

PS 1663

.F7 W5

FERRIS, MARY L.

"

THE WIDOW'S PRAYER

PS 1663
87 W 5

THE WIDOW'S
PRAYER

Mrs. Lanman (Deaw) Ferris

Mrs. Morris Patterson Ferris

New York, 1915

6

M.E.W. 4 Apr '18

PS1663
F7W5

Doubtless, you've heard of Madam Bogardus,
Trinity Church stands on part of her farm,
Possibly you are some kin to the lady,

Therefore, you'll pardon my spinning this yarn.
Madam had wealth as well as position;

Madam was comely and Madam was coy,
When, as a widow, she captured the Dominic,
Life was still brimming with youth and with joy.

What was her ancestry? History says not,

Only tradition supplies the lost chain.

William of Orange, the Prince, was her grandsire,

Tryn Janse, the midwife, her mother. In vain

Search we the records to vouch for the noble birth,

That she was comely sufficed the young maid;

And if a woman possesses this attribute,

Homage will sooner or later be paid.

When as a mere child she married van Maesterlandt—
 Roeloffsse Jansen he's generally known,—
All eyes were turned on the thriving New Netherland,
 Now to a prosperous settlement grown.
As little voices were heard in Annetje's home,
 Roeloffsse urged that they sail o'er the sea,
Health in his sturdy frame, wealth lay ahead of them,
 Wealth and success in the land of the free.

De Heer van Rensselaer heard of the Hollander,
 Called him to Amsterdam, gave him a place
On the domain in the New Netherland,
 Granted van Rensselaer by the King's grace.
With his young family, Roeloffsse Jansen,
 Full of man's vigor and brimming with life,
Came to the province to face all its dangers,
 Brave and undaunted; but his young wife

Pined for the friends she had left in the Fatherland,
Missed the refinements and comforts of home.
Here was a race whose whole life was a struggle;
Work was existence and pleasure unknown.
Toil aged van Maesterlandt, Annetje's figure
Rounded more perfectly, eyes shone more bright,
Roeloffsse smoothed as he could the rough places,
Bore all the hardships and fought a good fight,

But the strain told on the resolute settler,
And in two years he "slept in the Lord",
Leaving his wife with five little children,
And for those days, quite a neat little hoard.
All of New Amsterdam mourned for the goodman
Spoke of his virtues, and just was their praise
Faithful and honorable, true to his home ties,—
Qualities often quite rare in these days.

Foremost of those to console the young widow
Came the good Dominie, "Madam", he said,
"Mourn not the man the just Lord has translated,
"Think of the living and not of the dead."
Picture the Dominie, urbane and courteous,
Culture, refinement, a part of his life,
Flattered and courted, and eagerly welcomed,
Yet having not even thought of a wife.

Many the glances from Netherland maidens,
Many the smiles, and 'twas said in Love Lane
That the good man always meeting a score or two,
Vowed that he never would walk there again.
Are you surprised then, that Madam Annetje
Cheered when he entered, and smiled as of yore;
Burcher and Jufrouw exchanged knowing glances,
As night by night he would pass by their door.

Six months of mourning, and lo, the fair widow
Sat as of old on the stoop, by her side
Sometimes Vrouw Bancker, and sometimes the Dominie,
And the good Governor laughed till he cried,
That the old Dominie, so long a celibate,
Should by a widow be captured so fast.

Meantime the Dominie threatened and thundered,
Preaching, "Repent, or damnation at last,"
For if you fancy New Amsterdam's parson
Always was pleasant, and smiling, and bland,
You should have heard him preach at the Governor,
And other men standing high in the land.
Fearless and masterful, wielding great power,
True to his cause, tho' his zeal was mis-spent,
He has come down to us full of the energy
Needed in one to a new country sent.

Faults he had many, I would not condone them,—
Punch he could brew of the very best sort,
And when once brewed he could quaff it ad libitum;
Now, it is true that the Synod of Dort
Does not uphold such a liberal preacher,
Yet he had virtues outweighing this crime,
And his position was somewhat peculiar,
Judge then the man in the light of his time.

Having defended the gallant old Dominie,—
Would I could show you some points in his life—
Let us return to the little Dutch widow,
Whom he was trying to win for his wife.
One stormy evening, 'twas late in November,
Children in bed, and communing with self,
Madam Annetje spun by the fireplace,
Tiled with quaint views from the City of Delft.

Oh, how she needed some one to advise her,
 Manage the farm and train the young minds!
Sighing, she put a fresh log on the fire,
 Fastened the half-door, and barred all the blinds.
Just then there came a soft tap on the knocker,—
 What made her heart beat and flushed all her face?
Was she afraid of some stray prowling Indian,
 Asking for food and a bed on the place?—

No, Madam Annetje, only the Dominie
 Brings such a look in those lovely brown eyes,
Opening the upper door, asking "Who is it?"
 Feigning a very indifferent surprise,
Madam admits the comforting Dominie,
 Draws up a settle and bids him sit down,
Asks him to tell her how Hendrick van Dyck is,
 And any other chance news in the town.

Says she is sad, has been thinking of Roelffsse
How much she needs his advice and his care,
Surely she's asked the good God to direct her,
Yet He has seemed not to answer her prayer.
"Nay, say not so, I have come for that purpose,—
"See I am lonely, need counsel and rest,
"Guide thou my life, I will care for thee tenderly,
"Come let me press thy dear head to my breast,

“Comfort thy sore heart, and take all thy cares away,

“Bring up thy children, attend to thy land,

“Lead thee in pleasant ways—’tis the Lord’s doing—

“Thou needest help, here I give thee my hand.

“Lo! My poor heart thou hast had for a long space,

“E’en, when I told thee to mourn not the dead,

“God, in His mercy removed thy dear husband,

“Think of the living; I meant what I said.

"Surely thou readest the Scripture, and knowest

"That it is said man must not live alone,

"God foreordained this in Eden's great garden,

"Making the woman from Adam's rib bone.

"Didst thou not pray for some one to advise thee?

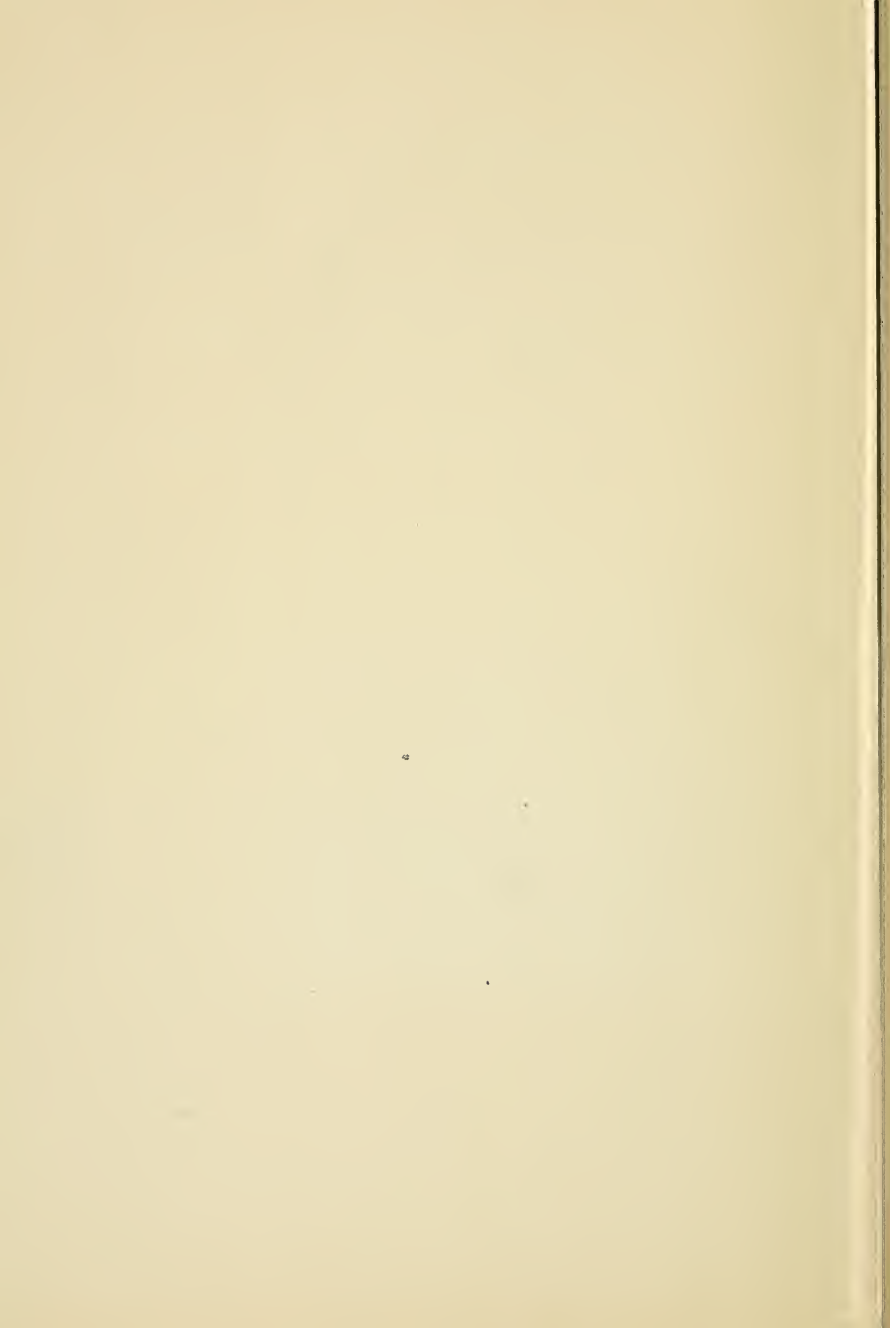
"Lo! here I stand, all I have at thy feet.

"Let us take up Life's burden together,

"Doing our part as seemeth most meet."

Only one answer made Madam Annetje,
"I could not bury another husband",
"Nay, and thou shalt not"—How wisely it seemeth
There are some things we cannot understand.*
When the glad news was publicly known,
How keen the interest, how great the chagrin.
That she was deeply attached to the Dominic,
Annetje boldly avowed—'twas no sin.

* Madam Bogardus survived her husband 27 years.

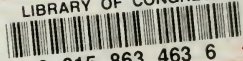




Well, in due time they were wed in New Amsterdam,
And what a gala array all things wore
Madam de Peyster provided the wedding feast,
And in the twilight when left at their door
In the whole province of Holland's possessions,
None were more happy, and just here I dare
State that the well-known Madam Bogardus
Received a husband in answer to prayer.

—MARY L. D. FERRIS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 863 463 6

Hollinger
pH 8.5