseurs, or followed the sound of the trumpet by which a negro attracted a crowd round a quack doctor.

Adrian van der Werff lounged about, day after day, with his comrades or alone, gazing at the splendors of the fair, and now and again feeling his leather purse with a satisfied sense of wealth as it hung at his girdle; for it contained several stivers given to him by different persons—his father, mother, Aunt Barbara, and his godmother. Young Captain van Duivenvoorde, his very particular friend, on whose tall horse he had more than once been allowed to ride, had taken him three times into a waffle-baker's booth that he might eat his fill; and thus, even on the Tuesday after Ascension-day, his little capital was but slightly diminished. He proposed to buy something very nice with it, something worth having—a long horseman's sword, or a cross-bow, or perhaps—but this he regarded as a base temptation—the large gingerbread cake all over almonds which stood as a sign or trophy in the booth of a pastry-cook from Delft. To be sure he and Elizabeth both might feast for a week on that gigantic cake if they husbanded it, and thrift is an excellent virtue. At any rate, something must be saved to buy "broedertjes," those excellent fairing-cakes,* which were made and baked in many of the booths under the eyes of the passers-by.

On that Tuesday afternoon, his way led him past a stall

* Made of buckwheat.

famous for Rotterdam broedertjes. In front of the slightly constructed wooden shanty, made smart with mirrors and gayly painted images, a buxom and tidy woman in the prime of life sat on a long-legged arm-chair that raised her high above the by-standers, while with wonderful rapidity and skill she poured a thin white batter, which she dipped out of a large earthenware pan, on to certain hot iron plates full of little pits or receptacles. These stood on a level with her knees, which were comfortably straddled apart. Her attendant, as prompt as thought, turned the tempting dainties with a fork, as they quickly browned in their hot metal beds, and when they were done laid them delicately on little plates. A waiter prepared them for the consumer by laying a noble lump of gold-colored butter on the top of each steaming heap of little cakes. An extraordinary delicious smell, reminding him only too strongly of former joys, rose from the oven; and Adrian's fingers were already counting the contents of his purse, when the negro's trumpet rang out, and the quack doctor's chariot drew up exactly in front of the stall.

The far-famed Dr. Morpurgo was a tall man, dressed all in scarlet, with a thin, square, coal-black beard, which hung low over his breast. His demeanor was measured and haughty; the bows and gestures with which he greeted the assembled crowd were affable and courteous. As soon as a sufficient number of curious folks had gathered round his chariot, which was covered with boxes and vials, he began to address them in broken Dutch, interspersed with several foreign words.

He praised the mercy of Providence who created the marvels of man's organism. In that, said he, all was wisely ordered and planned for the best, but in one respect still, nature must confess herself at fault before the tribunal of the learned.

"Do you know now where the fault lies, my masters and mistresses?" he asked.

"In the stomach," cried a merry barber's apprentice, "which is empty every day sooner than it ought to be."

"Right, my son!" answered the quack, graciously. "But nature has provided for its replenishment by that vast portal out of which your answer came so glibly. Your teeth are the bungling part of the work. They come with pain, they wear out before their time, and while they last torment their owners unless they are duly cared for. But art has correctives for nature. Look at this little box—" and he went on to sing the praises of his tooth-powder and of his elixir against the toothache. Then he went on to speak of the head, and de-

scribed in vivid colors the many pains to which it was liable. But these, too, were remediable, certain to be cured, if you only had money to buy his great secret. It was to be had for a mere song, and he who would risk a trifling sum was certain to be able to rid himself even of the very worst headache as easily as if he swept it away with a broom.

Adrian listened open-mouthed to the boastful leech. The most delightful fragrance was wafted toward him from the hot baking-plate in front of the broedertje stall, and he would have enjoyed a plateful of fresh cakes with all his heart. Indeed, the jolly pastry-cook even beckoned him with a flourish of her ladle, but he shut his hand more tightly over his purse, and fixed his eyes on the quack, whose vehicle was by this time surrounded by several men and women buying his tinctures and mixtures.

At home Henrika was lying sick; he had twice been taken up to see her, and her handsome pale face and large dark eyes had filled his heart with compassion. Her deep, clear tones, too, when she had addressed a few words to him, were strange and unfamiliar, and had sunk into his soul. One morning he had been told that she had arrived, and from that time his mother had rarely been visible, while the house had been kept quieter than usual; every one trod softly and spoke in lowered tones, knocked gently at the window instead of rapping with the knocker, and whenever Liesa or he laughed aloud or heedlessly jumped up or down-stairs, out would come Barbara, or his mother, or Trautchen, and whisper: "Hush, children; Mistress Henrika has a headache."

Now there, in the leech's chariot, stood numberless vials which promised to cure this pain, and the famous Morpurgo seemed to be a very sensible man, not poking his fun and jokes like other quack doctors; and he heard the wife of Wilhelm Peterssohn, the baker, who was standing near him, and whom he knew, tell her companion that the leech's remedies were good, for that they had cured her sister-in-law very promptly of a bad rash in her face.

This remark brought the lad's thoughts to a decision. A rapid vision of the long sword, the cross-bow, the gingerbread, and the savory buckwheat-cakes, crossed his mind, it is true; but he thrust them aside by a determined effort, held his breath that he might not smell the insidious perfume of the broedertjes, and stepped quickly up to the leech's cart. There he untied his purse from his girdle, shook the contents into his hand, and held them out to the doctor, who had fixed his eyes

with a benevolent gaze on this unwonted purchaser, and asked him "if that was enough?"

"What for?"

"For the medicine to cure headache."

The nostrum-seller spread the little coins out with his forefinger on the palm of Adrian's hand, and answered, gravely: "No, my lad; but I am always ready to promote the cause of learning. You have a great deal to learn yet at school, and headaches are a hinderance. Here are the drops, and for you I will give these instructions as to another great secret of mine into the bargain."

Adrian hastily wrapped the little vial the leech had given him in the piece of printed paper, clasped his dearly bought treasure in his hand, and ran home. On his way he was stopped by Captain Allertssohn, who came up to him with the organist.

"Have you seen my Andreas, Master Scapegrace?" he asked the boy.

"He was standing by the Rassenburg with the musicians, listening to them," said Adrian, wriggling himself from the tall captain's grasp and vanishing in the crowd.

"A nimble rascal," said the soldier. "So my boy is with the musicians again. His head is full of nothing but your art. He would far rather pipe a tune on a comb than comb his hair with it, and he uses every leaf and reed he picks up as a flute. He makes triangles out of broken blades, and not a saucepan is safe from his drumming—in short, the young vagabond has sing-song on the brain; he wants to be a town musician or something of the kind."

"That is right—that is right!" exclaimed Wilhelm, eagerly; "he has a good ear and is the best singer in the choir."

"Well, we must think it over," replied the captain; "and you, if any one, can tell me what is to be got out of your line of art. If you have time this evening, Master Wilhelm, join me in the watch; I should like to have a talk with you. But you will not find me before ten. To-day I have had that spasm in my throat, and on such occasions—by Roland, my former self—"

He cleared his throat loudly and violently.

"I am at your service," answered Wilhelm, "for the night is long; but now and here I will not let you go till I know what all this is about Roland and your former self."

"By all means; but there is not much to tell, and perhaps you will hardly understand it. But come in here—a stoup of beer will help on the story, and a man's legs rebel when they

have not been allowed their dues of rest for four nights running."

When the two men were seated opposite each other in the tavern parlor, the fencing-master parted his mustache over his lips and began:

"It is—how long ago?—well, we will say a good fifteen years since I one day had occasion to ride to Haarlem with the host of the Exchange Inn, who, as you know, is a learned man, and choke-full of all sorts of old-world lore and Latin books; he is a very pleasant man to talk to. Presently the conversation turned on the way in which often in life, when something occurs to you for the first time, you have a feeling as though the same thing had happened to you once before, and Aquanus said that this is easily explained since the soul of man is indestructible—a sort of immortal, airy bird. As long as we live it remains with us, but when it is all over with us it flies away, and is rewarded or punished according to its deserts; but after many hundred years, which to the Almighty are no more than the minutes it takes me to empty this cool tankard—bring another, tapster—the merciful Father sets it free, and then it finds a home in some new-born child. This made me laugh, but he did not care for that, and went on to speak of some ancient heathen, a most wondrous wise-head in his time, who knew for certain that his soul had formerly taken up its quarters in the body of a mighty hero. This same heathen remembered exactly where, during his former life, he had hung up his shield, and told his fellow sages. So they sent for it, and there they found the buckler, and on it the initials of the two names which had been those of the wise man hundreds of years before, during his life as a soldier. That staggered me, for you see, master—now, do not laugh—before that, something had happened to me just like the experience of that old heathen. I had not many books, and from a child upward had already read the same one again and again. I inherited it from my late father, and it is not a printed book, but a written one; I will show it you some day—it contains the history of Roland the brave. Often and often as I have sat buried in that glorious and veracious history, my cheeks have tingled, as red as live coal, and I will own to you as I did to Aquanus, if I am not much mistaken I have sat at table with King Charles, and fought in Roland's chain-mill in tournaments and battles. I feel that I have seen Marsille, the Paynim king; and once, when I was reading the story of how Roland blew his horn at Roncevalles till the battle was ended, I was seized with a pain in my throat, as if it would burst, and at the same time I knew

that I had felt that pain at some other long-past time. And when I told Aquanus all this exactly, he exclaimed that there could be no doubt that my soul had previously existed as that of Roland, or, in other words, that in a former life I actually was that noble knight."

The musician gazed at the speaker in astonishment.

"And do you really believe that, captain?" he asked.

"Wherefore not?" replied the other; "with God nothing is impossible. At first I laughed in the host's face myself, but his words stuck in my mind, and when I read the old story through once more—I need not hurt my eyes over it, for at every line I know what the next will be—I could not help asking myself—in short, master, my soul certainly did once live in Roland's body, and therefore I call him my former self. In the course of years I have got into the habit of swearing by him. Folly, you think, perhaps, but I know what I know. Now, I must be going. To-night we will talk further, but of other things; after all, master, each of us has a tile off if we did but know it, and mine at any rate gives my neighbors no trouble. Besides, I only confess it to a good friend, and strangers who once ask me what I mean by my 'former self' rarely ask a second time. The reckoning, tapster— There is that spasm again. I must see that the towers are properly manned, and stir up the outposts to keep their eyes open. If you turn out under arms perhaps you will save yourself a walk; I will answer for nothing to-day. You will have to pass by the New Rhine,* so just step into my house and tell my good wife not to wait supper for me. And yet—no, I will do it myself. There is something in the air to-day, as you will see before long, for I have my Roncevalles throat again."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN a large guard-room, not very far from the Burcht, and which had been erected during the former siege—now raised some two months since—a party of town guards and volunteers were sitting in groups, now that the sun had set, plying the tankard while they chatted, or passing the time in card-playing by the dim light of a few lean tallow candles. The bow-window, where the officers' table stood, was somewhat better lighted. Wilhelm, who in obedience to his friend's hint had put on his uniform as an ensign of the city forces, took his seat at a vacant table soon after the town clock had tolled ten.

* The name of a branch of the Rhine and of the houses on the quay.

While he was giving his order to the tapster to bring him a stoup of beer, the captain made his appearance, and with him the Baron van Warmond, the same who had taken part in the privy council at Van der Werff's, and who, two years since, had valiantly won his captain's sash at the taking of Brill—the son of one of the noblest and richest houses in Holland, and of a mother who had borne the name of Egmont. As he came into the oriel, he drew his hand, hidden in a long fencing-glove, away from the captain's arm, and exclaimed, shouting down the musician's order:

“Nothing of the sort, man! The little cask of golden Wurzburg Stein wine can not be empty yet, and we will see the bottom of it this night. What do you say, captain?”

“Ay, it will lighten the cask and not overweight us,” replied the other. “Good-evening, Master Wilhelm; punctuality becomes a soldier. The men are beginning to understand what has to be done; I have posted them so that their eyes command every point of the compass. They are to be relieved every hour, and between whiles I myself will see that all is well. This is good liquor, Jonker. All honor to the man who melts down his father's gold into such a noble fluid. The first glass to the prince!”

The three men clinked their glasses, and ere long clinked them again to the freedom of Holland and the prosperity of the good town of Leyden. Then their talk took a jovial turn, though duty was not forgotten, for at the end of half an hour the captain rose to cast an eye himself into the distance and rouse the attention of the watch. When he presently returned to the bow-window, Wilhelm and his companion were conversing so eagerly that they did not at once observe his presence. The musician was expatiating on Italy, and Allertsohn heard him impetuously run on:

“Any one who has once seen it can never forget it, and when I sit up there among my pigeons my thoughts only too often fly after them, and my eyes cease to see our broad, uniform flats of green and our cloudy gray skies.”

“Ho, ho! Master Wilhelm,” the captain broke in, as he threw himself into his arm-chair and stretched his booted legs out in front of him. “Ho, ho! this time I have caught you riding your pet hobby. Italy, and again Italy! Well, I know Lombardy, for I have been to Brescia, and brought back some good steel blades, too, for the prince and other of our seigneurs. Then I crossed the wild Apennines to Florence, to seek for finely wrought armor. From Leghorn I went by sea to Genoa, and there I procured gold and silver filigree work for

hangers and sword-hilts. The truth is the truth, and the swarthy rascals can work: but the country—the country—by Roland, my former self! how any man can prefer it to ours beats my comprehension.”

“Holland is our mother,” interrupted the young baron. “As dutiful sons we think her the best of women, but still there is no shame in confessing that there are handsomer ones on the face of the earth.”

“What! you blow the same trumpet?” exclaimed the captain, angrily, pushing his glass further on the table. “And were you ever on the other side of the Alps, may I ask?”

“No, never; but all the same—”

“All the same, you are ready to believe the daubers of the painters’ guild, whose eyes are bewitched by a patch of blue sea or sky; or your musical folks, whose heads are turned by a sweet voice or pathetic fiddling; but you will be wise, I tell you, to listen for once to a cool-headed man.”

“Speak on, captain.”

“Good; and the man who can find me out in a word of untruth may make me pay his reckoning to the day of doom. I will begin at the very beginning. First of all you have to get over those horrible mountains, the Alps; there you see barren desert rocks, sheets of cold snow, and icy roaring torrents on which you can never float a boat. Instead of watering the meadows, the perverse stream flings stones up on to the banks. Then you come down again into the plain, and there, I must confess, everything grows in plenty. I was there in the month of June, and I had a good laugh at the tiny plots of land planted with little trees to serve as props for the vines. It looked pretty enough—but the heat, Jonker—the heat spoils all enjoyment; then the dirt in the inns, the vermin, and the shocking things one hears of the brutes on two legs, who, for filthy lucre, are ready at any time to spill Christian blood in the dark. If your throat is dry and your tongue parched, not a drop of cool beer can you get, nothing but fiery wine—and the dust, masters, the fearful dust! So far as the Bresca blades are concerned, all honor to them! But the feather was stolen out of my hat in the inn there, and the host eat onions as if they were cakes. And may I perish if a single piece of good, wholesome beef, such as my old woman serves me up every day—and we do not live like princes neither—ever came between my teeth! Then the butter, Jonker—the butter! We burn oil in our lamps and use it to grease the door-hinges when they creak, but the Italians use it to cook their fish and fowls in—bah, horrid!”

“Mind what you are saying, captain,” cried Wilhelm, “or I shall take you at your word, and you will have to pay my reckonings as long as I live. The oil of the olive is a pure and delicate condiment.”

“For those that like it. I prefer Dutch butter. Olive oil is good enough for cleaning steel blades, but for baking and frying butter is the right thing, and there’s an end of the matter. Just ask your worthy mother to fry her pancakes and flounders in oil—why, she would stare at you. However, hear me further. From Lombardy I went to Bologna, and then crossed the wild Apennines. First up for a time, then suddenly down again: and there is a strange satisfaction—which in our country, thank God! we never enjoy—in sticking to your saddle as you go down-hill. To the right and left are tall cliffs like walls. In those narrow valleys you can hardly breathe: as to looking abroad, you can not do it, for whichever way you turn, there are the hideous mountains close to your nose. It is my belief that the Almighty piled up these heaps after Adam’s fall, as a punishment to mankind, and that on the sixth day of creation the earth was a level plain.

“It was then August, and when the noonday sun beat upon the rocky wall it was simply enough to kill you; it is a miracle to me that I do not at this minute sit before you utterly baked and dried up. Then that famous blue sky of Italy—it is always the same. We have seen it here too in this country, and it is varied by lovely clouds. There are few things here in Holland that I like better than those very clouds of ours. Well, when at last the Apennines lay behind me, I came to the famous city of Florence.”

“And could not that even meet with your approbation?” asked the musician.

“No, master; it has many grand and proud palaces and gorgeous churches, and no lack of silk and velvet everywhere, and their manufacture of cloth, too, is splendid; but still I was not happy, master—I was not happy in your Florence: principally by reason of the heat, but I found everything very different from what I had expected. In the first place, there is the Arno! why, it is perfectly ridiculous! a thing to laugh at is that river! Do you know what it is like? Why, for all the world like the gutters which stand in a stone-mason’s yard after a heavy storm of rain, and trickle between the splinters and blocks of hewn stone.”

“Beware, captain—the reckoning!”

“I mean a stone-mason’s yard on a very large scale, and tolerably wide gutters. Can you contradict me when I say that

the Arno is a shallow, narrow thread of water, only fit to float a boy's canoe? And it serves to ornament a broad plain of gray pebbles—very much as that gold fringe of the Jonker's gauntlet."

"You saw it at the end of a sultry summer," replied Wilhelm; "it is very different in the spring."

"May be, but I beg you only to think of the Rhine and the Maas, and our other big rivers, or even the Marne and the Dreicht, and the whole host of little ones. They are full all the year round, and bear fine large ships. Level and trustworthy—that is the rule in our country: one thing one day and another the next is the way in Italy. And it is just the same with their sword-play and fencing."

"But the Italians carry dangerous weapons," said Van Warmond.

"So they do; but they leap here and there—have no steadiness. I have a right to speak, for I lodged with Torelli, a fellow-swordsman, and the first fencer in the town. As to the meals they gave me, the less said the better; macaroni to-day, macaroni to-morrow, a couple of drum-sticks of a fowl, *e basta*. Many a time have I strapped my belt tighter after dinner. So far as the art of fence is concerned, Torelli, to be sure, is no bungler; but even he jumps and springs about too much. In a pass with him you must keep your eyes open, but if once I can engage his blade and put in my *carte tierce* and *longe* in *seconde*, he is done for."

"A fine *botte!*" said the young baron; "I have found it very serviceable."

"I know, I know," said the captain, eagerly; "you silenced that French ruffian with it at Namur. There is that grip at my throat again! There is something in the air to-day, my masters—there must be something in the air."

The fencing-master clutched at the front of his ruff with his left hand, while with his right hand he set his glass on the table. He had often before done so with far less care, but on this occasion the glass flew into a thousand pieces.

"It does not matter," cried the baron. "Here, boy—another glass for the captain."

The fencing-master pushed his chair back from the table, and said, as he contemplated the shards of green glass, but in an altered voice, and to himself rather than to his companions:

"Ay, ay—it will be in good earnest too! smashed into a thousand pieces. Well, God's will be done! I know where my place is."

"Why, master," interrupted Van Warmond, reproachfully,

as he filled up the new glass, "what maggots are there? Before the skirmish at Brill I jumped out of the boat with a leap; as I did so I broke my sword. I soon found another, but it passed through my mind, 'To-day will be the end of me'—and here I sit to this day, and hope to empty many a rummer with you yet."

"It is past," said the soldier, raising his hat and wiping his brow with the back of his hand. "Every man's hour must strike once, and if mine is at hand so be it. My family will not starve. The house on the New Rhine is a freehold, and if they do not inherit much else, at any rate I can leave them an honest name and true friends. My second boy, the young musician—you will keep your eye on him, Wilhelm, I know. No man is indispensable to the world's progress, and if Heaven recalls me from my command, the young Baron of Nordwyk, Jan van der Does, can fill my place. You, Van Warmond, are in your right place where you are, and the good cause will come to a happy issue without my help."

The organist listened with astonishment to the softened tones of the strange man's voice, but the Jonker lifted his glass, exclaiming:

"What dismal thoughts over a cheerful glass! You are the loser by it, captain. Take up your glass again and drink my toast: 'Long live the noble art of fence and your botte: carte, tierce, and longe in seconde.'"

"Long live the art—ay, and the botte," answered the captain. "Many hundreds of noble gentlemen use the sword in this land, and the man who sits before you taught them to use it according to rule. Many a one has my botte served well in a duel, while I, Andreas, their master, have cut and thrust, parried and longed thousands of times, and always with buttons on the foils and against a-padded doublet. But no man has ever stood up to me in a duel outside the city walls, or faced me in single combat in battle, often as I have pressed a leader of the foe. This Brescia blade has run through more than one Spanish gorget; but the art that I teach you, gentlemen, the art I love and to which I have devoted my life, I have never had the chance of putting into serious practice. This is hard to bear, my masters; and if merciful Heaven is disposed to vouchsafe a crowning mercy to a poor man who has been no worse than his neighbors before He calls him away, He will grant me yet once to cross my sword, in real and earnest single combat, and let me try my botte for life or death against a worthy adversary. If God Almighty grants me that—"

But the fencing-master had not finished his sentence when

a man at arms flung open the door and shouted into the guard-room:

“The light is up at Leyerdorp!”

At these words Allertssohn sprung to his feet, trembling with excitement like a boy, drew himself up, settled his arms and strappings, and drew down his sash as he cried:

“To the Burcht, bugler, and sound the assembly. Captain van Duivenvoorde, collect your volunteers; place yourself at the Hoogewoerde Gate with four companies ready to attack if the fight comes near to the city walls. The constable will see to your being provided with tinder. Our strength on the bastions must be doubled. You, Klaas, go at once and tell the bell-ringer of St. Pancras; he must toll an alarm to warn the folks who have come in for the fair. Give me your hand, Jonker—you, I know, will be at your post; you, Master Wilhelm—”

“I am coming with you,” said the musician, decidedly. “Do not refuse me; I have sat still long enough, and am suffocating in here.”

Wilhelm's cheeks were glowing, and so fierce and sinister a gleam sparkled in his eyes that Van Warmond looked with astonishment at his friend, usually so calm, while the captain exclaimed:

“Well, then, join the first company under my ensign. You do not look as if you were in the humor for jesting, and we are in earnest this night—ay, in bloody earnest!”

Allertssohn went out of the house with a resolute step, spoke a few short and determined words to his men, ordered the drummers to beat a reveillé as they marched through the streets of the town, to rouse the visitors to the fair, and then placed himself at the head of his little company of tried men, and led them by the New Rhine. The moon shone brightly down on the silent streets, was reflected from the black surface of the river, and flooded the tall, peaked gables of the narrow houses with its silver light. The brisk step of the soldiers echoed hollow from the walls through the stilly night, and the vibration from the sharp rattle of the drums made the window-panes ring again.

No merry children trotted on in front of the warriors with paper flags and wooden swords; there were no saucy maidens or proud mothers to follow them; no veteran to recall the by-gone time when he, too, had borne arms—on this occasion there was none of all this. As the little troop—silent, and set on the rigor of battle—reached Allertssohn's house, the tower

clock struck midnight in slow and solemn tones, and at the same instant the tocsin of St. Pancras tolled the alarm.

On the first-floor of the fencing-master's house a window was thrust open, at which the face of his wife appeared. An anxious married life with her eccentric husband had early aged the pretty face of his Eva, but the soft moonlight beautified her faded features. The rattle of her husband's drum was a well-known sound, but when she saw him marching past while the sinister toll of the alarm-bell shook the air, she was seized with terror, and could hardly utter the words as she tried to call out: "Husband—Andreas, what is the matter, Andreas?"

He did not hear her, for the roll of the drums, the trample of the soldiers' feet on the pavement, and the warning peal from the church tower, drowned her voice. But he saw her, and a strange feeling came over him; her face, wrapped in a white kerchief, and glorified by the moonlight, looked sweeter than he had ever seen it since the days of their wooing, and he felt so young and bold and chivalrously defiant as he marched to danger that he drew himself up and swaggered past in precise time to the beat of the drums, and, like some young lover, waved her a kiss with his left hand, while with his right he lowered the point of his sword.

The warlike roll and the flying standard had driven every gloomy thought out of his head. Thus they marched on as far as the Gansoord. There a cart was standing, which served as the night quarters of some travelers who had been roused by the tocsin, and who were now hastily collecting and packing their property; an old woman was grumbling and bewailing herself as she harnessed a gaunt horse to the shafts, and a lamentable little voice called persistently out of the small window, whimpering: "Mother, mother," and then for variety: "Father, father."

The captain heard the child's wail; the smile faded from his lips, and he walked less proudly. But then, turning to his men, he shouted in a loud voice: "Forward!" Wilhelm was marching close behind him, and at a sign from him took his place by his side; and the captain, as he mended his pace again, took the organist's arm, and said, in a low voice:

"You will take the youngster to teach, will you not?"

"Yes, captain."

"That is well; you will meet with your reward," replied the other; then brandishing his sword, he shouted: "Freedom for Holland! Death to the Spaniard, and long live the Prince of Orange!"

The men heartily joined in the cry, and they marched at a quick step out of the Hoogewoerde Gate toward Leyerdorp.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ADRIAN flew home with his vial, and in his delight at having brought a cure for Mistress Henrika he forgot all about the sick lady's headache, and knocked loudly at the front door. Barbara admitted him with a by no means flattering welcome; but he was so full of the joy of possessing his dearly purchased treasure that he boldly interrupted his aunt's angry scolding, exclaiming, with vehement confidence in the consciousness of so good a cause:

"But you will see—you will see. I have something here for the lady. Where is mother?"

Barbara saw the boy had come home bent on some delightful errand which prevented his thinking of anything else, and his fresh and radiant boyish face was so pleasant to look upon that she forgot to scold him, and said, with a good-natured smile:

"You make me quite curious; what can you be in such a hurry about?"

"I have bought something; is mother upstairs?"

"Yes, to be sure; but show me what you have got."

"Some medicine; infallible, I tell you. A remedy for headache."

"A cure for headache?" said the widow, puzzled; "who can have taken you in with that story?"

"Taken me in!" said the boy, laughing; "I bought it quite cheap."

"Show it to me, child," said Barbara, trying to seize the vial; but Adrian started back and hid his treasure behind him, exclaiming:

"No, aunt; I will take it to mother myself."

"What next?" exclaimed the aunt. "Were there ever such doings? A donkey dances on a slack rope, and now a school-boy meddles with the leech's practice! Show me the thing this moment. Quack medicines, indeed—we want them truly!"

"Quack medicines!" retorted Adrian, indignantly. "It cost me all my fairing stivers, and it is very good medicine."

During this little contest Dr. Bontius and the mistress of the house came down-stairs together. He overheard the boy's last words, and asked, sternly:

"Where did you get the stuff?"

And he grasped the boy's hand—for Adrian did not dare to

resist the grave physician—took the vial and the printed notice, and, as Adrian shortly replied:

“From Doctor Morpurgo,” he said, in a tone of annoyance:

“The decoction is good to throw away; but take care not to poison the fishes with it; and the stuff cost half a guilder! You are a man of substance, Master Adrian. Next time you have any superfluous capital you may lend it to me.”

This speech dashed the boy's innocent happiness, but it did not convince his judgment, and with a defiant wriggle he turned his back on the doctor. Barbara felt for him, understanding what was passing in his mind; and she whispered in deprecation to the doctor and her sister-in-law:

“It was the whole of his fairing money—to help the sick lady.”

Maria went toward the disappointed lad, drew his curly head to her side and kissed his forehead in silence, while the doctor read the printed notice. Then, as gravely as ever, and without moving a muscle of his face, he went on:

“Still, Morpurgo is not so bad as he might be. The medicine he here prescribes might, after all, do our patient good.”

Adrian had been nearer crying than laughing; he now breathed a sigh of relief, but he clung tightly to his step-mother's hand, while he once more faced the doctor and listened eagerly as De Bont went on:

“Two parts of buckbean, one part of peppermint, and half a part of valerian—the last especially for women—infused in boiling water. Drink a cupful cold, night and morning. Not bad—really not at all bad; you have hit upon a good prescription, my little colleague. However, I had something else to say to you: my boys are going this evening to see the English riders, and they will be very glad of your company if you will go with them. You may begin with this infusion at once.” The doctor bowed to the women and went out. Barbara followed him into the street.

“Are you in earnest about the prescription?” she asked.

“Certainly, certainly,” said the leech. “My grandmother was very fond of using this mixture as a cure for the headache, and she was a very shrewd woman—take it morning and evening, and keep quiet after it.”

Henrika was lodged in a fresh and prettily furnished room. The windows looked upon the quiet court-yard, planted with trees, and on the further side stood the leather factory. She was now allowed to sit up part of each day, propped with pillows, in an easy-chair. Her soundly healthy nature was reasserting itself; she was still weak, no doubt, and a pain on one

side of her head made her miserable sometimes for whole days and nights. Dame van der Werff's gentle and thoughtful presence did her good, and she liked to have Barbara about her too, with her fresh, wholesome face, and her simple, careful, prompt ways.

When Maria told her of Adrian's purchase she was moved to tears; however, to the boy himself she concealed her grateful feeling under a certain mockery, and greeted him with the exclamation:

"Ah! my preserver—come closer and give me your hand." And after that she would constantly call him her preserver; or, as she liked mixing Italian words with her Dutch, "Salvatore," or "Signor Salvatore." She always had a fancy for calling the people she had to do with by some name of her own devising; thus she would call Barbara, whose name she could not endure, Babetta; and little, fragile, lovely Elizabeth, whom she was always delighted to have with her, she named the Elf. Only the burgomaster's wife kept her own name of Dame Maria; and when one day in jest she asked the reason of such an oversight, Henrika replied that her name exactly suited her, and that if she had been named Martha she would probably have called her Maria.

This was a good and painless day with the convalescent, and when, in the evening, Adrian had gone to see the English riding, and the scent of the blossoming limes and the pale light of the moon found their way in at her open window, she begged Barbara not to bring a lamp, but asked Maria to come to sit with her and chat in the dim light. From talking of Adrian and Elizabeth they wandered into speaking of their own childhood. Henrika had grown up among her father's boon companions, amid the clatter of glasses and the cries of huntsmen; Maria had lived in a sober citizen's house, and what each could tell was to the other like news from another world.

"It was easy enough for you to grow up into a tall, white lily as you are now," said Henrika. "But I may thank the saints that I did no worse than I have done; for we grew up just like weeds; and, indeed, if I had not always loved singing, and if the chaplain had not been such an excellent musician, I should appear before you worse than I am. When will the doctor let me hear you sing?"

"Some day next week; but you must not raise your expectations too highly. You have too high an opinion of me in everything. Remember the saying about still waters; here they are often far less pleasant at the bottom than you would expect from the surface."

• “Ah, but you have learned to keep the surface calm when the depths are stirred, and I have not. Here a strange peace has come over me; whether I owe it to my illness or to the atmosphere that breathes in this house I know not; but how long is it since here in my heart there was a turmoil like the sea, when the hissing waves tumble into dark abysses and the sea-mews scream and the fishermen’s wives pray on the strand? Now the waters are still. But do not be too terrified if some day the storm were to begin anew.”

Maria took the excited girl’s hands and held them in her own.

“Gently; be calm, Henrika!” she said; “you must think of nothing now but of getting well. And I will confess one thing: I believe that every burden is easier to be borne when—like the sea of which you speak—the sufferer can toss it impatiently to the surface. With me one trouble gets heaped upon another; they lie, as it were, buried in the sand.”

“Till the wind blows and sweeps them away. I do not want to be a prophet of evil, but some day, you will see, you will remember my words. What a wild, reckless creature I have been! Then, in a single day, my very soul was turned upside down.”

“Did some false love wound your heart?” asked Maria, diffidently.

“No; it was only what I felt from false love in others,” said Henrika with a bitter laugh. “When I was a child my heart was easily fluttered, I do not know how often. First I felt far more than mere respect for the one-eyed chaplain, our music-master, and laid fresh flowers in the window for him every morning, but he never noticed them. Then—I may have been about fifteen—I returned the adoring glances of a page of Count Brederode’s; but he tried once to be tender, and felt my riding-whip for his pains. The next was a tall young baron, who would have married me when I was scarce sixteen, but he was even deeper in debt than my father, and so was shown the door. I did not shed a tear for him: and when, two months later, at a tourney at Brussels, I saw Don Fadrique, the great Alva’s son, I thought I loved him as no lady had ever loved her Amidis, although we never got any further than looking at each other. Then that storm burst of which I spoke, and there was an end of all philandering. Some day I will tell you more about it all; I need not hold my tongue, for it was no secret. Did you ever hear of my sister? No? She was older than I, and a more perfect creature God never created—and she sung! She went to live with my aunt who

is just dead, and then— But I must not excite myself for nothing. In short, the man she loved with all her heart left her in misery, and my father cursed her and would not put out even a finger to save her. I never knew my mother, but while I had Anna I never missed her. Her fate opened my eyes to the ways of men. During these last years many a one has wanted to marry me, but I had no confidence in them, much less love; for I will have nothing more to do with love.”

“Till love finds you napping one day,” replied Maria. “But it would be wrong to discuss such things with you now, for it excites you, and that will not do.”

“Oh, yes, it does one good to unburden one’s heart now and then. Did you never love any one but your husband?”

“Loved—no, Henrika; I never truly loved any one but him.”

“And your heart really waited to see the burgomaster before it beat any quicker?”

“No; before that there had been times when it was not altogether calm. I was brought up among pleasant and intelligent men, young and old, and naturally I cared more for some than for others.”

“Ay—and for one most of all.”

“I will not deny it. When my sister was married, a friend of my brother-in-law’s, a young German nobleman, came to the wedding and remained with us some weeks. I liked him very much; indeed, to this day I think kindly of him.”

“And have you never heard of him since?”

“No; and who can tell what has become of him? My brother-in-law expected great things of him, and he certainly was a rarely gifted creature; but he was recklessly daring—a constant anxiety to his mother, I am sure.”

“You must tell me more about him.”

“To what end, Henrika?”

“I will not talk any more, but I should like to sit here and breathe the scent of the limes, and listen—only listen.”

“No, you must go to bed now. I will help you, and when you have been alone and quiet for an hour, I will return.”

“You make me obey you, but when my preserver comes in bring him up to me; he must tell me all about the English riders. Here comes Dame Babetta with his potion—I will take it regularly, you will see.”

The lad came in late, for he had been enjoying all the delights of the fair with the doctor’s children; his visit to Henrika, therefore, was strictly limited. His father he did not

see at all, for Van der Werff was gone to a nocturnal meeting at the house of the commissary, Van Bronkhorst.

On the next day the fair would be at an end, school would begin again, and Adrian had intended to finish his holiday task this evening. But the English horse-riding had come in the way, and he could not possibly appear before the master without his exercise. This he frankly confessed to his step-mother, and she cleared a place for him on the table where she sat sewing, and helped out the young scholar with many a word or rule which she had learned as a child with her brother.

It wanted but half an hour of midnight when Barbara came in and said:

“Now, that must do. To-morrow early, before school, you must finish what is wanting.”

Without waiting for Maria to reply, she closed the boy's books and pushed them together. She was in the very act of doing this when the room seemed to shake from a violent knocking at the house door. Maria threw down her work and started from her seat, while Barbara exclaimed:

“In Heaven's name what is that?” And Adrian flew into his father's room and flung open the window. The women hastily followed, and before they could question the disturber of the peace, a deep voice called up to them:

“Open the door! I must come in.”

“What is the matter?” asked Barbara, who perceived in the moonlight that it was a soldier. “We can not hear ourselves speak; stop that knocking.”

“Call the burgomaster,” cried the messenger, who had knocked without ceasing. “Make haste, you women; the Spaniards are coming.”

Barbara gave a loud scream and clasped her hands. Maria turned pale, but did not lose her presence of mind.

“The master is not at home,” she replied, “but he shall be sent for. Quick, Adrian—run and tell your father.”

The boy rushed down-stairs, and in the hall met Trautchen and the man-servant, who had jumped out of bed and hastily thrown on some clothes. The old woman was now endeavoring, with trembling hands, to unfasten the door. The man pushed her aside, and as soon as the door creaked on its hinges Adrian flew out, and ran as if for a wager toward Van Bronkhorst's house. He reached it before any of the other messengers, made his way through the open door into the dining-room, and breathlessly shouted to the party who were sitting in council over their wine:

“The Spaniards are here.”

The men hurriedly rose from their seats. One proposed to hasten to the Burcht, another to the town hall, and in the excitement of the moment they could come to no coherent decision; only Peter van der Werff remained calm, and when Allertssohn's messenger had come in and told them that the captain and his men were by this time on their way to Leyderdorp, the burgomaster pointed out that their first care must be directed to the people who had come into the town for the fair. He and Van Hout undertook the duty, and before long Adrian was standing with the two men amid the rushing tide of humanity roused from sleep by the brazen voice from the St. Pancras tower.

CHAPTER XIX.

ADRIAN'S work for that night was not yet ended, for his father did not forbid his following him to the town hall. He then charged him to go and tell his mother that he should be detained there till morning, and that any persons desiring to speak with him after the next hour or so were to be directed by the man-servant to seek him in the wood market by the Rhine. His mother then sent the boy back again to ask whether his father would not have his cloak or something to eat, or wine, or some other refreshment. The lad executed these errands with eager zeal, for, as he made his way through the crowds which choked the narrow streets, he felt more important than he had ever felt before; he, too, had official duty to fulfill, and at night, too, when other boys were in bed and asleep, particularly his own comrades, who certainly would not have been allowed to be abroad at such an hour.

Besides, an exciting time might be counted on, with tuck of drum, blare of trumpets, rattle of musketry, and roar of cannon; he felt that the game of Dutch and Spaniards was going to be played in earnest and on a grand scale. All the manly vigor of his age suddenly sprung into vitality, and when now and then he could elbow his way through the throng to some quiet space, he hurried onward, and sung out as cheerily as if it were some joyful announcement:

“Here they come; the Spaniards are here;” or: “*Hannibal ante portas.*”

After he had learned, on his second visit to the town-hall, that his father needed nothing, and would send one of the ushers if he wanted anything, he considered himself released from duty and at liberty to indulge his curiosity.

First he went to the English horse-riding. The tent in

which the performances had been given had vanished from the face of the earth, and men and women, shouting and screaming, were rolling up huge pieces of canvas, tying up bales, and harnessing the restive horses in couples; the scene was lighted by the dull flare of torches and the white moonbeams, showing him a large four-wheeled wagon-house, and on the narrow steps that led up to its door a little girl in very poor clothing, who was crying bitterly. Could this be the rosy cherub who, fluttering round on a snow-white horse, had appeared to him some beatific creature from a fairer world? A scolding old woman came and lifted the child into the little house upon wheels, and Adrian went on his way, following the press of men. Then he saw Dr. Morpurgo on a bony nag, riding behind his chariot, no longer in scarlet, but in a suit of dark cloth. The negro was brutally urging the mule which dragged the vehicle, but his master did not seem to have lost his usual calm self-possession. His stock was of small value, and their lordships the Spaniards had no reason to deprive him of his head, or of the tongue by which he earned more than he needed.

Adrian followed in his wake as far as the long rows of booths in the Breede Street, and there he saw scenes which quelled his high spirits, and by degrees made him understand that matters were indeed serious and fit to make men's hearts quail. He still could laugh as he looked on at the doings of the gingerbread-maker and the yarn-seller, who had been partners in a stall, for in their first alarm they had tossed their parcels of goods each into the other's chests, just as they came to hand, and could now sort their respective belongings. But a poor woman who sold Delft crockery at a corner stall moved him to compassion, for a heavy wagon from Gouda, loaded with large bales, had completely wrecked her frail booth, and she was wringing her hands over the ruined possessions, which represented all the fortunes of herself and her children, while the wagon-driver, never heeding her, cracked his whip to encourage his team. A little girl, who had got herself lost, and was being led along by a kind-hearted citizen's wife, was howling lamentably. A rope-dancer, who had been robbed in the press of his little tin box and his small fortune in pence, wandered about vainly seeking a guardian of the peace. A cobbler thrust and stamped his stock of riding-boots and slippers and hanks of hempen thread into a wooden packing-case, while his wife tore her hair, and, instead of helping him, shrieked at him: "I knew it! I told him so, you simpleton—you wiseacre—you blockhead! They will come and take everything away from us!"

At the turning into the narrow street which leads to the bridge by the Church of the Holy Virgin, past the house of the Assendelfts, a number of high-piled carts had got locked, and in their alarm the drivers, instead of getting down and fetching help, fell to scolding each other, including the women and children, who had lain down on the top of the loads. Their cries and lamentations were heard afar, but even they were presently drowned, for at the north end of the alley a dancing bear had broken loose, and put every one to flight that happened to be near. Shrieking and hallooing, the terrified mob fled from the beast down the street, sweeping others before them who did not know the original cause of the stampede, and thinking only of the dominant terror, shouted: "The Spaniards! the Spaniards!" Everything that stood in the way of this flying rout was overturned on the spot. A child, standing by a basket-maker's cart which had been upset, fell under the feet of the people close by Adrian, who had ensconced himself in a door-way; but he could do nothing to help the little fellow, for he was tightly squeezed into his corner, and just then his attention was diverted to a new object, for Janus Douser appeared on the scene, mounted on horseback. He rode toward the panic-stricken crowd, and above the cry of "The Spaniards, the Spaniards!" he shouted, in piercing tones: "Peace—be quiet, good folks! The enemy is not here yet. Go to the Rhine—go to the river! There are ships and barges there for all strangers. There are no Spaniards there; do you hear? no Spaniards at all."

The baron drew up just in front of Adrian, for his horse could get no further, but chafed and fretted under his rider, whose proclamation had but little effect; and it was not till hundreds of flying people had hurried past him that the scared crowd grew thinner. The bear from which they had fled had long since been recaptured by some brewer's men and led back to his owner. The town watch now appeared, with Van der Werff at their head; and the boy followed them unobserved as far as the timber market on the southern bank of the Rhine. There he was met by another bustling swarm, for numbers of dealers had assembled there to stow their goods on board ship. Men and women were scrambling among the bales and cases which were being rolled or pitched into the barges. A woman and child with a rope-maker's barrow had been pushed into the water, and the loudest turmoil had centered round them; but the burgomaster was on the spot at the right moment, directed the rescue of the drowning wretches, and did his utmost to reduce the confusion to order. The watch were

ordered only to allow the fugitives to pass on to the boats which were starting for the towns they belonged to; two gangways were thrown across to each barge—one for goods, one for passengers; and the town criers were ordered to proclaim—and it was in fact prescribed by law—that at the sound of the alarm-bell all the inhabitants of the town should retire within doors, and not appear in the streets under a severe penalty. All the town gates might be opened for the exit of vehicles, with the exception of the Hoogewoerde Gate, which led to Leyderdorp. Thus, presently the streets were cleared, the crowd reduced to order, and by the time Adrian reached home and dawn was breaking the town was almost as quiet as on ordinary nights.

His mother and Barbara had been anxious about him; however, he was able to tell them he had seen his father, who had quelled the tumult under his very eyes. Even while he was still speaking they heard gunshots, and this excited the lad to such a pitch that all he asked was to run out again; but his mother held him back, and he had to submit to go up to his room. Still he would not go to bed, but clambered up to the highest loft in the gable of the warehouse at the back, and there, through the opening which was used for hauling up the bales of leather, he could look to the east, where firing was still to be heard. He could, however, see nothing but the rosy dawn and thin clouds of smoke which floated upward, tinged with the glow of the coming sun. Presently, as nothing new was to be seen, his eyes closed; he fell asleep by the open window, and dreamed of a bloody battle and of the English riders. He slept so soundly that he did not hear the clatter of wheels, which before long came up from the court-yard below. It was caused by the carts of various dealers from neighboring towns, who preferred leaving their property in the threatened city to risking its conveyance through the invading Spanish troops, and Master Peter had permitted some of these to deposit their goods on his premises. The carts were to be admitted through the outbuildings and workshops, and such wares as might suffer from exposure to the weather were to be put under shelter, in the course of the day, in the large rooms on the ground-floor.

At midnight Maria had gone to Henrika to reassure her; but the convalescent had betrayed no sort of anxiety, and when she heard that the Spanish were marching on the town, a bright gleam of satisfaction sparkled in her eyes. Maria saw it and turned away; she refrained from speaking the sharp words that rose to her lips, and merely bidding the girl good-night, she left the room.

Henrika looked after her thoughtfully, and then sat up in bed, for on such a night sleep was out of the question. The alarm-bell of St. Pancras's tower did not cease, and more than once a door slammed; she heard voices below, and presently distant firing. Noises and murmurs which she could assign to no definite cause crowded on her ear, and as the day grew there was ceaseless bustle under her window and in the house that was usually so still. Her impatience and curiosity increased every minute, and she listened so eagerly that her head began to ache again; but she could only catch a few words, and those not distinctly. Had the town surrendered to the Spaniards? Had some of King Philip's soldiers found quarters in the burgomaster's house? Her blood boiled for a moment when she thought of the triumph of the Castilians and the humiliation of her native land; but then again a pleasanter excitement came over her, for in fancy she saw the bare walls of the churches, which had been stripped of every ornament, once more decorated by art; chanting processions march through the streets, and high mass celebrated by priests in splendid robes before newly decked altars, with fine music, incense, and the tinkling of trueful bells. She expected that the Spanish rule should restore an Established Church, in which she could pray in her own way and relieve her soul by confession. All through her former life she had known no secure foothold, no sure hold-fast but her religion. A most worthy priest had been her teacher, and he had done his utmost to impress upon her that the new doctrines threatened to destroy all the mystical solemnities of life, all craving for beauty, every ideal aspiration of the human soul, and even art itself; and so Henrika wished that her country might be Spanish and Catholic rather than free from the foreign yoke—though she hated it—at the cost of being Calvinist.

By degrees the noise in the court-yard died away; but as the first beams of day fell upon her window-pane the stir below began again, busier and louder than ever. Heavy shoes clattered on the pavement, and among the confusion of voices she fancied she could recognize those of Maria and Barbara. Yes, she was not mistaken; that cry of dismay was certainly uttered by her friend, and it was followed by tones of bitter lamentation in a man's voice, and loud sobs. Some bad news must have reached her friends, for certainly the woman she heard weeping so violently was worthy Dame Babetta.

She longed to be up; on the table by her bed, with some vials and glasses, and the night-lamp and tinder-box, stood a little bell, whose lightest tinkle had hitherto never failed to

bring her nurses to her at once. Three times Henrika rung it, and again and yet again, but no one came. Her hasty blood rose, and, half in impatience and vexation, half in curiosity and sympathy, she slipped on her shoes and her wrapper. Then she went to the seat which stood on the step by the window, opened the casement, and looked down on the group close below. No one noticed her, for the men who had collected and who looked mournful, and the women all in tears—among them Maria and Barbara—were listening with every mark of sympathy to the eager speech of a young man, and had no eyes nor ears for anything else. Henrika recognized the speaker as Wilhelm, the organist, but only by his voice, for the helmet that covered his curls, and his cuirass stained with blood, gave the unpretending musician a warlike, nay, a heroic aspect.

He was already far advanced in his narrative when Henrika, though unperceived, became one of his audience.

“Yes, master,” he said, in answer to some question from the burgomaster, “we were following them, but suddenly they vanished into the village again, and all was quiet. It would have been sheer madness to think of storming the houses, so we kept close; but at about two o’clock we heard shots in the neighborhood of Leyderdorp. ‘The Baron van Warmond has forced his way out!’ cried the captain, as he led us in the direction of the firing. That was just what the Spaniards wanted, for long before we had reached the spot, in the gloaming, a company of Castilians jumped up from a ditch with white shrouds over their armor, fell upon their knees, muttered a Pater Noster, shouted Sant Jago, and rushed upon us. We had seen them in time, however, so the halberdiers could have their pikes ready, and the musketeers could lay their matchlocks down on the ground. So the Spaniards met with a warm reception, and four of them fell in the attack. We were stronger in numbers than they were, and their captain retreated in good order to their ditch. There they remained, for their work was done; they were only to detain us, and then leave us to be cut off by a stronger corps. We were too weak to drive them out of their position, and when it was growing light in the east and still they would not come out, our captain went toward them with a white handkerchief displayed and the drummer playing, and called to them in Italian, of which he had learned a little in Lombardy, that he wished the gentlemen a very good-morning, and if there should be among them an officer with a grain of honor in his composition, he might come forth and cross swords with a captain who wished for the

opportunity. He pledged his word that his men should look on at the duel without interfering, be the issue what it might. On this two shots were fired from the ditch, and the bullets barely missed our poor master. We shouted to him to save his own life, but he did not stir, only shouted to them that they were milk-sops and assassins like their king.

“Meanwhile it had become pretty light; we could hear them talking in their ambush, and just as Allertssohn was about to turn on his heel, an officer leaped up on to the bank and cried out: ‘Stand, braggart, and hold your own!’ The captain drew his Brescia blade, bowed to his antagonist just as if he were in the fencing-ground, tried his steel, and measured it with the Spaniard’s. He was a lean-made man and very tall, and, as it soon appeared, a dangerous swordsman. He whisked round our captain with cuts, thrusts, and feints, but Allertssohn kept quite cool, and at first confined himself to parrying. Then he engaged the Spaniard’s blade in *carte*, as his opponent parried followed in *terce*, and then, as quick as lightning with a *longe* in *seconde*, such as he alone knew how to deal, the Castilian fell on his knees, for the Brescia blade was through his lungs, and in a few seconds he was dead. No sooner was he stretched on the grass than the Spaniards rushed out on us again, but we drove them back once more, carrying the dead body with us. So proud and gay as at that moment was our captain never seen. You, Jonker van Warmond, can easily guess the reason. He had at last done justice to his famous *botte* in single combat for life or death with an opponent of equal skill; he said to me that the morning had brought him luck, and ordered us to surround the ditch and take the enemy in flank. But hardly had we begun to move when the expected corps marched out of Leyderdorp. Their loud ‘*Sant Jago*’ rung out afar, and at the same time our old foe jumped out of the ditch and renewed the onslaught. Allertssohn rushed upon them, but he never reached them. Ah! master, I shall never forget it—a bullet brought him to the ground by my side. It must have pierced his heart, for he said never a word but: ‘Take care of the boy!’ and then he stretched out his long limbs and was dead. We wanted to bring him away, but we were pressed by numbers, and it was as much as we could do to retire in miserable disorder within cover of the guns of the Jonker’s volunteers. The Spaniards dared not pursue us so far. So here we are. The body of the Castilian is lying in the tower by the Hoogewoerde Gate. Here are the papers we found upon him, and here is his ring; he had a proud coat of arms for his signet.”

Peter van der Werff took the letter-case in his hand and glanced through the contents; then he said:

“His name was Don Luis d’Avila.”

But he said no more, for his wife had just observed Henrika’s head stretched far out of the window, and, startled to see her, called out in dismay:

“Mistress! for Heaven’s sake, mistress, what are you doing?”

CHAPTER XX.

DAME VAN DER WERFF was anxious on Henrika’s account, but the young lady nodded to her with unwonted cheerfulness, and met her mild remonstrances with the assurance that the fine morning had done her good. Providence, she said, was just in its dealings, and if it were true that confidence in recovery was a help to the physician, Dr. Bontius would now have an easy patient to deal with. The Spaniard whom Allertssohn had killed could be none other than the wretch who had dragged Anna into misery. Maria left her, astonished but quite easy about her, and went to tell her husband how she had found the invalid, and of the connection which—as it would seem—had existed between the dead Spanish officer and Henrika and her sister. Peter listened to her with only half his attention, and as soon as Barbara had brought him a freshly plaited rouff, he interrupted his wife in the midst of her story by handing her the Castilian’s letter-case and saying:

“There, let her convince herself; and give me the portfolio back this evening. I am not likely to be home to dinner; in the course of the day you will try to see poor Allertssohn’s widow?”

“Of course I will,” she said, eagerly; “and whom will you put in his place?”

“That the prince must decide.”

“And have you thought of any way of keeping up communications with Delft, in spite of the enemy?”

“On your mother’s account?”

“Not for that alone. Rotterdam also lies to the south of us. Now, from Haarlem and Amsterdam—from the north, in short—we have nothing to look for, for everything is in the hands of the Spaniards.”

“I will procure you a seat at the Council of War. What makes you so wondrous wise?”

“Well, every one must have his own thoughts, and it is surely quite natural that, with you, I should look into the fut-

ure with my eyes open rather than blindfold. Have they availed themselves of the English regiment to secure the works by the old canal? The Kaak, too, is an important point."

Peter looked at his wife with astonishment, and the feeling came over him which troubles an unready writer when some one unexpectedly looks over his shoulder. She had hit upon a blot, a serious and momentous oversight, which, to be sure, did not wholly rest with him; but, as he certainly did not choose to be answerable to her, and perhaps would have found it difficult to justify himself, he did not reply, and simply saying: "These are men's affairs—till this evening," he went past Barbara and toward the door.

Maria did not know how she found courage, but before he had laid his hand on the lock she had collected herself sufficiently to call out to him:

"Will you leave me so, Peter? Is that fair? What did you promise me on your return from your journey to see the prince?"

"I know—I know," he said, impatiently. "But no man can serve two masters, and in these anxious days I entreat you not to trouble me with questions and matters that do not concern you. To manage the affairs of the town is my business; you have your sick friend, the children, the poor—be satisfied with these."

And without waiting for an answer he left the room, while she looked after him, silent and motionless. Barbara gazed at her for a moment anxiously, but without speaking. Then she busied herself with the papers on her brother's writing-table, muttering half to herself, but still turning to her sister-in-law:

"These are bad times indeed, and each of us may thank God that he has not such a burden to bear as Peter. He is responsible for everything, and with a hundred-weight tied to each leg, who could dance lightly, I wonder? A better heart beats in no man's breast, and not an honest soul lives. How the market-folk blessed his foresight! It is in a storm that you know the pilot's worth, and when the fray was at the thickest Peter was greatest. He knows full well what lies before him, but these last weeks have made him years older. We must overlook a great deal, I think."

Maria nodded assent, and Barbara quitted the room; but in a few minutes she returned and said, kindly:

"You look but poorly, child; just come and lie down awhile. An hour's sleep is better than three meals, and a night like last night is bound to leave its traces at your age.

The sun shines so brightly that I have drawn the curtains over the windows, and I have made your bed. Now, be reasonable and do as you are bid."

With these words she took Maria's hand and drew her away. Maria did not resist, and although when she was alone she could not keep back her tears, she was soon overmastered by sleep.

She woke greatly refreshed, and, having changed her dress, she betook herself about noon to Allertsohn's house. Her heart was heavy, and self-pity had once more taken possession of her. Eva, "Peter's daughter," the fencing-master's widow, a quiet, humble creature, whom she hardly knew by sight, refused to be seen; she was weeping alone in her room, but at the house Maria found the musician, who was trying to speak words of comfort to the son of his lost friend, and had promised to take him under his own teaching and make a good musician of him. Dame van der Werff sent up a message begging the widow to see her the following day, and then she and Wilhelm left the house. The street was full of citizens, apprentices, and women, standing together in knots and discussing the events of the night and the imminent danger; and Maria was several times interrupted as she was telling Wilhelm who the fallen Spaniard was, and that Henrika wished to speak with him—the musician—as soon as possible, for their progress was checked, now by a company of volunteers or a troop of the town guard on their way to relieve the watch on the bastions and walls, and now by cannon that was being transported. Was it the anticipation of coming events, or was it the rattle of drums and the trumpet blast, that so agitated her companion as to make him clasp his forehead in his hands, and more than once compel her to beg him to moderate his pace? And there was something unusual and constrained in his voice as he told her, in answer to her questions, that the Spaniards had come by the Amstel, the Drecht, and the Braasmer, by ship, and so into the Rhine, and then landed at Leyderdorp.

He was interrupted in his explanation by a mounted messenger wearing the prince's colors, and followed by a crowd, not merely of children, but of hurrying men, eager to reach the town hall as soon as he; but as soon as the throng was past Maria began again to ply her companion with questions. The warlike turmoil, the firing—audible in the distance—the gaudy uniforms of the soldiers, which were everywhere conspicuous instead of the sober suits of the citizens—all worked her up to a high pitch of excitement, and all that she heard

from Wilhelm was little calculated to soothe it. The chief strength of the Spaniards was posted on the road to the Hague. The blockade of the town was already begun, but the enemy could hardly make it complete, for the English auxiliaries who were to defend the new fort at Valkenburg, the village of Alfen, and the sluices of Gonda, were entirely to be relied on. Wilhelm himself had seen the English forces, their commanders, Colonel Chester and Captain Gensforth, and was full of the praises of their splendid equipment and handsome appearance.

At her own door Maria was about to take leave of her companion, but he begged to be allowed to speak with Mistress Henrika at once, and could hardly be persuaded that he must have patience until the physician had given his consent.

At dinner, Adrian—who was always ready to chatter when his father was not present at the meal—told them of all he had himself seen, as well as the news and rumors he had been able to pick up at school or in the streets; and his communicativeness was not a little encouraged by his mother's eager questions.

A great unrest had fallen upon the burgomaster's wife. Her enthusiasm in the cause of freedom—a cause to which those nearest and dearest to her had fallen victims—blazed up anew, and wrath against the oppressors of her country seethed hotly in her breast. This tender, maidenly souled woman, in daily life so reserved, so incapable of loud or bitter utterance of feeling, was now capable of mounting the ramparts, and, like Kenau Hasselaar of Haarlem, of facing the foe as stoutly as the men. Her wounded pride and all the emotions which, only an hour since, had weighed upon her spirit, sunk into nothingness as compared with her sympathy for her country's cause. Inspired with new courage for life, she went up to Henrika's room, and, after lighting the lamp, as it was by this time growing dark, she sat down to write to her mother; this she had postponed doing since the sick girl's arrival, and the communication with Delft might at any moment be cut off. As she read the letter through before closing it, she felt satisfied with it and with herself, for it breathed brave confidence in the triumph of the good cause, and expressed fully and freely how cheerfully ready she herself was to suffer the worst that might befall.

Barbara had already gone to bed when Peter at last came in. He was so tired out that he could hardly touch the food that had been kept ready for him. While he was trying to eat he confirmed all that Maria had already heard from the musician,

and was gentle and affectionate; but his looks grieved her, for she remembered Barbara's allusion to the heavy burden he had to bear. This evening, for the first time, she saw two deep lines which care had engraved between his eyes and mouth, and filled with tender solicitude, she went up behind him, laid her hands on his cheeks, and kissed his forehead. He started slightly, and grasping her slender hand so tightly that she almost winced, pressed it to his lips and eyes, where he held it for some minutes. At last he rose and led the way to bed, bid her an affectionate good-night, and lay down. By the time she was ready he was sleeping heavily; utter weariness had overpowered him instantly. But neither of them could sleep calmly that night, and as often as she woke she heard him sighing and moaning. She would not stir for fear of scaring away the sleep he so sorely needed, and twice she even held her breath as she heard him muttering to himself. Once he said in a low voice: "It is too much, too much," and then again: "If only I can bear it!"

When she awoke in the morning he had already quitted the room and was gone to the town council. At noon he returned with the news that the Spaniards had entered the Hague, and had been hailed and welcomed there by the miserable renegades. The stanch patriots and the Gueux had, happily, had time enough to escape to Delft, for the heroic Nikolas Ruich-haver had succeeded in keeping the enemy in check for some time at Geestburg. The western side was still open, and the Valkenburg, newly fortified and garrisoned by the English, would not be easily stormed. At Alfen, to the east, the other British auxiliaries lay to the rear of the Spaniards.

The burgomaster told her all this unquestioned; still, not so fully and naturally as he would have done to men. He paused in his speech many times and gazed into his plate. It was evidently an effort to him to speak of such matters as he was used to discuss only with his colleagues, before women, children, and servants. Maria listened to him attentively, but she modestly restrained her own observations, and only encouraged him to talk by affectionate glances and sympathetic exclamations, while Barbara rashly plied him with one question after another.

They had nearly finished their meal when the Jonker van Warmond entered the room unannounced, and begged the burgomaster to come with him at once, as Colonel Chester was standing at the White Gate with a detachment of the English troops, and craved to be admitted to the town. At this

news, Peter angrily set his tankard down on the table, started up and left the room, leaving Van Warmond to follow.

Late in the afternoon the house of the Van der Werffs was full of visitors. The gossips came in to discuss the proceedings at the White Gate with Dame Barbara; Burgomatser van Swieten's wife had learned from her husband himself that the English had surrendered the fine new fort of Valkenburg, and taken to their heels at the mere sight of the Spaniards. The enemy had marched across the *dunes* to Nordwyk, and it would have been quite easy for the British to hold so strong a position. The English were now demanding to be let into the town itself; but Dame van Hout asserted that the members of the Council, more especially Van der Werff and her husband, were doing their utmost to prevent this. All the women very decidedly expressed their objection to see five hundred more food-consumers quartered in the town, and blamed the prince's commissary, who was said to hold opposite views, and to wish that the gates should be opened to the English contingent. Dame van Swieten, meanwhile, had sat in silence, playing with the cat and listening to the others, but she now said, with an affected smile:

"Believe me, it will be all the same whether we admit our foreign allies or not; for before the raspberries are ripe in the garden all idea of resistance will be at an end."

Maria, who was offering them cakes and spiced wine, at these words set her tray on the table and said:

"Is that your wish, Dame Magtelt?"

"It is my wish," was the very decided answer; "and many sensible people wish the same. Resistance is impossible against such overpowering numbers; the sooner we appeal to the king's clemency, the more surely will it be extended to us."

The other women listened speechless to the utterances of the audacious Magtelt, but Maria stepped toward her and answered wrathfully:

"Whoever says that has only to go over at once to the Spaniards—whoever says that, desires nothing but the disgrace of the town and of the country—whoever says that—"

Magtelt interrupted Maria with a forced laugh, exclaiming: "Indeed, Dame Precocity! And are you going to take your seniors to task? And is it usual to attack a visitor in this fierce way?"

"Usual or not," retorted the other, "I will never allow such words to be spoken in my house; and if it were from my own sister's lips I would say: Go, you are no friend of mine!"

Maria's voice trembled, and with outstretched arm she

pointed to the door. Dame Magtelt struggled to be calm, but as she quitted the room she could find no further utterance than:

“Never mind! never mind! But you will never see me here again.”

Barbara followed the offended lady, and those who remained sat with their eyes in their laps; but Wilhelm's mother was delighted.

“Well done, little woman! well done!” she exclaimed. Friendly Dame van Hout put her arm round the young woman and kissed her forehead, whispering at the same time:

“There, turn your back on the others and wipe your eyes.”

CHAPTER XXI.

A STORY is told of a condemned criminal who was cast by a barbarous tyrant into a dungeon of ingenious construction. Each day the walls of his cell shrunk in extent, each day they closed in upon the helpless wretch, till he gave up the ghost in despair, and his prison became his grave. In the same way the iron circle of Spanish regiments was every hour drawn more tightly and closely round the walls of Leyden; and if at last they should succeed in breaking the resistance of their victims a fate more hideous and relentless than that which had overtaken that prisoner would overwhelm the town. The blockade which Valdez, King Philip's field-marshal, and his skillful lieutenant, Don Ayala, had effected in little more than two days was now almost complete; the outpost of Valkenburg, which had been so carefully strengthened, was in possession of the enemy; and the danger had altogether swept down upon them far more swiftly and irresistibly than the most dependent of the inhabitants had conceived possible. If Leyden should be taken, its buildings would fall a prey to the flames and to rapine; its men would be butchered; its women dishonored. The fate of other places and the character of the Spaniards were only too sure a warranty for that.

It was impossible to think of the guardian genius of the busy town otherwise than as sitting under a sinister sky with a gloomy frown and anxious eyes, and yet the scene by the White Gate on that very afternoon was as gay and bright as though some spring-tide festival were being closed by a gorgeous spectacle. Wherever standing room was to be found on the walls, as far as to St. Katharine's tower, they were densely thronged with men, women and children. The old ramparts looked like the closely packed amphitheater round an arena,

and the busy hum of the many-voiced and inquisitive crowd was audible far below in the heart of the town.

It is a merciful dispensation which enables men thus to revel in a brief gleam of sunshine breaking through ominous clouds. The apprentices and workmen, the women and children, perched up there on the walls forgot all about the immediate danger, and feasted their eyes on the splendid accouterments of the English soldiers, who looked up at them from outside, audaciously nodding and smiling at the girls, though some, no doubt with graver mien, looked forward to the issue of the negotiations now going on within the walls.

Now the White Gate was thrown open. Commissary van Bronkhorst, Van der Werff, Van Hout, and other leaders of the little commonwealth escorted the English colonel and staff over the bridge. The Englishman seemed boiling over with indignation, and more than once laid his hand upon his sword-hilt while the Leydeners spoke to him, and they finally took leave of him with profound bows, to which he returned a mere haughty wave of his hand. The citizens returned into the town, the gates swung to, the old lock creaked, the outer bars—strong iron-shod beams—fell into their sockets, the chains on the draw-bridge rattled loudly and ominously, and the assembled multitude understood that the English were excluded from the city.

Loud huzzas, mingled with many an expression of aversion, rang through the air. "Long live Orange!" shouted the boys, among whom were Adrian and the dead fencing-master's son; the women waved their handkerchiefs, and all eyes were fixed on the English. A loud trumpet blast was heard; the mounted officers of the English force rode forward to meet their colonel, and held a short council of war with him, interrupted, however, by the violent speech of some few of their number, and soon after a signal was sounded; the soldiers hastily formed in ranks, and many a one as he turned away threatened the town with his fist. The guns and halberts, which had been neatly piled, were snatched up by their owners, and, guided by the sound of drums and trumpets, the chaos fell into order. Individuals formed lines; lines multiplied into companies; the gaudy standards were raised and flaunted on the evening breeze; and with loud huzzas the whole force marched off along the Rhine to the south-west, where the Spanish outposts were placed; and the Leyden lads joined heartily in the shouts of the English.

Allertssohn's orphan, Andreas, had begun to shout, too, with a will; but catching sight of a tall officer marching proudly

ahead of his ensign, his voice failed him, and covering his eyes with his hand he ran home to his mother. His companions did not observe him, for the sinking sun was so dazzlingly mirrored in the cuirasses and helmets, the trumpets rang out so jollily, the officers' horses pranced so bravely under their riders, the gaudy feathers and flags and the smoke of the burning slow matches borrowed such glorious hues from the ruddy setting sun, that all eyes and ears were spell-bound by the scene.

But suddenly a new excitement attracted the attention of old and young. Thirty-six English soldiers, and among them some officers, had remained behind the others, and now came up to the gates. Once more the lock ground and shrieked and the chains rattled. The little party were admitted and made welcome at the entrance to the Nordeinde by Van Bronkhorst and the burgomaster.

Every one on the wall had expected that a fray between the retreating British and the Spaniards would now be fought under their very eyes. But, far from this, before the first ranks had reached the Spanish outposts they saw the slow matches tossed away, the flags lowered, and as night fell and the gossips and sight-seers dispersed, they learned that the English had deserted the good cause and gone over to the Spaniards. The six-and-thirty who were admitted into the town were the little handful who had refused to yield to this traitorous council.

It now became Van Hout's task to find quarters for Captain Cromwell and his stanch followers, British and Dutch.

Van der Werff went home with Van Bronkhorst, and their words though not loud were vehement. The commissary declared that the prince would be very irate at the dismissal of the English, since he laid great stress, and with justice, on Queen Elizabeth's countenancing the cause of their freedom, and that the burgomaster and his supporters had done it but ill service that day. This Van der Werff denied, since the one thing to be thought of was the preservation of Leyden. If it should fall, Delft, Gouda, and Rotterdam were lost, and all further efforts to win freedom for Holland must be vain. Now, five hundred valiant trenchermen must help to exhaust their already slender stock of provisions. They had done their utmost to give their refusal a courteous form, and the English had had the choice of encamping under the protection of the cannon mounted on the city walls.

When the men parted neither had convinced the other, still each was perfectly sure of his colleague's fidelity and conscientious purpose.

As they parted, Peter said:

“The town secretary ought to represent the reasons for our determination to the prince in a clear and convincing document—and no man can do it so well—and his excellency can not fail to approve of them; on that you may rely.”

“Let us hope so,” replied Van Bronkhorst. “But remember that we shall soon be sitting inside these walls like imprisoned felons under lock and key, and that by the day after to-morrow no messenger may be able to reach him.”

“Van Hout has the pen of a ready writer.”

“And to-morrow morning a proclamation is to be read, in which we advise all women, old men and children to quit the town—all, in short, who may consume provisions without helping in the defense. They can reach Delft without danger, for that road is still open.”

“Very good,” said Peter; “and indeed many women and girls have already started, as I learn.”

“That is well!” exclaimed the commissary. “We are piloting an ill-found ship in a stormy sea, and if I had a daughter at home I know well enough what I should do. Farewell for the present, master. I wonder what is happening at Alfen; I hear no firing now.”

“The darkness has interrupted the fighting.”

“We must hope for the best to-morrow, and if those who are outside all surrender together, we in here will neither waver nor yield.”

“We will hold out to the last,” said Peter, resolutely.

“To the last—and, by God’s help, to a happy issue.”

“Amen,” said Peter, grasping his friend’s hand and turning homeward.

On the steps he met Barbara. She wanted to call Maria, who was up with Henrika, but he would not have it, and took to walking up and down his room; his lips were pinched and set, as if he were suffering some great physical pain. When he presently heard his wife’s voice, in the eating-room, he collected himself by a strong effort, went to the door and slowly opened it.

“Are you at home? And here was I quietly sitting and spinning!” she exclaimed, in surprise.

“Yes, child. Come in here to me—I want to speak to you.”

“For God’s sake, Peter, what has happened? You speak so strangely and look so white!”

“I am not ill, but matters are serious—fearfully serious, Maria.”

“It is true, then, the enemy—”

“They have gained enormous advantages yesterday and to-day— But pray do not interrupt me now if you love me, for what I have to say to you is not easily said; it is hard, very hard, to speak. How shall I begin? How can I express myself so that you may understand exactly what I mean? You see, my child, I brought you into my home out of a snug and happy little nest. What I had to offer you was but little, and, in truth, you expected to find more. I know—I know you are not satisfied.”

“But it would be so easy for you to satisfy me.”

“Nay, Maria, you are mistaken. In these terrible times only one thing claims my thoughts, and everything beside or beyond that—everything that diverts my mind—is wrong. And yet at this very time one consideration paralyzes my courage and shakes my resolution; it is my fear of what your fate may be. For who knows what may be in store for us? and so I must speak—I must tear my very heart out and tell you that I wish— Wish! Good God, is there no other word to express what I feel?”

“Speak, Peter—say it and do not torture me so,” cried Maria, gazing terrified into her husband’s face; it could be no small matter that could make so resolute and plain-speaking a man hesitate and beat about the bush.”

The burgomaster controlled himself and began afresh:

“You are right; there is no use in postponing what must at last be said. We decided to-day in council that all women and girls should be enjoined to leave the town. The road to Delft is still open, but by the day after to-morrow it may be so no longer, and later—what may happen later who can tell? If no succor arrive and provisions run short, there will be no choice left but to open the gates to the foe, and then, Maria, you can imagine what the end will be. The Rhine and the canals will run purple with the blood that will pour into them, and they will reflect the flames of such a conflagration as was never seen. Woe to the men, and ten times woe to the women, on whom the fury of the conquerors shall fall! And you—you, the wife of the man who has persuaded thousands to revolt against King Philip—the wife of the proscribed rebel who within these walls is the leader of the rebels—”

At these words Maria had opened her eyes widely, and she interrupted her husband by asking:

“Are you trying to test how far my courage will hold out?”

“No, Maria; I know you will stand firm, and would look even death in the face without a tremor, as your sister did before you. But I—how can I bear the thought of seeing you

fall into the hands of our accursed butchers? My terrors for you, my intolerable fears, would cripple my firm resolve at some decisive moment, and so—I must say it—”

Maria had listened thus far in silence; she knew what he required of her. But now stepping close up to him, she interrupted him by saying firmly, nay, imperiously:

“No more, not another word—do you understand? I will not hear another word!”

“Maria!”

“Be silent—it is my turn now. What! to escape your own terrors you would turn your wife out of the house; your fears will maim your courage, you say. And will anxiety in my absence confirm it, do you think? And if you love me, you must surely feel—”

“If I love you, Maria?”

“Well, well. But you have quite forgotten to consider what my feelings will be in exile since I love you too. I am your wife. We swore to each other at the altar that nothing should part us. Have you forgotten it? Have I not made your children my own? Have I not taught them to be glad to call me mother? Yes or no?”

“Yes, Maria—a hundred times yes.”

“And can you find the heart to abandon me to the cruel mercy of anxious absence? Will you compel me to break the most sacred oaths? Can you bear to part me from the children? You think me too mean and poor a creature to suffer famine and death for the sacred cause which is as much mine as it is yours! You like to call me ‘child,’ but I can be strong too, and, come what may, I shall not shed a tear. You are the husband and must command, I am the wife and will obey. Shall I go? Or shall I stay? I await your answer.”

Her voice shook as she ended; and he, deeply agitated, exclaimed:

“Stay, stay, Maria! Come—come and forgive me.”

He took her hand and said again:

“Come, come!”

But she drew away her hand and shrunk back a little, saying:

“Leave me, Peter; I can not just now; I must have a little time to get over it.”

His arms fell by his side and he looked sorrowfully into her eyes; but she turned on her heel and left the room without speaking. He did not follow her, but returned to his work, endeavoring to give due consideration to a variety of matters relating to his office; but his thoughts constantly reverted to

Maria. His love weighed upon his soul as if it were a sin; he thought of himself as he might of an express messenger who should linger by the way to pluck flowers and waste precious time and neglect the business he was charged with in such idle dalliance. His heart was unutterably heavy and sad, and he felt it almost as a relief when, shortly before midnight, the bell of St. Pancras tolled out its boding knell of evil. In a supreme moment he knew that he should think and feel nothing but what duty demanded of him, so he took his hat from its peg with revived energy and left the house with a firm step.

In the street he met the Baron van Duivenvoorde, who requested his company at the White Gate, where some English had again made their appearance; a handful, these, of brave allies who had defended Alfen and the Gouda sluices in fierce and bloody fight, until their gunpowder had run short and they had been compelled either to yield or to save themselves by flight. The burgomaster went with the soldier, and the gates were opened to the brave warriors. There were not more than twenty of them, and among them were a Dutch captain, Van der Laen, and a young officer who was a German. Peter gave orders that they should for this night be quartered in the town hall, and with the guards at the gate; to-morrow they should be suitably billeted in the citizens' houses. Janus Dousa invited the Dutch officer to make himself at home with the best his house could offer, and the German went to the Exchange Inn. All were required to wait upon the burgomaster next day at noon, to have their quarters assigned to them and be enrolled in different companies of volunteers.

The alarm-bell had also broken the women's rest in the house of Van der Werff; Barbara had gone straight to Maria, and not till they had ascertained the cause of the tolling and had satisfied Henrika did they return each to her own room. Even then Maria could not sleep; her husband's proposition that they should part in the danger that threatened them had raised a turmoil that pervaded her whole being, and had wounded her deeply. She felt deposed, set aside, and if not misunderstood, at any rate but half understood by the man for whose sake alone she rejoiced to recognize in herself some lofty aim and magnanimous enthusiasm. What pleasure has a blind man in the charms of a lovely wife? of what value to her were the rich treasures of feeling that lay buried in her breast if he neither saw them nor cared to find them? "Show him, tell him how lofty your soul can be," her love advised; but womanly pride came in and whispered: "Do not force it upon him if he scorns to see it."

Thus the hours dragged by, and brought her neither sleep nor peace, nor even the wish to forget the humiliation she had suffered. At last Peter came into the room, very softly and carefully, so as not to wake her. She pretended to be asleep, but she could still see him with half-shut eyes. The light fell on his face, and the deep lines she had already noticed were marked as dark furrows of shadow between his eyes and mouth. They gave his face a stamp of stern and gnawing anxiety, and Maria remembered how, the night before, he had muttered in his sleep, "Too hard!" and "If only I can bear it!" Then he came to her bedside and stood there for some time, but she could not see him then, for she kept her eyes tightly closed; still the softened glance of tenderness with which he had come to look down upon her did not escape her. It dwelt in her "mind's eye," and she fancied that she could feel that he gazed at her lovingly and was praying for her as for a child. Sleep had long since overpowered her husband when she still lay wide awake in the early dawn. For his love's sake she must need forgive him much, but she could not yet forget the blow he had dealt her pride. "A toy," she thought to herself, "a gem, a work of art—such things as these a man bestows in safety when danger threatens; but his ax or his bread, his sword or his talisman, in short, anything that is indispensable to his existence, that he does not part with till death." She was not indispensable to him, not a necessity of life. If she had yielded to his wish and left him, then—then indeed—

But here the current of her thoughts was checked, for the question for the first time occurred to her: Would he really have missed your helping hand—your encouraging words? And she turned over uneasily while her heart beat fast as she confessed to herself that she had done but little to smooth the thorny way for him. And a dim perception rose up to torment her, that it was not by his fault alone that she had failed to find perfect happiness by his side. Nay, did not her former conduct justify him in expecting hinderance rather than help and encouragement from her in the desperate danger that threatened them?

Full of an earnest desire to judge herself clearly and justly, she sat up propped against the pillows and passed all her former life in review. Her mother had in her youth been a Catholic, and had often told her how free and light she had felt after confiding all that could trouble a maiden's conscience to a third person pledged to secrecy, and after receiving from the lips of a minister of God the assurance that now, un-

doubtedly forgiven, she might begin a new life. "It is more difficult for us now," her mother had said before her first communion, "for we of the reformed faith stand face to face with God, and must make our peace with Him ourselves before we approach the Table of the Lord. And no doubt that is all-sufficient; for when, without cloak or concealment, we confess everything that weighs upon our conscience, be it in thought or deed, to the Almighty Judge, and honestly repent, we are assured of pardon through the Redeemer's blood."

Maria now strove earnestly to attain to this inward confession, and sternly and uncompromisingly examined her past conduct. Yes, she saw much in herself that was unconverted; she had expected much and given little. She acknowledged her guilt, and henceforth amendment was to begin. After this self-conviction her heart was lighter, and when at last she turned her back on the growing daylight in the hope of finding sleep, she thought with pleasant anticipation of the loving greeting she would give her husband in the morning; but she was soon fast asleep, and when she woke her husband had long since left the house.

As usual, she set to work to put her husband's sitting-room in order before doing anything else, and as she passed the portrait of the lost Eva she cast a kindly glance up at her. On the writing-table lay a Bible, the only book her husband ever read that had not a direct bearing on his official work. Barbara, too, would sometimes seek consolation and edification from the same source, but she more commonly used it as an oracle in cases of doubt—opening it at random, and reading the passage on which her finger fell. This generally suggested its own interpretation, and she commonly, though not invariably, acted upon it. This very day, in fact, she had disobeyed such an indication; for in answer to a question as to whether she still might venture, in spite of the Spanish blockade of the town, to send a sack of creature comforts of various kinds to her son, the Gueux, at sea, she had lighted on these words of the prophet Jeremiah, "Their flocks and their tents shall they take away, and they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels;" and, nevertheless, the package had been given in charge early that morning to a widow, who, in obedience to the order in council, was leaving for Delft with her grown-up daughters. The good things might certainly reach Rotterdam, and what mother does not hope for a miracle in her child's behalf?

Before putting the Bible into its place, Maria opened it at the nineteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians,

which discourses of charity, and which was a particular favorite with her. There it is written, "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not;" and again it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." To be kind and long-suffering, to hope and endure all things, this was the duty that love required of her.

Just as she had closed the book and was about to go up to Henrika, Barbara announced Janus Dousa. The young nobleman had on his breast-plate and a gorget, and looked far more like a soldier than a sage or a poet. He had vainly sought Peter at the town hall, and had come hoping to find him at home. One of the messengers that had been sent to the prince had returned from Dortrecht with a letter which appointed Dousa to the post vacated by the death of Allertsohn, and he was not only to be the captain of the town guard but commandant of all the forces. He had accepted the call with cheerful alacrity, and begged Maria to announce it to her husband.

"Pray accept my best wishes," said the young woman; "but what now becomes of your motto, '*Ante Annia Musae?*'"

"I must alter it a little and say, '*Omnia ante Musas.*'"

"And do you understand that gibberish, child?" said Barbara.

"The Muses must have leave of absence for the present," Maria gayly replied to the young man's remark. Janus was amused at the prompt reply.

"How gay and pleased you look!" he exclaimed. "In these hard times a cheerful face is a rare sight."

Maria colored, hardly knowing how to take the young baron's remark, for he was a man who could disguise blame under a jest; but she replied, with frank sincerity:

"Do not think me frivolous or indifferent, Jonker. I know what grave times these are; but I have just gone through a private self-examination, and I found much to blame in my conscience; but, on the other hand, I have a sincere purpose of replacing it by something better."

"Well and good!" replied Dousa. "I knew that in your schools at Delft you had attached yourself to my friends the Ancients. 'Know thyself' was the highest teaching of the Greeks, and you very wisely obey it. All silent confession—all aspiration after self-purification—must begin with self-knowledge; and if in the process we find things which are little flattering to the beloved 'I'—if we have the courage to see ourselves as hideous as we see others—"

“Then we are horrified, and have already taken the first step toward something better.”

“Nay, good dame; then we are already standing on a higher level. After many hours of deep reflection, Socrates confessed—do you know what?”

“Yes; that he knew nothing. Well, I made quicker work of coming to the same conclusion.”

“And the Christian learns it at school,” said Barbara, anxious to have her share in the conversation. “All knowledge is but in part.”

“And we are all sinners,” added Dousa. “It is easy to say, good mother; and it is easy to believe it when it applies to other folks. ‘He is a sinner’ is soon pronounced, but ‘I am a sinner’ sticks in the throat; and he who can own it in anguish in the stillness of his chamber will find some white feathers of an angel’s pinions mingling with the blackness of the devil’s wings. Forgive me! but these are days when everything a man says or thinks is bitter earnest. Mars is with us, and the gentle Muses are silent. Greet your husband from me, and tell him that Allertssohn’s body has been brought in, and that he will be buried to-morrow.”

Van der Does departed, and Maria, after visiting her patient, whom she found well and cheerful, sent Adrian and Elizabeth into the garden by the walls to gather flowers and greenery, that she might weave them into garlands for the bier of the brave captain. Meanwhile, she herself went to visit his widow.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE burgomaster’s wife returned home shortly before dinner. Outside her house she found a motley assembly of bearded and mustachioed warriors, who were endeavoring to make themselves understood in English by two or three of the town watch, and who, when these functionaries saluted Dame Maria, followed their example, respectfully raising their hands to their helmets.

She returned their greeting civilly, and entered the hall, into which the midday sun was pouring through the door, which stood wide open. Peter had assigned quarters to these English soldiers, and, after consulting with the now commandant, Jan van der Does, had appointed them to companies. They were now evidently waiting for some of their comrades, for when the young woman put her foot on the lowest step and looked up, she saw that at the top of the narrow stairs her way was barred by the tall figure of a soldier. His back was toward

her, and he was showing Elizabeth his dark velvet beretta, decorated with what a herald would call an "embattled border," above which waved a handsome, light-blue ostrich feather. The child seemed to have made great friends with the soldier, for although he was refusing her something, the little girl was laughing happily. Maria stood undecided for a moment, but as the child made a snatch at the gay head-gear and set it on her own curls, she thought she ought to check her, and called up to her:

"But, Elizabeth, that is not a plaything!"

The soldier turned round, stood puzzled for a moment, shaded his eyes with his hand, and then leaped down the steps to meet Dame van der Werff. She had started back in surprise; however, he gave her no time for reflection, but held out both his hands, and cried eagerly, with delight sparkling in his eyes: "Maria! Mistress Maria! You here? This is a day of good fortune."

The young woman had at once recognized the soldier, and put her hand frankly into his, but not altogether without confusion. The soldier's clear blue eyes sought to meet hers, but she looked down and said:

"I am not as I was then—the girl is now the mistress of a family."

"The mistress of a family! How dignified that sounds. And yet—and yet you are still Mistress Maria. Not a hair has altered. At the wedding at Delft you held your head down in just the same way—lifted your hands, cast down your eyes, and always had that same lovely blush."

The tone and accent in which he spoke, with a gay freedom that was almost boyish, had something in them which attracted Maria as much as his confident manner annoyed her. She raised her head with a hasty impulse, looked steadily in the young officer's handsome face, and said, with some dignity:

"You see only the outside, Baron von Dornburg. Within, three years have wrought great changes."

"Baron von Dornburg!" he repeated, shaking his long, curly hair; "in Delft I was Jonker Georg. Things must have gone very differently with us, fair dame; for see, my mustache has grown considerably—though not very long; I am broader than I was; and the sun has burned my pink and white boy's face to a good brown; in short, my outer man is greatly changed, but here—within—nothing has altered from what it was three years since."

Maria felt the blood mounting again to her cheeks, but she was determined not to blush, and answered hastily:

“To stand still is to go backward, so you have lost three good years, Baron von Dornburg.”

The officer gazed at Maria in astonishment, and then said, more gravely than before:

“Your play of wit strikes home more than you think; I had hoped to find you in Delft again, but we ran short of ammunition in Alfen and the Spaniards may reach your native town sooner than we shall. A happy fate has thrown you in my way here; but—let me be frank—when I hope and wish a thing, my fancy brings it visibly before my eyes, and I hear it with my ears; and whenever I have thought of our meeting again I have dreamed that you might put both your hands into mine—that you would greet me, not with sharp words, but would say: ‘Do you still remember those we have lost? Was I not your companion in some happy by-gone hours, and our Leonhard’s closest friend?’ And then I fancied that when I should answer: ‘Yes, indeed; I have never forgotten them!’ the soft fire of your eyes—ah! now I may thank you! I see those bright stars twinkling through the crystal moisture. You are not so much altered as you fancy, Dame Maria; and if I remember the past in all loyalty, can you blame me?”

“Certainly not,” she answered, warmly; “and now that you speak thus to me, I will gladly call you Jonker Georg again, and invite you, as my friend and Leonhard’s, into our house.”

“That is well, and I am glad of it,” he said, eagerly. “I have so much to ask you; and as to myself—Good heavens! I wish I had less to tell.”

“Have you seen my husband?” asked Maria.

“I do not know a soul in Leyden,” he replied, “excepting the learned and hospitable host of my inn and the Doge of this many-ditched and many-bridged little Venice.” He pointed up the stairs, and Maria colored as she answered:

“The Burgomaster van der Werff is my husband.”

The young man was silent for a minute; then he said, hastily: “He received me most kindly. And that sweet little elf?”

“She is his child by a former marriage, but mine too now. What makes you call her an elf?”

“Because she looks as if she had been born among white blossoms in the moonlight, and because the reflection of the morning glow, from which the elves flee away, tinged her cheeks when I caught sight of her.”

“She has had that name given her already,” said Maria. “Now, may I take you up to my husband?”

"Not at present, Dame van der Werff, for I must look after my men out there, but to-morrow, if you will allow me."

"I will tell my husband all about you. Till to-morrow, then, Jonker Georg."

Maria found the steaming dishes standing on the dinner-table, but the family had waited for her. Flushed with her walk in the midday sun, and excited by her unexpected meeting with the young German, she opened her husband's study door, exclaiming, as she went in:

"Forgive me! I was detained. It is very late, I am afraid."

"We were very willing to wait," he said, kindly, and going up to her. Suddenly all her new resolutions rushed into her mind, and for the first time since their marriage she raised her husband's hand to her lips. He smilingly withdrew it, kissed her forehead, and then said:

"It is good to have you here—very good."

"Ay, is it not?" she said, with a playful gesture of reproof. "But now we are all at home, and dinner is waiting."

"Come along, then," she exclaimed, brightly. "Do you know whom I met below on the steps?"

"Some English soldiers."

"Yes, but with them the Jonker von Dornburg."

"He has been to see me. A smart young fellow with a very winning frankness; a German from the Protestant provinces."

"And Leonhard's dearest friend. Do you not remember? I must surely have told you about him. Our visitor at the time of Jacoba's wedding."

"To be sure, Jonker Georg! It was he who before that broke that vicious bay horse for the prince's equerry."

"That was a bold adventure," said Maria, with a deep breath.

"The bay goes capitally to this day," answered Peter.

"Leonhard thought that with all his talents and accomplishments the baron might lift the world off its axis—I remember it very well—and now the poor fellow has to sit still within these walls and let us feed him. How did he happen to join the English and come out here?"

"I do not know; he only told me he had had many adventures."

"That I can well believe. He is living at the Exchange Inn; but perhaps we can find a room for him in the side-wing across the court-yard."

"No, Peter!" she exclaimed, hastily; "there is not any room there in fit order."

“That we will see later. Ask him to dine with us to-morrow, at any rate, and he may be able to tell us something. There is good stuff in the Jonker; he begged me not to let him remain idle, but always to make him of use in some service. Jan van der Does will soon find the right place for him, for our new commandant can see what men are made of.”

Barbara now joined in the conversation, and Peter, although it was but a work-day, ordered up a flagon of wine instead of beer as usual, and this day a thing happened which had not occurred for weeks. The master of the house remained at table with his family a full quarter of an hour after the remains of the dinner had been removed, and told them of the rapid movements of the Spaniards, of the miserable fate of the renegade English who had been disarmed and sent off in detachments, of the resistance at Alfen, to the very death, by the company to which Jonker Georg belonged, and of another severe battle in which Don Gaytan, the best of Valdez's officers and his very right hand, was said to have been killed. Messengers could still come and go by the road to Delft, but by to-morrow, it was said, that too would be occupied by the enemy. Whenever he spoke he addressed himself to Maria, excepting when Barbara directly questioned him, and when at last he rose from table, he ordered that a good joint should be roasted for the morrow in honor of the guest he himself intended to invite. Hardly had he closed the door of his room when tiny Elizabeth flew to Maria, and, clasping her knees with her arms, looked up and asked her:

“Say, little mother; Jonker Georg is the tall captain with a blue feather who ran down-stairs so fast to meet you?”

“Yes, child.”

“And he is coming to dinner to-morrow! Adrian, he is coming!”

She clapped her hands with delight, and ran to Barbara, shouting once more:

“Aunt Barbel, do you hear? he is coming!”

“Blue feather and all!” answered her aunt.

“Yes, and he has curly hair—long curls like Assendelft's little Clara. May I go up to Cousin Henrika?”

“By and by, perhaps,” said Maria. “But now, children, bring me your flowers, and separate them neatly from the green sprays. Trautchen will bring us some hoops and thread, and we will make the wreaths.”

Jonker Georg's words, that it was a lucky day, seemed likely to come true; for the young hostess found Henrika in good spirits and free from pain. She had the doctor's leave to walk

up and down the room, and had been sitting for a long time at the open window; she had enjoyed a chicken, and when Maria entered the room was resting, in the delicious sense of growing strength, in her well-stuffed easy-chair. Her friend congratulated her on her improved looks, and told her how pleased she was with her appearance.

"I can return the compliment," replied Henrika. "You look as bright as good luck itself. What has happened to please you?"

"Me? Oh, my husband was more cheerful than usual, and had a great deal to tell us at dinner. But I only came just to ask after you; good-bye again for the present. The children and I have a melancholy task in hand."

"The children? What can the Elf and Signor Salvatore have to do with anything melancholy?"

"Allertsohn, the poor captain, is to be buried to-morrow, and we are going to twine some wreaths for the coffin."

"To twine wreaths! Oh, I could show you how to do that. Here, Trautchen, take away my plate and call the children."

The maid did as she was desired, but Maria anxiously remarked:

"You are trying to do too much again, Henrika."

"I? To-morrow I shall sing. It is all my preserver's potion; it works wonders, I tell you. Have you enough flowers and oak sprays?"

"I should think so!"

As Maria spoke the door opened, and Elizabeth came softly into the room, treading on tiptoe as she had been enjoined; she came up to Henrika and let her kiss her, and then exclaimed, eagerly:

"Cousin Henrika—do you know—Jonker Georg, with his blue feather, is coming again to-morrow to have dinner with us?"

"Jonker Georg?" asked the girl.

Maria answered for the child, saying, in some confusion:

"Baron von Dornburg, an officer who came into the city with the English. I told you of him—a German—an old acquaintance of mine. Go, Liesa, and sort the flowers with Adrian; I will come in a few minutes and help you."

"But up here—in Cousin Henrika's room!" entreated the child.

"Yes, my Elf, here; and mother and I will make the loveliest wreath you ever saw in your life."

The child ran off, and in her delight forgot to shut the door gently.

Maria sat looking out of the window; her friend watched her in silence for some minutes, and at last exclaimed:

“One word, Dame Maria! What is going on down there in the court-yard? Nothing! And what has become of your bright looks all of a sudden? You do not usually have swarms of guests in your house; why, then, did you wait for Elizabeth to tell me of Jonker Georg’s arrival—the German, your friend of former days?”

“Oh, Henrika, drop the question!”

“No, no—do you know what I think? I believe the whirlwind of war has blown that young madcap to your doors with whom you spent so many delightful hours at the time of your sister’s wedding. Now, am I right or wrong? You need not blush so scarlet.”

“It is he,” Maria answered, gravely. “But, if you love me, forget all that I told you about him; or at any rate deny yourself the idle pleasure of alluding to it, for if you do you will hurt me very much.”

“How should I? you are the wife of another man.”

“Of a man I love and honor, who trusts me entirely, and who himself invited the baron into his house. I liked the young man and admired his talents, and was sorry and anxious when he risked his life as if it were a mere leaf flung upon the current of a river.”

“And now that you have seen him again, Maria—”

“Now I know what my duty is. Only let it be your care that my peace of mind in doing it is not disturbed by your idle words.”

“Certainly it shall not be, Maria. Still, I am curious about this young knight and his singing. Unfortunately, we shall not have the opportunity of being together much longer. I must go home.”

“The doctor will not let you travel yet.”

“It is all the same; I shall go as soon as I feel well enough. My father is forbidden to enter the town, but your husband can do much, and I must speak with him.”

“Will you see him to-morrow?”

“The sooner the better, for he is your husband, and the very ground here seems to burn under my feet.”

“Oh!” Maria exclaimed.

“It sounds very dismal, I know,” said Henrika. “But need I tell you that it is hard to leave you? However, I am not gone yet. But my sister Anna is now a widow—thank God! I might say, though she is in want and entirely forlorn.”

I must see my father, to speak to him about her, and quit this quiet haven to go out into the storm."

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

"That is well. Now, children, come in; lay the flowers on that table. You, Elling, sit down prettily on the stool; and you, Salvatore, hand me the flowers. But what is this? I really believe the young rascal has been anointing his curls with scented oil—in my honor! Thanks, my preserver! We do not want the hoops just yet; first we must make little bunches, and then we will tie them to the wood with some greenery. Now, sing a song as we work, Maria. The first; but I can bear it to-day."

CHAPTER XXIII.

HALF Leyden had followed the gallant captain to the grave, and among the soldiers who paid this last mark of respect to the brave man was Georg von Dornburg. After the funeral, Wilhelm took the son of his deeply regretted and worthy comrade home to his own house.

Van der Werff, though after the solemn ceremony was over he found much waiting to be done, would not sacrifice the dinner hour, as he expected the German. He sat as usual at the head of his table; the baron sat on one side of it, between him and Maria, and opposite to Barbara and the children. The widow was never tired of gazing at the young man's fresh, bright face, for there was something frank and honest in the Jonker's eyes which reminded her of her son, though her Wilhelm was not to be compared to their guest in point of good looks.

Many a question had already been asked and answered as they eat, and many a tender reminiscence revived, when Peter, after the table had been cleared and a fresh jug of better wine brought in, filled the Jonker's glass and then lifted his own.

"We will drink this glass," said he, with a glance of sincere regard and welcome at Georg, "to the triumph of the good cause for which you, of your own free will, have drawn the sword. Thank you for your hearty response—even drinking is an art, and one of which the Germans are masters."

"It is to be learned in various places, and not last nor least at the University of Jena."

"All honor to the doctors and professors who turn out such proficient in it as my late brother-in-law, and, to judge from the present instance, as you yourself."

“Nay, Leonhard was my superior in the *ars bibendi*—but ah, how long ago!”

“Youth is not generally easily satisfied,” replied Peter, “but in the matter of years it is apt to call them many when old folks think them but few. To be sure, many events may have been crowded into the last years of your life. I can still spare a little time, and as we are so comfortably seated and all here together for once, you might relate to us now—unless you would rather be silent on the subject—how you came to quit your distant home and find yourself in Holland, and why you left your Greek and Latin to march under the English flag.”

“Yes, indeed,” added Maria, with frank ease; “you owe me such an account of yourself. Say grace, children, and be off with you.”

Adrian looked beseechingly first at his mother and then at his father, and as neither of them forbade their remaining, he drew his chair close up to his little sister's, and with their heads close together and wide-open eyes, they listened to the Jonker as he told his story, at first with some indifference, but with increasing eagerness as he went on.

“You know I am a native of Thuringia, a mountainous province in the heart of Germany. Our town lies in a pretty valley through which a river tumbles with many windings. Wooded mountains—not so high as the giants of Switzerland, but not small ones either—inclose the little dale, their bases checkered with fields and meadows and their heights covered with firs which, like the huntsman, are dressed in green the whole year round. In winter, to be sure, the snow covers them in a shroud of sparkling white, but when spring returns the firs put forth young shoots as fresh and tender as the sprouting buds of your oaks and beeches; and then it is in the meadows by the stream and under soft warm breezes that the snow appears; for the fruit trees bloom one after another, and when the wind blows the gleaming pale blossoms fly before it like white flakes, and fall on the gay flowers in the grass and on the clear surface of the stream. There are bare cliffs, too, on many of the higher parts of the mountains, and where they stand up, steep and inaccessible, our forefathers have built fortresses to protect themselves against the incursions of their foes. Our castle stands on a ridge in the midst of the valley of the Saale. There I was born, there I played away my early years, learned to read the Bible and to use my pen. There was plenty of hunting in the forests, and we had good horses in the stable, and I was a wild child and rarely went to school

of my own free will; our venerable master Lorenz had to catch me first when he wanted me. My sisters and Hans, the youngest of us—he was only three years younger than I was—were submissive enough; I had an older brother, too, and yet, as I may say, I had not; for hardly had his beard begun to show when our sovereign duke appointed him squire to the Ritter von Brand, and he was sent to Spain to buy Andalusian horses. Johann Friedrich's father, of happy memory, had learned their value in Madrid after the battle of Muhlberg. Ludwig was a fine young fellow when he went, and even then he could break in the wildest horse. It was a bitter grief to our parents to think of him as dead, but years went by, and as neither he nor his master ever was seen again, we had to give them up for lost. Only my mother never would believe it, and was always expecting him to come home. My father called me the future baron and his heir. When I was old enough to have lost my boy's voice, and could construe Cicero after a fashion, I was sent to the high school at Jena to study law, with a view to becoming a member of the Imperial Council, in accordance with the wishes of my uncle the chancellor. Oh, Jena! beloved Jena! There are certain delicious days in May and June when only the lightest clouds float in the sky, and every leaf is so green, every flower so fresh and bright, that one might think—and perhaps they fancy it themselves—that they could never fade and fall; well, in the life of a man—at any rate of a German—the happy time when he is a student answers to those delightful days in spring. You can believe it, I dare say, for Leonhard must have told you much about Jena. He knew how to combine work with pleasure; I, on the contrary, learned little on the wooden forms, for, truth to tell, I rarely sat on them, and the dust of books had no chance of choking my lungs; but I read Ariosto again and again. I was a diligent student of music, and in some of my wildest fits of excitement I wrote many songs, to my own great satisfaction. A man learns to use his sword, too, in Jena, and I should have liked to cross swords once with your famous fencer Allertssohn, of whom I have heard you speak. Leonhard was older than I, and he had attained the dignity of Master of Laws before I had got far into the Pandects. But we were always one in heart and soul, and so it happened that I came to Holland with him to his wedding. Ah! that was a time! Our doctors of theology at Jena have squabbled heartily as to where on earth the garden of Paradise may have been. But I always thought them a parcel of fools, for, said I, there is but one Eden, and that is in Holland; and the sweetest

roses the dew ever falls on in the early morning sunshine blossom in Delft."

As he spoke, Georg shook his long curls, and then suddenly paused in some confusion, but as no one interrupted him, and he caught sight of Barbara's eager face and the children's flush of excitement, he went on again, less fervidly:

"So I went home again, and had to learn for the first time that the sunniest days in our life often end in a storm. I found my father ill, and a very few days after my return he closed his eyes forever. I had never before seen any one die; and the first, the very first, was my father."

Von Dornburg paused, deeply moved, and passed his hand across his eyes.

"Your father!" said Barbara, breaking the silence in a voice of genuine sympathy; "if one may judge of a tree by its fruit, he must have been a splendid man."

The young man looked up again at these words, and his eyes sparkled as he said:

"Take all that is noble and combine it to form the tall and handsome figure of a man, and you will have the image of my father; and if I could only describe my mother—"

"She is still alive?" asked Peter.

"Please God!" cried the Jonker. "But for the last two months I have heard nothing of my family; it is very hard. Flowers grow by every road-side, and I like my work as a soldier, but it is often a great trouble to me to get so little news from home. Oh, if one were but a bird, or a sunbeam, or a wandering star, if it were only for an instant, for the winking of an eye, I could then see how things are with those at home, and lift up my soul in thankfulness, or if— But I will not think of that. At this very moment the trees are blossoming and the flowers springing in a thousand meadows in the valley of the Saale, exactly as they are doing here, and as they did two years since when I left home for the second time. After my father's death I was his heir, but neither hunting, nor riding to court, nor singing, nor the clink of the glass could please me. I went about as if half asleep, and I felt as if I had no right to be happy without my father. Then one day—just two years ago—a messenger brought a letter from Weimar, which had arrived with dispatches from Italy to his most serene highness our duke, and this contained news no less important than that our lost brother Ludwig was still alive, but sick in an hospital at Bergamo. A good sister had written for him, and we now learned that he had been taken prisoner by pirates on the voyage from Valencia to Livorno, and car-

ried off to Tunis. All the sufferings he had there endured, and all the dangers he had gone through, before he at last succeeded in escaping, you may perhaps care to hear some day. He had got to Italy on board a Genoese galley; he had then dragged himself on foot as far as Bergamo, but he could get no further, and was now lying ill—dying, perhaps—among strangers, though kind-hearted ones. I set out without delay, and did not spare my horse on the way to Bergamo; and though there was much that was strange and beautiful to be seen by the way, I took little pleasure in it all, for the thought of my dying brother always and everywhere saddened my mood and spoiled my enjoyment. Every running stream seemed to urge me to haste, and the mountain wall rose before me like an ominous barrier in my way. Once on the other side of the St. Gothard my spirits rose, and as I rode down from Bellinzova to the Lake of Lugano, and the mirror-like waters lay spread out in front of the town, smiling up at me like a bright blue eye, I forgot my anxiety for awhile and waved my hat and sung a snatch of a song. At Bergamo I found my brother, alive indeed, but utterly broken in mind and body—wasted, and without any care or wish to bear the burden of life any longer. He had, however, been in good hands, and in the course of a few weeks we were able to travel home—this time we took the beautiful road through the Tyrol. Ludwig's strength increased daily, but the wings of his spirit had been broken and crippled by suffering. For years he had been digging in the fierce sunshine, or carrying burdens with fetters on his ankles. His master, the Ritter Brand, had soon succumbed to his dreadful fate, and Ludwig had forgotten alike how to laugh or to cry in Tunis; and who shall say which we can best dispense with? Even when he saw his mother again he could not shed a tear, and yet his whole body trembled with emotion, and his heart, too, you may be sure. He is still master at our castle; but he is an old man in the prime of his years, and though he gets on very well in his daily life, he can not bear the sight of a strange face. I had quite a battle with him, for by right and law the castle and land belong to him as the eldest, and he wanted to give up his rights and put me in his place. When he gained over my mother to his side, and my uncle and brothers and sisters endeavored to persuade me to do as he wished, I remained firm. I will have nothing to do with what does not concern me, and our next brother Wolfgang is grown up, and can quite well take my place when necessary. At last, when I had had too much of entreaties and arguments, I saddled my horse and again rode off into

the world. My mother could hardly bear to let me go; but I had tasted the joys of a wandering life, and rode off as if I were starting to be married. Indeed, to be perfectly honest, I gave up the castle and estate as an onerous burden. As free once more as the winds and clouds, I took the same road as I had ridden along with Leonhard, for a war after my own heart was being fought in your country, and my future lot was to depend on my sword. At Cologne I placed myself under the standard of Louis of Nassau, and I fought with him at Mook Heath—fought till not a man could stand his ground any longer. My horse was killed, my buff coat torn, my knapsack lost, and hardly anything was left to me but a stout heart and a hope for better days. These soon dawned, for Captain Gensfort invited me to join the English troops. I was his ensign, and at Alfen I stood by his side till our last charge of powder was spent. How things went after that you know.”

“And Captain van der Laen,” Peter put in, “has told us that he owes his life to you. You fought like a lion.”

“Well, it was warm work, no doubt, by the fort, and yet neither I nor my horse had a hair singed; and this time I brought away my knapsack and all my baggage. Fortune, like a mother, loves her graceless children best, and so she has brought me to you and yours, burgomaster.”

“I can only beg you,” said Peter, “to account yourself as one of my family; we have two pleasant rooms across the court-yard, and they shall be set in order for you if you like to make use of them.”

“With pleasure,” said the baron; and Peter, offering him his hand, went on:

“My duties call me away, but you can tell the women what you will require and when you think you will take possession. The sooner the better, so far as we are concerned. Is it not so, Maria?”

“Indeed you are very welcome, Jonker Georg. Now I must go and see the invalid we are nursing here; Barbara will attend to your wishes.”

And Maria, taking her husband's hand, quitted the room with him. The widow, left alone with their visitor, did her best to find out all she could wish for, and then followed her sister-in-law, whom she found with Henrika.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, clasping her hands, “that is a man indeed! Mistress Henrika, I am an old woman, and I can tell you I never yet saw such another. Brave, tender, and then so handsome! When fortune bestows her gifts she does it in

bushels, and 'he that hath, to him shall it be given.' True words—golden words, these!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

PETER had promised Henrika that he would petition the Council to provide her with an escort. It was a hard wrench to leave the burgomaster's house. Maria's sweet nature had done her good; she felt as if her respect for her sex generally had risen in her society. Yesterday, too, Maria had sung to her, and her voice was like everything else about her. Every note was pure and clear as a bell, and it was a grief to her that for the present she was forbidden to join her voice to her friend's in part-singing. She was sorry, too, to leave the children. Still, go she must, if only for Anna's sake; for her father was not to be moved by anything she could say by letter. If she had written her appeal for forgiveness for his out-cast child, he would scarcely have read it to the end. By speech at some favorable moment she might be more likely to touch him; she must speak to him, though she shuddered at the thought of her life at home in his castle, particularly as she could but confess to herself that she was anything rather than indispensable to her father. To secure a fortune, he had delivered her over to a hell on earth existence with her aunt; while she was lying sick unto death he had gone off to a tourney; and a letter she had received from him only yesterday contained nothing but the information that he had been outlawed from the town, and an injunction to proceed forthwith to the house of Baron de Heuter, at the Hague. Inclosed in it there was a safe conduct from Valdez, the Spanish commander-in-chief, requiring all King Philip's officers and men at arms to care for her safety. The burgomaster had proposed that she should be carried in a litter, escorted by a flag of truce as far as the Spanish lines, and the doctor raised no further objections to her setting out. She hoped to start this very day.

She was sitting dreaming in the bow-window that looked out upon the court-yard. Some of the windows of the side buildings to the east were set wide open; Trautchen must have got up early, for she came out of the rooms which had been made ready for the baron, followed by a young girl carrying a quantity of pails and cleaning apparatus. Then came Janke with a large easy-chair on his head, and Elizabeth called out to him:

“That is Aunt Barbel’s grandfather’s chair. What will she sleep in now of an afternoon?”

Henrika heard the question, and her thoughts turned to the worthy old woman, “Babetta,” who had such warm and tender feelings, and then to Maria, and to the man who was presently to take up his quarters in those rooms. Did not the old tie which had bound the burgomaster’s wife to the handsome Jonker still hold them together by a few slender threads? She shuddered to think of it. Poor Master Peter! poor Maria! Was she doing right to leave the young woman, who had held out a hand at her utmost need, at this very juncture? And yet how much less near to her was this stranger than her beloved sister! Every day she allowed herself to spend in this peaceful retreat had seemed to her to be stolen from Anna, ever since she had found a letter addressed to her husband—the only one she had read of those contained in D’Avila’s portfolio—in which she told him that she was ill, and that she and her child were in absolute want.

Here help was needed indeed, and none but she could give it.

She packed her things with Maria’s and Barbara’s assistance; by midday all was ready for the start, and she would not be hindered from dining to-day for the first time with the family in the eating-room. Peter was not coming home to dinner, so she sat in his place, and tried to conceal the grief and pain that filled her soul under forced and noisy gayety. As evening came on, Maria and the children went up to her room with her, and she made them bring up a harp that she might sing. At first her deep voice failed her on many notes, but just as snow when it is slipping down a mountain slope to the plain below falls slowly at first, pausing as it glides, but quickly grows in mass and force, and gains solidity and roundness, so her low tones gradually swelled in fullness and enchanting power, and when at length she leaned the harp against the wall and sunk exhausted on her chair, Maria seized her hand, and said, with deep emotion:

“Henrika, stay with us.”

“I must not,” answered the girl. “Besides, you are enough for each other. Shall I take you with me, children?”

Adrian looked down, puzzled; but Elizabeth flung herself into Henrika’s lap, exclaiming:

“Where are you going to? Oh, stay—do stay with us!”

There was a tap at the door, and Peter came into the room. It was easy to see at once that he brought no good tidings. The council had refused his application. Van Bronkhorst had

been almost unanimously supported when he proposed that Mistress Henrika van Hoogstraten, as being related to one of the most distinguished adherents of the Spaniards among the nobles of Holland, should be detained within the walls of the town. If they should be driven to surrender, though her presence would scarcely protect them against fire and sword, it might secure some consideration for the leaders.

Peter's objection had met with no attention, and he now honestly told Henrika of the battle he had fought for her, and begged her to take patience and to be content to remain in his house as a most welcome guest.

She interrupted him with many vehement expressions of indignation and wrath, but presently grew calmer.

"You!" she cried, "you—yes, I will gladly stay with you—but you know what it is that this base act of violence prevents my doing. Besides, to be a prisoner—to live on for weeks, months, without mass and without confession! Still, first and last, good heavens! what will become of my unhappy sister?"

Maria looked pathetically at her husband, and Peter said:

"If you are pining for the consolations of your religion, I will send Father Damianus to you, and you can hear mass at the Carmelite Sisters', hard by, as often as you please. We are not fighting against your faith, only for the free exercise of every creed, and the whole town is open to you. My wife can better help you to bear your trouble about your sister than I can; but allow me to assure you, once for all, that whenever and however I may be able to help you, I will do it, and not with words alone."

As he spoke he held out his hand to Henrika, who gave him hers, saying as she did so:

"I owe you many thanks, and know it well, but let me beg you to leave me now, and give me till to-morrow to think it over."

"Is there no hope of changing the decision of the Council?" Maria asked.

"No, certainly; none."

"Well, then," she said, firmly, "you must remain with us. The thought of your sister does not trouble you alone, but disturbs me too. Let us first consider what can be done for her. How about the roads to Delft?"

"They are cut off, and by to-morrow or the day after not a soul will be able to pass."

"Then collect your ideas, Henrika, and let us try whatever is still left open to us."

Then began questions and discussion, and Henrika gazed in astonishment at the gentle young wife, for she, with unflinching decisiveness and acumen, took the lead in their consultation. It seemed finally that the surest way would be to send a trustworthy messenger that very day with some money to Anna d'Avila, to bring her, if possible, back to Holland. The burgomaster expressed himself willing to advance out of his own pocket a portion of the legacy left to Henrika's sister by their aunt, which, though sequestrated for the present, was certain to be paid ultimately, and he took his guest's gratitude very unaffectedly.

But whom could they send? Henrika thought of Wilhelm the organist, since he was already a friend of her sister's.

"But he is under arms," said the burgomaster. "I know him well. In this time of peril he will certainly not quit the town; not for his own mother!"

"But I know the right person," said Maria; "we will send Jonker Georg."

"That is well thought of!" cried Peter. "We shall find him at his inn at this hour. I must go to see Van Hout, and he lives close to the Exchange Inn. I will send the German to you; my time is limited, and fair ladies can do more to persuade a young fellow than an elderly man ever can. Now, farewell, mistress, and once more I say, we are happy in having you for our guest."

When the burgomaster had left the room, Henrika spoke:

"How quickly everything has come about, and how differently from what I had expected! I love you—I am grateful to you; but to be a prisoner, a prisoner! The walls will seem to close in upon me and the ceiling to crush me. Ought I to be glad, ought I to despair? I know not. You, Maria, have great influence over the baron; tell him about Anna; appeal to his feelings, and if he would indeed set out it would be the best thing for us both."

"For you and your sister, you mean," said Maria, with an evasive gesture of her hand. "Here is the lamp; when Jonker Georg comes you shall see me again."

Maria withdrew to her own room, and threw herself on a couch, but she soon started up again, and began walking restlessly up and down. Presently she flung up her arms, her hands clasped in supplication, and cried aloud:

"Oh, he must go—he must go! Merciful God! loving, pitiful Father in heaven, send him every happiness, every blessing, but leave me my peace of mind. Take him away; lead him far, far away from hence."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE Exchange Inn stood in the Breede Street, and was a fine tall house with a large court-yard, in which a number of vehicles were standing. To the left of the entrance was a large room, not closed by any door, but entered through a high archway. Here sat the drivers and other folks of that class over their beer or wine, making no objection when mine host's cocks and hens perched on the benches, or even flew up on to the table; here, by the wide hearth-place, vegetables were washed, and boiling and roasting were performed; here, not uncommonly, the stout hostess was compelled to call in the assistance of her buxom maids and the tapster when her customers fell to fisticuffs, or a toper had had too much good liquor. Here, too, tobacco was smoked—a newly imported fashion—only, it is true, by a few sailors who had served on board Spanish vessels; but Dame van Aken could not bear the pungent vapor, and kept the window open, where blossoming pinks and tall balsams stood, and cages hung with bright-colored goldfinches.

On the opposite side of the entrance there were two closed rooms. Over the door of the first, neatly carved in wood, was this line from Horace:

“ Ille terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.”

To this room, which was long and narrow, only a few guests of distinction were admitted; it was paneled with wood throughout, and from the center of the richly carved ceiling a quaint picture in gaudy coloring looked down, representing the host of the inn. The worthy man, with a clean-shaved face, tightly closed lips, and a nose so straight that it might have served as a guide for its owner's etching-needle, sat on a throne, dressed as a Roman warrior, while Vulcan and Bacchus, Minerva and Pomona offered him gifts. Klaus van Aken, or, as he much preferred to be called, Nikolaus Aquanus, was indeed a remarkable man, who had been well endowed by more than one of the Olympian powers, and who, besides attending to his business, devoted himself zealously to learning, and to more than one branch of art. He was a clever silversmith, a die-cutter and engraver of considerable skill, and at the same time a great connoisseur in coins, and a diligent student and collector of antiquities. His little inn

parlor was at the same time a museum; on the shelves which ran all round it were rare and curious objects of every kind in great numbers, and admirably arranged: old tankards and jugs; coins, large and small; gems in carefully locked glass cases; antique lamps in clay and bronze; fragments of stone in ancient Roman inscriptions; Italian and Greek terra-cottas; carved marbles that he had picked up among ruins in Italy—such as the head of a faun, an arm, a foot, and other fragments of antique statuary; a fine enameled reliquary of Byzantine workmanship; and another, also enamel, from Limoges. Part of a Roman breastplate and a piece of mosaic from some Roman bath were here, too, and among these antiquities stood some slender Venetian glasses, pine-cones, and ostrich eggs. Such another inn room was hardly to be found in all Holland, and the wine, too, was exceptionally good, which was served to the guests by a neat waitress, and poured out of quaintly formed flacons into finely wrought glasses. In this room, too, Master Aquanus was wont to entertain his guests himself; in that on the opposite side his wife ruled the roast.

This evening the “Angulus,” as the pretty parlor was very commonly called, was as yet scantily occupied, for the sun had only just set; the candles, however, were already lighted. They were fixed on tall, three-branched iron candlesticks of which every portion—from the slender shaft to the curved, twisted and intertwining tendrils—had been wrought by the careful hand of Aquanus himself. Two or three elderly men were sitting at a table over their wine; at another were Captain van der Lane, a valiant Hollander in the English service, who had come into the town with the other defenders of Alfen, Wilhelm the musician, Jonker Georg, and the host of the inn, on whom he had been billeted.

“It is a real pleasure to meet with a man like you, Jonker,” said Aquanus; “you have traveled with your eyes open, and what you tell me of Brescia excites my curiosity. I should like to have that inscription.”

“I will bring it to you,” replied the baron; “for if the Spaniards do not send me off into the other world, I shall certainly cross the Alps again some day. Have you not found Roman antiquities here and there in your own country?”

“Yes, baron; by the Roomburg Canal, on the site perhaps of the ancient Prætorium, and at Katwyk. Near Voorburg the Forum Hadriani probably stood; and from thence came the breastplate which I showed you.”

“An old, battered thing, half eaten away by verdigris,” exclaimed Georg, “and yet what thoughts rise up in our

minds at the sight of it! Some Roman armorer may have wrought it for the wandering Caesar himself! When I see that old armor all Rome and its legions seem to rise before my eyes. Happy is he who, like you, Master Wilhelm, has seen the Tiber, and there gazed backward from the present to the heroic age!"

"I should gladly visit Italy again in your company," replied Wilhelm.

"And I in yours."

"First, we must secure our freedom," said the musician. "If we succeed in that, every man will be his own master once more, and then—why should I conceal it?—nothing will tie me to Leyden."

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

"My brothers are content to sit here in the warm family nest," replied Wilhelm. "But I feel something stirring and driving in me—"

"Ay, we find rushing streams and stagnant waters on the face of the earth," interrupted Georg, "and in heaven there are fixed stars, while the planets can not cease from wandering. So it is among men; some, like plants, love their native spot better than any other, while we, again, are birds of passage. Well, I like our sort best. To be sure, you need not go so far as Italy to hear fine singing. I heard just now a voice—such a voice—"

"Where? you make me quite curious."

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

"It is the burgomaster's wife."

"Oh, no; her voice is quite different."

The captain had risen as he spoke, and was looking at his host's treasures and curiosities, and he now paused in front of a circular panel on which the head of an ox was sketched in charcoal with extraordinary freedom, boldness, and truth.

"You have a fine head of cattle here," he said to Aquanus.

"Ay, and no less a man drew it than Frans Floris," replied Aquanus. "He came here once from Brussels, and called upon our Master Artjen. But the old man was out, so Floris took a piece of charcoal and drew this sketch with it. As soon as Artjen came in and saw the ox's head he exclaimed: 'That was Frans Floris or the devil!' This story—but here comes his worship the burgomaster. You are welcome, Master Peter! This is a rare honor."

All the company rose and greeted Van der Werff with respect, while Georg sprung up and offered him his seat. Peter accepted it, and sat down for a few minutes and drank a glass

of wine, and then signed to the baron to come with him into the street. There he briefly begged him to go to his—Van der Werff's—house, for a communication of importance was awaiting him there; and then the burgomaster went on to Van Hout's house, which was close at hand.

Georg went as he was requested, in a mood of grave excitement. The "communication" could hardly come from any one but Maria, and what could she require of him at so late an hour? Had his worthy friend begun to regret having offered him rooms in his own house? He was to have taken possession of his new quarters early next morning—perhaps he was to be apprised of their change of purpose before it should be too late. Maria's manner when they had met was different from what it had formerly been—there was no doubt of that; but it was very natural that it should be. He had dreamed, it is true, of a very different meeting—ay, far different! He had come to Holland to uphold the good cause of the Prince of Orange; still he would have turned his horse's head toward Italy the beloved, instead of northward, if he had not hoped to find in Holland the woman he had never forgotten, and whom he had never ceased to long to see once more. Now she was the wife of another—of a man who had shown him kindness and had treated him with simple confidence. To tear the love out of his heart was impossible; but he owed it to her husband and to his own honor that he should stand firm, should smother every idea of making her his own and be satisfied merely to see her—this at least he must try to carry out.

All this he had told himself, and more than once; and yet he was conscious of treading a plank over an abyss, and that with an unsteady foot, when she met him at the dining-room door, and he felt how cold and tremulous her hand was as she took his.

She led the way, and he followed her in silence to Henrika's room. Henrika greeted him with a friendly nod; both the women hesitated to speak the first words. He, however, after glancing round him, perceived that the room they were in faced the court-yard, and said eagerly:

"I was down below there just before sunset looking at my new quarters, and I heard here—up here in this room—a voice singing—and ah, what singing! At first I did not know what was coming, for the notes were husky, dull, and broken; but then it made its way like a lava stream through ashes. I could almost wish many griefs to a singer who can lament in such tones."

"You must make acquaintance with the singer," said Maria,

turning to the girl: "Mistress Henrika van Hoogstraten, our dear and esteemed guest."

"And it was you who were singing?" asked Georg.

"Are you surprised?" said Henrika. "It is true my voice has kept up its strength better than my body, which is weakened by a long illness. I can feel how hollow my eyes must look, and how pale my cheeks must be. Singing no doubt eases pain, but I have long enough had to do without that consolation. For weeks not a note have I sung, and now my heart is so heavy that I could cry rather than sing. 'What does that matter to me?' no doubt you are thinking; but Maria encourages me to ask of you a really unheard-of knightly service."

"Speak, speak," cried Georg, eagerly. "If Dame Maria claims it, and if I can do anything to serve you, gracious mistress, here I stand—command me as you will."

Henrika did not shun his open gaze.

"You must hear first," she said, "what it is that I require. And to begin with, you must submit to listen to a short history. But I am still very weak, and have tried my strength to-day rather severely; Maria must speak for me."

The young woman fulfilled the task quietly and clearly, ending with these words:

"I myself thought of the messenger we need—it must be you, Jonker Georg."

Henrika had not once interrupted her friend's narrative, but she now added, with eager warmth:

"I never saw you till to-day, but I trust you entirely. Only a few hours since black was my color, but if you will indeed be my true knight I will choose green, bright green, for I shall begin to be hopeful again. Will you venture on this ride for me?" Georg had sat till now with his eyes cast down to the ground; he now raised his head, saying:

"If I can get leave I place myself at your disposal; but my lady's color is blue, and I can wear no other." Henrika's lips twitched a little, but the young man went on: "Captain van der Laen is my superior officer. I will go and speak with him at once."

"And if he says no?" Maria asked. Henrika intercepted the answer.

"In that case," she said, proudly, "I would beg you to send Wilhelm the musician to see me."

Georg bowed and went off to his inn.

As soon as the two women were alone, Henrika asked:

"Do you know who is the lady of the Baron von Dornburg?"

“How should I?” said Maria. “But now give yourself a little rest, mistress. As soon as the Jonker returns I will bring him up to you.”

She left the room and sat down with Barbara to her spinning-wheel; it was long before Georg returned. At last, about midnight, he came back; not alone, however, but with two companions. It was not within the captain's power to give him leave for so many weeks—for the journey to Lugano would take a long time; but the baron had at once gone to consult with Wilhelm, and he had hit upon the right man for the task. The musician had soon come to an understanding with him, and had brought him with him without delay. It was Belotti, the old major-domo.

CHAPTER XXVI.

By noon on the following day there was a great stir on the spacious shooting-ground—still known as the Doelen—lying not far from the White Gate, between the Rapenburg and the town wall; for the town council had decreed that every citizen and inhabitant, without exception, whether poor or rich, humble or noble, should there take a solemn oath to remain faithful and devoted to the prince and the good cause.

Under a clump of noble lime-trees, and dressed in holiday attire, stood the prince's representative, Van Bronkhorst, the burgomaster Van der Werff, and two recorders, before whom the vast concourse of men, old, middle-aged, and young alike were each to swear in turn. The solemn ceremony had not yet begun, when Janus Dousa, in full uniform as commandant, with his breastplate over his buff leather gorget and his helmet on his head, came up, arm in arm with Van Hout, to Van der Werff and Van Bronkhorst.

“Here we see the same thing again!” he said. “Of the working-men and common townfolk not a man is absent, but the gentlefolk in velvet and fur are poorly represented.”

“They ought to be here by this time!” cried the town clerk, angrily.

“What good will forced oaths do us?” asked the burgomaster. “Those who care for freedom must fight for freedom. However, this day will show us in whom we may put our trust.”

“Not a man of the town guard is missing,” said Van Bronkhorst. “That is good to see. But what is going on in the lime-tree?”

The friends looked up and spied Adrian, who was rocking in a bough of the tree, a hidden spectator of the scene.

“That boy must need be everywhere,” cried Peter. “Come down, you imp of mischief! You are the very person I want.”

The lad hung by his hands to a branch, and let himself drop on to his feet, and then came to stand before his father with a woe-begone expression of rueful penitence, which he could put on on occasion. Peter, however, did not scold him, but desired him to run home to his mother, and tell her that it was no longer possible to send Belotti in safety through the Spanish lines, and also that Father Damianus had promised him to visit Mistress Henrika in the course of the day.

“Make haste, boy,” he added; “and you, town watchmen, keep every one away from these trees, for the spot where men shall swear such an oath is holy ground. The ministers, I see, have seated themselves out there by the butts; they may come forward. Will you have the goodness to invite them to do so, Master van Hout? Dominie Vertroot will give us a discourse, and then I myself should like to exhort the citizens to do their duty in a few words.”

Van Hout went as he was requested, but before he had reached the preachers where they sat, Van Warmond met him and informed him that an envoy, a smart young fellow, had arrived and requested to parley. He was now at the White Gate, and had a letter to deliver.

“From the general in command?”

“I do not know; but the youngster is a Dutchman, and I fancy that I know him.”

“Bring him in; but he must be content to wait till the citizens have sworn. Then he may go and tell Valdez what he has seen and heard. It will be a good thing for the Castilians to know from the first what we really mean.”

The Jonker went, and by the time he returned with Nicolas van Wibisma—for he was the envoy—Dominie Vertroot's earnest exhortation was ended and Van der Werff was addressing the people. The sacred fire of enthusiasm glowed in his eye, and the words he spoke in his deep and powerful tones to the assembled confederates, though few and simple, found their way straight to the hearts of his hearers. Nicolas, too, listened to his speech with a beating heart, and he felt as if the stalwart, earnest man standing under the lime-tree spoke to him and him alone when, at the close, he raised his voice and exclaimed, with a look of inspiration:

“And now, come what may! A brave man, one of us, has said this very day, ‘We will not yield so long as we have an

arm left on our body wherewith to put food in our mouths and to wield the sword.' If we are all of this mind, twenty Spanish armies will meet death outside these walls. The freedom of Holland hangs on Leyden; if we waver and fail rather than face the dearth which to-day only threatens us, but which, ere long, will clutch us and torture us, our children will say of us: 'The men of Leyden were blind cowards. It is through their fault that the name of Hollander is esteemed no more highly than that of any useful slave.' But if we hold out faithfully, and resist these dark invaders to the last man and to our last morsel of food, they will remember us with tears, and rejoice as they say: 'To them we owe it that our brave, industrious, and happy nation can proudly hold its own with other nations, and need no longer suffer the foul cuckoo to dwell in its nest.' Whoever prizes honor, whoever is not a degenerate son and a traitor to his father's house, whoever loves to be free rather than a slave—before he raises his hand in attestation before God, let him shout with me: 'Long live our guardian genius, the Prince of Orange, and Holland's freedom!''

"Long live Orange!" shouted and roared hundreds of loud, manly voices, five times, ten times, after the burgomaster. The high constable fired off the mortars, which had been placed for the purpose near the butts; drums rolled, and trumpet-calls sounded through the air; bells rung out over the heads of the excited throng from every tower in the town, and the clamor never ceased till the prince's commissary gave the signal for the ceremony of taking the oath to begin.

The various guilds and the armed defenders of the town came up in companies to the lime-trees. There they held up their hands to swear, vehemently, no doubt, but with quiet dignity—nay, with devout uplifting of their minds; and those who clasped hands did it with fervent purpose. Hour after hour went by before all had registered their oath; and many a group who had gone up to swear together under the lime-tree pledged themselves a second time to each other out in the exercising ground, with a silent and mutual pressure.

Nicolas van Wibisma sat in silence by one of the shooting stands, just in front of the scene of the ceremony; his letter lay on his knees, and his heart swelled with sad and bitter feeling. Gladly could he have wept aloud, and have torn his father's missive across. Gladly would he have flown to join the noble Lord of Montfoort and the venerable Herr van der Does, as he saw them stand hand in hand to swear, and have

taken the oath himself. He longed to cry out to the brave burgomaster as he stood under the lime-trees:

"I—I am no degenerate son, nor a traitor to my father's house! I will never be a slave; I will not be a Spaniard. I am a Dutchman as much as you."

But he did not stir, he did not speak; he sat motionless till all was over, and Jonker van Warmond led him up to the lime-tree. There the town clerk and the two Barons van der Does had joined the officials, who received the oath. Nicolas bowed low, and silently handed his father's letter to the burgomaster; Van der Werff opened it, and, after reading it, handed it to the others; then he said, turning to Nicolas:

"Wait here, Jonker. Your father urges us to surrender the town to the Spaniards, and promises us the king's clemency. You can have no doubt as to what the answer will be after what you have witnessed here."

"There is but one possible answer," said Van Hout, in the middle of reading; "tear the thing up, and say nothing."

"Ride home, and God be with you!" added Janus Dousa. "But stay—I will give you something for the Spanish commander-in-chief."

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

"None, Jonker. We wish to have no dealings with Baron Matenesse," replied Van Bronkhorst. "So far as you yourself are concerned, you can go home or remain here—that is as you please."

"Go to see your cousin, Jonka," said Dousa, kindly. "It will be an hour yet before I have found paper and pens and wax to seal my letter; and Mistress van Hoogstraten will be glad to hear of her father from you."

"Yes; if you like to go, my house is open to you, young gentleman," added the burgomaster.

Nicolas hesitated for an instant, and then said, hastily:

"Yes; take me to her."

Baron van Warmond undertook to escort him, and when they had reached the street known as the Nordeinde, Nicolas asked him:

"You are the Jonker van Duivenvoorde, Baron of Warmond?"

"I am."

"And you were with the Gueux when they took Brill from the Spaniards?"

"I had that good fortune."

“And yet yours is a fine old title; and there were other nobles, too, among the Gueux?”

“To be sure; and do you suppose it is any discredit to us to have a heart that beats true for the home of our fathers? My ancestors, like yours, were noble before a Spaniard ever trod our soil.”

“But King Philip rules us as our legitimate sovereign.”

“Alas! and it is for that very reason we submit to his regent, the prince, who governs in his name. The perjured ruffian needs a protector. Ask any questions you please; I am ready to answer.”

Nicolas, however, did not respond to this challenge, and walked by his escort in silence till they reached the Aeltergracht. There he stopped short, eagerly seized the soldier's arm, and said, in broken sentences and in a low voice:

“My heart is bursting—I must speak to some one! I want to be a Hollander; I hate the Spaniards. I learned to know them at Leyderdorp and at the Hague. They paid no heed to me, as I was only a lad; and they did not know I understood their language. So my eyes were opened! Whenever they speak of us it is with scorn and contempt. I know everything that Alva and Vargas did here; and I heard from the very lips of the Spaniards themselves that they long to annihilate and exterminate us. If I only could do as I wish—and if it were not for my father I know what I would do! But my brain is in a whirl, and the burgomaster's speech put me almost beside myself. Tell him, Jonker, I beg you tell him, that I hate the Spaniards, and that it is my pride to be a Dutchman.”

They had meanwhile gone on their way again, and as they got nearer and nearer to the burgomaster's house, the young officer, who had listened with pleased surprise to the lad's profession, said to him:

“You are carved out of sound timber, Jonker, and are walking in the right way. Only bear Master Peter's words in mind, and reflect on what history teaches you. Whose names are those that are written on the most splendid pages of the great book of the fate of nations—the tyrants and those who have obeyed them slavishly with eye-service, or the men who have lived and died for freedom? Hold up your head! This struggle will probably last longer than either of us, and you have ample time before you for fighting on the right side. A noble should serve his liege, but he ought never to become the slave of a monarch—least of all of a stranger and the enemy of his nation. Here we are! In an hour I will come and escort you back; give me your hand, and for the future I

should like to call you by your Christian name, my brave Nico!"

"Do so!" cried the lad; "and you will not send any one to escort me, will you? I want to talk further with you."

The Jonker was received at the house of the Van der Werffs by Barbara. Henrika could not see him at that instant, for Father Damianus was with her, so he had to wait in the dining-room till the priest came down. Nicolas knew him very well, and in former years had confessed to him from time to time. After he had greeted the worthy man, and answered his inquiry as to why he was there, he went on at once, and hurriedly:

"Father, forgive me—but there is something on my mind! You are a saintly man, and you must know. Is it a sin for a Hollander to rebel against the Spaniards—is it wrong when a Dutchman resolves to be and to remain what God himself has made him? I can not believe it."

"Neither can I believe it," replied Damianus, in his simple fashion. "He who clings to our Holy Church—he who loves his neighbor, and tries to do right, may in all confidence be a true-hearted Dutchman, and pray and fight for his country's freedom."

"Oh!" gasped Nicolas, with a flashing glance.

"For, after all," Damianus went on more eagerly, "we were good Catholics here, and lived piously and in the fear of God before a Spaniard ever came into the land. And why should it not be so again? The Almighty divided the nations because He thought good that each nation should live its own life, and grow in knowledge to its own salvation and to His glory, and not that the stronger should have the right to torture and oppress the weaker. Now, just suppose that my lord your father should go out walking, and a Spanish grandee should leap upon his shoulders and flog him and spur him as though he were his riding-horse. It would be an evil day for the Spaniard! Then in the place of Baron Matenesse say Holland, and in that of the grandee say powerful Spain, and you will see what I think of the matter. Nothing is left to us but to throw off the oppressor. The Holy Church will not suffer by that: God has established it, and it will stand firm whether King Philip rules here or another. Now you know my views; am I right or am I wrong in thinking you are tired of the name of Glipper, my brave Jonker?"

"You are right, Father Damianus, a thousand times right. It is not a sin to hope to see Holland free."

“And who told you that it was?”

“Canon Bermont and our chaplain.”

“Then on this, which is but a temporal question, our opinions differ. Render unto God the things that are God's, and hold your own in the place in which God has set you. When your beard is grown, if you feel bound to fight for the liberties of Holland, do so in all confidence. For such a sin I, for one, will readily grant you absolution.”

Henrika was rejoiced to see the bright and happy-looking lad once more. Nicolas had to tell her all his news of her father and his, and why he had come to Leyden. When she heard that he was about to return within an hour, a good idea struck her with reference to Belotti's errand, which she was just then chiefly concerned with. She told Nicolas of the project she had in view, and begged him to conduct the steward through the Spanish lines and as far as the Hague; and Wibisma was not merely willing to do it, but promised her that when the old man returned he would find means to let her know.

At the end of an hour the boy bade her farewell, and as he was once more crossing the Achtergracht with Van Warmond, he gayly asked him:

“And how can I get to join the Gueux?”

“You?” said the baron, astonished.

“Yes,” said the lad, eagerly. “I shall soon be eighteen years old, and then—wait, only wait—you shall hear of me again.”

“Well said, Nicolas, and well done!” said his companion.

“Let us be Dutch nobles and noble Dutchmen forever!”

Three hours later the young Baron Matenesse van Wibisma rode into the Hague, followed by Belotti, who had known him and loved him from a child. He brought nothing for his father but a neatly folded and carefully sealed letter which Janus Dousa had given him, charging him with a meaning smile to deliver it from the municipality of Leyden to the “Maestre del Campo Valdez,” and which contained nothing but a line from Dionysius Cato, elaborately written in an elegant hand on a large sheet of paper:

“*Fistula dulce canit volucrum dum decipit anceps.*”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE first week of June had passed and half the second; the beautiful sunny days were now over, and many customers

crowded into the *Angulus* of the Exchange Inn as evening fell; it was snug in there, though the sea-wind might howl and the rain fall in torrents, splashing on the pavement outside. The Spanish besiegers encircled the town like a wall of iron. Each man felt himself a fellow-prisoner with the rest, and clung more closely to those whose situations and sentiments were the same as his own. Business and traffic were at a standstill; inactivity and anxiety weighed like lead on the spirits of the inhabitants, and those who wanted to hurry on the weary and lagging hours to a swifter flight, or refresh their oppressed souls, resorted to the taverns, where they could give expression to their own hopes and fears, and hear what others felt and thought of their common sufferings.

Every table in the *Angulus* was occupied, and any one who wanted to be heard by a neighbor sitting even at a short distance had to raise his voice considerably, for a separate discussion was being carried on at each table; while here, there, and everywhere, the bustling serving-wench was shouted for; glasses were clinking, and the metal lids clinked on the tops of the stout earthenware jugs.

But loudest of all was a discussion that was being carried on at a round table at the further end of the long narrow room. Six officers were seated at it, and among them Georg von Dornburg. Captain van der Laen, his superior officer, whose career had been really that of a hero, was entertaining the company by relating in a loud, deep voice many extraordinary and amusing stories of his adventures by land and sea, Colonel Mulder constantly interrupting him and capping each hardly credible anecdote with a similar but absolutely impossible story, and grinning as he did so. Van Duivenvoorde interfered as peacemaker when the captain—who was conscious of adhering pretty closely to facts—indignantly repelled the older officer's jesting insinuations. Lieutenant Cromwell, a grave man with a broad round head and straight lank hair, who had come to Holland to fight for the reformed faith, took little part in the talk, speaking only a few words of very broken Dutch. Georg leaned back in his chair with his legs stretched out, and sat silent, staring into the air.

Master Aquanus, the host, went from one table to another, and when presently he came to that at which the officers were sitting, he stood still in front of the young Thuringian and said:

“Well, Jonker, and whither are your thoughts flown? You are not yourself at all these last few days. What possesses you?”

Georg started upright, stretched himself like a man waking from sleep, and answered, good-humoredly:

“In idleness one soon falls into dreamy ways.”

“His cage is too small for him,” interrupted Van der Laen. “If this goes on much longer we shall all have the staggers, like sheep.”

“Or get as stiff as that brass idol on the mantel-shelf,” added the colonel.

“We heard the same complaints in the first siege,” said the host, “but the Herr van Noyelles drank down his discontent, and emptied many a cask of my best liquor.”

“Tell these gentlemen how he paid you,” cried Mulder.

“There hangs the note, framed and glazed,” laughed Aquanus. “Instead of sending me money he wrote those lines:

“My worthy friend, I owe you many a kindly turn,
But if from me you hope for hard coin in return,
Tis vain—so ere I leave this town that I have stayed in,
Instead of filthy wage
Take this fair written page—
Paper is legal tender now in Leyden.”

“Capital!” cried the Jonker van Warmond. “And it was you who cut the die for the paper coinage!”

“To be sure! The Herr von Noyelles’s inaction cost me a good deal. Now you have twice tried to make a move.”

“Silence, silence! For Heaven’s sake, say nothing of our first sortie,” cried the captain. “It was a well-planned attempt, which failed disgracefully because its leader must lay himself down to sleep like a mole! Was there ever such a case heard of before?”

“But the second came to a better issue,” said Aquanus. “Three hundred hams, a hundred tuns of beer, butter, and ammunition, and the basest of spies into the bargain—a booty worth taking, at any rate.”

“And yet that was a failure too!” cried Van der Laen. “Why, we might have cut away and towed in all the provision ships on the Leyden Lake! And the Kaak—to think of that island fort being in the hands of the enemy!”

“But our men fought bravely,” said the captain.

“Ay, there are some of the devil’s own among them,” said Van der Laen, laughing. “One of them ran a Spaniard through, and in the midst of the fighting stopped to draw off his red hose and pull them on his own legs.”

“I know the man,” said the host; “his name is Van Keulen; there he is, sitting down near the beer-tap, and telling a

sorts of queer random stories to the other folks. He is a perfect dare-devil and with a face like a satyr. But we have our joys too! Think of the defeat of Chevraux and the Gueux's victory at Vlissingen, on the Scheldt."

"To our brave Admiral Boisot and the valiant army of the Gueux!" cried Van der Laen, clinking his glass against the colonel's. Mulder in his turn raised his glass to the young baron, who, however, was once more lost in reverie and took no notice of the action.

"Well, Jonker von Dornburg," exclaimed the colonel, irritably, "it takes you a long time to respond to a pledge." Georg started.

"A pledge!" he said, hastily; "to be sure. I drink to you, colonel." And as he spoke he took up his goblet, emptied it at a draught, rang it with his nail, and set it down again on the table.

"Well done!" cried the old officer, and Aquanus remarked: "He learned that at college; study makes a man thirsty;" and he cast a kindly and anxious glance at the young German. Then he looked toward the door, which opened to admit the musician. The host went forward to meet him.

"I do not like the looks of the German Jonker," he whispered to the new-comer. "Our singing lark has become a moping owl. What is the matter with him?"

"He is home-sick; he gets no news from his people; and then he thinks of this trap into which war has flung him in his pursuit of fame and glory. He will soon be himself again."

"I hope so," replied Van Aken; "so green a sapling must surely soon spring straight again when it has been bent to the ground; you must help him up; he is a splendid young fellow."

At this moment a customer called the host, and the musician sat down with the officers and began a conversation with Georg in a low tone that was completely drowned in the loud confusion of other voices and sounds.

Wilhelm had just come from the Van der Werffs, where he had learned that the next day but one, the 14th of June, was the burgomaster's birthday. Adrian had told Henrika, who had repeated it to him. The worthy man was to be surprised in the early morning with some music and singing.

"Capital!" Georg interrupted his friend; "she will do the thing to perfection."

"Not she alone; the burgomaster's wife will help too. At first she steadily refused; but when I proposed a pretty madrigal, she gave in, and is to take the first treble."

“The first treble?” said the Jonker, eagerly. “I am at your service too, of course; let us go—have you the copy at your house?”

“No, Jonker, I have just left it with the ladies—but early to-morrow morning.”

“To-morrow morning you practice! That tankard is for me, pretty Dortchen! To your good health, Colonel Mulder! Captain Duivenvoorde, here is to your new company of horse, and may I ride many a jolly mile by your side!”

The German's eyes had regained their bright and lively sparkle, and Van der Laen went on to say:

“The ‘Sea Gueux’ will utterly destroy the Spanish fleet,” he shouted, vehemently. “To the sea, gentlemen, to the sea. Cast your cause upon the waters! that is the best way. Shout down the storm, grapple, and board; fight man to man and hand to hand on the enemy's deck! Strike and conquer or go to the bottom with the foe!”

“Here is to your good luck, Jonker!” cried the colonel. “Storm and thunder! but we can find a place for a man like you.”

“Now you are yourself again,” said Wilhelm, turning to his friend. “Here is to the health of those you love at home.”

“Two glasses for once,” exclaimed Georg. “To those I love at home, to all love's joys and sorrows, to the women we love, each and all! War is a pastime, and love is life! Let our wounds bleed, and our hearts break into a thousand pieces. Laurels grow on the battle-field, and love weaves wreaths of roses—roses with thorns, to be sure, but still lovely roses! Away with you—no one shall drink out of you again!” And with a heightened color, he flung the glass into a corner of the room, where it was dashed into fragments. His companions shouted in chorus, but Lieutenant Cromwell rose and quietly quitted the room, while Aquanus even shook his shrewd head doubtfully.

It seemed as if fire had been poured into the young man's spirit and his soul had taken wings. His long curls were tossed in disorder round his handsome head, as he leaned back in his chair, with his gorget unlaced, and flung keen jests and gay fancies into the midst of his comrades' sober talk. Wilhelm heard him, now with astonishment, and then again with anxiety. Day had long since dawned when the musician and his friend left the tavern; Colonel Mulder looked after him, and exclaimed to the others, who still remained:

“That madcap wag has the very devil in him.”

The madrigal in three parts was practiced that morning at the burgomaster's house, while Van der Werff himself was sitting as president of the Council. Georg stood between Maria and Henrika. So long as their conductor had to correct their mistakes and suggest repetitions, the little chorus were in the best of spirits, and more than once Barbara, in the next room, heard them laughing merrily; but when all had mastered their parts, and the madrigal was to be performed without a mistake, the two women grew graver. Marie never took her eyes off the page, and her voice had rarely sounded so emotional and so sweetly pure. Georg accommodated his singing to hers, and whenever he looked up from the notes his eyes were fixed on her face. Henrika tried to meet his glance, but always in vain; she wanted to divert his attention from the young wife, and at the same time it nettled her that she should remain unnoticed. She longed and strove to outdo Maria, and all the passionate vehemence of her nature rang in her voice. Her fire and spirit carried away the others; Maria's treble sounded brightly and joyously above the full tones of the German, while Henrika's deep notes flowed on, strong and jubilant. The musician, delighted and flattered, beat time, and as he listened to the rich sweetness of Henrika's voice, cradled his fancy in tender memories of her sister.

When the serenade was finished, he cried out: "Once more!" The contest between the two young women began again, and this time the Jonker's eye met Maria's; she hastily laid down her music, and stepping out of the little group, she said:

"We know the madrigal. To-morrow morning early, Master Wilhelm; my time is precious."

"What a pity!" said the organist; "it was going so splendidly, and there were only a few bars more to the end."

But Maria was already leaving the room, and only replied: "Till to-morrow morning."

The musician thanked Henrika in warm terms for her splendid singing, and Georg politely did the same. When they were gone, Henrika began to pace the room with a hasty step, striking one little fist with passionate defiance against her other hand.

On the morning of the master's birthday the singers were up betimes; but Peter himself had risen with the sun, for he had to look through certain proposals and measures which had to be made ready before the sitting of the Council.

Nothing was further from his mind than the recollection of his birthday, and when the little chorus struck up in the din-

ing-room, he thumped at the door with his hand and called out:

“We are very busy here; you must find some other place for your sing-song.” The performance of the madrigal ceased, and Barbara observed:

“A man who is picking apples does not trouble himself about a fishing-net. It does not strike him that it is his birthday. Let the children go in to him first.”

Maria led Adrian and Elizabeth into her husband's study. Each held a nosegay, and Maria had dressed the little girl so prettily that in her white frock she really looked like a sweet Elfing. Now, at last, Peter understood what the singing had meant. He embraced the trio who had come to congratulate him, and when the madrigal was started once more he placed himself opposite to listen. The performance, to be sure, was not half so good as the rehearsal had been, for Maria sung too softly, and not so clearly as before, and in spite of Wilhelm's energetic time-beating they could not recover the fire and swing that had carried it through the day before.

“Capital! excellent!” said Peter, when the voices ceased; “well conceived and well executed—a delightful birthday surprise.” He then shook each performer by the hand, with a few kind words, and as he took the Jonker's, he said: “You have dropped upon us from heaven in these cruel times. A home even among strangers is better than none, and that you have here, and welcome.”

Georg was looking at the floor, but at the burgomaster's last words he raised his eyes to the speaker's. How honestly, how kindly and frankly they gazed into his own! He was overcome by a strange emotion, and without reflecting, without knowing what he did, he laid his hand on Peter's arm and hid his face on his shoulder.

Van der Werff passed his hand over the young man's waving hair, and said, with a kind smile:

“Like Leonhard, wife; just what our Leonhard was! We will all meet again at a dinner to-day; you too, Van Hout, not forgetting your good wife.”

At dinner-time Maria distributed the party so that she need not look at Georg; he was placed next to Dame van Hout and opposite to Henrika and the musician. At first he was silent and embarrassed, but Henrika gave him no peace, and when once he had been led into answering her questions he was soon carried away by her vehement vivacity, and gave full play to his merry wit. Nor was she behindhand in the sport; her eyes flashed, and in her growing eagerness to measure her wit with

his, she strove to cap every jest and every repartee. She drank no wine, but her own flow of words seemed to intoxicate her, and she so entirely absorbed the baron's attention that he had no time to address a word to any one else. Indeed, when he once did so, she abruptly interrupted him and compelled him to turn to her again. This insistence annoyed him; and while it vexed him it decided his defiant spirit, and he provoked Henrika to the wildest assertions, which he met by others not less extravagant.

Maria meanwhile listened to the young girl in blank astonishment, and there was something that displeased her in the baron's demeanor to the young lady. Peter paid little heed to her, for he was talking with Van Hout of certain letters received from Glippers, counseling the town to surrender, of which three had already reached them; and they were also discussing the wavering opinions of some of the members of the Council and the execution of a spy who had been taken.

Wilhelm, whose neighbor had hardly vouchsafed him a word, was now listening to the conversation of the older men, and remarked that he himself had known the traitor; he was the keeper of a tavern where he once had met the Baron Matenesse van Wibisma.

"Now the secret is out!" exclaimed the town clerk. "In Quatgelat's pocket I found a scrap of paper, and the writing on it was damnably like the baron's. Quatgelat was to get information as to the amount of provisions left in Leyden."

"They are a pair!" cried the burgomaster. "But, alas! he might have carried only too gratifying a report to Valdez. Our own inquiries have not proved comforting; to be sure, the returns are not yet precise and complete."

"That we might leave to the women to do within the next few days."

"To women?" cried Peter, aghast.

"Yes, to us," said the town clerk's wife. "Why should we sit idle when we might prove ourselves of use?"

"Allow us to do something," exclaimed Maria. "We long as earnestly as you to do something in the service of the great cause."

"And believe me," added Dame van Hout, "we shall be more readily admitted to inspect the contents of lofts and cellars than ushers and men at arms, of whom the citizens' wives would be afraid."

"Women in the service of the town!" said Peter, doubtfully. "To be frank with you—but the proposal shall be duly considered—*Mistress Henrika is in high spirits to-day.*"

Maria glanced with some displeasure at Henrika, who was leaning far across the table. She was showing the Jonker a ring, and said, laughing:

“Do you not know what the emblem means? A serpent with its fangs set in its own tail.”

“Yes,” said Georg, “it is the symbol of self-torment.”

“Good, good! But it has another meaning, and you should mark it well, Sir Knight. Do you know what is meant by eternity and eternal constancy?”

“No, mistress. In Jena we are not taught to think of such deep matters.”

“Of course not. Your teachers are men. Men and constancy!—eternal fidelity!”

“And was Delilah, who betrayed Samson to the Philistines, a man or a woman?” asked Van Hout.

“She was a woman—the exception that proves the rule. Is it not so, Maria?” But the burgomaster's wife did not answer; she only nodded in silence, then she pushed her chair impatiently from the table, and the meal was at an end.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DAYS and weeks had slipped away; a hot August had followed July, and now August was near its close. The Spaniards still invested Leyden, and the town was now a prison indeed. The soldiers and armed citizens did their duty dully and wearily; at the town hall there was plenty to be done, no doubt, but the labors of the authorities were all sad and painful, for no message reached them from the prince or the states general to encourage their hopes, and all they found to discuss and decide referred to the threatened famine and that hideous attendant of war, the pestilence, which had invaded Leyden hand in hand with starvation. Added to this, the number of the malcontents increased from week to week. The adherents of the old order of things uplifted their voices louder and louder, and many a friend of freedom, seeing those dear to him sicken and perish, joined the Spanish party and clamored for the surrender of the city. The children still went to school as they had always done, and still met in their play-grounds, but the merry audacity of former days only now and then flickered into life; and what had become of the boys' rosy cheeks and the girls' fair round arms? The poor tightened their belts, and the scrap of bread which was doled out to each by the town authorities no longer sufficed to satisfy hunger or keep body and soul together.

Jonker Georg had now long been an inmate of the Van der Werffs' house. On the morning of the twenty-ninth of August he was returning home from a walk; he carried a cross-bow in his hand and a game-bag slung across his shoulder; he did not as usual go upstairs, but went into the kitchen to Dame Barbara. The widow welcomed him with a friendly nod; her gray eyes twinkled as brightly as ever, but her jolly round face was narrower, and a melancholy line had set itself at the corners of her pinched lips.

"Well, what have you brought us to-day?" she asked the young man. Georg laughed as he emptied his bag.

"A fat woodcock, and besides that four larks; you know."

"Poor little sparrows. But what sort of creature is this—no head, no feet, and carefully plucked! Jonker, Jonker, this is very suspicious."

"It will all go into the pot; never mind what it is called!"

"But yet—who knows what it may have fattened on; and the Lord did not create every creature fit for man's food."

"I told you just now; it is a short-billed woodcock, a genuine *corvus*."

"*Corvus*? Oh! that is all right. I was afraid of the thing—these feathers here under the wing—merciful God! Is it not a raven?"

"It is a *corvus*, as I have told you. Lay the bird in vinegar and stew it with a little spice, and it will taste for all the world like an ordinary woodcock. Wild duck are not to be got every day as they were lately, and the small birds are as scarce as roses at Christmas. Every boy is on the watch with his bow and arrows, and in every court-yard they are being caught with sieves and limed twigs. They are fast being exterminated, but here and there one has escaped. How is the *Elfling*?"

"Do not call her so," cried the widow. "Do, I entreat you, give her her Christian name. She is as white as this cloth, and since yesterday she has refused to take the milk we have got her every day at an immense cost. God knows what will come of it. Look at that cabbage-stalk; that was half a stiver! And those wretched bones—I should have thought them too bad to throw to a dog once, and now the whole house must make shift to dine off them. For supper I can stew some shreds of ham with wine, and make some porridge. And that for a giant like Peter! where he gets his strength from, God alone knows. But indeed he looks but the shadow of himself. Maria needs no more than a bird; but Adrian, poor boy, often leaves the table with tears in his eyes, and yet he often breaks a piece of bread off his thin slice for Elizabeth,

that I know. It is pitiable to see. And yet we can only say: Cut your coat according to your cloth—necessity knows no law, and save if you would have. The day before yesterday we again sent in an account of what we have left, as others did, and to-morrow we must give in to the common stock everything that is over and above what we require for a fortnight; and Peter will not let us keep back even a bag of meal; and after that what will happen, what will become of us?—merciful Heaven!”

The widow burst out sobbing as she spoke, and went on in a voice choked by tears. “How do you keep up your strength? This miserable scrap of meat at your age is like a drop of water on a hot stone.”

“Master van Aken gives me what he can spare out of his rations in addition to my own. I shall do very well—but what I saw to-day down at the tailor’s who is mending some clothes for me—”

“Yes?”

“Two of his children have died of hunger.”

“And at the weaver’s,” added Barbara, crying. “Such decent folks as they are, too. The young wife lay in only four days ago, and this morning mother and child are both dead of weakness—gone out like a candle that has burned down to the end. At Peterssohn’s, the cloth-maker, the father and all five children are dead of the pestilence. If that is not pitiable—”

“There—tell me no more,” said Georg, with a shudder. “I must go now to exercise the men in the court-yard.”

“And that!—what good does that do? The Spaniards do not attack us; they leave that to the skeleton fiends. Your drill makes you hungry, and the miserable starvelings you have enlisted can hardly move their own limbs.”

“You are wrong, mother, quite wrong,” replied the young man. “Activity and exercise keep them going. When the Jonker van Nordwyk asked me to drill them in the place of poor Captain Allertsohn, he knew what he was about.”

“You are thinking of the saying that a plowshare never rusts. Perhaps you are right; but before you go, drink a mouthful of liquor. We are still well off for wine. Well, at any rate when folks are kept employed they do not mutiny like those miserable volunteers the day before yesterday. Thank God we are quit of them!” While the widow was filling a glass, the musician’s worthy mother, Dame van Microp, came into the kitchen and greeted Barbara and the baron. She carried a little parcel wrapped in cloth, which she clasped tightly to her bosom. Her person was still tolerably substantial, but

her ample dimensions, which only a few months ago she had carried with honest pride, now seemed a burden which oppressed her. She took her parcel in her right hand, and holding it out, she said:

"I have something here for your Elizabeth. My Wilhelm, like a good soul as he is—" but here she paused and withdrew her gift; she had observed the Jonker's plucked bird, and she went on, in an altered tone: "But I see you have a pigeon already—so much the better. The town clerk's little girl is beginning to sicken too. Till to-morrow—God willing."

She turned to go, but the Jonker held her back, and said:

"You are mistaken, most worthy dame. I shot that bird to-day; and I will confess now, mother—my corvus is a miserable raven."

"I thought as much!" cried the widow. "Abominable carrion!" But she poked her finger against the bird's breast, and added, reflectively: "Still, there is some flesh on the breast."

"A raven!" cried the receiver-general's wife, clasping her hands in horror. "But to be sure, the cats and dogs have long since twirled on many a spit and found their way into many a stew-pan. There is the pigeon for you."

Barbara unwrapped the precious morsel as tenderly as if it might break under her hand, and gazed at it quite lovingly, as she felt its weight, and the worthy donor went on:

"This is the fourth already that my son has killed, and he says it was a good flier too. He himself sent it expressly for Elizabeth. Stuff it nicely with a light paste—not too stiff and a very little sweetened. That is what the little ones like; and it is sure to do her good, for it was given with real good will. But put it out of sight, for when one has known the poor little thing so well it grieves one to see it dead."

"May God reward you!" cried Barbara, wringing the good woman's hand. "Oh, these are awful times!"

"But still there is always something to be thankful for."

"Certainly, for it is still worse in hell," retorted the widow.

"Nay—do not speak so sinfully," said the old woman, gravely, "for you have but one sick child in your house. Is Dame Maria within?"

"She is in the work-rooms, giving the people a little meat out of what we can spare. Are you as badly off for meals as we are? There are still cows to be seen in the fields, but the corn has vanished as if it had been swept away; there was not a measure for sale in the market. Will you take a glass of wine, friend Van Microp? And shall I fetch my sister-in-law?"

“I will go and find her myself. The prices in the market are quite beyond endurance. We can not stand them at all; but she will bring the folks to reason.”

“The dealers in the market?” asked Georg.

“Yes, Baron von Dornburg, yes. That gentle woman can do things you would never believe of her. The day before yesterday, when the authorities wanted to find out what store of provisions still remained in each house, I and the others found the people very ill pleased, and several, in fact, showed us the door. And she went to the roughest and rudest, and they opened their cellars and store-rooms to her, as the waves of the sea parted before the children of Israel. How she managed it God only knows, but no one could resist her.”

Georg drew a deep breath and left the kitchen. In the court-yard he found some of the town guard, with a few volunteers and soldiers belonging to the town watch, with whom he was about to practice fencing. Van der Werff had lent his court-yard for the purpose, and certainly there was not in all Leyden a man better fitted to take the place of the valorous Allertssohn than the young German baron.

But Barbara was right; his pupils looked lean and wretched enough; still, many a man among them had learned to wield his sword right well from their deceased master, and put his whole soul into his work. In the middle of the court-yard stood a dummy stuffed with tow and covered with leather, which had on its left side a red patch in the form of a heart. On this the unskilled were made to practice, to steady their hand and eye; the rest stood in pairs, face to face, and fought their bloodless duels under the baron's directions with blunted rapiers.

The young man had been feeling very limp and feeble when he first came into the kitchen, for he had left the larger half of his day's rations at the unfortunate tailor's; but Barbara's wine had done him good, and he pulled himself together and went out boldly and resolutely to meet his pupils. He flung his ruff on to a bench, tightened up his belt, and was soon standing in his shirt-sleeves in front of the soldiers.

No sooner had he spoken his first word of command than Henrika's bow-window was shut with an angry rattle. It had often been thrown open on former occasions when the fencing practice had begun; indeed, she had not been too coy to clap her hands now and then or shout: “Well done!” But this was long since; for some weeks past she had not had a word or a glance for the baron. She had never before treated any man as she had him, nor taken so much trouble to win even a

prince's good graces. And he? At first he had taken it very coolly, and afterward he had taken more and more pains to avoid her. Her pride was deeply wounded; her mission to keep him out of Maria's way was long since forgotten; and, indeed, something—she knew not what—had risen up and stood between her and the young wife. Not a day passed without her having occasion to meet the Jonker; and of this she was glad, for it gave her the opportunity of showing him that she was indifferent to him—nay, that she would rather not see him. Her imprisonment within the walls weighed heavily on her, and she longed beyond all utterance to be free—in the open country—in the woods. Nevertheless she never expressed a wish to leave the town, for Georg was in Leyden, and he filled her mind sleeping and waking. To-day she loved him, to-morrow she hated him, and both with all the vehemence of her passionate nature. She often thought of her sister, and put up many a prayer for her. To win the favor of Heaven by good works, as well as to dissipate the tedium of life, she helped the Carmelite Sisters, who lived in the little old convent close to the Van der Werffs' house, to nurse the sick whom they had benevolently taken under their roof, and even went with Sister Gonzaga to the houses of the richer Catholics to collect their alms for the little hospital. But she did all this without any cheerful devotedness; sometimes with fevered zeal and then again indifferently; sometimes she would even neglect it for days. She had become to the last degree irritable; but after carrying everything with such a high hand as to be quite unendurable one day, the next day she would be depressed and melancholy, though she never thought of asking forgiveness of those whom she had offended.

At the present moment she stood behind her window looking at Georg, who was rushing at the leather man with flying leaps, and piercing his red heart through and through with his sword. The soldiers gave loud expression to their admiration; even Henrika's eyes glanced approval, but they suddenly lost their fire, and she turned on her heel as she saw Maria come out of the warehouses and with downcast eyes cross the courtyard in front of the fencers.

The young woman was paler than of yore, but her clear blue eye looked out on the world with more independence and determination. She had learned to go her own way and had sought and found many onerous duties in the service of the town and of the poor. In many a wild heart-struggle she had won the field, but the battle was not yet over; that she felt keenly as often as Georg's way and hers happened to cross.

She avoided him whenever it was possible, for she did not conceal from herself that any attempt to live with him on equal terms as a friend and a brother could be nothing else but the first step toward the abyss. He honestly did his best to second her efforts, with infinite self-control; and of this she was gratefully conscious, for she stood heart to heart with her husband on the ship of their united life; she would have no other pilot but Peter, nor was there any terror in the thought of foundering with him. And yet, and yet—Georg was the mountain of lodestone which attracted her to its side, and which she must diligently avoid to save the whole craft from shipwreck.

To-day she had made it her business in the workshops to ask each worker how he was getting on, and pictures of the utmost misery had been brought before her. The brave folks knew that the surrender of the town might put an end to their sufferings, but for faith and freedom's sake they were resigned to hold out, and bore their hardships as an inevitable misfortune.

In the hall Maria met Wilhelm's mother, and she promised her that in the course of the day she would speak to the town clerk's wife on the subject of the exorbitant demands of the market-folk; then she went to poor little Elizabeth's room, and found the child sitting pale and exhausted in her little chair. Her best doll had been lying in her lap in the same position for more than an hour, for her hands and spirit were too feeble to play with the toy. Trautchen brought her in a cupful of fresh milk; the supply had not yet altogether failed, for a considerable number of cows still grazed outside the walls within range of the cannon; but the child would not drink it, and cried before she could at last be persuaded to sip a few drops.

While Maria was coaxing the little girl, Peter came into the room. The fine, tall man, the very ideal of a respectable burgher, who was wont to pay some attention, too, to the dignity of his outward appearance, now looked neglected; his brown hair hung over his forehead, his thick beard—usually so cleanly defined—now spread a thin unshaven border of lighter color over his cheeks; his doublet was too wide for him, and his hose did not cling neatly as they used, but hung in creases on his sturdy legs.

He waved his hand languidly to his wife, and going up to the child he stood looking at her for some time in silence, but with pathetic tenderness. The child turned her sweet little face toward him and tried to smile at him, but the smile faded on her lips, and she looked down again dully at the doll. He

bent down and lifted her up in his arms, called her name, and kissed her pale cheeks. The child gently stroked his beard, and said, feebly:

“Put me down again, father; it makes me giddy to be held so high up.”

His eyes were moist as he gently set her down in her little chair again. Then he quitted the room and went to his own study. Maria followed him.

“Nothing yet from the prince or the states general?” she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing.

“But they will not, they can not forget us,” cried his wife, eagerly.

“We are dying, and they leave us to die,” he said, gloomily.

“No, no, they have pierced the dykes. I know, I am sure, they will relieve us.”

“Yes, when it is too late. One misfortune comes upon another, miseries are heaped upon us, and on whom do the curses of the starving folks fall? On me, on me, and on no one but me.”

“Nay, you have the prince's representative to stand by you.”

Peter smiled bitterly.

“He took to his bed yesterday,” he said. “The plague, Bontius says. I am alone to bear it all.”

“We bear it with you,” said Maria. “In dearth now, and then in hunger, as we pledged ourselves.”

“And worse than that! Our last flour was baked to-day. There is no more bread anywhere.”

“We still have cattle and horses.”

“It will be their turn next; it was settled to-day; two pounds with bone to every four souls. Bread gone, cows gone, milk gone. And then what will happen? Mothers, infants, sick folks—and our Elizabeth—”

The burgomaster pressed his hands to his temples and groaned; but Maria said: “Courage, Peter; courage. Cling only to one thing; one thing never cease to hold fast by—hope.”

“Hope!” he said, scornfully; “hope!”

“To cease to hope,” she went on, “means despair. Despair in our case means opening the gates, and opening the gates means—”

“Who thinks of opening the gates? Who speaks of surrender?” he interrupted, wrathfully. “We will stand firm—

still, still— There is the letter-case; give it to the messenger.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

ELIZABETH had eaten a scrap of the roast pigeon, the first solid food for several days, and there was as much joy in the burgomaster's house as though some great piece of good fortune had befallen the family. Adrian ran across to the workshops, and told all the work-people. Peter drew himself up more bravely as he went to the town hall, and Maria, being obliged to go out, went round to the good dame who had brought the bird to tell her what a good effect her son's gift had had.

Tears ran down the good woman's flabby cheeks as she listened to Dame Maria's report. She kissed her, exclaiming:

“ Ah, our Wilhelm—my Wilhelm! I wish he were at home at this moment; but I will call his father. But, to be sure, he is out too, at the town hall. What was I thinking of? Hark, dame, listen! what is that?”

The old lady's speech had been interrupted by the pealing of bells and booming of cannon; she hastily threw open the window, exclaiming:

“ It is the bell of St. Pancras, and not an alarm-bell! Hark, firing and joyful chimes! Something good must have happened—well, we wanted it! Ulrich, Ulrich! Come back at once and tell us the news. Great and merciful Father, merciful God! send us relief! If it should be there already!”

The women waited in the utmost excitement; at last Ulrich, Wilhelm's brother, came back, and told them that the messengers sent from Delft had succeeded in making their way through the enemy's ranks, and had brought a letter from the states general. Van Hout had read it to the people from a window of the town hall. The states general praised the conduct and steadfastness of the town, and informed them that, notwithstanding the injury it must entail on thousands of landholders, the dykes were being pierced.

The sea was in fact already flooding the country, and the messengers had themselves seen the vessels which were to bring relief. Before long the land round Leyden would be under water, and the rising flood must compel the Spanish army to evacuate their position. “ Better a drowned land than a lost land!” This stern motto had decided the votes as to resorting to this extreme measure, and it might be confidently expected that those who had staked so much already would

shrink from no sacrifice to save Leyden. The two women shook hands with happy excitement; the peal of bells rung cheerily out, and shot after shot shook the rattling windows.

It was growing dark as Maria made her way homeward. It was long since she had felt so light-hearted. The black tablets on the plague-stricken houses looked less dismal; the sharpened faces less pitiable than before, for succor was at hand for all. Their tenacious fidelity would be rewarded; the cause of freedom would triumph.

Her feet seemed winged as she walked down the Brede Street. Thousands of townfolk were assembled there to see and to hear what they might dare to hope, or what there was still to fear. The town musicians—an important institution in every Dutch or German town in those times—were posted at the corners of the streets, and playing with inspiring energy, while the chant of the Gueux mingled with the sound of pipes and trumpets and the shouts of the excited inhabitants. But there were, too, several groups of well-dressed citizens and their wives, who had collected on purpose to mock loudly and unblushingly at the cheerful strains and the deluded simpletons who allowed themselves to be cheated by empty promises. Where was the relief? What could such a handful of Gueux as, at best, the prince could command and bring up, do against the tremendous force the king had set down to beleaguer Leyden? And as to flooding the country—the plain on which the town stood was too high for the water ever to reach it. The peasants had been ruined without helping the townfolk. There was but one way of escape—to trust to the king's clemency.

“What good will freedom do us?” cried a brewer, whose grain had long since been confiscated with that of all his guild, and who had been unable to brew any new beer. “What good will freedom do us when we are all cold in our graves? Every well-meaning man follow me to the town hall, and insist on surrender before it is too late.”

“Surrender! Trust to the king's grace!” a score or so of citizens shouted in chorus.

“Ay, first we must live, and then comes the question of free or Spanish—Calvinist or Papist!” shouted a master weaver. “I am going to the town hall!”

“You are very right, good folks,” said Burgomaster Baersdorp, who was coming toward them from the town hall, in a splendid cloak bordered with sable, and who had heard the last speech; “but be warned! to-day the more credulous are beginning to be hopeful again, and the time is ill-chosen for

urging your views, however reasonable. Wait a few days longer, and if relief has not then arrived, assert your opinion loudly. I will speak a word on your side, and many another good man, too, in the Council. We have nothing but kindness and mercy to look for from Valdez. To resist the king was a foolish game from the first, and to fight against famine, pestilence, and death is sinful madness. God be with you, good people!"

"The burgomaster is right," said a dyer.

"And Van Swieten and Norden think as he does; but Master Peter holds his seat by the prince's favor. The Spaniards may save us, but he loses his head when they march in! Die we may, if die we must, so long as he and his live on the fat of the land and are satisfied."

"There goes his wife," said the master weaver, pointing to Maria; "how well content she looks! The buff-leather trade must be thriving. Hi! Dame Burgomistress! hi! Carry our service to your husband, and tell him that his life is no doubt precious, but that ours, after all, is not a mere wisp of straw."

"Yes, and tell him too," shouted a cattle-dealer, who did not look as if he had suffered much yet from hunger, "tell him that oxen are good to kill, and the more the better, but that the good folks of Leyden—"

The speaker did not finish his sentence, for Master Aquanus had spied from the *Angulus* what was happening to the burgomaster's wife, and he had come out of his inn, and was now standing among the malcontents.

"Shame upon you!" he exclaimed, "for attacking a respectable lady in the street. Is this the Leyden fashion! Take my hand, Dame Maria, and if I hear another word of abuse I will call the town watch. I know you. The gallows still stands by the Blue Stone, where Master van Bronkhorst had it set up for such as you. Which of you would like to handsel it?"

The men to whom this was addressed were not the bravest of their sex, and not another word was uttered as Aquanus led the young woman into the shelter of the Exchange Inn. The host's wife and daughter received Maria in their own rooms, which stood apart from the hostelry, and begged her to rest there till the throng should have dispersed. But Maria was anxious to get home, and when she explained that she must proceed at once, Van Aken offered his escort.

In the hall of the inn Von Dornburg was standing, and he was about to retire with a respectful bow, when Aquanus called him to speak with him.

"We are very busy here," he said, "for many a man is treating himself to a glass in a honor of the good news. Do not take it amiss, dame, but the Jonker will take you home quite as safely as I could; and you, Baron von Dornburg—"

"I am yours to command," replied Georg; and he and the young wife went out into the street.

For some minutes they walked on side by side in silence, each fancying they could hear the other's heart beat. At last the Jonker drew a deeper breath and spoke.

"Three long, long months have gone by since I came. Have I been brave, Maria?"

"Yes, Georg."

"But you can never imagine what it has cost me to keep my aching heart in chains, to guard my words, and blind my eyes. Once, only once, Maria, I must speak—"

"Never!" she interrupted him with resolute entreaty. "Never! I know how nobly you have struggled; do not now weakly lose the glory of victory."

"Oh, hear me, Maria! this once only, hear me!"

"And what good will it do you to burden my soul with hearing your burning words? There is but one man living who may tell me that he loves me; and what I ought not to hear you ought not to say."

"Ought not?" he said, in a tone of gentle reproach; and then he went on, gloomily and bitterly: "You are right, very right. Even speech is forbidden me; my life must flow on forever a stream of lead, and whatever may grow or blossom on the banks must be scentless and colorless. The golden sunlight is shrouded from me by clouds; all joys lie pale and dead in my heart; and all that ever delighted me is now mere emptiness and vanity. Do you even recognize in me the careless fellow that I once was?"

"Nay, try once more to be happy; try for my sake."

"It is past and gone," he murmured sadly. "You saw me at Delft, but you never really knew me. My eyes were like a pair of magical mirrors, in which every object that is reflected is beautified and transfigured; and they had their reward, for wherever they turned they met kindly glances. My heart could then embrace the whole world, and it beat so high and so lightly! Sometimes I was quite beside myself, and did not know which way to turn for sheer joyousness and vitality; I felt as though, like a cannon that bursts with being overcharged, I must fly into a thousand pieces—only not scattered about the world, but straight up to heaven at once. It was happiness, and yet it was a pain. Ah! I have felt it in Delft

a score of times when you have been sweet and kind to me! And now, now! I still have wings—I still could fly—but I crawl about like a snail—for you will have it so.”

“I will not have it so,” answered Maria; “you are very dear to me; that I may frankly confess, and to see you as you are now is a great grief to me. And now, if you have any regard for me—and I know full well that you have—I implore you, cease to inflict such misery on me. You are very dear to me; I have said it, and it has to be said, that all may be clear between us. You are dear to me as the sweet by-gone days of my youth are, as sweet dreams are, as a strain of delicious music is, which soothes and refreshes our soul when we hear or remember it; but you are no more to me, and you never can be. You are dear to me, and I wish that you should remain so, and you can only remain so by keeping the oath which you have sworn.”

“Sworn?” said Georg; “sworn?”

“Yes, sworn,” repeated Maria, standing still, “on my husband’s breast on his birthday, after we had been singing. Remember it well! you swore then an unspoken vow; I know it no less certainly than that I swore to be faithful to my husband at the altar. If you can give me the lie, do so.”

Georg shook his head and answered with growing vehemence:

“You read my soul; our hearts know each other like two trusted friends—as the earth sees the moon and the moon the earth. What would one be without the other? Why, why should they be parted? Have you walked along a lane through a wood? There are two ruts running side by side, and never crossing, never meeting. They are kept asunder by the axle-tree, as we are by our vows.”

“Say, rather, by our honor.”

“By our honor. But presently you come to a spot where the road ends, at a plantation or a charcoal heap, and there the ruts cut across each other; well, at this hour I feel my path has come to an abrupt end. I can not go on any further like this; I can not—the horses will run away into the thicket, and the chariot will be wrecked on the roots and rocks.”

“And with it our honor. Not another word; come, we must walk faster. Do you see the lights in the windows? Every one wants to show that he rejoices at the good news, and our house must not remain in darkness.”

“Do not hurry so; Barbara will take care of that; and we so soon must part. And you know you said that I was dear to you.”

“Do not torture me!” pleaded the young wife, pathetically.

“I do not wish to torture you, Maria, but you must at least hear me. It was in earnest—in solemn earnest—that I pledged myself to that vow I swore in silence, and I had hoped to redeem it by death. You heard how I flung myself, like a madman, into the midst of the Spaniards, at the storming of the fort of Boschhuizen, in July. Your ribbon—the blue ribbon of Delft, that ribbon of heaven’s own blue—fluttered from my shoulder-knot as I rushed upon the swords and spears. But I was not to die; I came safely out of the *mêlée*. Oh, Maria, for that oath’s sake I have suffered torments unutterable! Release me from it; let me once—only this once—tell you, Maria—”

“Stop, Georg; say no more!” she hastily implored him. “I will not—I must not hear you; not to-day nor to-morrow—never, never; through all eternity, never!”

“Once—for once I will—I must tell you that I love you; that my life and salvation—my peace and honor—”

“Cease, Jonker von Dornburg; do not speak another word. There is our house; you are our guest. If you say a single word more such as those last to the wife of your friend—”

“Maria, Maria! stay; do not knock. How can you so heartlessly wreck the whole happiness of a human life—”

But the door was opened, and Maria stood on the threshold. Georg stood opposite to her for a moment, stretching out his hand as craving hers to save him, and he said, desperately:

“Rejected—thrust out to death and desolation! Maria, Maria, why have you done this?”

She put her hand into his.

“That we may remain worthy of each other,” she said.

She wrenched her cold hand from his clasp and went into the house; but he wandered for hours through the illuminated streets like a drunken man, and at last flung himself on to his bed with an aching brain. On a little table by his side lay a note-book; he took it up, and with trembling fingers began to write. Many times his pencil stood still, or he lay sighing deeply and gazing into vacancy. At last he threw the book aside, and watched uneasily for the morning.

CHAPTER XXX.

SOON after sunrise Georg sprung from his bed, pulled out his knapsack and began to fill it with his few possessions; but the note-book was not packed in with the rest. It was still quite early when the organist came into the court-yard with

the first of the workmen coming to their work. The Jonker saw him, and went to meet him at the gate. The musician's face showed but slight traces of the famine, but his whole frame quivered with agitation, and his color came and went as, unhesitatingly and in breathless haste, he related the object of his early visit to the burgomaster's house.

A Spanish envoy had brought in letters the day before to Van der Werff, shortly after the arrival of the prince's messenger. One of these letters was from young Nicolas Mate-nesse, and contained merely the information that Henrika's sister had reached Leyderdorp with Belotti, and had found a home, for the time, at a farm belonging to the elder Baron van Wibisma. She was very ill, and longed to see her sister. The burgomaster had given this letter to Henrika, and she had at once hastened off to Wilhelm, to entreat him to help her to quit the town, and to escort her himself as far as the Spanish lines.

Wilhelm had a hard battle to fight; no sacrifice seemed to him too great if he could only see Anna once more; and what the messengers had succeeded in doing, he surely could do. But ought he to help the one hostage for the authorities of the town to make her escape—ought he to cheat the gate-keepers and desert his post? Since the day when Henrika had appealed to him to fetch her sister from Lugano to Holland, Georg had been fully informed as to her whole history; and he knew, too, how the musician's heart was engaged in the matter.

"I must, and yet I must not!" cried Wilhelm. "I have passed a terrible night; put yourself in my place or in Mistress Henrika's!"

"Ask for leave till to-morrow," said Georg, decidedly. "When it is dark, I will conduct Henrika with you outside the town. Only she must solemnly promise to return to it if it is at last surrendered. So far as I am concerned, I am no longer pledged to serve under the English flag: four weeks since we had leave granted us to enlist in the service of the Netherlands. One word to Captain van der Laen and I am my own master."

"Thank you very heartily! But Mistress Henrika strictly forbids my availing myself of your services."

"Folly! I am going with you, and when we have reached our destination I shall cut my way through to join the Gueux. The Council will not grieve at our departing, for when Henrika and I are outside, there will be two mouths less to fill in Leyden. The sky is overcast; we may hope for a dark night.

Van Duivenvoorde is captain of the watch at the Hoogewoerde Gate. He knows us both, and will let us pass out; I will speak to him. Is the farm far in the village?"

"No; quite at the beginning, on the road to Leyden."

"Very good; we will meet again at four o'clock at the Exchange Inn."

"But Henrika—"

"It will be soon enough if she is told who her companions are when she is at the gate."

When Georg betook himself at the appointed time to the Exchange Inn he was informed that Henrika had received yet another letter from Nicolas, who had himself given it to the courier. It contained only these words:

"Until midnight the Spanish pass-word is 'Lepanto.' Your father shall be told to-day that Anna is here."

When they had finally agreed to set out by the Hoogewoerde Gate at nine that evening, Georg went to his captain and to the Commandant Van der Does, and procured from the former the leave of absence he required, and from Janus Dousa a letter to his friend Admiral Boisot. When he told his men that he was about to leave the town and to join the Gueux, they all declared that they would follow him, and live or die with him, and it was only with great difficulty that he persuaded them to remain behind.

As he passed the town hall he slackened his pace; the burgo-master was always to be found there at this hour. Ought he to quit Leyden without taking leave of him? No, no; and yet since the day before he felt he had lost all right to look him boldly in the face; he dreaded meeting him, and he felt an alien and an outcast. So he hurried past the town hall, saying to himself: "And if I do leave him without a word of farewell, what do I owe him? I must pay for his kindness with pain and anguish—perhaps even with my life. Maria loved me before she loved him, and ere I go she shall know what she is and will forever be to me."

It was dusk when he went back to his room; he desired the man-servant to carry his knapsack to Captain van Duivenvoorde, on guard at the Hoogewoerde Gate, and, placing his note-book inside the breast of his doublet, he went into the dwelling-house to bid adieu to Maria. He went up the steps, trembling with excitement, and paused when he reached the upper stair-landing. His heart beat so violently that he could hardly breathe. He did not know at which door to knock, and was oppressed with a vague dread. There he stood as if

paralyzed for some few minutes; then he pulled himself together, shook himself, and muttered to himself, "What a coward I am!" In an instant he had opened the door into the dining-room, and went in. Adrian was sitting at the table, with his books before him, by the light of a pine torch. Georg asked him where his mother was.

"She is spinning in the parlor," said the boy.

"Go and fetch her; I have something of importance to tell her."

Adrian went, and returned with the message that Jonker Georg might wait in his father's sitting-room.

"Where is Barbara?" asked Georg.

"With Elizabeth." The baron nodded, and took to pacing up and down by the long table, thinking to himself: "I can not go thus; I must speak out from the bottom of my heart. Once, only once more, I will hear her tell me that she loves me. I will—I will. It may be dishonorable—it may be base; I will atone for it—atone for it with my life." While the young man walked about the room, Adrian was packing his books together, and could not help exclaiming:

"Why, Jonker, how badly you look to-day! It is enough to frighten one. Mother is in the next room; I hear the tinder-box snap; she is getting a light."

"Have you time for a message?" asked Georg.

"Yes; I have done."

"Then run to Wilhelm Corneliussohn, and tell him everything is settled. We are to meet at nine—punctually at nine."

"At the inn?" asked the lad.

"No, no; he knows; only make haste."

Adrian was on the point of starting, but Georg beckoned him to come close, and asked him in a whisper:

"Can you hold your tongue?"

"As mute as a fish."

"I am going to slip out of the town to-night, and perhaps I may never come back."

"You, Jonker—to-night?" asked the boy.

"Yes, dear fellow. Come here and give me a kiss at parting. Keep this little ring as a remembrance." The boy gave and took the kiss, and slipped the ring on to his finger; and his eyes were full of tears as he said:

"And you really mean it? Yes; we are hungry here! God knows I would go with you, if it were not for Elizabeth and mother. When will you come back?"

“Who can tell, my lad? Do not forget to love me, do you hear?—to love me truly! Now, be off with you.”

Adrian flew down-stairs, and in another minute Georg was standing in Peter's room, face to face with Maria. The shutters were closed, and there were two tapers burning in the branched candlestick on the table.

“Thank you a thousand times for coming to speak to me,” said he. “You passed judgment on me yesterday, and to-day—”

“I know what has brought you here,” she replied, gently. “Henrika has bade me good-bye, and I can not detain her. She does not wish that you should accompany her, but Master Wilhelm has told me about it. You are come to say farewell.”

“Yes, Maria—farewell forever.”

“Nay, please God, we shall meet again. I know what it is that is driving you out of this place. You are right, Georg, good and noble; and if anything can soften a parting it is that we may remember each other without a pang of bitterness. You will not forget us, and—as you well know—your memory will live here among great and small—in all your hearts—”

“And in yours too, Maria?”

“In mine too.”

“Cling to it, cherish it; and when this hapless dust, which to-day still lives, and breathes, and loves, and is desperate, has been swept out of your path by the whirlwind, grant it still a green spot in your remembrance.”

Maria shuddered, for deep desperation indeed glowed in the dull fire of his eyes, and full of agonizing fears she cried out:

“What are you planning, Georg—for Christ's sake, what are you thinking of doing?”

“Nothing wrong,” he said, dully. “Nothing violent. But we birds do not all pipe the same tune. Happy is he who slips on through the years with tepid blood and lukewarm joys; but my blood courses in hotter haste, and when my soul has once clasped an idea with its poulp-like arms, it can never relinquish its hold but in death. I am going, never to return; but you and my devotion I carry with me to the battle, to the grave. I am going—I am going—”

“But, Georg, we must not part thus—”

“Then bid me stay. Only say: ‘Here am I, and I pity you.’ But do not encourage the abject wretch whom you have blinded, to look up, to open his eyes, and rejoice in the beauties of creation! And you stand there, trembling, hesitating, with-

out a word for the man who loves you, for the man—the man—”

The young man's voice was choked with emotion; he pressed his hand to his forehead and groaned. Then he seemed to collect his thoughts, and he went on, in a low and sorrowful voice: “I am here to tell you once more how my heart is unchangeably fixed on this one thought. I meant to have spoken words of sweeter meaning, but pain and regret infuse their bitterness into everything I can say. Take this little book; I have written it all—everything that my heart longed to utter, and for which ordinary words have no language—in the form of verse. Read these pages, Maria, and if they can rouse any response in your soul, keep them. The honeysuckle in your garden needs a trellis to help it to grow and blossom, and these poor songs may serve as a support round which your remembrance of me, when I am gone, may clasp its tendrils and fondly cling. Read—yes, read, and then once more say you love me, or else send me away from you.”

“Give it me,” Maria said; and she opened the book with a trembling hand.

He drew back a little way, but his breath came quickly and his eyes followed hers as she read.

She began with the last song but one. He had written it shortly after he had come in the evening before, and it ran as follows:

“Joyous bustle fills the town,
 In the windows lights are gleaming,
 Through the highways to and fro
 Happy, busy crowds are streaming.
 Could such joys but last forever!
 Last forever? Brief delight!
 Dead the lights—love finds no answer—
 Past and gone that festal night.”

The last poem of all Georg had hastily written during the night, and in it he bewailed his hapless fate. Once—at least once—she must and should hear him; he would write an appeal such as she had never listened to before. She had read the first set of verses in silence with her eyes only, but now she moved her lips and read quickly and in a low voice, but still audibly:

“Now should it sound like solemn thunder pealing,
 Then soft as flutes through sweet May moonlight stealing;
 Anon storm Heaven in jubilant elation
 Or sob like Philomel in desolation,
 And this my song, perennial and undying,
 Shall rouse mankind to listen to my sighing,

Resound through earth's deep caves and secret places,
 Beyond our grosser air through skyey spaces,
 Throughout the universe—an invocation
 Waking weird echoes from the whole creation.
 Those echoes, swelling to a suppliant choir,
 Shall pray thee hear and answer my desire.
 Ev'n when the ivy o'er my grave is ereeping,
 That magic strain of singing, sighing, weeping,
 Shall still be heard, and pierce the tomb's dark portal,
 A mighty song, insistant and immortal."

Maria read on; her heart beat faster and her breath came quicker, and by the time she had got to the last words tears had started to her eyes, and she had lifted the book with both hands, prepared to fling it from her and throw her arms round the writer's neck. He, meanwhile, had stood in front of her as if spellbound, and listened with rapture to the soaring flight of his own verse. Quivering with passion, he yet controlled himself till she had read the last word, raised her eyes from the page, and held the book aloft; but then all his self-command was blown to the winds, and he vehemently exclaimed: "Maria, sweetest wifely woman—the only woman—"

"Wifely?" The word found a questioning, warning echo in her own soul, and she felt as if an icy cold hand had been laid upon her heart. The intoxicating fumes suddenly lifted, and as she saw him before her, his arms open, his eyes full of flame, she shrunk back, sobered to an intense horror of him and of herself. Instead of tossing the book aside and rushing to meet him, she tore it across and said, proudly: "Here are your verses, Jonker von Dornburg; take them with you." And she added in gentler tones, but with a dignity that she recovered with some effort: "I can remember you without this book. We both have let ourselves dream; now let us wake! Farewell. I will pray God to protect you. Give me your hand, Georg, and when you return we shall welcome you to our house as a friend."

As she spoke, she turned away and merely assented with a silent bow, when he cried after her:

"It is all over—all over!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

GEORG went down the stairs like a man who had been stunned: the two halves of the note-book, in which, ever since the wedding at Delft, he had been in the habit of writing verses addressed to Maria, lay in his hand. A bright blaze in

the kitchen lighted up the hall; he followed its guidance, and before he even returned Barbara's friendly greeting, he went straight up to the hearth and flung the leaves which contained the pure and fragrant emanations of a sweet and tender blossom into the flames. "Oho, Jonker!" cried the widow. "A quick fire is not good for all meat; what are you burning there?"

"Only some nonsense—some papers," he said. "Be easy; the worst they could do would be to weep and put the fire out. Now they are ashes. There go the sparks in procession through the charred, black paper. How pretty! they come out and vanish again like a funeral train with torches in a pitch-black night. Sleep soundly, poor children—sleep in peace, poor little poems. Look, mother, they curl up and writhe almost convulsively, as if it hurt them to be burned."

"What things to say!" interrupted the widow, as she poked the burned volume into the fire with the tongs, and then she added, as she tapped her forehead: "Many a time have I felt truly sorry for you. High-sounding words, like those of the Psalms, are not for every-day use and our kitchen. If you belonged to me you would often hear a piece of my mind. Remember the proverb, 'Slow and steady wins the race.'"

"Good advice to a traveler," said Georg, holding out his hand to Barbara. "Farewell, good mother. I can not stay here any longer; in half an hour's time I shall have turned my back on this town."

"You are going then! Well, as you think best; or are you taking Mistress Henrika in tow? A noble's son and a noble's daughter! Like to like; but no, there has never been anything between you two. She has a good heart, but I could wish you something better than a papistical turncoat."

"Then Henrika has told you—"

"She has this moment left me. Well, well, she has her own kith and kin out there; and for us it is difficult to divide a plum into a dozen mouthfuls. I wished her God-speed with sincere good will—but you, Georg, you—"

"I shall conduct her out of the town, and then—you can not blame me—I shall go over to the Gueux."

"To the Gueux! That is a very different thing; that is right. There you will be in the very place for you. Boldly conceived, Jonker, and bravely planned! Give me your hand; and if you should meet my boy—he commands a ship of his own. Good heavens! what a good idea—you can wait a minute longer? Trautchen, come here. Upstairs in the painted chest are the worsted hose I knitted for him. Make haste and

fetch them. He may want them in the wet autumn weather and at sea. You will take them for me?"

"With all the pleasure in life; and let me thank you for all your kindness; you have been like a dear, kind mother to me." He took the widow's hand, and neither of them attempted to conceal how dear each was to the other, and how bitter the parting was. The maid-servant had given him the knitted hose, and as they said good-bye, many tears ran down on to them, and Barbara, remarking that they were wet before they were rained on, shook them dry and gave them to the Jonker.

The night was dark, but still and even sultry; the travelers were met at the Hoogewoerde Gate by Van Duivenvoorde; an old corporal of the watch carried a lantern before him and opened the gate. The captain embraced his brave and valued comrade, Dornburg; a very few words of farewell or God-speed were spoken under the walls of the fortified gate-way, and the three refugees were outside and free.

For some time they walked in silence through the darkness: Wilhelm knew the way and went first; the baron kept close to Henrika's side. All was silent excepting that from time to time they heard a word of command from the ramparts, the toll of the tower-clock, or the bark of a dog. Henrika had recognized Georg by the light of the lantern, and when, presently, Wilhelm stopped to ascertain whether there was any water in the ditches across which he wanted to lead his companions, she observed in a low voice:

"I did not count upon your escort, Jonker."

"I knew that, but I, like you, wished to leave the town."

"And you will have the benefit of our knowledge of the pass-word. Well, then, remain with us."

"Until I see you in safety, mistress."

"The walls of Leyden are already standing between you and the danger from which you are flying."

"I do not understand you."

"So much the better."

Wilhelm turned round and begged his companions to be silent. Without another word they went on until they reached the high-road, which they had hitherto avoided, close in front of the Spanish camp.

A Spanish sentinel challenged them. "Lepanto," said Wilhelm, and without let or hindrance they went forward into the camp.

A coach with four horses, a sort of ark hung between two very small fore wheels and two gigantic hind wheels, went slow-

ly past them. It was conveying Mistress Magdalena Moons, the daughter of a highly respected family of Dutch—all high in office—back to the Hague, from paying a visit to her admirer, the commander-in-chief, who subsequently became her husband. Indeed, there were plenty of women in the camp, so Henrika's presence there attracted no attention. A few wretched camp followers sat at the doors of the tents mending the soldiers' clothes, while outside one of the officer's tents were a party of over-dressed hussies throwing dice and drinking with their companions. Behind the commander's quarters there was a bright, illuminated spot, where, under a canopy, several confessionals and an altar had been erected. On the altar stood lighted tapers, and over it swung a silver lamp, while a steady stream of dark figures flowed to the confessionals—Spanish warriors, whose figures could be distinguished as the light of the tapers fell on their helmets and breast-plates.

The low chanting of the priests and the murmur of penitents and worshipers were drowned by the loud tones of the boozing German mercenaries, the neighing and stamping of chargers, and the laughter of the officers and their women; but the shrill tinkle of the mass-bell was heard now and again in brisk vibration above the hubbub of the camp. When they reached the village, the pass-word once more worked its charm, and they gained the first houses unchecked.

"Here we are," said Wilhelm, with a sigh of relief. "Take advantage of the darkness, Jonker, and go on at once till you have left the Spaniards behind you."

"No, my friend, you are still among them, and I have a fancy to share your danger. I will return with you to Leyden, and then try to reach Delft; meanwhile, I will stay here and watch and warn you in case of need."

"Nay, let us part here, Georg; it may be hours before I return."

"I have time—horribly too much time. I will wait. There, the door is opened." And he laid his hand on his sword, but he soon left hold of it, for it was Belotti who came out to them and greeted his signorina. Henrika followed him into the house, and there stood talking with him in low tones till Georg spoke to her once more.

"Mistress van Hoogstraten," he said, "I may surely hope that you will at any rate bid me God-speed?"

"Farewell, Baron van Dornburg," she replied, coolly; but she went a step toward him. Georg, too, went forward to meet her, and held out his hand. She hesitated a moment,

then she gave him hers, and asked, so softly that he only could hear her:

“You love Maria?”

“What! am I to confess?”

“Do not refuse me this last and first request. If you know how to be generous, answer me frankly; I will not betray you. Do you love Dame van der Werff?”

“Yes, mistress.”

Henrika drew a deep breath, and asked again:

“And you are rushing out into the storm in order to forget her?”

“No, madame.”

“Tell me, then, why you have come out of Leyden?”

“To meet the death that becomes a soldier.”

She went close up to him, and exclaimed, in a tone of scorn that cut Georg to the heart:

“And you too! It falls upon all—knights and maidens, wives and widows—it spares none. Sorrow, and still no end of sorrow. Farewell, Georg. We may laugh at each other, or weep for each other, just as suits our mood. A heart pierced with seven swords—a picture full of meaning. Let us each wear a blood-red scarf instead of green and blue. Give me your hand once more, and God be with you!”

Henrika beckoned to the musician, and together they followed Belotti up the steep and narrow stair.

Wilhelm was then let in a small room, beyond which was a second, in which a handsome little boy of three was playing with an old Italian nurse. In a third room, which, like all the others in the farm-house, was so low that a tall man could hardly stand upright in it, Henrika's sister was lying on a large bed, above which a canopy, after the fashion of a baldachino, was supported on four little pillars. Pine torches shed a feeble light in the large cavernous room. Their orange-colored flare was lost under the canopy, and the sufferer's face was hardly recognizable. Henrika just nodded to the Italian woman and the child as she passed through the room, and hastening into the one beyond, flew up to the bed, and, falling on her knees, clasped her sister passionately in her arms and covered her cheeks with fervent kisses.

She could say nothing but “Anna, Anna!” and the sick woman had no words but “Henrika.” This lasted for some minutes; then the girl sprung to her feet, took down a pine torch, and held it so as to light up her long-lost sister's features. How pale and thin they were! But she was still beautiful—still the same as ever. A strange mixture of pleasure

and pain took possession of Henrika; all that had been hard and cold in her nature seemed to warm and melt, and the relief of tears, which she had not known for many a long day, came back to her in that hour.

By degrees this spring-tide of feeling began to ebb, and the confusion of loving appeals and broken phrases settled down into orderly question and answer. When Anna was informed that the musician Wilhelm had escorted her sister she expressed a wish to see him, and as he came up to her bedside she held out both hands to welcome him.

“Ah, master, master!” she exclaimed, “in what a state do you see me once more! Henrika, this is the best of men, the only disinterested friend I have ever known in this world.”

How painfully agitating were the next few hours! Belotti and the old Italian nurse would now and again take up the tale to relieve their suffering mistress, and by degrees Henrika and Wilhelm had before them the complete picture of a life that had been disastrously wrecked, though worthy of a better fate. Fear, anxiety, and agonizing doubt had tormented Anna from the very first day when she had become the wife of the reckless adventurer and gambler who had succeeded in dazzling her young and inexperienced heart. To a brief intoxication had succeeded a terrible sobering and reaction. Her first child was still an infant at the breast when Don Luis, with unheard-of baseness, desired her to go with him to the house of a certain notorious Marchesa, in whose disreputable gambling salon he had for months spent evening after evening and night after night. She had indignantly refused to comply, but he had coolly insisted and threatened. Then the blood of the Hoogstratens had asserted itself, and she had fled at once, and without a word of parting, to Lugano. There her child had found a home with an old serving-woman of her mother's, while she had gone to Rome, not as an adventuress, but firmly bent on a worthy aim. She purposed to cultivate her musical talents in the new school of Palestrina and Nannini, and so acquire the power of bringing up her boy by the exercise of her art, independently of his father and of her own family, who had never troubled themselves as to her fate. She was venturing everything; still a definite hope lay before her, for an eminent prelate, a great patron of music, to whom she had letters of introduction from Brussels, and who knew her voice, had promised to procure for her, when she should return, an appointment to teach singing in a convent for the education of young girls of rank at Milan. This appointment was in his

hands, and the worthy priest also took care, before she set out, to provide her with letters to his friends in the Eternal City.

Her abrupt departure from Rome had been prompted by hearing that Don Luis had found their boy and carried him off. She could not part with her child, and not finding her husband in Milan, she followed his track, and at last joined him in Naples. D'Avila restored the boy to her, but not till she had declared herself willing to surrender to him the allowance which she was still receiving from her aunt. The long journey, with its agitations and hardships, had exhausted her strength, and she returned to Milan, crushed and ill.

Her patron had taken care to keep the appointment as singing mistress open for her; but she could fulfill the duties which the lady superintendent of the convent required of her only for a very short time; her illness rapidly increased, and a bad cough spoiled her voice. Then she went back to Lugano once more, and here tried to indemnify her poor and honest friends by selling her jewels; but ere long the generous and high-minded artist was reduced to dependence on the charity of a waiting-woman. Until about six months previously she had not suffered actual want; but her good nurse's husband had died, and they lived in anxious care for their daily bread; then a mother's love had broken Anna's pride—she wrote to her father the letter of a penitent daughter crushed by misery, but she received no answer. At last the poor creature, ill herself and perishing with her child, had stooped to the extreme of humiliation; she had implored the man, whom she could never think of but with horror and contempt, not to leave his child to grow up a beggar. The letter containing this cry of despair had reached Don Luis in Holland very shortly before his death. From him no help was to be hoped for; but Belotti had come, and now at least she was at home; her sister and her friend were standing by her side, and Henrika even encouraged her to hope for her father's forgiveness.

It was past midnight, and Georg was still waiting below for his comrade's return. The noise and bustle of the camp were beginning to die away, and the lantern which had lighted up the large lower room of the farm-house was now burning low. The German had no fellow-occupant but instruments of tilth, harness, and stores of vegetables and grain piled up against the walls, and he was in no mood even to cast a glance round him at these various objects. There was no gleam of pleasure for him far or near; he felt humiliated, guilty, weary of his life. His self-respect lay in the dust, and he saw before him a gray and joyless future, full of bitterness and vain regret.

He had nothing left to wish for but an early end to it all; and yet, now and then, a smiling picture of his distant home rose before his fancy, but it vanished as he remembered the dignified figure of the burgomaster, his own horrible weakness of purpose, and the repulse he had suffered. He was full of an intense spite against himself, and longed with vehement impatience for the rattle of arms, the thunder of cannon, and the mad struggle of man to man. The time slipped by without his heeding it, but presently his famished vitals began to crave agonizingly for food. There were turnips in plenty lying by the wall, and he ate one after another till he began to enjoy a long-forgotten sense of repletion. Then he sat down on the dough-trough to consider how he might succeed in making his way to the Gueux. He knew neither how nor where to find them, but woe to the man who should try to oppose him! His arm and sword were strong, and there were Spaniards enough at hand who might happen to feel them both. His impatience was becoming intolerable, and it was a welcome diversion when he heard steps approaching, and a man entered the house-place. He had set his back against the wall, holding his sword with his arms crossed, and he now shouted a loud "Halt!" to the late comer. He, on his part, drew his sword, and when Georg asked him, in imperious tones, what he wanted there, he answered, in a youthful voice, but with pride and determination: "I might ask you that! I am at home here in my father's house."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dornburg, smiling, for by the dim light of the lantern he had recognized the speaker. "If you are young Matenese van Wibisima you have nothing to fear from me."

"I am; but what brings you out here to-night, sword in hand, on our premises?"

"I am warming the wall for my own pleasure—or if you want to know the truth, I am on guard."

"In our house?"

"Yes, Jonker. There is some one upstairs with your cousin who has no wish to be surprised by the Spaniards. But you go up in peace; I have heard from Captain van Duivenvoorde what a brave youth you are."

"From Warmond!" exclaimed Nicolas, excitedly. "Tell me what brings you here and who you are."

"A soldier in the cause of freedom—a German, Georg von Dornburg."

"Oh! wait here awhile, pray. I will return quite soon. Do you know whether Mistress van Hoogstraten—"

"She is up there," replied Georg, pointing upward.

Nicolas flew upstairs with a few long strides, and calling his cousin, told her in hot haste that her father had had a bad fall from his horse out hunting, and was lying much hurt. He had broken out in furious language when Nicolas had first spoken to him of Anna, but presently had of his own accord asked him to tell all he knew of her, and had even attempted to come from his bed to see her. He might actually have succeeded in getting up, but his strength had failed him. If his father could come to see her next day, she might tell him that she craved to be forgiven; her father was quite ready to do what he considered his duty in the matter.

Nicolas evaded all Henrika's questions, and only inquired briefly as to Anna's health and about the friend from Leyden of whom Georg had spoken. When he heard it was the organist, he entreated her to warn him to return to the town in good time and under his escort; then he took a hasty leave and ran down-stairs again.

Wilhelm very soon joined him, and Henrika was coming down with him to see Georg once more, but no sooner did she hear his voice than she turned defiantly on her heel and returned to her sister.

The musician found the baron and Nicolas in eager colloquy.

"Nay, nay," Dornburg was saying, feelingly, "my way can never be yours."

"I am eighteen now."

"It is not that, it is not that. I have seen you behave bravely before now, and your will is as resolute as a man's; but life has flowers in store for you yet, please God, and sweet ones too. You are just setting out, and your sword will win you fame and good fortune yet for yourself and your country in freedom and contentment; while I, on the other hand, I—give me your hand and promise solemnly—"

"My hand is yours, but I can promise nothing. With you or without you I am going to join the Gueux."

Georg looked in the brave lad's face with kindly approbation.

"Is your mother alive?" he said, gently.

"No, Jonker."

"Come along then. We shall each find what we look for among the Gueux."

Nicolas grasped the hand that Georg held out to him, and Wilhelm, going up to the young fellow, said:

"I expected no less of you after the scenes by the church and in Quatgelat's tavern."

"It was you who first opened my eyes," cried Nicolas. "Now, come; we will go straight across the camp; they all know me."

On the road the lad kept close to Georg, and when the German remarked that he would have a hard battle to fight with his father, he replied:

"I know it, and it grieves me, grieves me deeply; but I can not act differently. The word traitor shall never cling to our name."

"Your cousin Matenesse, Seigneur of Riviere, is likewise devoted to the good cause."

"But my father is of a different mind. He has the heart to hope good things of the Spaniards. Of the Spaniards!—ah! I have come to know them well these last few months! A brave Leyden lad—you must know him well by his nickname of Leeuw (the lion), which he well deserved—was taken prisoner by them in fair fight. I shudder when I think of it; they hung him up head downward and tortured him to death. I was by, and not a word of what they said did I lose: 'If all Holland could be treated in the same way, the land and the people alike.' That is what they wish. And I hear these things every day of my life. No treatment is too foul for us, and the king feels just the same as the men do. But some one else may serve a master who tortures and scorns us; not I. My holy religion is eternal and indestructible. If it is held in detestation by many of the Gueux I do not care, if only they will help me to break the Spanish fetters."

Talking thus, they traversed the Spanish camp, where by this time all were sunk in sleep; then they came upon a German company of infantry who were still drinking noisily. At the further end of the camp a market-dealer and his wife were collecting the remains of their wares.

Wilhelm had walked in silence behind his two companions, for his heart was stirred with deep emotion; pain and pleasure struggled in him for the mastery, and he was intoxicated with exalted feeling; but in front of the market-booth he suddenly pulled up and pointed to some loaves which were being tossed one after the other into a bread-box. Hunger, too, was a living fact—a too living and powerful fact—in the town yonder, and it was not surprising that Wilhelm should go up to the market-folk and buy their last ham and all the loaves they had left. Nicolas laughed to see him carrying the bread under his arm, but Georg said:

"You have never yet looked famine in the face, Jonker. These loaves are medicine for the worst sickness known."

When they reached the gate, Georg had the captain roused, and announced to him that Nicolas, too, was for the future one of the *Guerx*. Duivenvoorde wished the boy God-speed, and offered him some money that he might supply himself in Delft with various necessaries and have something to live on for a week or two; but Nicolas refused his comrade's offer, for he had at his girdle a purse full of gold pieces. A jeweler at the Hague had given them to him yesterday as the price of his aunt's emerald ring. He showed this treasure to the captain, and then exclaimed:

“Now, onward, Jonker von Dornburg. I know where we shall find them, and you, Captain van Duivenvoorde, tell the burgomaster and Janus Dousa what has become of me.”

CHAPTER XXXII. .

A WEEK had gone by since Henrika's escape—seven dreadful days of famine. Maria had heard from Wilhelm that young Matenese had accompanied Georg to join the *Gueux*; that was well. That turbulent torrent was in its proper place, flowing with the wild, roaring, rushing stream. She wished him success, life, and happiness; but, strange to say, since the moment when she had torn his poems in twain, her remembrance of him had sunk as completely into the background as in the days before the Spaniards had beleaguered the town. Indeed, after that crowning victory over herself, and after parting from the baron, the young wife had felt a peculiar and unusual contentment in the midst of her sorrows and anxieties. She had judged herself sternly, and the intrinsic light of the purest diamond is never visible in all its beauty till it has suffered under the hand of the cutter. She felt thankfully glad that she could now look Peter freely in the face and give expression to her love for him, and ask his love in return. It is true that, under the pressure of his trouble, he hardly seemed to notice her and her care for him, but she felt, all the same, that much that she could say and do comforted and pleased him. The young woman did not suffer keenly from the dearth of food, while it told severely on Barbara and sorely weakened her strong frame. She would sit dejected in front of the fireless hearth and empty pans, and no longer took the trouble to quill or plait her deep-frilled cap and ruff. It was now Maria's part to raise her courage, and to remind her of her son, the captain of the *Sea Gueux*, who might before long be at Leyden with the relieving forces.

On the 6th of September the burgomaster's wife was going

home from an early walk. Autumn mists thickened the air, and a sea-breeze drove the fine damp spray through the streets. The dripping trees had long since been stripped of their leaves, not by wind and weather, but by men, women and children, who had carried off the caterpillars' food as vegetables for their own pot. In the Schagen Steeg Maria saw Adrian and overtook him; the lad was slouching wearily along, and counting aloud as he went. His mother called to him, and asked him why he was not at school, and what he was doing.

"I am counting," said he; "I have got as far as nine."

"Nine?"

"Nine bodies I have met; the master has dismissed us from school for Magister Dirks is dead, and to-day we were but thirteen. There, they are bringing another this way."

Maria drew her kerchief more closely over her face, and went on. A tall, narrow house stood on the left hand, in which a shoemaker lived, a man of merry wit, over whose door hung two doggerel inscriptions. The first was as follows:

"Here, flat below and round above,
Are shoes for every buyer;
If David does not find them fit,
Perhaps they'll suit Goliath."

And the other:

"When Israel walked in the desert of yore,
Through forty years' wanderings the same shoes he wore;
But if nowadays we could make them as strong,
The shoemaker's trade would not thrive very long."

It was on the back ridge of his roof that we saw the stork's nest—it was now empty. The red-billed visitors did not usually fly southward so early in the autumn, and a few still were left in Leyden, standing meditatively on the roofs. What could have become of the worthy cobbler's favored guests? Yesterday morning their host, who was wont, on their arrival in March, to help to secure the nest that brought good luck to the roof on which it was built—yesterday morning he had stolen up to the gable, and with his cross-bow had shot down first the mother bird and then her mate as he flew home. It had gone hard with him to do such a thing, and during the commission of the deed his wife had sat weeping in the kitchen; but when the cravings of famine are gnawing a man's vitals, and when he sees those dearest to him dying of want, he can not stop to think of old affections or future good fortune, but seeks some immediate succor. But the storks were sacrificed too late, for the shoemaker's son, his nearly full-grown ap-

prentice, had that night closed his eyes forever. Loud lamentations fell on Maria's ear from the open shop door, and Adrian observed:

"Jakob is dead and Mabel will not last long. This morning their father was shouting curses after me on account of my father. He was the cause, he said, of everybody's perishing. Is there no bread again to-day, mother? Barbel has some biscuit left, and I feel so badly. As for that endless meat, I can not get it down."

"Perhaps to-day we may be able to find a morsel. But we have to be very saving with the bread, child."

In the hall of their own house they found a servant dressed in black; he had come to announce the death of the prince's commissary, Dietrich van Bronkhorst. Last night—Sunday evening—the plague had cut off the strong man in his prime.

Maria knew, as she heard of this terrible loss, that henceforth the whole responsibility of whatever might happen would fall on her husband's shoulders. She had heard, too, that a letter had arrived from Valdez, in which he pledged his word as a nobleman that if the town would only surrender to the king's mercy it should be spared, and especially to grant free departure to her husband with Van der Does and the other instigators to resistance. The Spanish forces should be withdrawn, and Leyden garrisoned with only a few German troops. He invited Van der Werff and the Seigneur of Nordwyk to Leyderdorp as mediators, and whatever the issue, even if the negotiations came to nothing, he promised to send them home unharmed, under a safe conduct. Finally Maria knew, too, that her husband had called together, for this very day, an extraordinary meeting of the Council, the law officers, and all the chief men of the town, as well as the principal citizens. But none of this had come to her knowledge directly from Peter himself; she had heard it from the town clerk's wife and other friendly gossips.

A great change had come over her husband in these last few days. He went and came, pale and gloomy; in his own house he kept aloof from the family, silent, and consuming himself, as it were, in his own sorrow. When his wife, obeying the impulse of her heart, tried to speak some words of encouragement, he dismissed her shortly and impatiently. Night brought him no sleep, and he left his bed before dawn to walk restlessly up and down the house, to go to look at his little girl, who could no longer show that she recognized him even but by a feeble smile.

As soon as Maria reached home she went at once to the

child's room, and there found Dr. Bontius. He shook his head gravely as she entered the room, and told her that all must soon be over with the frail little creature. In the first months of the famine her digestion had been utterly undermined; now the stomach refused to do its work, and it was hopeless to think of saving her.

"She must live—she must not die!" cried Maria, beside herself, and as determined to be hopeful as a real mother, who can not conceive of the possibility that such a blow can fall upon her as the loss of her child, even when the little heart has already ceased to beat and the clear eyes are dim and closing. "Lisa, Lisa, look at me. Take a little of this nice milk—just a few drops. Tiny Elizabeth, you must not leave us."

Peter had come into the room unobserved and had heard her last words. With choked pulses he looked down at his darling, and his broad shoulders shook as he said to the doctor in husky tones: "Will she die?"

"Yes, old friend, I think so! But hold up your head; you have still much left to you. Van Loo has lost all five from the plague."

Peter shuddered violently; then he left the room, his head sunk on his breast, and without noticing Maria, Bontius followed him into his study and laid his hand on his arm.

"The scrap of life that is left to us is being made bitter enough, Peter," said he. "Barbara tells me they laid a corpse at your door this morning."

"Yes. As I went out the ghastly face greeted me—it was that of a young lad. The lives that death reaps they lay on my soul. Whichever way I look—the dead! whatever I hear—curses! Have I the right to dispose of so many lives? By day and by night I see nothing before my eyes but sorrow and death—and yet, Lord! Lord! save me from going mad." Peter clasped his hands on his forehead as he spoke, and Bontius could find no word of consolation.

"And I," he exclaimed, "I myself! My wife and the little one are down with the fever, and I am on my feet day and night—not to heal the sick and suffering, but to see them die. All that we have learned in years of weary toil is a mere mockery in these days, and yet the poor creatures sigh hopefully as soon as I feel their pulse. But things can not go on like this; it is impossible. Seventy deaths the day before yesterday, eighty-six yesterday, and among them two of my own colleagues."

"And no prospect of any improvement?"

"To-morrow the ninety will be a hundred, and the one hun-

dred will soon mount up to two—three—four—five; till at last there will be one man left, and no one even to bury him.”

“The plague-stricken houses are closed, and we still have cattle and horses.”

“But the contagion exhales through doors and shutters, and since the last bread and the last malt-cake were given out, and men have nothing left to live on but meat, meat, and nothing but meat—and only a morsel of that each day—sickness breaks out constantly in forms never before heard of, described in no books, and for which no cure has yet been found. This pouring water into bottomless jars is too much for me; my brain is no steadier than yours. Farewell, till to-morrow.”

“To-day, to-day—you will come to the meeting at the town hall?”

“Not I, indeed! Do what you feel you can answer for: I follow my own calling, which at present means closing men’s eyes and certifying their death. If this goes on much longer there will be nothing else to do by way of medical practice.”

“To put it plainly: In my place you would treat with Valdez.”

“In your place? Nay, I am not you; I am a leech—one whose duty it is to wage battle against death and suffering. Since Bronkhorst’s death you are at the head of affairs in the town. Find a scrap of bread no bigger than half your hand to eat with the meat, or else—I love my country and its liberties as well as any other man—or else—”

“Or else?”

“Or else leave death to reap his harvest. You are no physician.”

Bontius nodded to his friend, and left him. The burgomaster stood, passing his fingers through his hair and staring out of the window, till presently Barbara came into the room, and, laying his official dress on a chair, asked him with affected calm:

“May I give Adrian some of the last biscuit that is left? His stomach turns against the meat. He is lying on his bed all doubled up.”

Peter turned paler, and said, dully:

“Yes, give it him, and send for the doctor.”

“Maria and Bontius are with him.”

The burgomaster changed his dress with a feeling of aversion toward each separate garment. He hated the rich garb of office as he did the functions which entitled him to wear it, and which, till within the last few weeks, he had exercised with so much self-confidence and satisfaction.

Before leaving the house he went to see Adrian. The lad was lying in Barbara's room, complaining of horrible pains, and asking whether he, too, must die. Peter shook his head, but Maria kissed him, and said:

“No, no, certainly not.”

The burgomaster had no time to linger; his wife called to him to wait as he went through the anteroom, but he hurried down the stairs without hearing what she had to say to him, and she returned to Adrian's bedside. As she held the boy's clammy hand, she thought with a pang of the swift death that had overtaken so many of his companions; she thought of sweet little Elizabeth, and her fancy followed Peter to the Council, and heard his firm voice contending for resistance till the last pound of meat was gone and the last man left standing; and, indeed, she was ready to stand by him, though she knew what it must come to; patient endurance for freedom's sake, or, if God should so will it, a martyr's death in the cause—to die as Jacoba and Leonhard had died, and Peter's noble father!

So the weary hours went by one after another. When Adrian began to feel better she went back to the little one, who lay white and indifferent, fading through twilight into the darkness of death, and only now and then lifting her little hand to her dry lips.

Poor, sweet, fading bud of human life; how closely it had grown to her heart, how impossible it seemed to bear to lose it. With streaming eyes she pressed her brow against her clasped hands as they rested upon the head-board of the little bed, and prayed with passionate fervor that God would spare this child and save its life. And not once only, but again and again. But at last, when the half-glazed eyes of the dying child no longer met her own, her hands dropped into her lap and her thoughts reverted to her husband, to the town council, to the fate of the town, and to the words: “Save Leyden, and Holland is saved; Leyden lost, and all is lost!”

The woful day faded into twilight, and the twilight sunk into night. Trautchen brought the lamp, and at last she heard Peter's footfall on the stairs. It must be he—and yet it could not be he, for he never dragged himself up the steps so heavily. The door of the study opened—yes, it was himself.

What could have happened, what had been decided by the citizens? With an anxious qualm she bade Trautchen stay with the little girl, and she went to her husband.

Peter was sitting in front of his writing-table in his burgomaster's dress and with his hat on. His face was hidden in

his folded arms, the two-branched candlestick stood lighted on the table. He saw nothing, heard nothing; and when she presently called him by his name he started violently, stood bolt upright, and flung his hat angrily on to the table. His hair was in disorder, his gaze unsteady, and in the dull flickering light of the candles his face was as gray as that of a corpse.

“What do you want?” he asked, shortly, in a hoarse voice; but for some moments she could not answer—her tongue seemed paralyzed with terror. At last she spoke.

“What has happened?” she said, and her voice betrayed her anguish.

“The beginning of the end,” he said gloomily.

“They have outvoted you!” cried the young woman.

“Baersdorp and the rest of the cowards want to treat!”

He drew himself up.

“Beware of what you say,” he cried, in loud and threatening tones. “A man who holds out till his children die, and corpses bar the way to his own house door, who is responsible for a thousand deaths, who for weeks has been loaded with curses, and who for more than four months has hoped for succor, who, look where he will, sees nothing but unutterable and constantly increasing wretchedness and then feels that he can no longer thrust back the saving hand held out even by the foe—”

“He is a coward, a traitor, and breaks the solemn oath he has sworn!”

“Maria!” thundered Peter, going close up to her with a threatening glare.

She stood still, drawn up to her full height, and pointing her finger at him, as she went on with keen asperity, though her voice trembled:

“You—you voted with Baersdorp! You, Peter van der Werff—you! You have done this, the prince’s friend, the guardian and providence of this brave town; you, the man to whom the citizens pledged their word—the son of the martyr, the champion of freedom!”

“Say no more!” he interrupted, quivering with shame and rage. “Do you know what it is to bear the burden of this woe that cries to Heaven, in the sight of God and man?”

“I do, I do, and again I say, I do. It is to bind your heart to the rack and wheel in order to save Holland and her freedom! That is what it is! Great God! great God! You are lost indeed; you are making terms with Valdez!”

“And if I were?” said the burgomaster with a haughty wave of his hand as if to dismiss the question.

Maria fixed her eyes on his, and exclaimed, with clear decision:

“Then it would be my turn to say: Go to Delft, go to Delft; we want other men here.”

Van der Werff turned paler and looked down at the floor, while she stood facing him with a frank and fearless gaze. The light fell full on her glowing countenance, and as he raised his eyes once more to hers he felt that the woman who stood before him was that same Maria, who, as his bride, had sworn to share suffering and danger with him, and stand steadfast to the end in the struggle for freedom; he felt that his “child” Maria had grown up to his own level, ay, and beyond it; he recognized for the first time in the high-souled woman before him his ally in the fight, a worthy helpmate in trouble and in danger. An overpowering yearning, an eager aspiration such as he had never before felt, surged and seethed within him, and drew him to her, and found utterance in words.

“Maria!” he cried, “Maria my wife, my guardian angel! We have indeed written to Valdez, but it is yet time; nothing as yet binds me, and with you, with you by my side, I can stand firm to the end.”

And in the middle of this day of anguish her heart overflowed with the flood of this new, unhoped-for, and unutterable joy. As she flung herself on his breast, she exclaimed: “And I with you—one with you! forever, through this struggle, and in love beyond the grave!”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PETER felt like a man under a charm. Courage and enthusiasm once more filled his soul, for they overflowed in an unfailling stream from the brave and confident spirit of his wife. Under the pressure of the fearful responsibility he bore and the urgency of his fellow-citizens, he had agreed in the Council to write to Valdez and crave a safe-conduct for an envoy to be sent to the states general and the Prince of Orange, to beg them to release the perishing city from its oath. Valdez spared no effort to incite the burgomaster to further negotiations, but Van der Werff stood firm, and the demand for release from the sacred duty of resistance never left the town. Both the Van der Does, the town clerk, the Jonker van Warmond, and other stanch men, who, at the great gen-

eral meeting had opposed all negotiations with the enemy, now ranged themselves on his side against their fellow-officials and the town council, who, with the exception of seven only of their number, perseveringly and violently insisted on the discussion of terms.

Adrian soon got better, but the doctor's predictions were terribly fulfilled; for hunger and pestilence vied with each other in their hideous fury, and destroyed nearly half the inhabitants of the thriving town. And yet, deep as the gloom was, and dark as was the horizon, in the midst of all this cruel misery there were moments when a bright ray of sunshine fell on these suffering souls, and Hope unfurled her green standard. On the morning of the eleventh of September the townsfolk of Leyden rose from their beds more radiantly joyful than a bride roused on her wedding-day by the songs of her maiden companions, for in the distance the loud and persistent thunder of cannon could be heard, and the sky was dyed with crimson; to the south-west of the town there must be villages in flames, and each house, each granary, that sunk into ashes, burying the hopes of honest men, was a beacon of promise to the despairing Leydeners.

The Gueux were approaching!

There, out there, where the cannon thundered and the horizon glowed, was the land-scheiding, the dike, which for centuries had stoutly protected the plain of Leyden against the incursions of the waves, and which now stopped the advance of the fleet that was to bring them life.

“Fall, sheltering wall! Rise, storms, and thou sea, engulf thy prey! Destroy the peasant's wealth, ruin our fields and pastures, but drown the foe or drive him hence!”

Thus sung Janus Dousa, thus cried Peter's soul, thus prayed Maria, and with her thousands of men and women.

But the blaze in the distance died away, the firing was silent. A second day went by, a third, a fourth; no messenger came, no ship of the Gueux was to be seen, and the lake lay motionless; while another awful power grew and stalked through the city with secret, stealthy, and omnipotent force—Death, with its gaunt helpmates Despair and Famine. Silently and at night the dead were carried to their graves, that the survivors might share their slender ration undiminished. From house to house the Angel of Death winged his way and laid his hand at last on little Elizabeth, kissing her closed eyes as she slept in the noiseless night.

The faint-hearted and those who sided with the Spaniards assembled in mobs, one of which even made its way into the

council-room, clamoring for bread. But there was not a crumb left in the stores, the authorities had nothing left to give but a morsel of cow or horse-flesh, or hides—soaked and salted hides.

On one of these days of dire extremity, Van der Werff was going down the Breede Street; he paid no heed to the fact that a crowd of desperate men and women were following him with threats and abuse, but as he turned a corner to go to Van Hout's house he suddenly found himself surrounded. A pale woman, with a child in her arms at its last gasp, flung herself before him, holding the dying infant up to him, and crying in a hollow, feeble voice:

"Is it not enough, is it not enough? Look here, see this—it is the third! It is enough, enough!"

"Enough, enough! Bread, bread—give us bread!" thundered and growled all round him, and stones and missiles were lifted to throw, while a carpenter whom he knew, and who had always stood by the good cause, stepped close up to him, and said deliberately, in a deep voice:

"We can bear it no longer. We have patiently endured famine and suffering to defy the Spaniards and to defend our Bible, but to fight with certain death is sheer madness."

Peter stood still, shocked and silent, and looked at the mother, the child, the stalwart working-man, and the shrieking, threatening wretches. The common woe which was crushing them and so many starving creatures burdened his soul with tenfold weight. Anguish unutterable clutched his heart, and he longed to open his arms and embrace them all as fellow-sufferers and brethren in a future and nobler existence. He looked from one to another deeply moved; then pressing his hands to his breast he thus addressed the crowd that thronged round him:

"Here I stand. I have sworn to remain faithful, and you swore it with me. I will never break my oath, but I can die! If my death can do you any good, here I am! Bread I have none, but here is my body—take it; kill me, and tear me in pieces. Here I stand, and I will never break my oath."

The carpenter's head fell on his breast. "Come, good folks," he said; "God's will be done. We have sworn."

The burgomaster passed on calmly to his friend's house. Dame van Hout had watched the whole scene from a window, and that same day she related it to Maria, and her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm as she added:

"I never saw a man so supremely great as he was at that moment. It is well for us that he commands within these

walls; this deed will be remembered by our children and our children's children."

They have, indeed, kept his memory green in faithful remembrance.

During the night which followed the day when the burgo-master had held himself so bravely, a letter arrived from the prince, full of cheerful and encouraging news. Their illustrious chief was well again and straining every nerve to save his brave town of Leyden. The Gueux had pierced the land-scheiding; the ships were advancing; help was approaching; and the devoted men who brought the letter had, with their own eyes, seen the fleet that was bringing supplies and the champions of freedom, fired with zeal and valor for the struggle. The two Van der Does were nominated in the same letter to represent the prince in the place of Van Bronkhorst. Van der Werff no longer stood alone; and when, next morning, "Father William's" letter was read to the populace, and the messenger's errand became generally known, the spirits and confidence of the long-suffering towns-folk rose like withered grass under refreshing showers.

But there were still weary weeks of terror and misery to be gone through. In the last days of September they had to kill the cows, which till then had been spared for the benefit of the children and women in child-bed; and then—what next? Succor was at hand, for the sky was often red, and the air shook with the thunder of distant cannon; but the east wind blew steadily and held back the water which let in upon the land; and the ships which were trying to reach the town needed a high flood-tide.

Of all the messengers they sent forth not one returned; nothing was certain but their hideous, cruel, and increasing misery.

At last Barbara had succumbed, and was complaining of prostration and loathing for every kind of food. Maria remembered the roast pigeon which had been so welcome to their little lost Elizabeth, and she went to the musician to ask him whether he could bear to sacrifice another of his pets to save her sister-in-law.

She was received by his mother, who was sitting languid and feeble in an easy-chair. She could still walk, it is true, but all this anxiety and extreme want had brought on a strange shaking palsy in her hand. To Maria's question she shook her head and replied: "Ask him yourself. He has had to keep the poor little creatures shut up, for if they had been seen they would have been shot down long since by the starving people.

He still has three; the rest have flown off with various letters, but have never come back. Thank God! say I, for the scrap of food he still has by him is better in the pot than in their crops. Would you believe it? A fortnight since he paid fifty gûlden out of his savings for half a sack of pease, and God only knows where he got them then. Ullrich, take Dame van der Werff up to speak to Wilhelm. I would spare you the stairs, but he is watching up there for the pigeons he has sent out, and will not come down even to meals; and God knows they are not worth coming down to."

The day was clear and sunny. Wilhelm was standing on his balcony, and looking out over the green, well-watered plain that stretched before him to the south. Behind him sat the captain's orphan son, Andreas, writing music; but his attention was not very steady, for, whenever he had finished a line, he sat gazing into the air and watching, like his master, for the expected pigeons. He was not very much the worse for the dearth, for a certain portion of the pigeons' food had fallen to his share with his small allowance of meat.

Wilhelm was as much surprised as honored by Maria's visit, and promised to grant her request; but it was plain that he did not find it an easy matter to say "Yes." The young woman went out on to the balcony with him, and he showed her that to the south, where formerly nothing had been visible but miles of green, there was a line—a long, level margin—above which hovered a filmy mist. The noonday sun seemed to saturate the pale vapor with light and draw it upward. It was the water that was pouring in through the cuts in the dikes; and the long black patches which might be seen moving on its shore must be the Spanish troops and herds of cattle which were being driven into the outermost forts, villages, and hamlets, by the encroching tide. The land-scheiding itself was out of sight, but the Gueux had already cut through that. If the fleet could only reach the Zoetermeer Lake, and from thence—

But Wilhelm suddenly broke off in his explanation, for Andreas sprung up, throwing down his stool and shouting:

"It is coming—the pigeon! By Roland, my former self, there it is!"

It was the first time that Wilhelm had ever heard the father's favorite cry from the lips of the son; something must have excited him strangely; and in fact he was not mistaken, for the speck which his sharp eyes had espied cutting through the air was no longer a speck but already an object of discernible form—a bird—a pigeon.

Wilhelm snatched up a banner that lay on the balcony, and waved it more joyfully than ever a victor waved his flag after winning a battle. There came the pigeon: it settled, slipped into the dove-cote, and in another minute the musician appeared with a tiny letter in his hand.

“To the burgomaster—quick!” cried Wilhelm. “Carry it at once to your husband, dear dame, and finish what the pigeon has begun. God be praised! they are already at North Aa. This will save the poor folks from despair: and one thing more, you shall have a bird to cook; but take this corn too—barley-meal porridge is the very best remedy in Barbara’s condition; I have tried it.”

In the evening, and after the organist had communicated the good news to his parents, he ordered that the blue pigeon with a white breast should be killed. “Make an end of it outside,” he said: “I can not bear to see it done.”

Andreas soon came in with the dead pigeon: his lips were red, and Wilhelm could guess the reason, but he could not scold the famishing boy, and only said:

“Faugh! you ferret!”

Next morning, quite early, another pigeon flew in. The letters that they had brought were read out from the window of the town hall, and the courage of the Leydeners, now in the utmost extremity of misery, once more flickered into life and helped them to endure the worst. One of the letters was to Van der Werff, the other to Janus Dousa: they spoke of confidence and hope; and the prince—the faithful rock of their freedom, the friend and leader of the nation—the prince was well and strong again, and had himself been to see the ships which were being sent to relieve the town. Salvation was so near—but the north-east wind would not change and the waters did not rise.

On the Burcht and other elevated spots stood the citizens, soldiers, town-councilors, and women in great numbers, all gazing into the distance. A thousand hands were uplifted in fervent prayer, and all eyes were fixed in fervent expectation and agonizing longing on the southern horizon; but the line of water did not advance, and the sun broke brightly through the mists of the autumn morning as if in mockery, tempered the keen air, and sunk to rest in the evening in a fiery glow and far-reaching shafts of golden light. A cloudless blue sky overarched the town with pitiless calm, and decked itself at night with myriads of bright stars.

On the morning of the 29th, however, the mists seemed to pack more solidly together, the grass was dewless, a fog rose, the sharp air was tempered to a dull mildness, and the great

clouds grew dense and gathered blackness. Then a light breeze rose and rustled in the leafless branches, and suddenly a gust of wind swept over the heads of the watching crowd. It was followed by a second and a third, and at last the gale whistled and roared, and a howling storm whirled through the town, sweeping the tiles from the roofs, bending the fruit-trees in the gardens and the young elms and lime-trees in the streets; tearing down the banners which the boys had stuck up on the walls, in defiance of the Spaniards; lashing the dull waters of the canals and the moat. And now—for the Lord forsaketh not His own—the weather-cock veered, the blast came down from the north-west and drove the spring-tide in the storm-tossed sea up the mouth of the Maas; none could see it, but the seamen shouted out the news, and it was caught up and passed on from one to another. The stream was forced violently up its channel and over its banks, rushing through the cuttings made in the dikes made to admit it, and through the yawning sluice-gates, and bearing on its mighty shoulders the ships that bore relief. Rage, rage, thou storm; beat down, thou lashing rain; rush on, ye floods; destroy the land, engulf the houses and farms! Thousands are waiting to welcome you on the walls and towers of Leyden. They see in you the avenging and saving hosts of the Lord, and rejoice and hail you with shouts.

For two successive days the burgomaster—with Maria and Adrian, and the families of Van der Does and Van Hout—has remained, with brief intervals, among the towns-people, who are watching from the Burcht or the Cow Gate; and even Barbara, though hardly recovered, will not be kept at home, for hope has done more to revive her than the barley-meal porridge and the lean pigeon; she has dragged herself up to the musician's eyrie, for every one must see the advancing waters, as the earth gives place to them—see the moisture trickle through the grass, collect in puddles, pools, lakes, till at last it is a broad level, beaten by the thrashing rain into bubbles that break into rings and vanish. Every one wants to see with his own eyes how the Spaniards hurry hither and thither, like sheep fleeing before a wolf. Every one must hear for himself the thunder of the Gueux's cannon, the rattle of their arquebuses and musketry; men and women alike rejoice more in the storm which threatens to sweep them away than in the softest zephyr; and the drenching rain that soaks them is more delightful than the sunlighted showers of spring.

Beyond the stronghold of Lammen, defended by some hundred Spanish soldiers, and the tower of Croonesteyn, a keen

eye could now detect the ships of the Gueux. All Thursday and Friday Wilhelm had looked in vain for a pigeon, but on Saturday his best carrier came home. It bore a letter from Admiral Boisot, begging that the men at arms left in the town would make a sortie on the Friday, and throw themselves upon Lammen. The storm had carried the bird out of its track; it had arrived a day too late. However, on the Saturday evening Janus Dousa and Captain van der Laen prepared to move. All who could bear arms were called out early on Sunday morning. A hapless, pale, and diminished force gathered at their commanders' call; but none would be missing, and all were prepared to yield up their lives for the rescue of the town and of those dear to them.

The storm had moderated; the firing had ceased; the night was warm and dark. Not an eye was closed, and those who, for a few moments, were overcome by sleep were startled and alarmed by strange and mysterious noises. Wilhelm sat up on his balcony, looking and listening toward the south. Now a light gust of wind would whistle round the tall house, now a shout, a cry, a trumpet-call rang through the silent night; and presently there was a crash and roar out by the Cow Gate, as though an earthquake had shaken the foundations of part of the town and hurled it to the ground. There was not a star in the sky, but in the neighborhood of Lammen dancing lights moved in regular rows across the black darkness. It was an ominous and terrible night.

At dawn it was seen that a part of the town wall by the Cow Gate had fallen in, and a cry of joy went up to Heaven at the sight of the breach, which was no longer a source of danger, while the joyful news flew through the streets and alleys. Men and women, old men and children, sick and sound, came out of the houses, crowding down to the Cow Gate; now the fleet of the Gueux was to be seen rapidly coming nearer, and the town carpenter, Thomassohn, with some others, was tearing up the piles with which the Spaniards had barred the Vliet, till at last the first ship, and then a second and a third, was close under the walls. The wild-looking, hairy sailors—men with deeply scarred, fierce, sunburned faces, which for years had felt no touch of salt water but the sea spray—were laughing to the citizens and crying and sobbing like children; while they threw them up loaves and good things long unknown to them, which the poor creatures on the wall eat and eat, and could not even find a word of thanks. And then the chiefs arrived and met; Admiral Boisot fell into the arms of Van der Does and the burgomaster, and Van Duykenburg into

those of his mother, old Barbara, and many a Leydener hugged the liberators he had never set eyes on till this hour. Many, many a tear was shed, and thousands of hearts overflowed, and the Sunday bells rang out louder and clearer than was their wont, bidding the rescuer and the rescued alike to church and prayer. The wide vault of the sanctuary was too narrow for the worshipers, and when the preacher, Corneliussohn—filling the place of the worthy Verroot, who had fallen ill himself while tending so many sufferers—exhorted the devout to thanksgiving, his words had long been anticipated, for at the very first sounds of the organ the thousands who crowded the church in every part had been fired to offer up, as with one voice, thanks—thanks, and again fervent thanks!

Pater Damianus, too, returned thanks to God in the little chapel of the Carmelite Sisters, and with him Nicolas van Wibisma and many another Catholic, to whom freedom and his fatherland were dear.

After church, Adrian, with a piece of bread in one hand and his shoes in the other, waded at the head of his school-fellows across the higher meadows, which were all under water, as far as Leyderdorp, to see the deserted Spanish camp. There stood the handsome tent of the commander-in-chief; over the bedstead hung a map of the Rhineland, which had been drawn by Beeldsnyder, a Dutchman, for the destruction of his own countrymen. The boys stood gazing at it, and a Gueux, who had once sat at a desk, and who now looked like a sea-bear, went up to them.

“See here, lads,” he said, “here is the land-scheiding. We cut through that first, but that was only half our task. We were checked at the Greenway, and here at the third dike—the Voorweg they call it—we found too hard a nut to crack; we could not get through any way. So back we had to go again, a long round by Zeegwaert and through the canal here, where we had a hard tussle, to North Aa. The Zoetermeer Lake was now behind us, but the water was too shallow, and we could get no further. Have you seen the great ‘Ark of Delft’? It is a huge vessel, and is not moved by oars but by wheels, which turn and push it on through the water; you will like to see it. At last the Lord sent the storm and the spring-tide, and the ships had water enough to float them. At the Kirkway we again had hot work, but we got to Lammen the day before yesterday. Many a brave man had already fallen on both sides, but when we got to Lammen, we all thought we were to fight it out in good earnest. Early this morning we meant to storm the fort, but when day dawned all was awfully

still in the nest, and there was an uncanny sultriness in the air. Then we thought to ourselves: 'It is all over with Leyden; hunger has been too much for them!' But nothing of the kind! You are made of sterner stuff; and a boy came wading out to the ship—about as big as one of you—and said that in the night he had seen a long train of lights come out of the fort and march away. At first we would not believe him, but the boy was right. The crabs had found the water too hot for them, and the lights the youngster had seen were the slow matches of the Spaniards. Look, children, there is Lammen—”

Adrian and his companions had gone quite close up to the map and had interrupted the seaman's story with a loud laugh.

“What have you found there, curly pate?” asked the Gueux.

“Look here, look here! the great Valdez has immortalized himself; and here is his name too! Our head-master would make him wear a dunce's cap, for he writes: '*Castelli parvi! Vale civitas, valete Castelli parvi; relictis estis propter aquam et non per vim inimicorum.*' Oh, what an ass! *Castelli parvi!*”

“And what does all that mean?” asked the sailor.

“Farewell, Leyden, farewell, ye little *Castelli!* you are abandoned because of the waters and not because of the strength of the enemy. '*Parvi Castelli!*' I must tell mother of that.”

On Monday William of Orange arrived at Leyden and took up his quarters in the Baron of Montfoort's house. The people hailed their “Father William” with great rejoicing; and the indefatigable champion of the freedom of the Netherlands, in the midst of the satisfaction and triumph that surrounded him, busied himself for the further prosperity of the town. At a later period he rewarded the stanch endurance of its inhabitants with a truly glorious monument of their victory—the University of Leyden. It served to arouse and cherish in the busy town, and throughout the land which had so long lain bleeding under the horrors of war, that lofty spirit whose struggles and labors are their own reward, and which sets eternal blessings far above temporal ones. That tree of which the seed was sown at the moment of escape from utter misery, and in the very midst of warfare and suffering, has borne splendid fruits for mankind, and bears them still, and, please God! will flourish for many a century yet.

On the 26th of July, 1581, seven years after the relief of Leyden, Holland and Zealand, whose political independence

had already been established for six years, declared at the Hague their formal separation from Spain. William of Orange had hitherto ruled as *Stadhouder*, or regent, under King Philip, and had even carried on the war against him in his own name. Nay, the charter of foundation of the university—a document which, in spite of the grave purpose which dictated it, may be designated as an unsurpassed masterpiece of subtle political irony—was put into the mouth of King Philip by his viceroy; and it is amusing to read in this legal deed that the gloomy bigot in the Escorial has, after mature deliberation, agreed with his dear and faithful cousin, William of Orange, to found a free school and university on grounds which it is quite certain the king must have held in the greatest abhorrence.

On the 24th of July this mockery had been quashed, and Philip formally deposed. The prince no longer wielded the government in the name of the king, but in that of the states general.

Three days later the event was celebrated by a splendid banquet in Van der Werff's house.

The windows of the dining-room stood open, and the fresh air of the summer night fanned the heated brows of the guests who had met round the burgomaster's table. These were all his best and most intimate friends: Janus Dousa; Van Hout; the learned Dr. Grotius of Delft, who, to Maria's great joy, had been invited to Leyden as a professor, and who had this year been chosen rector, or warden, of the new university; our learned acquaintance, the inn-keeper Aquanus; Dr. Bontius, now professor of medicine at the college, and others. The musician Wilhelm was present, too, but not alone; for with him was his handsome and charming wife, Anna d'Avila, whom he had lately brought home from Italy. He had now for some years borne the name of Van Duivenbode—"pigeon messenger," the state having granted him this well-earned surname and a coat of arms—on a field argent, three pigeons azure, and two keys crossed.

With the full consent of the prince, the bequests of old Mistress van Hoogstraten to her relations and servants had been recognized, and Wilhelm and his wife were now living in a handsome new house—with a dove-cote attached—where Maria took part in many a madrigal, although the four children she had brought her husband left her now but little time. The musician had plenty to tell Adrian of Rome and of his sister-in-law, Henrika; and Adrian was now a fine young man, who had studied at the university, and was ere long to be made a

member of the town council. Belotti had followed Henrika to Italy after the death of her father, who had consented to see and bless Anna once more, and there she lived as superior of a secular order who cultivated music with special zeal.

Barbara was not among the guests, for she found enough to occupy her in the kitchen. Her wide cap frills were gffered now with an almost coquettish elaboration, and the confident satisfaction with which she ruled Trautchen and the other two serving-maids amply proved that all went well in Peter's household and business.

And it was really worth while to take some extra trouble for the guests they had upstairs. The Jonker van Warmond was among them, and a place of honor was kept for him between Dr. Grotius and Janus Dousa, the chief curator of the university; for he had risen to be a great personage and a powerful statesman, who had had great difficulty in making time to come from the Hague with his young colleague, Nicolas van Wibisma, to take part in the festivity. But he was as lively and eager as ever as he pledged Master Aquanus, exclaiming:

"To the memory of old times and our friend Georg von Dornburg!"

"With all my heart," replied the inn-keeper. "It is a long time since we heard any tidings of his daring deeds and travels."

"Very naturally. The fermenting liquor has settled and cleared itself. Dornburg is in the English service again, and a month ago I met him in London, a British naval officer. His squadron is now on the way to Venice. But he still thinks of all here with affection, and bade me greet you. You would hardly recognize our favorite of other days in the respected and imperious commander, at once so calm and so jovial. How often would his soaring-genius bear him high above our heads, and how sad it was to see him gloomily dreaming over his secret sorrows!"

"I saw the Jonker formerly in Delft," said Grotius. "Such soaring spirits are apt to fly too high, and then to have a fall; but if they can only harness themselves to the car of work and duty, they have a force that may move heavy burdens and conquer the greatest difficulties with happy ease."

Meanwhile Adrian, at a sign from his father, had risen to his feet and filled the glasses of the company with the best wine he had. The "Hoch" which the burgomaster gave out was in honor of the prince, and Janus Dousa supplemented it with one for the independence and freedom of their native land. Van Hout filled a glass to the memory of their days of

suffering and of the wonderful rescue of the town. Every one responded vehemently to this, and when their cheers had died away, Aquanus said:

“Who does not thankfully remember that Sunday, October the 3d! But when I look back on the misery that preceded it my very heart stands still to this day.”

Peter took his wife's hand and pressed it tenderly, as he said to her in a low voice:

“And yet it was then, on the bitterest day of my life, that I found my dearest blessing.”

“And I also!” she replied, with a grateful look into his honest eyes.

THE END.

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