

***CHARLES
READE***



***THE CLOISTER
AND THE HEARTH***

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The Cloister and the Hearth

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)

["The soup is hot," said Gerard.](#)

[CHAPTER III](#)

[CHAPTER IV](#)

[CHAPTER V](#)

[CHAPTER VI](#)

[CHAPTER VII](#)

[CHAPTER VIII](#)

[CHAPTER IX](#)

[CHAPTER X](#)

[CHAPTER XI](#)

[CHAPTER XII](#)

[CHAPTER XIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIV](#)

[CHAPTER XV](#)

[CHAPTER XVI](#)

[CHAPTER XVII](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIX](#)

[CHAPTER XX](#)

[CHAPTER XXI](#)

[CHAPTER XXII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIV](#)

[CHAPTER XXV](#)

[CHAPTER XXVI](#)

[CHAPTER XXVII](#)

[CHAPTER XXVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIX](#)

[CHAPTER XXX](#)

[CHAPTER XXXI](#)

[CHAPTER XXXII](#)

[CHAPTER XXXIII](#)

[They met the landlord in the passage.](#)

[CHAPTER XXXIV](#)

["Where be the true men?"](#)

[CHAPTER XXXV](#)

[Gerard awoke, and found Denys watching him with some anxiety.](#)

[CHAPTER XXXVI](#)

["In prison, sir; good lack, for what misdeed?"](#)

[CHAPTER XXXVII](#)

[CHAPTER XXXVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XXXIX](#)

[CHAPTER XL](#)

[CHAPTER XLI](#)

[CHAPTER XLII](#)

[CHAPTER XLIII](#)

[CHAPTER XLIV](#)

[CHAPTER XLV](#)

[CHAPTER XLVI](#)

[CHAPTER XLVII](#)

[CHAPTER XLVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XLIX](#)

[CHAPTER L](#)

[CHAPTER LI](#)

[CHAPTER LI](#)

[CHAPTER LIII](#)

[CHAPTER LIV](#)

[CHAPTER LV](#)

[CHAPTER LVI](#)

[CHAPTER LVII](#)

[CHAPTER LVIII](#)

[CHAPTER LIX](#)

[Happy the man who has two chain-cables: Merit, and Women.](#)

[CHAPTER LX](#)

[CHAPTER LXI](#)

[CHAPTER XLII](#)

[Gerard returned to consciousness and to despair.](#)

[CHAPTER LXIII](#)

[A dark cloud fell on a noble mind.](#)

[CHAPTER LXIV](#)

[CHAPTER LXV](#)

[CHAPTER LXVI](#)

[CHAPTER LXVII](#)

[CHAPTER LXVIII](#)

[CHAPTER LXIX](#)

[CHAPTER LXX](#)

[CHAPTER LXXI](#)

[CHAPTER LXXII](#)

[The Cloister](#)

[CHAPTER LXXIII](#)

[THE HEARTH](#)

[CHAPTER LXXIV](#)

[THE CLOISTER](#)

[CHAPTER LXXV](#)

[CHAPTER LXXVI](#)

[THE HEARTH](#)

[CHAPTER LXXVII](#)

[CHAPTER LXXVIII](#)

[CHAPTER LXXIX](#)

[CHAPTER LXXX](#)

[THE CLOISTER](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXI](#)

[THE HEARTH](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXII](#)

["Mistress, they all say he is dead."](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXIII](#)

[THE HEARTH](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXIV](#)

[THE HEARTH](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXV](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXVI](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXVII](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXVIII](#)

[CHAPTER LXXXIX](#)

[CHAPTER XC](#)

[CHAPTER XCI](#)

[CHAPTER XCII](#)

[CHAPTER XCIII](#)

[CHAPTER XCIV](#)

[CHAPTER XCV](#)

[CHAPTER XCVI](#)

CHAPTER XCVII

CHAPTER XCVIII

CHAPTER XCIX

CHAPTER C

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

Not a day passes over the earth, but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrows. Of these obscure heroes, philosophers, and martyrs, the greater part will never be known till that hour, when many that are great shall be small, and the small great; but of others the world's knowledge may be said to sleep: their lives and characters lie hidden from nations in the annals that record them. The general reader cannot feel them, they are presented so curtly and coldly: they are not like breathing stories appealing to his heart, but little historic hail-stones striking him but to glance off his bosom: nor can he understand them; for epitomes are not narratives, as skeletons are not human figures.

Thus records of prime truths remain a dead letter to plain folk: the writers have left so much to the imagination, and imagination is so rare a gift. Here, then, the writer of fiction may be of use to the public—as an interpreter.

There is a musty chronicle, written in intolerable Latin, and in it a chapter where every sentence holds a fact. Here is told, with harsh brevity, the strange history of a pair, who lived untrumpeted, and died unsung, four hundred years ago; and lie now, as unpitied, in that stern page, as fossils in a rock. Thus, living or dead, Fate is still unjust to them. For if I can but show you what lies below that dry chronicler's words, methinks you will correct the indifference of centuries, and give those two sore-tried souls a place in your heart—for a day.

It was past the middle of the fifteenth century; Louis XI was sovereign of France; Edward IV was wrongful king of England; and Philip “the Good,” having by force and cunning dispossessed his cousin Jacqueline, and broken her heart, reigned undisturbed this many years in Holland, where our tale begins.

Elias, and Catherine his wife, lived in the little town of Tergou. He traded, wholesale and retail, in cloth, silk, brown holland, and, above all, in curried leather, a material highly valued by the middling people, because it would stand twenty years' wear, and turn an ordinary knife, no small virtue in a jerkin of that century, in which folk were so liberal of their steel; even at dinner a man would leave his meat awhile, and carve you his neighbour, on a very moderate difference of opinion.

The couple were well to do, and would have been free from all earthly care, but for nine children. When these were coming into the world, one per annum, each was hailed with rejoicings, and the saints were thanked, not expostulated with; and when parents and children were all young together, the latter were looked upon as lovely little playthings invented by Heaven for the amusement, joy, and evening solace of people in business.

But as the olive-branches shot up, and the parents grew older, and saw with their own eyes the fate of large families, misgivings and care mingled with their love. They belonged to a singularly wise and provident people: in Holland reckless parents were as rare as disobedient children. So now when the huge loaf came in on a gigantic trencher, looking like a fortress in its moat, and, the tour of the table

once made, seemed to have melted away, Elias and Catherine would look at one another and say, "Who is to find bread for them all when we are gone?"

At this observation the younger ones needed all their filial respect to keep their little Dutch countenances; for in their opinion dinner and supper came by nature like sunrise and sunset, and, so long as that luminary should travel round the earth, so long as the brown loaf go round their family circle, and set in their stomachs only to rise again in the family oven. But the remark awakened the national thoughtfulness of the elder boys, and being often repeated, set several of the family thinking, some of them good thoughts, some ill thoughts, according to the nature of the thinkers.

"Kate, the children grow so, this table will soon be too small."

"We cannot afford it, Eli," replied Catherine, answering not his words, but his thought, after the manner of women.

Their anxiety for the future took at times a less dismal but more mortifying turn. The free burghers had their pride as well as the nobles; and these two could not bear that any of their blood should go down in the burgh after their decease.

So by prudence and self-denial they managed to clothe all the little bodies, and feed all the great mouths, and yet put by a small hoard to meet the future; and, as it grew and grew, they felt a pleasure the miser hoarding for himself knows not.

One day the eldest boy but one, aged nineteen, came to his mother, and, with that outward composure which has so

misled some persons as to the real nature of this people, begged her to intercede with his father to send him to Amsterdam, and place him with a merchant. "It is the way of life that likes me: merchants are wealthy; I am good at numbers; prithee, good mother, take my part in this, and I shall ever be, as I am now, your debtor."

Catherine threw up her hands with dismay and incredulity.

"What! leave Tergou!"

"What is one street to me more than another? If I can leave the folk of Tergou, I can surely leave the stones."

"What! quit your poor father now he is no longer young?"

"Mother, if I can leave you, I can leave"

"What! leave your poor brothers and sisters, that love you so dear?"

"There are enough in the house without me."

"What mean you, Richart? Who is more thought of than you Stay, have I spoken sharp to you? Have I been unkind to you?"

"Never that I know of; and if you had, you should never hear of it from me. Mother," said Richart gravely, but the tear was in his eye, "it all lies in a word, and nothing can change my mind. There will be one mouth less for you to feed.'

"There now, see what my tongue has done," said Catherine, and the next moment she began to cry. For she saw her first young bird on the edge of the nest trying his wings to fly into the world. Richart had a calm, strong will, and she knew he never wasted a word.

It ended as nature has willed all such discourse shall end: young Richart went to Amsterdam with a face so long and sad as it had never been seen before, and a heart like granite.

That afternoon at supper there was one mouth less. Catherine looked at Richart's chair and wept bitterly. On this Elias shouted roughly and angrily to the children, "Sit wider, can't ye: sit wider!" and turned his head away over the back of his seat awhile, and was silent.

Richart was launched, and never cost them another penny; but to fit him out and place him in the house of Vander Stegen, the merchant, took all the little hoard but one gold crown. They began again. Two years passed, Richart found a niche in commerce for his brother Jacob, and Jacob left Tergou directly after dinner, which was at eleven in the forenoon. At supper that day Elias remembered what had happened the last time; so it was in a low whisper he said, "Sit wider, dears!" Now until that moment, Catherine would not see the gap at table, for her daughter Catherine had besought her not to grieve to-night, and she had said, "No, sweetheart, I promise I will not, since it vexes my children." But when Elias whispered "Sit wider!" says she, "Ay! the table will soon be too big for the children, and you thought it would be too small;" and having delivered this with forced calmness, she put up her apron the next moment, and wept sore.

"'Tis the best that leave us," sobbed she; "that is the cruel part."

"Nay! nay!" said Elias, "our children are good children, and all are dear to us alike. Heed her not! What God takes

from us still seems better than what He spares to us; that is to say, men are by nature unthankful—and women silly.”

“And I say Richart and Jacob were the flower of the flock,” sobbed Catherine.

The little coffer was empty again, and to fill it they gathered like ants. In those days speculation was pretty much confined to the card-and-dice business. Elias knew no way to wealth but the slow and sure one. “A penny saved is a penny gained,” was his humble creed. All that was not required for the business and the necessities of life went into the little coffer with steel bands and florid key. They denied themselves in turn the humblest luxuries, and then, catching one another's looks, smiled; perhaps with a greater joy than self-indulgence has to bestow. And so in three years more they had gleaned enough to set up their fourth son as a master-tailor, and their eldest daughter as a robemaker, in Tergou. Here were two more provided for: their own trade would enable them to throw work into the hands of this pair. But the coffer was drained to the dregs, and this time the shop too bled a little in goods if not in coin.

Alas! there remained on hand two that were unable to get their bread, and two that were unwilling. The unable ones were, 1, Giles, a dwarf, of the wrong sort, half stupidity, half malice, all head and claws and voice, run from by dogs and unprejudiced females, and sided with through thick and thin by his mother; 2, Little Catherine, a poor little girl that could only move on crutches. She lived in pain, but smiled through it, with her marble face and violet eyes and long silky lashes; and fretful or repining word never came from her lips. The unwilling ones were Sybrandt, the

youngest, a ne'er-do-weel, too much in love with play to work; and Cornelis, the eldest, who had made calculations, and stuck to the hearth, waiting for dead men's shoes. Almost worn out by their repeated efforts, and above all dispirited by the moral and physical infirmities of those that now remained on hand, the anxious couple would often say, "What will become of all these when we shall be no longer here to take care of them?" But when they had said this a good many times, suddenly the domestic horizon cleared, and then they used still to say it, because a habit is a habit, but they uttered it half mechanically now, and added brightly and cheerfully, "But thanks to St. Bavon and all the saints, there's Gerard."

Young Gerard was for many years of his life a son apart and he was going into the Church, and the Church could always maintain her children by hook or by crook in those days: no great hopes, because his family had no interest with the great to get him a benefice, and the young man's own habits were frivolous, and, indeed, such as our cloth merchant would not have put up with in any one but a clerk that was to be. His trivialities were reading and penmanship, and he was so wrapped up in them that often he could hardly be got away to his meals. The day was never long enough for him; and he carried ever a tinder-box and brimstone matches, and begged ends of candles of the neighbours, which he lighted at unreasonable hours—ay, even at eight of the clock at night in winter, when the very burgomaster was abed. Endured at home, his practices were encouraged by the monks of a neighbouring convent. They had taught him penmanship, and continued to teach him

until one day they discovered, in the middle of a lesson, that he was teaching them. They pointed this out to him in a merry way: he hung his head and blushed: he had suspected as much himself, but mistrusted his judgment in so delicate a matter. "But, my son," said an elderly monk, "how is it that you, to whom God has given an eye so true, a hand so subtle yet firm, and a heart to love these beautiful crafts, how is it you do not colour as well as write? A scroll looks but barren unless a border of fruit, and leaves, and rich arabesques surround the good words, and charm the sense as those do the soul and understanding; to say nothing of the pictures of holy men and women departed, with which the several chapters should be adorned, and not alone the eye soothed with the brave and sweetly blended colours, but the heart lifted by effigies of the saints in glory. Answer me, my son."

At this Gerard was confused, and muttered that he had made several trials at illuminating, but had not succeeded well; and thus the matter rested.

Soon after this a fellow-enthusiast came on the scene in the unwonted form of an old lady. Margaret, sister and survivor of the brothers Van Eyck, left Flanders, and came to end her days in her native country. She bought a small house near Tergou. In course of time she heard of Gerard, and saw some of his handiwork: it pleased her so well that she sent her female servant, Reicht Heynes, to ask him to come to her. This led to an acquaintance: it could hardly be otherwise, for little Tergou had never held so many as two zealots of this sort before. At first the old lady damped Gerard's courage terribly. At each visit she fished out of

holes and corners drawings and paintings, some of them by her own hand, that seemed to him unapproachable; but if the artist overpowered him, the woman kept his heart up. She and Reicht soon turned him inside out like a glove: among other things, they drew from him what the good monks had failed to hit upon, the reason why he did not illuminate, viz., that he could not afford the gold, the blue, and the red, but only the cheap earths; and that he was afraid to ask his mother to buy the choice colours, and was sure he should ask her in vain. Then Margaret Van Eyck gave him a little brush—gold, and some vermilion and ultramarine, and a piece of good vellum to lay them on. He almost adored her. As he left the house Reicht ran after him with a candle and two quarters: he quite kissed her. But better even than the gold and lapis-lazuli to the illuminator was the sympathy to the isolated enthusiast. That sympathy was always ready, and, as he returned it, an affection sprung up between the old painter and the young calligrapher that was doubly characteristic of the time. For this was a century in which the fine arts and the higher mechanical arts were not separated by any distinct boundary, nor were those who practised them; and it was an age in which artists sought out and loved one another. Should this last statement stagger a painter or writer of our day, let me remind him that even Christians loved one another at first starting.

Backed by an acquaintance so venerable, and strengthened by female sympathy, Gerard advanced in learning and skill. His spirits, too, rose visibly: he still looked behind him when dragged to dinner in the middle of an

initial G; but once seated, showed great social qualities; likewise a gay humour, that had hitherto but peeped in him, shone out, and often he set the table in a roar, and kept it there, sometimes with his own wit, sometimes with jests which were glossy new to his family, being drawn from antiquity.

As a return for all he owed his friends the monks, he made them exquisite copies from two of their choicest MSS., viz., the life of their founder, and their Comedies of Terence, the monastery finding the vellum.

The high and puissant Prince, Philip “the Good,” Duke of Burgundy, Luxemburg, and Brabant, Earl of Holland and Zealand, Lord of Friesland, Count of Flanders, Artois, and Hainault, Lord of Salins and Macklyn—was versatile.

He could fight as well as any king going; and lie could lie as well as any, except the King of France. He was a mighty hunter, and could read and write. His tastes were wide and ardent. He loved jewels like a woman, and gorgeous apparel. He dearly loved maids of honour, and indeed paintings generally; in proof of which he ennobled Jan Van Eyck. He had also a rage for giants, dwarfs, and Turks. These last stood ever planted about him, turbaned and blazing with jewels. His agents inveigled them from Istamboul with fair promises; but the moment he had got them, he baptized them by brute force in a large tub; and this done, let them squat with their faces towards Mecca, and invoke Mahound as much as they pleased, laughing in his sleeve at their simplicity in fancying they were still infidels. He had lions in cages, and fleet leopards trained by Orientals to run down hares and deer. In short, he relished

all rarities, except the humdrum virtues. For anything singularly pretty or diabolically ugly, this was your customer. The best of him was, he was openhanded to the poor; and the next best was, he fostered the arts in earnest: whereof he now gave a signal proof. He offered prizes for the best specimens of orfevrerie in two kinds, religious and secular: item, for the best paintings in white of egg, oils, and tempera; these to be on panel, silk, or metal, as the artists chose: item, for the best transparent painting on glass: item, for the best illuminating and border-painting on vellum: item, for the fairest writing on vellum. The burgomasters of the several towns were commanded to aid all the poorer competitors by receiving their specimens and sending them with due care to Rotterdam at the expense of their several burghs. When this was cried by the bellman through the streets of Tergou, a thousand mouths opened, and one heart beat—Gerard's. He told his family timidly he should try for two of those prizes. They stared in silence, for their breath was gone at his audacity; but one horrid laugh exploded on the floor like a petard. Gerard looked down, and there was the dwarf, slit and fanged from ear to ear at his expense, and laughing like a lion. Nature, relenting at having made Giles so small, had given him as a set-off the biggest voice on record. His very whisper was a bassoon. He was like those stunted wide-mouthed pieces of ordnance we see on fortifications; more like a flower-pot than a cannon; but ods tympana how they bellow!

Gerard turned red with anger, the more so as the others began to titter. White Catherine saw, and a pink tinge came on her cheek. She said softly, "Why do you laugh? Is it

because he is our brother you think he cannot be capable? Yes, Gerard, try with the rest. Many say you are skilful; and mother and I will pray the Virgin to guide your hand."

"Thank you, little Kate. You shall pray to our Lady, and our mother shall buy me vellum and the colours to illuminate with."

"What will they cost, my lad?"

"Two gold crowns" (about three shillings and fourpence English money).

"What!" screamed the housewife, "when the bushel of rye costs but a groat! What! me spend a month's meal and meat and fire on such vanity as that: the lightning from Heaven would fall on me, and my children would all be beggars."

"Mother!" sighed little Catherine, imploringly.

"Oh! it is in vain, Kate," said Gerard, with a sigh. "I shall have to give it up, or ask the dame Van Eyck. She would give it me, but I think shame to be for ever taking from her."

"It is not her affair," said Catherine, very sharply; "what has she to do coming between me and my son?" and she left the room with a red face. Little Catherine smiled. Presently the housewife returned with a gracious, affectionate air, and two little gold pieces in her hand.

"There, sweetheart," said she, "you won't have to trouble dame or demoiselle for two paltry crowns."

But on this Gerard fell a thinking how he could spare her purse.

"One will do, mother. I will ask the good monks to let me send my copy of their 'Terence:' it is on snowy vellum, and I can write no better: so then I shall only need six sheets of

vellum for my borders and miniatures, and gold for my ground, and prime colours—one crown will do.'

"Never tyne the ship for want of a bit of tar, Gerard," said his changeable mother. But she added, "Well, there, I will put the crown in my pocket. That won't be like putting it back in the box. Going to the box to take out instead of putting in, it is like going to my heart with a knife for so many drops of blood. You will be sure to want it, Gerard. The house is never built for less than the builder counted on."

Sure enough, when the time came, Gerard longed to go to Rotterdam and see the Duke, and above all to see the work of his competitors, and so get a lesson from defeat. And the crown came out of the housewife's pocket with a very good grace. Gerard would soon be a priest. It seemed hard if he might not enjoy the world a little before separating himself from it for life.

The night before he went, Margaret Van Eyck asked him to take a letter for her, and when he came to look at it, to his surprise he found it was addressed to the Princess Marie, at the Stadthouse in Rotterdam.

The day before the prizes were to be distributed, Gerard started for Rotterdam in his holiday suit, to wit, a doublet of silver-grey cloth, with sleeves, and a jerkin of the same over it, but without sleeves. From his waist to his heels he was clad in a pair of tight-fitting buckskin hose fastened by laces (called points) to his doublet. His shoes were pointed, in moderation, and secured by a strap that passed under the hollow of the foot. On his head and the back of his neck he wore his flowing hair, and pinned to his back between his shoulders was his hat: it was further secured by a purple silk

ribbon little Kate had passed round him from the sides of the hat, and knotted neatly on his breast; below his hat, attached to the upper rim of his broad waist-belt, was his leathern wallet. When he got within a league of Rotterdam he was pretty tired, but he soon fell in with a pair that were more so. He found an old man sitting by the roadside quite worn out, and a comely young woman holding his hand, with a face brimful of concern. The country people trudged by, and noticed nothing amiss; but Gerard, as he passed, drew conclusions. Even dress tells a tale to those who study it so closely as he did, being an illuminator. The old man wore a gown, and a fur tippet, and a velvet cap, sure signs of dignity; but the triangular purse at his girdle was lean, the gown rusty, the fur worn, sure signs of poverty. The young woman was dressed in plain russet cloth: yet snow-white lawn covered that part of her neck the gown left visible, and ended half way up her white throat in a little band of gold embroidery; and her head-dress was new to Gerard: instead of hiding her hair in a pile of linen or lawn, she wore an open network of silver cord with silver spangles at the interstices: in this her glossy auburn hair was rolled in front into two solid waves, and supported behind in a luxurious and shapely mass. His quick eye took in all this, and the old man's pallor, and the tears in the young woman's eyes. So when he had passed them a few yards, he reflected, and turned back, and came towards them bashfully.

“Father, I fear you are tired.”

“Indeed, my son, I am,” replied the old man, “and faint for lack of food.”

Gerard's address did not appear so agreeable to the girl as to the old man. She seemed ashamed, and with much reserve in her manner, said, that it was her fault—she had underrated the distance, and imprudently allowed her father to start too late in the day.

“No, no,” said the old man; “it is not the distance, it is the want of nourishment.”

The girl put her arms round his neck with tender concern, but took that opportunity of whispering, “Father, a stranger—a young man!”

But it was too late. Gerard, with simplicity, and quite as a matter of course, fell to gathering sticks with great expedition. This done, he took down his wallet, out with the manchet of bread and the iron flask his careful mother had put up, and his everlasting tinder-box; lighted a match, then a candle-end, then the sticks; and put his iron flask on it. Then down he went on his stomach, and took a good blow: then looking up, he saw the girl's face had thawed, and she was looking down at him and his energy with a demure smile. He laughed back to her. “Mind the pot,” said he, “and don't let it spill, for Heaven's sake: there's a cleft stick to hold it safe with;” and with this he set off running towards a corn-field at some distance.

Whilst he was gone, there came by, on a mule with rich purple housings, an old man redolent of wealth. The purse at his girdle was plethoric, the fur on his tippet was ermine, broad and new.

It was Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, the burgomaster of Tergou.

He was old, and his face furrowed. He was a notorious miser, and looked one generally. But the idea of supping with the Duke raised him just now into manifest complacency. Yet at the sight of the faded old man and his bright daughter sitting by a fire of sticks, the smile died out of his face, and he wore a strange look of pain and uneasiness. He reined in his mule.

“Why, Peter,—Margaret,” said he, almost fiercely, “what mummary is this?” Peter was going to answer, but Margaret interposed hastily, and said: “My father was exhausted, so I am warming something to give him strength before we go on.”

“What! reduced to feed by the roadside like the Bohemians,” said Ghysbrecht, and his hand went into his purse; but it did not seem at home there; it fumbled uncertainly, afraid too large a coin might stick to a finger and come out.

At this moment who should come bounding up but Gerard. He had two straws in his hand, and he threw himself down by the fire and relieved Margaret of the cooking part: then suddenly recognizing the burgomaster, he coloured all over. Ghysbrecht Van Swieten started and glared at him, and took his hand out of his purse. “Oh!” said he bitterly, “I am not wanted,” and went slowly on, casting a long look of suspicion on Margaret, and hostility on Gerard, that was not very intelligible. However, there was something about it that Margaret could read enough to blush at, and almost toss her head. Gerard only stared with surprise. “By St. Bavon, I think the old miser grudges us three our quart of soup,” said he. When the young man put that interpretation on

Ghysbrecht's strange and meaning look, Margaret was greatly relieved, and smiled gaily on the speaker.

Meanwhile Ghysbrecht plodded on, more wretched in his wealth than these in their poverty. And the curious thing is, that the mule, the purple housings, and one-half the coin in that plethoric purse, belonged not to Ghysbrecht Van Swieten, but to that faded old man and that comely girl, who sat by a roadside fire to be fed by a stranger. They did not know this; but Ghysbrecht knew it, and carried in his heart a scorpion of his own begetting; that scorpion is remorse—the remorse that, not being penitence, is incurable, and ready for fresh misdeeds upon a fresh temptation.

Twenty years ago, when Ghysbrecht Van Swieten was a hard and honest man, the touchstone opportunity came to him, and he did an act of heartless roguery. It seemed a safe one. It had hitherto proved a safe one, though he had never felt safe. To-day he had seen youth, enterprise, and, above all, knowledge, seated by fair Margaret and her father on terms that look familiar and loving.

And the fiends are at big ear again.

CHAPTER II

[Table of Contents](#)

“The soup is hot,” said Gerard.

[Table of Contents](#)

“But how are we to get it to our mouths?” inquired the senior, despondingly.

“Father, the young man has brought us straws.” And Margaret smiled slily.

“Ay, ay!” said the old man; “but my poor bones are stiff, and indeed the fire is too hot for a body to kneel over with these short straws. St. John the Baptist, but the young man is adroit!”

For, while he stated his difficulty, Gerard removed it. He untied in a moment the knot on his breast, took his hat off, put a stone into each corner of it, then, wrapping his hand in the tail of his jerkin, whipped the flask off the fire, wedged it in between the stones, and put the hat under the old man's nose with a merry smile. The other tremulously inserted the pipe of rye-straw and sucked. Lo and behold, his wan, drawn face was seen to light up more and more, till it quite glowed; and as soon as he had drawn a long breath:

“Hippocrates and Galen!” he cried, “’tis a soupe au vin—the restorative of restoratives. Blessed be the nation that invented it, and the woman that made it, and the young

man who brings it to fainting folk. Have a suck, my girl, while I relate to our young host the history and virtues of this his sovereign compound. This corroborative, young sir, was unknown to the ancients: we find it neither in their treatises of medicine, nor in those popular narratives, which reveal many of their remedies, both in chirurgery and medicine proper. Hector, in the Ilias, if my memory does not play me false—

(Margaret. "Alas! he's off.")

——was invited by one of the ladies of the poem to drink a draught of wine; but he declined, on the plea that he was just going into battle, and must not take aught to weaken his powers. Now, if the soupe au vin had been known in Troy, it is clear that in declining vinum merum upon that score, he would have added in the hexameter, 'But a soupe au vin, madam, I will degust, and gratefully.' Not only would this have been but common civility—a virtue no perfect commander is wanting in—but not to have done it would have proved him a shallow and improvident person, unfit to be trusted with the conduct of a war; for men going into a battle need sustenance and all possible support, as is proved by this, that foolish generals, bringing hungry soldiers to blows with full ones, have been defeated, in all ages, by inferior numbers. The Romans lost a great battle in the north of Italy to Hannibal, the Carthaginian, by this neglect alone. Now, this divine elixir gives in one moment force to the limbs and ardour to the spirits; and taken into Hector's body at the nick of time, would, by the aid of Phoebus, Venus, and the blessed saints, have most likely procured the Greeks a defeat. For note how faint and weary

and heart-sick I was a minute ago; well, I suck this celestial cordial, and now behold me brave as Achilles and strong as an eagle."

"Oh, father, now? an eagle, alack!"

"Girl, I defy thee and all the world. Ready, I say, like a foaming charger, to devour the space between this and Rotterdam, and strong to combat the ills of life, even poverty and old age, which last philosophers have called the summum malum. Negatur; unless the man's life has been ill-spent—which, by the bye, it generally has. Now for the moderns!"

"Father! dear father!"

"Fear me not, girl; I will be brief, unreasonably and unseasonably brief. The soupe au vin occurs not in modern science; but this is only one proof more, if proof were needed, that for the last few hundred years physicians have been idiots, with their chicken-broth and their decoction of gold, whereby they attribute the highest qualities to that meat which has the least juice of any meat, and to that metal which has less chemical qualities than all the metals; mountebanks! dunces! homicides! Since, then, from these no light is to be gathered, go we to the chroniclers; and first we find that Duguesclin, a French knight, being about to join battle with the English—masters, at that time, of half France, and sturdy strikers by sea and land—drank, not one, but three soupes au vin in honour of the Blessed Trinity. This done, he charged the islanders; and, as might have been foretold, killed a multitude, and drove the rest into the sea. But he was only the first of a long list of holy and hard-

hitting ones who have, by this divine restorative, been sustentated, fortified, corroborated, and consoled."

"Dear father, prithee add thyself to that venerable company ere the soup cools." And Margaret held the hat imploringly in both hands till he inserted the straw once more.

This spared them the "modern instances," and gave Gerard an opportunity of telling Margaret how proud his mother would be her soup had profited a man of learning.

"Ay! but," said Margaret, "it would like her ill to see her son give all and take none himself. Why brought you but two straws?"

"Fair mistress, I hoped you would let me put my lips to your straw, there being but two."

Margaret smiled and blushed. "Never beg that you may command," said she. "The straw is not mine, 'tis yours: you cut it in yonder field."

"I cut it, and that made it mine; but after that, your lip touched it, and that made it yours."

"Did it Then I will lend it you. There—now it is yours again; your lip has touched it."

"No, it belongs to us both now. Let us divide it."

"By all means; you have a knife."

"No, I will not cut it—that would be unlucky. I'll bite it. There I shall keep my half: you will burn yours, once you get home, I doubt.'

"You know me not. I waste nothing. It is odds but I make a hairpin of it, or something."

This answer dashed the novice Gerard, instead of provoking him, to fresh efforts, and he was silent. And now,

the bread and soup being disposed of, the old scholar prepared to continue his journey. Then came a little difficulty: Gerard the adroit could not tie his ribbon again as Catherine had tied it. Margaret, after slyly eyeing his efforts for some time, offered to help him; for at her age girls love to be coy and tender, saucy and gentle, by turns, and she saw she had put him out of countenance but now. Then a fair head, with its stately crown of auburn hair, glossy and glowing through silver, bowed sweetly towards him; and, while it ravished his eye, two white supple hands played delicately upon the stubborn ribbon, and moulded it with soft and airy touches. Then a heavenly thrill ran through the innocent young man, and vague glimpses of a new world of feeling and sentiment opened on him. And these new and exquisite sensations Margaret unwittingly prolonged: it is not natural to her sex to hurry aught that pertains to the sacred toilet. Nay, when the taper fingers had at last subjugated the ends of the knot, her mind was not quite easy, till, by a manoeuvre peculiar to the female hand, she had made her palm convex, and so applied it with a gentle pressure to the centre of the knot—a sweet little coaxing hand-kiss, as much as to say, “Now be a good knot, and stay so.” The palm-kiss was bestowed on the ribbon, but the wearer's heart leaped to meet it.

“There, that is how it was,” said Margaret, and drew back to take one last keen survey of her work; then, looking up for simple approval of her skill, received full in her eyes a longing gaze of such ardent adoration, as made her lower them quickly and colour all over. An indescribable tremor seized her, and she retreated with downcast lashes and tell-

tale cheeks, and took her father's arm on the opposite side. Gerard, blushing at having scared her away with his eyes, took the other arm; and so the two young things went downcast and conscious, and propped the eagle along in silence.

They entered Rotterdam by the Schiedamze Poort; and, as Gerard was unacquainted with the town, Peter directed him the way to the Hooch Straet, in which the Stadthouse was. He himself was going with Margaret to his cousin, in the Ooster-Waagen Straet, so, almost on entering the gate, their roads lay apart. They bade each other a friendly adieu, and Gerard dived into the great town. A profound sense of solitude fell upon him, yet the streets were crowded. Then he lamented too late that, out of delicacy, he had not asked his late companions who they were and where they lived.

“Beshrew my shamefacedness!” said he. “But their words and their breeding were above their means, and something did whisper me they would not be known. I shall never see her more. Oh weary world, I hate you and your ways. To think I must meet beauty and goodness and learning—three pearls of price—and never see them more!”

Falling into this sad reverie, and letting his body go where it would, he lost his way; but presently meeting a crowd of persons all moving in one direction, he mingled with them, for he argued they must be making for the Stadthouse. Soon the noisy troop that contained the moody Gerard emerged, not upon the Stadthouse, but upon a large meadow by the side of the Maas; and then the attraction was revealed. Games of all sorts were going on: wrestling, the game of palm, the quintain, legerdemain, archery,