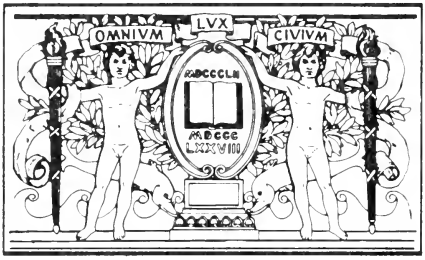
ANTONIA

JESSIE VAN ZILE BELDEN



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ANTONIA


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By

JESSIE VAN ZILE BELDEN

Illustrated by

AMY M. SACKER

"*Dutch tulips from their beds*
Flaunted their stately heads"

BOSTON

1901

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To Holland

Silent — Sturdy — Indomitable —
Who wrested a Nation from the Sea —

THE seeds of perseverance planted by thy people have blossomed and borne fruit.
To-day a great city looks over the waters which bore the ships of the Dutch West India Company to the coast of the New World.

Publisher's Note

THE idea that the early colonial settler in New Amsterdam was a stout-bodied soul, with a peaceful life and a prosperous bouwerie, is as picturesquely delightful as it is fallacious. The struggle for very existence of the Dutch colonists at the mouth of the Hudson River, along its banks, and at Rensselaerswyck (now the city of Albany) was as severe and as strenuous as among the Puritans of New England.

Perhaps there was no more critical period of New World growth than that in which the scenes of the following story assert themselves. Wilhelm Kieft, the governor of this frontier settlement on Manhattan Island, although a man of considerable energy of character, was irritable, capricious,

and injudicious,—in fact, wholly deficient in that firmness and cool discrimination necessary for one in a position of such responsibility.
With characteristic lack of foresight, in 1640 he sent an armed force against the Raritan Indians for an alleged robbery on Staten Island by a portion of the tribe, and, although these particular Indians were wholly innocent of the offence, ten of their braves were ruthlessly slaughtered, and their crops and other possessions destroyed. This, as was the natural course, soon provoked a bloody retaliation. In time of need the governor and his adherents were found sadly wanting. For five weary years the colonists were plunged into the fiercest of war, not only with the tribe aforementioned, but with nearly all

the savage hordes surrounding their badly fortified settlements. Peace finally came to their depleted ranks only after the departure of Kieft, and the coming of Peter Stuyvesant, the last of the Dutch governors and the most resolute.

Antonia is but a type of the Old-World maiden who, trusting her fortunes to the life in what was to be the greater Holland, passed through a series of misfortunes which then were but everyday experiences. Johannes van Blerckom might have been met in simile within many a palisade, and as for David Buytenhof, Catryntje, Van Slyck, and the rest, their originals, in years gone by, lived existences of energy and distress precisely similar to the fanciful characters who move before us on the printed page.

Preface

MANY historians have written of the period when the Dutch West India Company held sway from the sea to the source of the Hudson River — and beyond. To those authorities you may turn for proof of the possibility of the story. Some of the incidents are historical, but have been made to follow each other in quick succession instead of keeping the exact chronology of the actual events.

The people may or may not have lived. If they did, the years 1640 to 1650 found them in New Amsterdam, Rensselaerswyck or Schonowe — now the cities of New York, Albany and Schenectady.

List of Illustrations

CHAPTER I

"What a pity you are not a Frieslander."
"The Frisians shall be free as long as the wind shall blow in the clouds and as long as the world shall endure."

"DEAR Heart," I said, "I count the past as nothing. My life began the day I came on board this ship.

"Only a coward would speak such words to the wife of another man."

"I—*a coward?*"

"Yes," the woman's voice continued, "I thought you all that was good, all that was honorable, but I was mistaken in you. Do not speak to me

again — Forget me, as I shall forget you."

I leaned against the mast with my arms folded, and watched her walk aft and down the companion way. Lithe and slender, with the dark hair of a Spanish woman and the high bred air of a court dame, she was little like the thickset blonde girls who were bound to the new land with their fathers and mothers.

I had said no word to justify myself. What could I say? She had called me "a coward," I could feel the blood leap from my heart to my head. Had a man said that word to me either he or I would go to the final reckoning before the sun set. Who in Stavoren had dared so much as I when the north wind blew and the houses shrank and shivered in the blast, when the waves

rolled inland and the Zuyder Zee almost engulfed the town, leaving only a sweep of waters? What other man, save old Hans, had dared brave that rushing torrent?
Would "a coward" go to almost certain death?
Then the night when the wolves came into the town and we knew that some of the children had not reached home. —Would a coward have fought the beasts single handed, and won?
"A coward?" What could have given her *that* word to use? Like a flash it came to me, how I had seen Jan Groesbeck talking to her the night before, while I smoked my pipe on deck. He hated me, that I knew, and nothing would please him better than to belittle me in my lady's hearing. It was he who had told the Captain that

I was that outcast Blerckom, who had laughed in drunken glee while his mother drowned before his eyes in the Zuyder Zee. No blood of that villain ran in my veins, thank God, but the name was like, and I only waited for land to make Groesbeck pay to the full the debt I owed him, He must have told her the same tale with embellishments, which I hope in my heart she did not believe, at least until I made that great mistake.

Ah, well, I could settle the score with Groesbeck but the matter between Antonia and myself could not be changed.

"The Eendracht" had all sails set, for the day was fine and we were nearly at the end of our journey. I had thrown my fortune with my cousin, Arent van

Curler, superintendent of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck, in the new land over which Hendrick Hudson was so enthusiastic. To a free Frisian, and to one who had been a roving blade, there was much that appealed in the call—A new land, new people, adventure and wealth. I had been so busy in Amsterdam that up to the time of sailing I knew little or nothing of my fellow passengers. In the harbor there had been a forest of masts, and as we tacked slowly back and forth, in and out, among the merchantmen and privateers that almost blocked the way, I was more interested in the progress of the ship than in its people. It was the third day out, I had finished my pipe and was about to go below when I saw her for the first time. The ship was rolling and I caught her as

she was about to fall. I found a sheltered corner, wrapped her up in blankets and, giving my name, said that I would come to her again and help her below. The noise of the rigging drowned the lady's voice so I only caught the name "Antonia." I never asked again—I even avoided the chance of knowing the other when the Captain tried to joke with me about my devotion, and so until this day on the ship she was to me only "Antonia." Why I avoided knowing who my lady was I do not know, for capriciousness was not one of my characteristics, I cannot tell unless some inner consciousness made me feel that if I knew the truth the sweetest period of my life must end.

The days grew into weeks, there were storms and calm, stress of weather

and summer seas. I came to watch for the sunrise because of the dark-haired woman of whose life I knew nothing, but who was for me "the world and all that therein is."

There were nights and days when the ship tossed and the waters were mountain high; the morrow might be only the entrance to another world. I cared not so that I might be by her side and minister to her wants. "A coward."—As I walked up and down, up and down, my blood cooled and I looked the matter in the face. I had never said that I knew her only as "Antonia," and this day when I caught her in my arms and told her that I loved her, as I kissed her hair, she called me a "coward." And so she was a wife—well—it was a rude awakening from a beautiful dream.

I could count the number of days of my happiness, only fifty-nine out of a life-time, but worth all the rest, if I should live a century. Let her think me a coward—She had forbidden me to speak to her and we were within two days of port. The days kept fine and I saw her only from a distance, laughing and talking more than I would wish with the men among the passengers, who, now that the journey was almost over, devoted themselves to the women.

As the first rays of light touched the eastern sky of the third day after that black one when she called me that ugly name, I saw the dim outlines of the fort. My first impulse was to call her, for it had been a promise made long before, when we had talked of Hudson and his hope to reach Cath-

ay, but, instead, I stood alone, watching the sun's rays lift and touch the thatch of the distant houses. So Hudson had sailed into this great still harbor. The immensity of this western world filled me with awe. Could anything so small as an individual shape his own destiny; was he not merely an infinitesimal part of an imperceptible progress?

Such a harbor I had not dreamed of. Stretching north were two rivers, one of which would bear the ship to the land of the Patroon Van Rensselaer. The windmills were like a bit of home as their sails turned in the breeze; then a strange thing happened — the one on the hill stopped at a certain angle, then another, until by the time we were well in smooth water all had stopped in the same position. A sig-

nal, thought I, that a friendly ship is in the offing. In front of us rose the fort with its wooden palisades and breastworks of earth. It stood at the meeting of the rivers and the deep waters in front would give safe anchorage to a great navy. One road stretched north toward the interior, while another followed the eastern stream, close to the water. Hills, covered with forests, and deep valleys stretched beyond. It was indeed "God's country."

A few tiny vessels swung at anchor. A blast from my cousin Anthony's trumpet roused me from my dreaming and I turned to see the deck swarming with people, many of whom had left their berths for the first time since they sailed away from Amsterdam. A small sail boat named

"The Squirrel" drew alongside. On her deck stood my good old friend David Buytenhof. I was about to hail him when I saw indications that he was coming for "Antonia," so I stepped back and held my peace.

Can it be, thought I, that she is the wife of Buytenhof. No word had come to me of the death of Catryntje, his wife, and I ran over the names of the men I knew in the colony, but not one came to me as a possible husband of Antonia. Who was this man who had for a wife the woman for whom I would have given my life?

As "The Squirrel" moved off, Buytenhof heard the trumpet's blast.

"Hail to Anthony, the trumpeter," he cried, "no one else can blow a blast like that." As Anthony's bright colors flew out over my shoulder,

Buytenhof waved his hand, calling back a hearty greeting. — "Welcome to you, Anthony, and to you too, Johannes van Blerckom; this is God's land."

"You may well say so," thought I, as I took a long look at the face of the woman standing by his side.

All was now activity on the ship. The soldiers stood on deck waiting to salute the Governor; men and women crowded each other to get a better view as we neared land. I — I only saw "The Squirrel" and the two figures on her deck.

What did Antonia see as she looked back toward the ship? A man in sombre costume, standing with folded arms near to the portly figure and gay colors of the trumpeter. Her face flushed and then paled, but she made

I·ONLY SAW "THE·SQUIRREL"

no sign of recognition as she turned away. Long afterwards I was told what was said that day. As I remember it was something like this—

"Fair cousin, you are welcome to New Amsterdam. To-night you rest with us; to-morrow Catryntje and I go with you to your home. We hoped that Rutger Van Slyck, your husband, would have been able to meet you but it was impossible. I am sorry, for many reasons, that he thought it wise to settle so far from the town, but it is very lovely there and he has taken so much interest in watching the blossoming of the trees. He has brought apple and cherry from Virginia and there is even a row of Lombardy poplars; to be sure they are not much higher than your shoulders now, but time will change all that."

Buytenhof hesitated a moment, then with a world of sympathy in his voice, "Antonia why did you do it; why did you marry this old man; was there no other way to save your father?"

"Cousin," she said, "he has been *very, very* good to us. I am content. Let us say no more about it."

Buytenhof yielded, but in spirit he deplored the fact that this lovely highborn girl had believed it her duty to become the wife of a man old and ill. "Pray God," he thought, "that she may not meet someone who will show her what she has lost."

I watched "The Squirrel" as the wind filled her sails. My dream was over, action now must take its place. All was hurry and confusion on the decks. The landing place was filled with people, eager to welcome friends

and relatives to the new land. I was among the first to land and was soon deep in arrangements for the further journey of the ship. A message came to me from the Governor bidding me to a banquet to be held at his house that night. I was in no mood for gayety but I must pay my respects to His Excellency, and one time was as good as another.

My time was so filled with the men, women and chattels under my care that I gave but little time to my toilet for the banquet, leaving the gay brocades and lace neckties to the dandies of the town.

With my first glance, as I entered the hall, I saw Antonia. She was seated at the Governor's right and so captivated was he with her smiles that he gave me scant greeting. I wondered

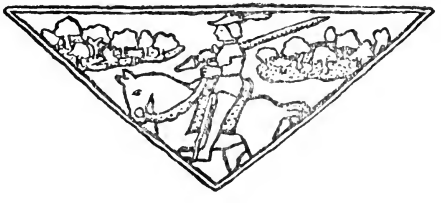
not at his devotion, nor at the admiration in the faces of the men who surrounded her, for she was radiant. No longer covered by a long gray cloak and scarlet hood, but by rich satin, brocade and jewels.

An English officer, whose face stirred some cord of memory, was chief among her admirers. What matters it to you? I said to myself, to-morrow you will be numbered among her forgotten yesterdays. I went out to an ante-room where I might talk undisturbed with an old friend from Friesland when I heard Buytenhof call me. I turned to greet him. For an instant the blood surged to my heart for Antonia was on his arm, and a great hope that I might at least justify myself came over me.

"I want to thank you, friend," he said,

"for your care of my fair cousin." I looked at Antonia.—She raised her eyes to mine, "I, too, wish to thank you for your courtesy," she said, "and as my home is not in New Amsterdam and yours is far north, it is unlikely that we shall meet again, I bid you good-night."

She turned away and I held the great door open for her to pass. No words came to me but I bowed low and smiled grimly as I heard her laugh at a quip of Buytenhof's.



CHAPTER II

"Mak hast, mak hast, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne."

THE day after the banquet Van Curler had gone up the Hudson, trusting to me to see that some of the more important of the craftsman who were to man the small boats should follow with as little delay as possible. I could depend upon that sturdy sailor, Roeloff Jans of Masterland, and Tymen the carpenter, but for the rest I was not sure. For the sake of peace I had to allow them to stretch their legs on land once more, but in

three days' time we were again on the water. The beauty of the scenery bewildered me. I had chosen one of the smaller boats, wishing to be with my own thoughts and away from the confusion of many voices. As we journeyed up the river great forests frowned upon us, where vines hung in graceful festoons from tree to tree. The silence was unbroken save by the songs of the birds and the crackling of the branches by an occasional deer, who would gaze at us in wonder and disappear in the wood.

About noon of the third day of our journey, two canoes glided noiselessly out from the shore and came towards us. There were two Indians in each. They drew alongside and, through an interpreter I had brought with us from New Amsterdam, we

were invited to stop and visit their chief who lived near by. As trust begets trust, I signified my acceptance at once, and giving the word to send a party after us if we did not return within a certain time, I called Roeloff and Tymen to join me and we set forth.

As we journeyed inland under the canopy of trees we found a circular house built of oak bark, with an arched roof; a granary, filled with beans and maize, and on the ground enough to fill three ships.

The chief greeted us with dignity and great formality. Two mats were spread for seats, and food was served us in red wooden bowls; hunters were sent for, pigeons and a dog were killed, while haste was made to prepare a meal, or rather a feast. To

show us that we might trust them and fear no treachery, one of the red men took an arrow and breaking it in pieces threw it into the fire. Before we left I induced the chief to send a young buck with me to teach me the language of the river Indians.

The spirit of adventure had again entered my blood and the danger of the enterprise once more appealed to me. The sound of Anthony's trumpet came to us telling that it was time to start again toward the north, and our first encounter with the Indians was over. It did not seem possible that the dreadful tales we had heard of their cruelty could be true.

The wind died down and the sails flapped idly. I watched the shadows lengthen, and Antonia, as I saw her at the Governor's banquet, came be-

fore me. The stiff brocade and ropes of pearls became her well as she graced the seat of honor at the Governor's right. She noticed me no more than she did the servant behind her chair. All my spirit rose within me and I could scarce refrain from crying out to her, "I am not a poltroon, God knows I hold you sacred — I did not know — I did not know."

There were many hours for thought as we sailed up the river. My fantastic fancy saw a great recumbent figure formed by mountain peaks on the west bank of the river, where for centuries he had watched and slept, for centuries he would watch and sleep. Deer came down to drink, and wild turkeys skurried through the underbrush ; now and then a canoe would

pass in ghostly silence, its only passenger a sinewy redman.

It was on an afternoon when we reached our journey's end and I heard the hammers ringing in the new settlement. For days there was much confusion, but with strong hearts and clear heads at the helm, order came quickly. The young Indian who had journeyed up the river with me, had taught me many things beside his dialect and it was not many weeks before I was on friendly terms with various tribes.

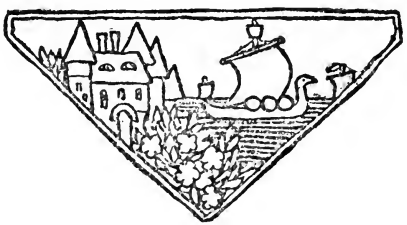
A year rolled round and Rensselaerswyck was a power in the new land. Van Curler was looked up to and loved, a man of many friends, with influence among the Indians, and I felt a thrill of pride when he chose me for his chief assistant in ne-

gotiating with them. Another year came and went. I had never returned to New Amsterdam. Others could transact all necessary business for me but the life up the river was more to my taste.

Or was it that I could not forget? Belated gossip from New Amsterdam would occasionally come to my ears, but if there had been any news of Madam van Slyck, Antonia, I had not heard it. Captain Bramhall, the Englishman, had spent some weeks with the Dominie, but although I recognized him for her devoted swain at the Governor's banquet, his talk was all of the fair damsels of Pafraets Dael or Boston. It was "out of sight, out of mind" with the Captain and the last love was always the best.

A fair land lay north and west of

Rensselaerswyck. In my journeys into the interior I would plan a settlement of my own, when Van Curler should no longer need me. The future was a sealed book, but I could afford to wait, for I was young. Hard work is good medicine for a sick heart.



CHAPTER III

"May he live
Longer than I have time to tell his years!
Ever beloved and loving may his rule be,
And when old time shall lead him to his end,
Goodness and he fill up one monument!"

"CURSE you." The squaw shook her fist at the back of the coach as she dragged herself out of the dust where the wheels had flung her. "Pride goes before a fall," called one good vrouw to another as the four black stallions plunged forward. "Aye," was the reply, "and she'll come to some bad end."

The fair driver drew the reins tight

over her mettlesome steeds while the coach, rocking from side to side, followed down the hill and disappeared from the sight of the angry people of the village in a cloud of dust.

"Is there no end to this dusty road?" The fretful tone of the woman roused the man at her side.

"It is dusty, I grant Catryntje, but if you were only willing to drive at an ordinary pace and not run down all the women and children on the way, you would find it pleasanter. At the next turn you will see the Van Slyck bouwerie. Rutger will think that we have little feeling for our beasts when he sees these steaming horses. What devil enters into you, Catryntje, when you sit on the box?"

"The old Adam that made me unbearable in Friesland, David. For

months at a time I am quiet and contented — then the old restlessness seizes me, the wind and waves call to me, I hear the Zuyder Zee and if the reins are in my hands I let the wild woman out, as I did to-day. It is better, David, better for me, better for you."

He looked at her. Her face was quite pale save for a bright red spot on either cheek. He sighed, for the untamable spirit of the woman beside him had ever been beyond his grasp. David Buytenhof had known Catryntje but a few short weeks before he had made her his wife, and he had never known that he had caught her heart in its rebound. They had sailed immediately for the new land, and, as years went on, had drifted apart, although, so far as the world knew, they were a model

couple. David was ambitious and was deep in the settlement of a new colony on Long Island. On this day he had watched with amazement and pride the skill with which she managed the hard-bitted horses.

The carriage moved on rapidly. As it turned into an avenue of trees, the woman exclaimed, "How lovely." Stretched out before them was a park of rolling green, cut by a narrow, turbulent stream, crossed by a tiny bridge. The trees had been trimmed out sufficiently to give a good view of a large brick house with double-hipped roof and broad piazzas, supported by slender white pillars. The sun touched great beds of tulips that nodded their heads in the breeze, making ripples of fire. Hedges of box outlined the gardens, and great horse

chestnut trees screened the detached buildings.

The carriage had been seen from the slaves' quarters, and as it drew up in front of the door a dozen darkies of all ages were ready to assist the travellers.

Madam van Slyck, more mature but quite as beautiful as when she stood on the deck of "The Eendracht," was waiting in the doorway.

"How good of you," she cried, as she embraced Catryntje. "This visit will give Rutger a new lease of life. He has been fretting for some time to see you and thinks that he is not so well, but I believe he only needs the tonic of your presence, David."

The horses were sent to the stables, and Madam van Slyck with her guests turned toward the south end

of the piazza which was enclosed in glass. An old man, gaunt and gray, was seated in a large armchair. Everything about him indicated age and illness except his eyes. His face lighted up with a smile as he greeted David and Catryntje. "You are God-sent, Cousin," he cried, "I have wearied for you and would not send. "You know, dear friend," said David, "that I am always at your service and glad to come to you." The two women had disappeared up the stairway and David drew a chair close to van Slyck. "What wonders you have wrought, Rutger," he said, "it seems but yesterday that you planted those Lombardy poplars and now they cast a shade — and the tulips — Vrouw van Orde would look with envious eyes on those glorious

reds and yellows." "It is all Antonia, bless her," said van Slyck, "you should hear her talk to them. I know they understand. She has been sunshine to them and to me, David, I hope I will go before she realizes that I am her great shadow. I am glad that you are here for I have long wanted to talk to you about her." He lifted a glass with some dark liquid in it and took a long draught.

"You do not know, David," he continued, "by what reasoning I persuaded myself that a marriage with me would be for the benefit of this lovely girl. We will not go over the matter for, whether you agreed with me or not, the condition is here to be dealt with. I will simply say that I did it to protect her from a worse

evil, to help her father and because I knew that my time was short; that during the few years of her young life, which she would give to me, she would mature and if, in the meantime, she should see someone to whom she could give her whole heart it would be but a short while before she could do so. She has grown into a noble woman and will have my wealth, which you know is not to be scorned. She has been loyal to me; she has given me the dear affection of a daughter and — David — I have held her as such since the day in Amsterdam when her father placed her hand in mine. I have taught her many things and soon, when she is alone, she will find that she has grown into a magnificent, capable woman. I pray God that she will meet and

love the man who will give her happiness. But, David, old friend, at first she will be at a loss, for in many ways she will miss me. Help her, David — for me — and tell her that it is my wish that she marry again if so be it shall please her."

"Rutger, it is far off, you are not old and you are looking better than when I saw you last, why worry and grieve over what may be deferred for years?"

"I do not worry, David, I pray that it may be soon. My years are many and I am tired — tired. I love this woman but with the tender affection of a father for a dear daughter, and for her sake it is best that I should go. Do you not see the fire of youth and love in her eyes? What have I with threescore years and ten to do with such as she? No, David, if I thought that I

IN · A · GAY · FLOWERED · MUSLIN

should live to have her hate me for dragging out a longer existence, I should feel myself justified in doubling my sleeping draught. They are coming—we will say no more, but when you close my eyes remember what I have said to you to-day."

David bent his head as he said gravely, "I will do for her as I would for my sister."

All traces of the dusty journey had vanished and Catryntje, in a gay flowered muslin, came out with Antonia. They seemed only two young girls as they went laughing down the steps and out to the tulip beds.

"What haughty flowers they are," said Catryntje, "just like you, Antonia. When you throw back your head with 'that touch me not' look in your eyes I always think of tulips.

Now *I* am like a timid violet, hiding my head in the shadow — Don't you think so?" Her laugh rang out.
"A tiger lily rather," said Antonia. "No timid violet would drive four such horses as those black ones."
A shadow fell over Catryntje's face. "You are right," she said, "I am like *no* flower but some rank and poisonous weed. If you knew the passions that war within me you would be thankful that I am not often a guest at the van Slyckbouwerie. Cousin, you do not know how miserable I am."
"What is it, Catryntje, tell me, perhaps I can help you," said Antonia.
"Ah! no, dear, I cannot tell you, I must not, but when I am hateful bear with me, for I am unhappy." She dashed the tears from her eye and broke into a laugh.

"Oh! what nonsense," she cried, "come let us see which will reach that gate first, there is nothing like exercise to dispel the vapours." She broke into a run but Antonia followed slowly, knowing, with quick intuition, that the other woman needed a moment to herself.

There was no trace of excitement when they met at the tulip bed. A firm friendship had sprung up between the two women, although their acquaintance dated from the arrival of "The Eendracht."

"Antonia," said Catyrntje, "are you happy?"

The younger woman hesitated a moment and then said slowly, "I am content—which is better."

Catryntje looked at her keenly. "Are you so sure at your age? Child,

there are heights and depths that you do not dream of. *Content* better than *happiness?* Yes for the aged, for Rutger, if you will, but sometime, years hence, if I ask you the question you will say 'one day of happiness is worth a lifetime of content.'" She spoke with earnestness and conviction and a wave of memory came over Antonia. The green grass was the green ocean. She was standing on the deck of "The Eendracht" and a man in sombre clothes was saying, "I love you."

She turned away with impatience and, answering David's signal from the piazza, they walked in silence towards the house.

When the night fell they gathered in the north room and David told them of his new settlement; of his Indian

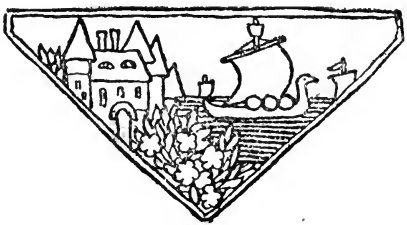
friends; of his encounters with the Governor, for whom he had little friendship; of Rensselaerswyck, the most flourishing Manor of all, where the Indians brought skins and furs for trading, and where, by the good offices of van Curler and his aid, van Blerckom, the red men had learned to trust the settlers, and there was now little danger of treachery. "But, Rutger," he said, "this detached bouwerie of yours is in a very exposed situation and I think you should have more protection."

"You are right, David, as usual," replied his host, "I will see to the matter at once, although I am anticipating no danger if the Governor uses any tact and discretion."

"Aye, — if —," said David.

David and Catryntje stayed a week

at the bouwerie and Rutger van Slyck talked long and freely of his approaching death and Antonia's future. "Goodbye, good friend," he said as the black horses and the coach stood again before the door, "Goodbye, and, if we never meet again, may all go well with you now and always."



CHAPTER IV

"Yesterday I loved,
To-day I suffer,
But I shall gladly
To-day and to-morrow
Think on yesterday."

IT was one of the last days in November; the trees and vines were bare of leaves; the ground was frozen and covered with a light snow, while thin ice reached from shore to shore of the river. I had grown restless, for the Manor of Rensselaerswyck had become a well-organized colony under competent government, and my services to van Curler seemed to me to

be merely nominal, although I could spare him fatigue. Four years had passed since I had sailed from Friesland on "The Eendracht." Buytenhof had been north and bits of gossip had come to me from Manhattan. While Rutger van Slyck lived I had filled my life to the full with work, easily found in a new country, but since the word came that he was dead and Antonia free, I had been drawn irresistibly toward the south.

My thoughts went back continually to those days on "The Eendracht" when I hoped that she would care for me even as I cared for her. Then would come to me that last day on the ship, and her scornful glance at the Governor's banquet, and the late rumors of the devotion of an English Captain. Fool, I said to myself,

she has forgotten you long ere this: you have grown five years older and if she scorned you then she surely would now. The Mohawks have signified their desire to sell the land you covet, go purchase it of them, and in founding a colony you will forget the woman who has forgotten you.

The land I had so desired was but a half day's journey nearer the setting sun; full a day's journey long on the banks of the Mohawk river, and as beautiful as Paradise. Six men with their families would join me if I determined to make the new settlement. The time of year was unpropitious but a great unrest possessed me, so I sent for Tymen and told him that I had determined to make a journey westward at once and desired his company. I gave him all in-

structions about the horses and went myself to talk with van Curler and some of his officers ; and it was not until the shadows of the early night had fallen that we were prepared to start on our journey. We left Rensselaerswyck in the early morning, sending a message to Vrouw van Orde that I would return for the feast of St. Nicholas. The sun shone on the ice of the river and we rode rapidly west toward the Mohawk. For generations the Mohawks had cultivated the Great Flats, and their five castles were well known to us. It was our purpose to stop first at Castle Monemias, on an island at the mouth of the river, and then go westward to the two castles situated on the land I desired.

Messengers could be sent to the

other chiefs asking them to meet us to discuss the terms of sale. As we neared the castle, sentinels, always alert, gave the word that we were approaching, and we were obliged to halt for a quarter of an hour while a salute of musket shots was fired. The custom learned from the Dutch; the ammunition taken from the French. We were hailed with joy, as friends, and hunters were at once dispatched to shoot wild turkeys for a feast. Time seemed to be of no account, and it was not wise to appear hurried, so we contented ourselves with the best grace possible to a delay of several days. At last the chief indicated that he was ready to escort us to the second castle and under lowering snow clouds, we once more moved westward. The weatherwise pre-

dicted a long and steady storm, but not until we were well housed in the second castle did it overtake us. It looked very much as if the feast of St. Nicholas might still find us in the Mohawk valley.

I had discovered that there were three Frenchmen held prisoners by my hosts ; one a learned priest who had been tortured by having a finger and thumb cut off. I had certain money concealed for just such an emergency, and it was not the first time I had found myself in the position of mediator between the Indians and the French. The latter had shown such poor judgment in antagonizing the red men that it was a difficult task to adjust differences, especially with the Mohawks. The New England tribes feared this tribe of Iroquois more

than they did the whites, and within the month the head of the Pequot chief, Sassacus, had been presented by them to the Governor of Massachusetts. We, of Rensselaerswyck, were fortunate in possessing their friendship, but to preserve it we must be just to them and not, for the sake of race, countenance unfair dealing on the part of their white enemies.

When the chiefs were assembled I said to them, "I ask you to release your prisoners. If you will do this thing I will give you six hundred guilders or their equivalent in goods."

They sat silent for some time, then a chief, the oldest one, answered, "We shall manifest toward you every friendship that is in our power, but on this subject we will be silent.

You well know how they treat our people who fall into their hands."
The words of the chief were true. I could not dispute my host's words, but I did succeed in persuading him to promise to return the prisoners to their own people in Canada without further torture. Had we delayed to reach there three days longer the Frenchmen would have been burnt.
The snow fell steadily and quietly for days and then the wind rose and great white drifts lay in the valley.
After settling the matter of the Frenchmen, we brought before the assembled chiefs the purpose of our winter journey, the desire on our part to meet their proposition for the exchange of ownership of the Great Flats. If the other matter had been tedious this one was infinitely more

so. We parleyed and feasted for days, but, finally, I fastened the clasp of my leather pouch over a deed signed with a bear, a turtle, and a wolf, and knew that, under the Company, I possessed the coveted land where, if all went well, a fair settlement would soon look out over the valley.

An escort of twelve men accompanied us back through the drifts to the second castle, where once more we tarried feasting for the sake of friendship, and then we travelled eastward to Castle Monemias where we rested, unwilling guests, until the very day of the feast of St. Nicholas.

CHAPTER V

"Our wills and fates do so contrary run,
That our devices still are overthrown;
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own."

A LIGHT snow had fallen, covering with a feathery mantle the country from Pafraets Dael to Beeren Island. The conk shell was silent at the ferry, for the ice bridge made it an easy matter to reach Rensselaerswyck, on both sides of the river, without aid from ferry or ferryman. Beverwyck, the center of the Patroon's colony, controlled the fur trading for a thousand square miles.

Goede vrouw van Orde had bidden relatives and friends to spend the feast of St. Nicholas with her, and on this winter morning she was awake long before light. For days the servants had been busy under her close supervision, testing the capacity of the great fireplace. The iron trammels, cranes and hooks had been tended so vigorously that the negro quarters in the cellar were quiet for once, and the story tellers silent from sheer exhaustion. The feast was to be no ordinary function, for not only the Dutch relatives and friends were bidden, but also some New England folk, and a French refugee of high degree. The great living room was decorated with oranje boven and ground pine. Flint and tinder had soon set fire to the brimstone-soaked wood, and the

flames were curling over the logs and casting a ruddy light on the Bible story told by the tiles. Between the brass sconces, with mirror reflectors, hung silhouettes and bunches of peacocks' feathers. The mirrors vied with the polished cupboards and sideboards in reflecting the glories of the table, laden with all good things.

At each place, on the snowy linen, lay a two-tined fork and a horn-handled knife. The floor had been newly sanded by black Erasmus, who had made every effort to reproduce a design in laurel leaves on its smooth surface.

The prettiest patchwork quilts were piled on the open shelves and Madame van Orde was proud of their number and variety. She was good to look at, too, with her cheeks rosy

from effort, while her striped petticoat and short gown set off the clocked stockings and low shoes. Her cap would be changed later for a gorgeous crimped coiffure and fancy bits of court plaster would emphasize the dimple in her cheek. The embroidered pocket, filled with her snuff box and keys, with her pincushions and scissors, would be laid aside for the bravery of a brocade gown with a train, which would add to the dignity of the chatelaine of so fine a mansion. As she looked carefully over the banquet room to detect any short-comings, she heard the Dominie. He shook the snow from his wide black hat and hung it on his ebony cane with the massive gold head. His cloak too, was covered with the fine white particles but, giving it a shake

over the half door, he hung it on its customary hook. He was a striking figure, Dominie van Orde, with his black coat and wide white cuffs turned back.

"Dirck," said his wife, "suppose you put on a more cheerful face. In a very short time we will have a houseful of guests, and I fear they will think they are bidden to a funeral. What worries you—is it van Curler?"

"No dear," said the Dominie, "I am fearful that something ill may have befallen van Blerckom. He takes such chances and is, always, it seems to me, at the point of greatest danger. Only last month when 'The Flatts' were under water, at the risk of his life, he rescued three families from almost certain death. We cannot spare him, I cannot spare him. He

is absolutely unselfish and when you come to my age and know such a man as that, hold onto him, you will never find another." His wife smiled for, while she endorsed all he had said of van Blerckom, she thought that she knew of at least one other as she looked at the noble face of Dirck van Orde.

"Four weeks ago," continued the Dominie, "he took Tymen, the carpenter, and went to what he calls 'dat schoonste landt,' not many miles from here. It is his wish to buy of the Indians, and then, when he can be spared by van Curler, to settle there. He was to return last night. Ah! well, worrying will do no good and he has marvellous power with the red men. I am told that he talks with them in their dialects and it is believed by

some that he has even been initiated into their mystic rites. They are treacherous, though, and I am always fearful that he may not return."

"He promised me that he would be here to-night, and he is noted for keeping his word, so we will not lose heart yet," said Madame van Orde.

"Doctor Huystede writes me," said the Dominie, "that Buytenhof is trying to induce Antonia van Slyck to move into the town. Ever since Rutger died, a year ago, she has had no one but servants to protect her, and the house is several miles from the fort and quite by itself. She says that she is not at all afraid and really she has been protected in a most mysterious way. There have been depredations all about, but never has her

bouwerie been molested. On the front and back doors are great dents made by a tomahawk; when and how they were made no one knows, but there they are. She told him that often, when she could not sleep, she has seen an Indian come up to the door, examine the dents and then go away making mysterious signs to companions concealed in the trees. At first the visits frightened her, but now she has such faith in the marks in the doors that she quite refuses to leave." Madame van Orde looked thoughtful. It seemed to her not so mysterious as it did to her husband. "Don't you think, Dirck, it is just possible that some good friend of the Indians has placed her under their protection? It is quite possible, you remember van Curler explained it to us."

"Yes, my dear, it is possible, but only van Curler or van Blerckom could have such power, and they would not think of trying to protect a bouwerie so far away."

"I am not so sure of that," thought his wife, as she remembered one day long ago, when van Blerckom had told her a little of his journey across the sea, and being a keen, and withal a loving woman, she had guessed the rest, but she only said, "Well, we must let gossip rest for a while, and get ready for our guests."

CHAPTER VI

"All is not well;
I doubt some foul play."

THE wooden shutters were closed and the house looked quite dark, as I went up the steps at Dominie van Orde's. I could hear voices and laughter, and a warm feeling crept about my heart, for here I was sure of a welcome. I gave one knock with the brass knocker, then paused for an instant, and then gave three short, sharp taps, for we were safer with a signal, although, to all appearances, the Indians were friendly. The chains

rattled and fell, and the bolt shot back, while the Dominie himself stood in the doorway. "Thank God," he cried, "I had almost decided to send a search party out after you, but Machteld counselled my waiting a bit, and she was right, as usual."

As I stepped into the light of the hall, he threw his arm around my shoulders and called to his wife "Machteld, van Blerckom is here after all my croaking, you did well to save his place."

I had had a hard journey through the snow, but the warmth and cheer which now surrounded me made me forget all that. The candles shone on the silver tankards and glass decanters, and made the women look lovelier than ever. Pretty Trintje van Alstyne sat next to Benjamin Covell,

a gay young blood from farther up the river, and his suit was sure to prosper, for it would take a strong heart and a steady brain to resist him. He was full six feet tall, and with his fine blue broadcloth cloak lined with crimson velvet, his short breeches and yellow top boots, a long gold chain about his neck, his hair white with perfumed powder, he was simply irresistible. I looked at him and was doubly conscious that I was but a sombre figure at a feast.

I went around the table, giving and receiving hearty greetings, for they were all true and tried friends. My place was near a window and as I lifted my glass to drink the health of Monsieur la Tour, the French refugee, I heard a curious stealthy noise at the shutter behind me. I forgot to

listen to the speech of the Frenchman, who was telling with vivid touches the tale of his journey to the new country, and bent all my attention on the slight sound outside. I heard it once, then waited. "Oh," thought I, "I am getting to have the nerves of a woman," and I turned, impatient with myself, to the maiden at my left. Again came the noise, like the scrape of a nail on the shutter, then a light tap. Instantly I recognized the call of a river Indian. With a hurried excuse, I scarce remember what, and saying that I would return soon, I left the table. I caught up my cloak from Erasmus and went out of the house. There stood an Indian, stolid and apparently indifferent. He took a paper from some hidden place and gave it to me. I motioned to him to follow me

to the building where we kept the trading stores. The fire was burning in the fireplace, for we never knew when we should spend hours in giving out material. I looked about the room with pride. Piled high on the shelves were shrouds, beads, duffells, and gewgaws of all kinds, with pans and kettles; stacked in the corners were guns and axes. Great pieces of hoop iron reached to the ceiling, while demijohns of rum and molasses stood close to the wall. If the last ship had brought more red cloth and brass buttons, I should have been better pleased thought I, as I lighted a bit of tallow and looked at the letter.

"To Arendt van Curler or Johannes van Blerckom." I read, Well, thought I, van Curler is too far away to deliver it to him to-night, and as I seem to be

a good second, I might as well look at the matter now. It was without date and opened abruptly.

"For the sake of humanity," it began, "come instantly to New Amsterdam. No white man has the power to help unless you come—and I fear *you* will be too late. Kieft is determined to make war on the red men, and either does not, or will not realize what it will mean to the settlers. Already my bouwerie is overrun with Indians claiming my protection. Last night I came through the ice in a canoe to see what I could do in New Amsterdam to avert the catastrophe, but all to no purpose. The Governor called three of the twelve men to meet at van Dam's to-day, and they decided to send the soldiers out from the fort to-night

against the Indians, in the name of the commonalty.

LATER

"I hear shrieks from over the river and know the horrid work has begun. If a stray Indian comes this way, I will take him to the unguarded gate and trust that he will, in thankfulness, make every effort to reach you. You are the only hope for the detached bouweries. I wish Antonia van Slyck had listened to reason, and come into the town. A friendly Indian has just come to the door begging shelter from the hostiles.

"I will take him to the gate. Come—come—come.

"Your friend and kinsman,

"DAVID BUYTENHOF."

"*Antonia*—Not a coward," I cried, "but helpless, powerless." I turned

the letter over hoping that I had missed the date and that I might find some indication of the length of time which had elapsed since it was written, but there was no sign. With an energy born of despair, and fighting the conviction of the hopelessness of effort I hastened to make my preparations for departure. Calling Tymen, the carpenter, I told him a little of the contents of the letter, and sent the Indian with him for refreshment. It was necessary to return to the Dominie's and explain my absence, so I went back to the house. They had risen from the table, and were deep in games, but I had no trouble in calling the Dominie aside. "But you cannot go," he cried, "it is too perilous, you are even now exhausted from a long, hard journey."

"I must," I said quietly.
"Yes, friend, I know, you must, but not to-night, to-morrow."
"No," I replied, "to-night, — now. Please make my excuses to Madame van Orde, and pray that I may not be too late."
"God keep you, friend Johannes. Will you let me go with you?"
"No, no," I said, "you are needed here. Van Curler is not yet home and you cannot be spared. Goodnight and goodbye."
I had purchased of the Indians the tract of land some miles from Rensselaerswyck, with the purpose of building in the future, and of sending to Stavoren for my aunt to come to the new land and make a home for me. I had the deed with me, for it had just been signed, and I took it

from my pocket and looked at the signatures, a wolf, a turtle, and a bear.

Although the time was flying, I sat at my desk and wrote a few directions for my friend, the Dominie, then, sealing the paper, placed it in a private drawer known only to van Curler, the Dominie, and myself. I heard Tymen in the kitchen, so I called him to send the Indian in to me. By questions, I found that four separate messengers had had charge of the letter at different points of the journey. Evidently it had come in the shortest possible time. The snow was deep, but hard, and the ice of the river smooth and clear, for how many miles I did not dare to think. The journey behind me seemed like a dream of the past, and I forgot that

I was tired and only thought of annihilating space between Rensselaerswyck and New Amsterdam.
I had no thought of taking anyone with me, as it was not force but knowledge of and friendship with the red men that was needed in the difficulty, so I was annoyed when I saw Tymen standing ready as I started forth. "Go home to your bed," I said sharply, "you are not needed."
"No," he said, "nor wanted, I judge, but I have need to go to New Amsterdam. I want new tools, and with your permission I would like to travel in your company, as the road, I am told is somewhat dangerous."
"Come on then," I said, "but let your Dutch blood keep your tongue quiet. Your French blood with its loqua-

ciousness, irritates me," and so we started toward the south.

The moon shone down on the river ice, and as I touched its surface with my skates I was back in Stavoren striving for the race. Surely if I could distance the wind then, what could I not do with Antonia's life the stake? I turned once and looked back on the sleeping town. Everything quiet and dark save the lantern of the watch. As if to give us Godspeed, there came to us on the night wind "All's well." Like the even strokes of a hammer the words "make haste, make haste," kept beating in my brain. My one hope was at Beeren Island. Some months before, a Norwegian had come to New Amsterdam, and at the first strong ice had brought his dogs and sledge up the river. If now, by

some good fortune, he had been delayed he could take us down the river. It was nine o'clock when I left the Dominie's, and close on eleven when we reached the fort. Never before had the formalities and the preliminaries of entrance seemed so unnecessary and prolonged. I heard the yelping of dogs, a most welcome sound this night, although I had no great love for them at other times. All was excitement in an instant, as I told Buytenhof's message. It took but a short time, although the minutes seemed like hours, to harness the dogs. With a hearty cheer from the fort, we were off, and, as I settled myself under the robe, I called to the Norwegian, "The price of the dogs if you kill them in getting us there, and a tract of land for speed."

CHAPTER VII

"But though I loved you well, I woo'd you not."

THE night had fallen on the van Slyck bouwerie. The shutters and doors were closed and locked. In the embrasures of the house there were loaded guns, but Madame van Slyck could but think that she had a poor defense against Indians, with only servants—and those either too old or too young to be of much use in warfare.

"Perhaps I was foolish" she thought, "not to go to the town, but I have no

wish to go there." For some reason her thoughts turned persistently to the days on "The Eendracht," and the Frisian, with his cheery laugh and his strong, lithe frame. How he had disappointed her. She had looked forward to his friendship in the new land and, with a few words, he had made it impossible.

As the fire burned up, and the shadows in the corners deepened, she heard the sound of hoofs, then a loud knock at the door. "Pompey," she called, "the Indians are about, although I doubt if they ride on horses: be quite sure you know who asks entrance before you open the door." She rose and went with him. At Pompey's question the answer came in a voice which seemed a continuation of her thoughts. "A friend,

open in the name of David Buytenhof."

The chains fell, and the bolts flew back. In the doorway, I, Johannes van Blerckom stood, worn with travel, pale with anxiety.

I felt my face clear, as I saw her standing there, for I had not known whether she was safe, or the victim of the treachery of red men, and Swannekins. With true hospitality she ordered food and wine, and made me break my fast before she asked any questions. The quiet country life had kept the lines from her face, and the black and white of her widow's garb accentuated the beauty of her figure. The only touch of color, was her heavy gold chatelaine with its many chains. Older she was, and more womanly, than on the day I watched

her sail away on the "Squirrel," but always, to me, the one beautiful woman on earth. Standing by the fire, where I could look down upon her, I waited for questions.

"You will not think me inhospitable, I hope," she said, "if I ask to what I am indebted for this visit, at this unseemly hour?"

"I am here," I replied, "at the request of your cousin, David Buytenhof. He has a curious idea that I have some special power over the Indians, and as your bouwerie is so remote he sent for me to help you. You may not know that the Governor has within a few days sent out soldiers against the Indians, and, as a consequence, the whole country round about New Amsterdam is in a turmoil. Even as I came to-night I saw fires in three

different directions, indicating that revenge was working already. I have come to conduct you in safety, if possible, to the fort."

"May I ask how it happened that David did not come himself?"

"I am sorry that he could not come, Madam," I said, "but he is detained at his own home, for many have sought his protection, and, as for me, I am always at *his* service.

"When am I desired to leave," she asked haughtily.

"Immediately," I replied, "every hour makes it more difficult of accomplishment. My horse is spent, but no doubt you have fresh ones."

"And if I refuse to go?"

"I should greatly regret it, for I should feel it my duty to stay until you had changed your mind, and it is not

pleasant to be an unwelcome guest, besides every moment's delay is a mistake."

"You would be afraid to stay then?" she asked.

I felt my face flush a dull red, but said quietly, "Put it in that way if you like, the Indians are not pleasant foes."

"There is absolutely no danger I am sure," she said, with a laugh, "the tomahawk dents have been a sure protection so far, I am willing to trust to them a little longer. You may go back to David Buytenhof and tell him that I shall be pleased to have him visit me in the summer."

"I will go back, Madam, when you are ready to accept my escort, or when someone, whom we both trust, comes to take you. I have given my word not

to leave you until you are safe in the fort."

"I will bid you goodnight, then," she said, "Pompey will make you comfortable." She left the room and I heard a door close in the distance. The Indian situation was very grave, for many had been killed and the survivors were wreaking vengeance on the detached bouweries. This one, for some reason, perhaps because it was a little out of the way, had so far escaped, but it was simply a matter of time, while in the coming few hours the road to New Amsterdam would be comparatively safe. I had had little sleep for days, so with the warmth of the fire it was not strange that I was soon in a sound slumber, with my cloak about me, and my head resting on the high back of the chair.

It was long past midnight when I was awakened by a loud knock on the front door. Calling to Pompey not to open, I went quickly into the hall. Listening, I heard the voices of Indians. The house could possibly withstand an attack for a short time, but I saw the flash of a torch and knew that diplomacy, not force, would be the only way to save it from fire. Listening intently, I heard their dialect; fortunately, it was familiar to me, so I called imperatively in their tongue. "What do you want?" Instantly all was quiet. They had evidently withdrawn for a parley. In a few minutes there came a knock and then a voice saying, "Who within speaks our language, we would talk with him." "It is I, van Blerckom," came the reply, "send two of your

number here into the house and I will talk with them."

There was a rattle of the chains and bolts and two red men came into the light of the fire. Pompey was fairly pale with fright, his knees knocked together while his teeth chattered as he pushed the bolt to its socket. As they entered the room Madam van Slyck stood by the fireplace. She was pale but calm, and said nothing. I was at a loss to know what terms to offer for the safe conduct of Madam to the town, so waited, and signed for the Indians to speak first. "Blerckom," the spokesman said, "we have already sent a messenger to you, hearing that you were at New Amsterdam, to come to us a few miles from here tomorrow afternoon. We cannot keep our people from burning the houses,

and this one was to have gone to-night, but, as your wife is with you," —I glanced at Madam van Slyck, but the dialect was Greek to her—"it will not be disturbed. It is not, however, safe for you to take her through the country on the road to New Amsterdam to-night. There are many abroad who do not know you, and will not, until after the meeting to-morrow, so if you will come to-morrow the road may be safe then. What shall we tell our chief?"

"Tell him," said I, "that I will meet him to-morrow and will wait here for you to conduct me to him."

The Indians went out of the door and once more it was locked and bolted. I was in a deep study as I stood with bent head looking into the fire. If Madam van Slyck expected me to

speak, she was disappointed. She said softly, "I had just come down to tell you that I would go to New Amsterdam with you to-night, and that I could be ready in an hour. I have been perhaps selfish in giving my friends so much anxiety."

I noticed as I looked at her, that she was in travelling costume, and that her cloak lay on the table near her. My voice was harsh as I said, "Madam, it is too late; the road, since midnight, has been too dangerous for you to take the chances. The house is, however, safe for to-night."

"I am not afraid to try the road," said the lady, "but if you do not wish to risk it, we will wait."

I bit my lip, but, as before, answered quietly, "Yes, we will wait until to-morrow."

CHAPTER VIII

"Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety."

THE odor of cooking was sweet in my nostrils, when I woke in the van Slyck living room. The floor was newly sanded, and Pompey stepped softly from cupboard to sideboard, from sideboard to table. I brought my thoughts back with an effort for, in my dreams, I had been once more in the Mohawk Valley, but not alone, for I sat in a house like the mansion I was now in, while on the other side of the fireplace was the dark-haired woman

who had scorned me so. She smiled upon me in my dream, and I saw the love-light in her eyes.

Ah, no, I thought, dreams are but dreams.

Pompey brought the message that my (unwilling) hostess would join me at the morning meal, and also offered to show me a chamber where I could make myself a little more presentable for the company of a lady.

There was a lilt in my heart, notwithstanding the lady had treated me with such disdain, for I, at least, had the consciousness of her presence. As we sat at table, waited on by Pompey, the humor of the situation struck us both. There had never been tragedy in it for her, and we went back over the days on "The Eendracht," both avoiding any reference to the last day. During

the months we had been together on the ship, many things had happened, and we were both sad and gay as we talked of the people who were with us, many of whom were now at Rensselaerswyck.

The Indians returned early with a message from their chief. With them was a red man who spoke Dutch, and for that reason, he had been entrusted with the message, and was the spokesman. Madam had left the room, but Pompey remained. He was a little more used to the warlike braves, and in the bright light of day had recovered his courage.

The sight of the white flag which they carried, reassured him, and he listened to the talk with his eyes glistening. He offered them refreshment, which they accepted, and then the

spokesman turned to me, "Our chief sends you greeting," he said, "and asks you to come to the assembly place, on the river, before the sun drops behind the hill. You are asked to bring your wife with you, as a token that you have faith in all who are to be there. Then we will discuss the terms of peace."

I thought a moment. A new complication had come up. "The lady must be taken by me to New Amsterdam," I said, "After that I will come to your meeting but not before, if *all* the tribes are at stake."

The Indian stood straight and stolid as he said, "My answer to that is this: Your coming is the only chance to the *Swannekins*, not to the *Indians*. We know that you are brave, our brothers up the river have told us

that you do not care for your life, that you will not hesitate to take that life in your hands to come among a lot of angry Indians. We, who are your friends, may be able to protect you, we may not. We know that you must love your wife, that if you show to the people, our people, that you trust them, even with her, we not only believe that you will have a safe journey to the fort, but that you may make peace. Otherwise, we cannot tell; you may not be spared yourself. You have been honest with us, we will be honest with you."

Oh, if she had only been willing to go the night before. I did not dare, for her sake, to tell him that she was not my wife, for it might mean safe conduct for her, if worst came to worst.

"Take my answer to your chief," I

said, "I *alone* will meet him and the assembled Indians." Pompey opened the door for them, and I was astonished to see that he had some conversation with the Indian, but I was too far away to hear more than the murmur of their voices.

I watched from the window until they disappeared, single file, in the wood. Before the Indians left me, Pompey had gone away to answer the call of a bell, and I was surprised to see him at the door when they departed, and now, when I wanted him to send him quickly for his mistress, he was nowhere in sight. Her immediate departure was necessary, for if we started at once, it was only by hard cross-country riding, that I could get back to the meeting place of the Indians, after leaving the lady in the

fort. I knew that much depended on the result of that conference, that, perhaps, the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam rested on a word too much or a word too little, and on the keeping of my promise before the setting of the sun.

As I turned from the window, the lady herself stood in the door. She looked pale and worn, and I fancied that her vigil of the night before had been longer than I knew.

"I am sorry," I said, "but as you were good enough to set to-day for your departure, could you make it convenient to go at once? The road is comparatively clear as the Indians are assembling a few miles back of us, near the river, and we may be pretty sure of a safe journey."

"I am told by Pompey," she said,

"that the Indians have asked for my presence."

I muttered a curse under my breath, and consigned Pompey to a hotter place than he had ever seen. She was evidently unconscious of the name they had given her, for if she had heard it her resentment would have known no bounds, and *I*, surely *I*, could not tell her.

"As you know," she went on, "they have murdered no women, and I may be able to help make peace. You know a woman sometimes succeeds where a man fails."

"I entreat you," I began, "to let me take you at once to the fort. You will be taking grave chances."

"Say no more," she said, "my mind is made up, I am going to the meeting. In fact, it is too late to make any

other arrangement for I sent word to them by Pompey that I would accompany you." This then, accounted for Pompey's conversation at the door.

In almost gracious manner she continued, "You may accompany me if you choose to do so." Surely the shoe was on the other foot. My lady was to meet the chief, and *I* was to be her humble escort. Well, there was something to be thankful for, I was at least to go with her.

I bowed in acquiescence, what else could I do? No man was ever so sorely tried, and yet, with all her wilfulness, she went quietly about her preparations as if she were arranging for her heirs. Writing and sealing letters; sending the silver down into the buried box in the cellar; locking up

closets and cupboards, so that, if the house should escape fire, it could not be looted without infinite trouble; calling all the servants in and giving them instructions as to what they should do in New Amsterdam; ordering the horses put to the large wagon, so that the children might be carried. All her orders for the safety of her people, which she gave to her bowmeester, were so clear that I listened in silent admiration. The safety offered her, she accepted gladly for her people.

As she stepped to the door to give some parting injunction about the guns which the men were carrying, I said to her, "You seem so full of resource that I hesitate to offer any service, but if you will give this paper to your man he may find it use-

ful. Most Indians will recognize the van Rensselaer coat of arms and they know a private mark which I sometimes use." She thanked me softly for her people's sake and motioned to them to start toward the fort. Pompey was to go with us. The fires were banked and everything ready for departure. Even the shutters and the great front door were chained and bolted. There was no trace of fear in the lady's face and we sat on either side of the dull fire, busy with our thoughts, and waiting for our Indian escort. It was a curious situation which Fate had brought about. The chance that I, instead of van Curler, had received Buytenhof's message had made two people play a strange game. The ticking of the great clock was the only sound to break the still-

ness. I had noticed long ago, on "The Eendracht" that although my lady could be active and merry when she was in the mood, there were times when she would sit so still, so still, that I wondered if she breathed.

At the stroke of two I saw, coming out of the wood, the three Indians of the morning. I had noticed that Pompey had taken care that his mistress was well protected, and I had taken occasion to speak to him privately, so that there would be no fear for her comfort; for her safety—well, I would do my best.

I rose and said to her, "I see the Indians coming, is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, thank you," she said, "Pompey has his instructions. I will only cumber you with myself, and as we are to

be companions, though only for a short time, in a dangerous enterprise, we will at least seem friends, for the better luck with the Indians." She held out her hand and I took it in mine for an instant.

As I folded her cloak about her, I saw in her girdle, the wrought handle of a poniard. She caught the direction of my glance, and the color mounted to her temples, as she said, "There is a chance that we may not reach New Amsterdam." Until that moment I had believed that she knew not the danger of our enterprise. Well, there are worse things than death.

CHAPTER IX

"But on and up, where Nature's heart
Beats strong amid the hills."

FOR the past few days there had been no new snow and the frozen path was comparatively smooth. My companion started off as if she were used to walking, while her short skirt and snow boots made me feel that, for the journey before us, she, at least, would not be uncomfortable. The keen air brought the roses to her cheeks, and her eyes shone as we tramped on. At the edge of the woods, she turned to look at the house.

"I have not left the bouwerie since the day after the landing of "The Eendracht," she said.

"Will it grieve you if you never go back?" I asked.

She hesitated before she answered. "I do not know," she said. "One must have suffered or loved deeply, to make a place sacred, do you not think so? I do not believe I am capable of deep love or deep grief. I *should* have felt both and I have been conscious of neither."

Apparently vexed at herself for having spoken to me freely, as she had been wont to do on "The Eendracht," she said no more, and we entered the wood.

The Indians preceded us, and we followed almost as noiselessly. The creaking of the naked limbs on the

trees, and the occasional breaking of a twig, were the only sounds to break the stillness.

It was necessary to go single file as we took the trail, and I watched her grace, and the haughty poise of her head, as she walked swiftly forward. She showed no sign of fatigue as time went on, but I called a halt knowing that weariness of body was not the worst ill that might befall her. We feared to kindle a fire, not knowing how near we might be to hostile Indians, but Pompey spread a fur skin on some boughs, and wrapped another one about his mistress.

We ate and drank as if we had chosen this time for a pleasure trip, and once more she was frank and merry. The old friendship of the sea seemed to be coming back to me. We avoided

the subject of the Indian meeting, and I searched my brain for anecdotes and stories of Rensselaerswyck. I told her of the ransom of Father Jogue; of the journey to the Mohawk Valley, where I hoped some day to make a home. Van Curler made a good hero, and it was easy to make her believe that he had been the actor in all the brave deeds with which I tried to beguile the weary hours. She would not have been interested, if I had told her of *my own* journeyings; if I chanced to think of a bit of my own history, it was easy to say "van Curler" instead of "I." When I came to the story of the St. Nicholas feast at Dominie van Orde's she stopped me.

"Please," she said, "keep a shadow of possibility in your stories, for I would like to believe many of them,

but how was it possible for you to be in two places at once? Surely you could not have been at Dominie van Orde's at the feast, and in New Amsterdam so soon after. Nothing but wings will explain it. I am quite sure that," she laughed, "you haven't them yet."

I stammered a bit, for I could not tell her, without seeming to brag, of the lightning journey by skates and dogs down the river, so I was grateful to see near at hand, the light and smoke of campfires. "I will tell you some other time," I said, "now we are at our journey's end for the time being."

We walked on now in silence, she, serene and brave; I, a coward for her sweet sake. As far as my own life went I cared little, but for her I was torn with anxiety.

Close trees hid the valley where the Indians were encamped, and it was with almost a shock, we saw them as we turned a sharp angle. Among the Indians surrounding the chief, I saw, to my great relief, several familiar faces. Already three hundred had assembled with at least fifty horses. Many wigwams dotted the plain and great fires were burning. Our three guides conducted us immediately to the chief, a man with one eye, who received us with great dignity.

"Good friends," he said, "you will sup with us, then rest, and on the morrow we will go to meet the other chiefs."

"Our time is limited," I replied, "we appreciate your hospitality, but it is our desire to go on our way to-night."

"It is impossible," he said, "you are

cruel to your wife to think of a longer journey to-night. Do you not see that she is almost ill with fatigue?"

He was right. The savage had noticed what I in my self-absorption had overlooked, that she was indeed faint and tired beyond endurance. A great yearning came over me to take her in my arms and comfort her. She did not understand the dialect, so she did not have the added humiliation of hearing the chief call her my wife.

A fine wigwam was placed at our disposal, where Pompey and an Indian maiden were already busy in preparation for her comfort. There was a fire burning and a feast was spread. The tent of the chief was near at hand and I was bidden to eat with him. I had given Pompey a whistle to use in case I should be wanted, but even

with that, I did not like the idea of leaving the lady in his charge. Cautioning him to be quite sure that the couch of boughs was well covered with furs, and telling him that it was at the peril of his life to leave her, I sallied forth. Of his devotion to his mistress I was well assured, but in his discretion and courage I had no faith.

As I pondered the matter I saw coming towards me a North river Indian who had eaten my bread, and whom I had befriended many times. I called to him and asked him to mount guard over the wigwam until my return. I hoped that I could trust him, and went on my way with a lighter heart. As I sat in the chief's tent, feasting, my mind was busy with the near-by wigwam, and I again urged the im-

mediate assembling of the Indians for a parley.

"No, my friend," said the chief, "it is impossible. To-night we feast and rest, to-morrow we will meet sixteen great chiefs who have much to say. To-night we must sleep."

The time dragged its weary length until the hours seemed weeks. Suddenly, on the still night air came the sound of a shrill whistle. I jumped to my feet and tore at the flap of the tent. With a few strides I had reached the other wigwam. In the middle of the floor stood Pompey shaking with fear. I caught him by the collar, crying:

"Where is she, you black villain?"

"I don't know," he wailed, "I must have gone to sleep, and when I woke she was gone."

There was no sign of my Indian

watchman—horrible visions of the red men's vengeance came before me, and I groaned aloud. Chief Pacham's fiendish face as he brandished the bloody hand of a Dutchman on the end of a tomahawk was an awful memory. I knew the tortures of hell in those moments. What could have happened? If the earth had opened, she could not have vanished more completely. Pompey cowered in a heap, dumb with fear, while I, with every sense alert, was trying to decide in which direction to seek her. The night was quite clear and all was quiet. Suddenly, not far away, the clear sweet tones of a woman's voice singing a Dutch song, a song of Friesland, came from a large wigwam not far away. My heart leaped, for I knew that she was safe.

Following the sound, I entered without ceremony. There, enthroned on boughs and skins, sat Antonia, surrounded by Indians. She saw me enter, but sang the song through to the end. "I could not sleep," she said, "so I talked with the Indian guard, who could speak Dutch, and he told me that music was loved by the red men, so I thought that perhaps I might make some friends. You know we will need them to-morrow."

If I said anything it was of little worth, for my brain could only keep repeating, "She is safe, she is safe."

She was quite willing to go with me, and I said goodnight to her at the entrance to her wigwam, but for the rest of the night, I paced back and forth before the bearskin door.

CHAPTER X

"The glorious sun
Stays in his course, and plays the alchymist;
Turning with splendor in his precious eye,
The meagre cloddy earth to glittering gold."

THE clear sky of the winter night was thickly set with stars; from the far distance came the occasional cry of a wildcat, while near at hand the stamping of the horses was the only sound about the sleeping camp. Silently I paced back and forth in front of the wigwam, thinking many things; of Fate, of my lonely life, of the woman who, I hoped, was sleeping on her

couch of boughs, of the morrow, which held so much for her.

I had often watched the sun rise but never under such conditions. As the first faint rays fell on the glistening snow, I saw the flap of the wigwam lift and Antonia, for that was still her name to me, appear at the opening.

"I am sorry if I wakened you," I said, "I could not sleep and so thought I would walk."

"You did not waken me," she replied, "I too was wakeful, and the wigwam is stifling. May I walk with you?" She called to Pompey for her cloak and once more we were comrades. I was more than willing to take short views of life and live only from day to day — aye — from hour to hour.

Walking briskly back and forth we

said little. I, more than glad just to feel her presence — she, evidently deep in her own thoughts.

"All of this trouble and anxiety would have been saved if I had gone to the fort as you asked me to," she said, "please forgive me for making myself such a burden." This humility was so foreign to her usual attitude that I looked at her in wonder before I said:

"Not all, Madam, although I confess that the most important matter, your safety, would have been settled. This meeting would have been held in any case, and it is possible that the mere fact of your gracious presence will be of great benefit to your countrymen in its influence on the chiefs. I hope that to-night will see you in safety in the fort and for that reason I shall insist

upon an early meeting. I shall countenance no more delay. As for me, Madam, you cannot help but know that the hours have been only too few to me." She smiled and was about to speak, then evidently thinking better of the impulse, turned away.

The sun was about an hour high when Pompey announced that we were to break our fast, and very soon after there was a general movement toward the woods on the other side. The one-eyed chief was our companion, and our guides of the day before formed a sort of escort. The Indian girl seemed fascinated by the beauty of the white woman and kept close at hand.

From an elevation we could see an encampment, larger than the one behind us and in the distance was the

glimmer of water and the shadows of many canoes. Does she know, I wondered, that to these Indians she is *my wife* and that never could they be made to believe that it was not true? *My wife*—yes, thought I, and I shall take a husband's right and kill you rather than let them keep you a prisoner.

As I glanced at her I saw that her hand rested on the handle of the poniard in her belt. My hand was not quite steady as I touched hers.

"Pardon me," I said, "if I hold your hand in mine, it will indicate to them that we are not to be separated and it seems better so. I am particularly anxious that there should be no mistake when we embark in the canoes; we must be in the same one." I kept my voice as even as possible so that

she should not know how deeply I felt, and she made no answer save to place her hand in mine. It was so cold that every impulse urged me to clasp it close with both my own.

In the circle of chiefs, I counted but two familiar faces, for my contact with the red men had been almost entirely in the northern country, and with different tribes; those of Long Island seldom came to Rensselaerswyck to trade.

As we walked hand in hand, like two children, place was made for us by the fire, a rug was spread, and we seated ourselves.

Turning to our host of the night before, I said, "You have entertained us hospitably, we thank you, now we ask that you hasten matters, so that we may reach New Amsterdam by three

hours after noon or earlier. *My* time is also precious. I am your friend and can speak your language, but I have other work to do, and have already given more time to you and yours than I can well afford. I pray you hasten." At that a Tankiteke chief, who held a bundle of sticks, arose and turning to me said, "We have sent for you to tell you our side of the question. The Swannekins came to our land, we shared with them our food, they have murdered our people." He broke one stick. "We gave them our daughters in marriage. There are children with the mingled blood of Swannekin and red man in their veins, and yet you murdered our people." He broke another stick. I looked at the number in his hand. By swift calculation it would take until midnight to finish

the count, and not until the next morning could we start for New Amsterdam. I stepped forward and raised my hand.

"I know all," I said. "The Governor is even now awaiting you in the fort to tell you that his desire is for peace, that he will indemnify you for all loss, that peace shall again reign over Indian and Swannekin."

I could see that many were of a mind to follow my lead, when suddenly there sprang into the center of the circle, a man with bow and arrows.

"Why," he cried, "do you go to the palefaces to make peace? It is revenge we want, not peace. They will make peace for their own convenience and then not keep it."

Fearing the effect of his impassioned utterance, I sprang to my feet and

cried, "He is wrong, I give you my word, the word of a man of Rensselaerswyck, the word of a Curler, that you will be well treated, that it is for your advantage to come to the fort." One of the chiefs who knew me well, commanded silence, and then in a loud tone said, "I have known Blerckom long. He never lies. We will go with him on his word, but we will not go until the sun sets and rises once again. We will sleep once more in the encampment and the water will then be quiet."

The day was partially won for us but I looked longingly at the graceful canoes as they lay upon the water. Great trees had been felled to build them and twenty people could easily be placed in each. I did not realize how deeply I had hoped that this jour-

ney should be hastened, or how earnestly I desired to place Antonia in the fort in safety, until I knew that it must be deferred.

It was wiser to bend to the will of the chief in what seemed a small matter than to take the chance of antagonizing him, and then he was right about the water, for it was turbulent and ran in angry waves.

The keen air brought roses to Antonia's cheeks as we walked briskly toward the encampment. Again we talked of many things, while her merry laugh rang out as she told of the quaint and precise Annetje, the first wife of Rutger van Slyck, whose house she would occupy if she should decide to live in New Amsterdam. "I am afraid she will come back and haunt me," she said, "for I never can

make a good housewife. I love to sit and watch the wind blow through the corn, to see the different colors of the tulips, to hear the birds sing; I don't like to knit, to bake, to brew. My Dutch ancestor who brought home a Spanish bride little knew the legacy of languor and indolence that he was handing down to vex some thrifty Dutchman."

That was then the secret of the charm. The warm blood of Spain coursed through her veins. Tall she was and stately, but with the beautiful curves, tiny waist and arched instep of the senorita. I fancied castanets in her hands and a camelia in her hair. The air of a Spanish love song came to my lips.

"Sing it," she cried, "I love the Spanish songs."

I, obedient to her slightest wish, let my heart speak in the words of the sweet old song.

Had I not believed that she still harbored resentment, that she still believed evil of me, I should have been tempted to speak all that was in my heart. Her eyes spoke love, devotion, sweetness, but not for me, for her lips were mocking as she said: "You have all the graces of a soldier of fortune, I am surprised that my cousin did not choose a sober and more sedate guardian to send as my escort. Do you know, I believe that these Indians are perfectly harmless and that my journey from home is all nonsense. I really think I will take Pompey and go back."

"As you please, Madam," I said, "but I shall not consider myself re-

leased from my promise to those who would protect you until I leave you in the fort. It will simply delay matters, that is all, unless you count the possibility of a massacre, which is of course a mere detail. I have given my word to these Indians that I will go with them to the fort, and although they have made *us* wait, it is possible that *they* may object to further delay. It is, however, for you to decide."

In an instant her mood changed, as she said, "I will go with you." Taking the poniard from her belt she said, "Will you keep this in memory of a capricious woman, and to remind you sometimes of a strange and unexpected journey?" I touched the handle with my lips before I thrust it in my doublet.

"It will remind me of many things,"

I said, "I thank you. If at any time you may need me I will be at your service. I pray you, Madam, heed the wish of Buytenhof and do not return to the bouwerie, it is not safe in the present state of affairs between the Dutch and the Indians."

"Do you wish me not to return?" I could not believe that she had spoken thus to me but she was looking into my eyes. With sudden resentment at her coquetry, I said coldly:

"Madam, my wishes can be of little moment to you, but I add my humble prayer to David's, do not return to the bouwerie." She laughed and I knew that my wishes were indeed nothing to her.

It was but a glimmer of what might have been; lost as soon as dreamed of. Hope is born of nothing and dies

quickly. We said no more. She seemed to have forgotten my presence while I—I was once more standing on the deck of "The Eendracht" watching "The Squirrel" bear her away.

The night fell early and with the setting of the sun the wind died away, promising a safe journey on the morrow. I had been long without sleep, and with the experience of the previous night fresh in my mind I had no fear that my lady would leave her wigwam. The Indians had prepared the tent for us both and to avoid suspicion I had thrown a skin over the side and wrapping myself in my blanket, threw myself on the ground and drew the fur down over me. I had often slept in worse places. It seemed to me as I closed my eyes, that no

sound could escape me, but my exhaustion had been too great for me to control tired nature.

It was early in the evening when I fell asleep; no sound disturbed my deadened senses until the sun was an hour high and I heard the swift footsteps of the Indians passing and re-passing in their preparations for departure. I slipped out from behind the fur, quickly drawing myself to my full height. There was no sign of wakening in the wigwam so I hastened to bathe in the cold water of the river. The current was swift and just what I needed to cause reaction, for my long sleep had made me dull. The air was warmer than on the day before, betokening a comfortable journey.

There was still no movement of life in the wigwam when I returned, so I

tapped gently. No answer came. I called, "Pompey!" still no answer. Waiting no longer I lifted the curtain and went in. The fire was almost out and no one in the outer room. What had happened? Had Pompey, the coward, run away and left his mistress to the ministrations of the Indians? The skins hung down between the rooms, and I could not see within. "Madam van Slyck," I cried, "I pray your pardon, but Pompey is not here" — still no sound. With a stride I reached the fur and pulled it aside— "God!" I cried.

There on the couch lay her cloak, on the floor one of her shoes. No living soul within the room save myself. Where was she, without cloak, with only one shoe? There was no sign of a struggle and yet she would not have

gone willingly and tried to walk over the cold ground with one foot bare. There were evidences of great haste in their departure, for a dainty trifle of lace and muslin lay on the couch. I touched it reverently and tenderly, but its elusive, subtle fragrance of some flower went to my brain and, as I crushed it to my lips, I felt my whole being expand—"Oh, my love, my love," I cried, "what devil entered into that one glass of Mandragora wine I was forced to take with the chief to dull my senses and let this thing happen?"

I must have slept the sleep of the dead not to have heard her, for my couch was separated from hers by the wigwam cover only.

Hasty action might precipitate evil, so I collected my thoughts as well as

might be, dropped the skin over the doorway and went swiftly to the wigwam of the chief. In an emergency thoughts come quickly, and my plan of action formed unconsciously as I covered the ground with hasty steps.

CHAPTER XI.

"Apprehensions are greater in proportion as things are unknown."

WITHOUT the ceremony of a knock I entered the tent and asked that a messenger be sent at once for the chief who had espoused my cause the day before. He was with us in a very few minutes and I waited for them to seat themselves before making my business known, then, waving aside the proffered pipe, I said:

"Yesterday I counted you and your people friends, I conceded to you the delay you asked for, believing that

you were honorable and honest in your intention. What has been the result? Like the wild cats of your country you are treacherous and your word is unstable as water. During the night the woman I love, whom you have acknowledged as my wife, has been spirited away and I demand her immediate return, unharmed, or no longer may you count upon the friendship of Rensselaerswyck. Even now, we have delayed too long at your request. The Swannekins may now be on their way to kill you and your people."

"You talk in riddles," said the friendly chief, "your wife is still sleeping in her wigwam."

"Come and see," I cried, "she and her servant have both disappeared. Where are they?"

"We know not," said the chief, as he hurried with me across the field, "if she is not there some enemy has carried her off and you are to blame, not I." I could not tell him that I was not with her and knew no more than he of the interior of her wigwam.

Hoping against hope that in the meantime she might have returned, I followed the chief into the wigwam. It was vacant as I had left it, but the fire was now quite dead and the rooms chill and desolate.

"I demand," I said turning to the chief, "that you assemble all your people, every man, woman and child. If one is missing that one is the guilty party and must be followed. *Dead* or alive *I* shall follow him until his punishment is equal to his sin." Superstition was an important factor some-

times in dealing with the red men. "If no one is absent then we must go back over the ground of our journey until we perhaps find her safe in her own home." My glance fell on her shoe and I knew that she did not go alone or willingly.

"It is well," said the chief, "we will call our people together and if there is a guilty one you shall be revenged; our hospitality does not turn to treachery."

Messengers were sent in all directions while the tom-toms called the Indians to a central meeting place. I could see no trace of footsteps leading from the wigwam in the direction of the bouwerie. In all other directions the passing and re-passing of many feet had obliterated all signs.

In despair I watched and waited as

the Indians came running from all parts of the camp. If no one was missing, what then?

I looked toward the water. It was comparatively smooth but I thought of its turbulence of the night before. No, she could not have gone that way. Each blow of the tom-toms seemed to strike a nerve. The noise ceased and I heard the chief speaking. The Indians formed in single file and marched between two chiefs. As the last one passed, the chief of the tribe turned to me.

"Friend Blerckom," he said, "The villains are not of my tribe; all my people have answered to my call. I will divide them into parties, and we will beat the country for three days, unless we find her sooner, which I hope for, then, if we are not success-

ful, we will go to the fort, make our peace with the Governor, and after that, we will be at your service until the mystery is cleared up."

He spoke me fair, and I had found before that honor was not an unknown quantity with the red men, and their rules of hospitality would put to shame those of other nations. I left the direction of the parties to the chief, knowing that *I* would go towards the bouwerie. I prayed that I might find her, for brave and fearless as I knew her to be she would think the Indians enemies, not friends.

The distance was interminable. The changed conditions had made the miles double in length and number. Before me was the hill whence I knew there would be a view of the house. I ran ahead of my two companions,

hoping to see smoke coming from the chimney.

Yes, thank God, a thick column rose, as if Pompey had piled on log after log to warm my lady, who must have been tired and cold. I would not let the shoe be an obstacle to my solution of the problem.

Had it been any other woman I would have rated her well for her imprudence, but I was so weak in this woman's hands, that, no doubt, ere the night fell, I would be thanking her for her clever move. I had fasted since the night before, and felt a bit light-headed, and then the tension had been great. I saw her at the window, dressed as she had been at the Governor's banquet, the pearls about her throat, the shining brocade and the priceless lace, while no widow's cap

covered her dark hair. Nothing would surprise me now. If she chose to deck herself in silks and satins after a cold hard journey over rough fields, it was for her own pleasure, and no one had the right to criticise. She waved her hand and stepped back. For an instant all was dark before my eyes, but I stumbled on, gathering strength as I went.

I lifted the knocker and let it fall with a sharp clang.

"Who's there?" called the voice of an Englishman.

"Open," I cried. "It is Johannes van Blerckom."

The chains rattled, the bolt slipped back and the door opened.

"Well of all people," cried Captain Bramhall, "Where did you drop from?

I pushed him aside and went into the reception room. So he had been the one to help her in her journey back to the bouwerie, which she had threatened the day before, and it was for him that she had decked herself in fine apparel. Why then had not Buytenhof sent him in the first place, instead of fetching me from Rensselaerswyck on a fool's errand?

She was not in the living room, the table was littered with the remains of a feast, while the sideboard was covered with bottles and cups. A dozen men sat in front of the fire in all stages of undress. I could think of nothing but the inns we sometimes found during the border wars in Holland.

I was completely bewildered as I turned to the Captain. "You are welcome," he said, "although I am not

exactly the host. We were getting rather tired of each other, and a new face is good to see. Better have a drink."

He seemed to be in a fair condition, but the wine cellar had been too wide open for the weak heads of his companions. No wonder the fair mistress had withdrawn her presence and I marvelled at the temerity and audacity of the man who had dared to use any portion of her house in this manner.

"I would like to speak to Madam van Slyck," I said, "is she above?"

"By gad, so would I," said the Captain, "she's a fine woman. We accepted her hospitality first and will thank her later."

"Do you mean that she is not here?" I asked.

"That is just what I mean," he said, "that is the only thing needed to make this visit a success, the presence of a beautiful woman."

How dared he profane her memory by mentioning her in the light of a hostess to the drunken sots half asleep over the fire. I needed his help though, and explained in short order the incidents of the morning.

"Do you mean to say," I said, "that Madam van Slyck has not been here?" I said nothing of the face I saw at the window, knowing that it must have been a fancy of my brain, born of desire for her presence and of fasting.

"No, she has not been here," he said, "we have not seen her. I was in this part of the country with twelve of my men, and, finding the house unoccupied we took the chance of making

ourselves welcome and comfortable. In fact, we *broke in.*"

My shock and disappointment at not finding the woman I sought were greater than if I had found the house cold, dark and deserted. Deep in my heart I had fully believed that I should find her at the bouwerie. She had called herself capricious, and I believed that during wakeful hours she had determined to take Pompey and to return home. I had no knowledge of what Pompey had carried in the bag, and no doubt there had been an extra pair of shoes; then I remembered that the bag, apparently as full as when he took it from the bouwerie, lay still on the floor of the wigwam where he had left it.

The captain, in love with Madam van Slyck, and eager for adventure, was

all excitement. As we ate and drank we laid our plans. He with his men would go in one direction while I would go in another. At the end of the third day we would meet at the encampment unless we were successful earlier. Working in one cause, we parted as good friends although I chafed at the idea of his daring to be so free with the house and chattels of Madam van Slyck. Once more I started forth, despair and determination fighting for mastery.

At the end of the third day, footsore, weary and discouraged I neared the meeting place. I had found no trace save one. A little ring which she had lost the day we walked to the camp. I had said half in jest, "I will find it for you if I spend half my days." Ah! well, I had found it, but to what

end if my greater quest should be futile!

The captain and I met within a mile of the camp. "What luck?" he cried.

"None," I replied briefly. "It will be wise for us to decide upon some plan of action before we reach the, camp as the Indians will be restless and one or the other of us must go with them to the fort."

"You, then," he said, "for they do not trust me. I will stay about here with my men until you return, unless, indeed we find that she is at the camp, safe and well. Do you suppose that," he hesitated, "she could have drowned herself?"

I hated him for having formulated the fear which had come to me. "No, not voluntarily, she loved life, she was filled with the joy of living."

And yet, I thought, a capricious woman will do many things incomprehensible to a man.

As we walked we talked of other matters, of the Dutch border wars, where we found that we had met in past years. So was explained that half recognition at the Governor's banquet. His father served at the siege of Breda with Sir George Blundell, and I came very near to liking him, as he told of his daring life. He was brave and debonair; the very man to charm a woman, but I mistrusted him. It was prejudice, perhaps, but it is difficult to be just to the man who is preferred by the woman one would give his life for. His life for? That sounds well from the man who could not protect her for more than a few hours and who could sleep while she was in dan-

ger. From choice, we were among the last to arrive, for it was easier to bear suspense while we were moving.

The search had been fruitless, and the chief, with exasperating deliberation, told me the details of the careful search of all the country for miles around. No vestige or trace of any kind had been found. There was nothing left now but the water. Had Pompey dared attempt to manage a canoe? Would she be washed upon some shore, where the rocks would beat all semblance of beauty from her fair face? or would the sea-weed entangle her hair and hold her prisoner in the green depths of the sea?

Powerless against great odds, hope left me. I would go back to the fort on my promised mission with the Indians, leave Captain Bramhall to

watch and wait and then I would return to him. We would beat up and down the coast until we found her or until time proved our quest futile. Telling the chief that I believed that he had done everything possible, we made our plans to board the canoes at sunrise.

The Captain and I talked late into the night, for we were both too anxious to sleep. Before we slept he gave me a packet directed to "Eleanor Bramhall."

"Will you give this to Catryntje Buytenhof," he said, "she will see that it reaches its destination."

"With great pleasure," I replied, "it is not often a man remembers to send a greeting to his mother or his sister." I put it safely away, thinking that I had misjudged the man who could think

to send a message to his kin when his heart was torn with anxiety for one he perhaps called "sweetheart."
There was a faint pink light in the east, the wind had quieted, and the water was unruffled as the weird procession of canoes, with their silent passengers moved slowly from the shore. The Indians bent to their paddles, and swift and straight we cut the water. The city was not far off, and I watched the houses growing larger as we neared the fort. What could I say to Buytenhof, who no doubt was waiting to welcome Antonia? Nothing, save that I had lost her. I could not tell him that it was more to me than it could be to him, but I could assure him that I would not return to Rensselaerswyck until I knew the truth of the matter.

He and Catryntje were both there at the wharf to meet me, and I drew them aside, and told them in as few words as possible, of Antonia's disappearance. In the excitement I nearly forgot the Captain's packet, but fortunately something reminded me of it, and I gave it to Catryntje. Her thanks were as warm as if the little thing were for herself, but Catryntje had ever a large heart even if in old times she had let too many bask in its warmth.

Buytenhof left us to arrange a search party from the fort. In mercy he said nothing of blame and I could not tell him that it was more than life to me. I felt, however, that he understood me, and I knew that he believed that I would leave no stone unturned until I had found her — living or dead.

CHAPTER XII

"*Even so my sun one early morn did shine*
With all triumphant splendor on my brow:
But out alack! he was but one hour mine.
The region cloud hath masked him from me now."

GOVERNOR KIEFT had been warned that we had arrived, and it seemed best that I should go to him first as he was waiting for me in the council chamber.

The desire of the Indians should be understood before they were received in audience. The chiefs were accordingly invited to partake of refreshment, and were taken to the inn

by officials hastily appointed for that duty.

As we neared the Governor's quarters I heard voices in altercation, and, as I entered the room, was just in time to knock up the barrel of a gun which in another instant would have carried death to the chief officer of the colony of New Amsterdam. At the same time Tymen drew the assailant's sword from its scabbard, and threw it into the corner of the room. In an instant all was confusion, the Indians were forgotten, and the angry ravings of the struggling man, who by this time was pinioned, filled the air.

"It was you," he cried, looking at the Governor, "who caused all this trouble and I would have killed you, curse you. *You* sent the soldiers. We met at your call, to be sure, but it was

by your orders that the Indians were killed and the settlers blame *me*. Do you know how they have revenged themselves, these red men? Listen and let me tell you. They have murdered the men, they have tortured the children, they have burned the houses and barns, and the people blame me, do you hear, me—*me*."
By that time the Governor had recovered himself sufficiently to order the man's arrest, and he was well on his way to the guard house before the chiefs appeared. "Ah," growled Kieft, "I will make that man bite the dust; he has threatened me before this, and he shall go in irons to Amsterdam when van Rensselaer's ship goes back, but first fasten him in the market place with a bridle in his mouth until I settle his fate. Enough

of this nonsense, let us get to business."

I had never liked this man Kieft. He was brutal, and his judgment more of the stomach than of the head. So far, although he had during his administration corrected some abuses, he had been so short-sighted in his dealing with the Indians, I had had no patience with him, and this last performance with the red men was beyond explanation or forgiveness. His picture I had seen over the gallows in Hull, but he was in command here in New Amsterdam by order of the Company, and must be considered. It was fortunate for him that Rensselaerswyck was far north, and difficult of access for neither van Curler, van Orde nor myself would be easy subjects for him to govern.

The Indian outbreak showed him, however, that he must change his course, while the revolt of the Dutchmen proved to him that the people must be pacified and, like all bullies, he was willing to make concessions to save his own skin. I told him of the council, of the arraignment of the Dutch by the warlike Indian, and the more sober counsel of the able chief, and of my promise of gifts. "Gifts," he snapped, "always looking for gain." I wondered if he had ever considered what even the Dutch, who were liked by the Indians, had demanded of the red men.

However, he gave orders that the chiefs and the other Indians should be assembled outside, and we went out to meet them.

It was to his advantage to be concil-

iatory, and I was surprised to see how easily he made the best of a bad situation, and presented the gifts as if he had been the King of Holland himself.

I spent an hour on board "The Rensselaerswyck Arms," and was turning towards the inn, when a message came that I must wait upon the Governor immediately. My first thought was of Antonia, so I hastened to the Governor's house. It seems that a boy was held for ransom by some Long Island Indians, and my aid was sought to bring him home. The child's mother was weeping, and beseeching the officers to save the boy, her only child. All the power of the settlement had been set in motion to find Antonia, so I felt that I was only an insignificant part of a whole.

"I will go to find him," I said, "provided the Governor gives safe conduct into New Amsterdam, for two Indians, who must accompany me. I am afraid that in the present state of feeling, they would have short shrift without it."

"I promise you," he said, and I went out to make some hasty preparations. I filled my lungs with the keen air, for I felt as if I had been in a stifling hold. The Governor's personality was so antagonistic to me, and we could have been enemies on slight provocation.

CHAPTER XIII

"Behold the threaden sails,
Borne with the invisible and creeping wind,
Draw the huge bottoms through the furrowed sea,
Breasting the lofty surge."

THE harbor was free from ice when, with the two Indians for whom I had demanded safe conduct from the Governor, I boarded the "Privateer" which I had pressed into service for my expedition to ransom the boy. Tymen, the carpenter, was with me, and I let him talk at will, as we moved through the smooth waters. I rarely paid attention to his chatter, but this

day I was glad to listen to him and forget, if possible, my own thoughts.
"Meinherr Buytenhof goes north in 'The Squirrel' as soon as the leaves of the white birch are as large as a squirrel's paw," he said.
"You'll be an Indian yet yourself, Tymen, I can speak their tongue, but you think their thoughts."
"God forbid," he muttered, "I like them not, they give me the creeps. They are so still. You are alone with no one in sight, then you look up and an Indian is there, as if he had dropped from the skies. Oh! no, I like them not."
"Why is Buytenhof going north? Is he tired of Swaennendale," I asked.
"He intends to buy land up the river and then visit Rensselaerswyck. The journey will be safe and pleasant by spring."

"Nay," I said, "pleasant perhaps, but long years will pass before it is without danger. However, that will be of no moment to Buytenhof, the more hazard the better for him. He fears nothing, neither man nor beast."

The day wore on, I was in haste to return, for Antonia was ever in my thoughts, but before we reached our destination the wind died away, and we swung back and forth without sails limp as rags, until I thought I should go mad. Again I listened to Tymen's gossip as he told of the van Slyck house which Antonia would occupy in New Amsterdam. It seems that after he and I parted on that memorable day, when I tested with my skates the ice of the lower Hudson, he had taken to the river bank, and had made his way to New Amsterdam

leaving the man and dogs to follow. Hiding in the underbrush from passing Indians, and creeping warily along, he had taken hours to reach the town. Once there, knowing that he could not help me, he was pressed into service to assist Madam's servants, for by that means he could get word from me. His first impulse was to follow me, but he reasoned well in thinking that we might miss each other, and he had all plans laid to take soldiers with him to search for us if I had not appeared in the canoe of the Indians. The house, waiting to receive Madam van Slyck, was one belonging to her husband, and although well furnished, had been long vacant. It was in fact the abode in past years of his first wife, who had died during her first year in the new world. It was just

outside the fort, which was now overflowing with a horde of frightened people. I was interested in all he said because it concerned Antonia. A single purpose is well, I thought, if it leads to success, but where there is no hope and no future, it is weak to let one thought be dominant. This sounded well, it was philosophical, but, nevertheless, the thought of this woman was, even in its hopelessness, so sweet that I let my heart dwell upon her. Let it dwell? Ah! I could not help myself had I wished to.

Tacking back and forth we finally made a landing, and Tymen, with the two Indians, followed me on shore. Just over a knoll, a short distance inland, an Indian village was located, and we had reason to believe that the boy we sought was there. Steadily

and silently we marched onward in the open, for it was all open and unsheltered, quite different from the country on the upper Hudson. Suddenly an arrow shot past us. We halted, and through the night air and over the sand dunes I shouted, "We are friends from Rensselaerswyck," repeating it rapidly in several dialects, for no self-respecting Indian will speak the language of another tribe. It was a chance only, but many times before I had found among the tribes of western Indians an occasional river Indian, who seemed to act as ambassador. Certainly there was a constant communication between the tribes the entire length of the river and westward through the Mohawk region, and undoubtedly the same conditions prevailed in this section.

We advanced cautiously, and no more arrows fell, so with renewed confidence we approached the knoll. The two Indians climbed the hill; on the crest they turned and beckoned, and Tymen and I loosened our weapons and followed. About a dozen braves sat huddled around the fire, and near at hand was the boy we sought, tied hand and foot. A north river Indian was among them, and although he had never been at Rensselaerswyck, yet he knew me and told them that I was a friend of the red men and could be depended on to keep my word. So far as I had had experience there had been more treachery by the white men than by the red. We had brought the usual gifts to exchange for the boy, and the chief seemed inclined to drive a stiffish

bargain, but we haggled only enough to maintain our dignity and the transfer was soon made.

There was little danger in the expedition, for the destruction of the bouweries had drawn the Indians inland, looking for plunder. In many directions could be seen the reflection of fires, where houses and barns were masses of flames.

The boy was but a lad of ten, and when the thongs were loosened, clung to me in terror, for he was half dazed with fright. I soothed him as well as I could, and with the friendly protestations of the Indians following us, we started to retrace our steps.

Our voices had been raised as we arranged the ransom and had evidently carried as far as a distant wigwam, for, as I turned away, I saw the skin pulled

aside, and a black face peered out for an instant. I almost dropped the boy, and my first impulse was to rush past the Indians and pull aside the fur. I was sure of Tymen, but my two Indians were something of an unknown quantity.

"Wait," I said to the chief, "our business is not yet finished. The boy is ransomed, that is as you wished, but the woman (God grant that she is here, I thought) and black man you hold as hostages must be given up now — to me."

The chief looked ugly. "Unless you give them over to me," I continued, "I can only say that your lives will be forfeited. An alarm has gone out, and even now soldiers are preparing to avenge any injury that may happen to them." With that I touched my rifle,

and motioning Tymen to follow, started for the wigwam. Hope and dread strove for the mastery. All depended on coolness now. "Pompey," I called, throwing the curtain back. "Thank God," came from the interior, but it was the voice of Antonia, not that of Pompey.

There the black man sat, tied to a stake and stupid with fear. He told me afterwards that he thought that they were going to burn him. Between the two rooms stood Antonia, great circles under her eyes, but she smiled as she said, "Have you come to scold me? Indeed, this time, it is not my fault." Her feet were encased in moccasins, while a brilliant blanket was thrown about her.

Great emotions have least expression, so I answered nothing. Instant

action was necessary, for we had no more presents, and I would not leave her with the chance that she might be spirited away again, and held for higher ransom. It was her woman's wit that solved the problem. She must have read perplexity in my face, for she said rapidly, "I will tell you all about my awful journey when we are going to New Amsterdam, but now tell them that I am your wife, and as you are the mediator between the Dutch and Indians you demand my release without ransom."

She swayed as she finished, but it was only for an instant, and she was her own brave self again. The chief, with his council, was already outside the wigwam and, much to my surprise, did not even demur when I put the case as she had suggested. In all

my dealings with the red men I had found them just if not generous. When I said, "She is my wife," they said no word, but gave me furs to cover her, and escorted us to the "Privateer."

For long hours I listened to the strange tale of how they were carried from the encampment. It seems that the old chief had heard that a woman of wealth would be in the great encampment, and that a large ransom would be paid for her, so two of the fleetest of the tribe were sent in a canoe to steal her. They crept from the water to the wigwam, and lifting the cover slipped under opposite the place where I was sleeping. They gagged Pompey, before he could utter a sound, and entering Antonia's room, covered her with a blanket to

prevent her screaming, and lifting her in his arms a strong and sinewy brave carried her to the canoe. The other followed with Pompey. "It is well, perhaps," she said, "that the poniard was in your doublet for I should have used it to good purpose that night." Had she not laughed, I should have once more taken her in my arms, at the risk of another rebuff. She tempted me so. Something said to me, be content with her presence, it is more than you hoped for.

They had covered her with furs in the canoe, so that the water did not touch her, and when they reached their journey's end a young Indian girl had done what she could to make her comfortable. I begged her to rest, and she lay on deck and slept.

Once again I watched over her, and

this time my eyes watched the stars come out, the moon wax and wane, and the dawn brighten the east. She wakened as we neared the foot, and again we stood together on the deck of a ship.

"Madam, my trust is finished," I said, "David Buytenhof stands on the shore waiting for you; it has been my good fortune to find you again. No greater honor has ever come to me or will come than I have had for the past few days, the honor of your company." She held out her hand. I bent and kissed it. So were added a few more hours to the perfect ones on board "The Eendracht."

The astonishment and delight of Buytenhof, when he recognized Antonia, were boundless.

The air of dilapidation at the fort was

in sharp contrast to the trim neatness of Rensselaerswyck, and I pitied Madam van Slyck, who would find cramped quarters, unlike her large and airy house in her bouwerie.

I associated her with the salt wind of the sea; with fields of clover; with pine trees; with all the wealth of nature, and now she would be practically imprisoned in the stuffy town. My mind flew to "dat schoonste landt" where sometime I would live, and where the beautiful country would be a fitting home for such as she.

It was like a thorn in a wound for me to think how she would be subjected to the attentions of the Governor, and that among the better men were few worthy of her affection, though they would all surely offer her their devotion.

I would see her once more, and then go back to my work at the north, filling my time so full of other things that only in the night, when I lay sleepless on my pillow, would I dwell on the hours on "The Eendracht."

The mother of the boy had seen the ship in the distance, and I held him up so that she might know that he was safe. While his fate was uncertain, she had moaned and cried, but now that he was safe, she fell to the ground in a faint. Joy, unlike despair, sometimes loosens the spirit until it almost takes flight, but it seldom kills, and before we reached the shore she stood with arms outstretched, ready to clasp him close.

The same resentful feeling came over me as when I watched "The Squirrel" leave "The Eendracht," for it seemed

CHAPTER XIV

"Ah were she pitiful as she is fair,
Or but as mild as she is seeming so,
Then were my hopes greater than my despair,
Then all the world were heaven, nothing woe."

TYMEN had taken my traps to the inn under the great elm tree, and I was glad to find them, for my clothes were worn and shabby.

During my absence van Curler had arrived, so the matter of the ship was his now, and not mine. I decided therefore, to leave for Rensselaerswyck later in the day. Buytenhof came to the inn and persuaded me to wait

until the morrow and to join him that night for a last visit, until he should sail up the Hudson in the spring.

I could not complain of a cold welcome, for Buytenhof and I were old and tried friends before the new land had claimed either one of us.

"Come in," he cried, as he opened the door wide, and, as he threw his arm over my shoulder, "I am glad indeed to welcome you, although I am sorry that it is not at my own hearthstone. Antonia tells me that you were good to her, and put up with her foolishness much better than I would have done. She seems to know so little about you, that I had just begun to tell her of your trip down the Hudson, when I saw you coming."

"It is naught," I said, "don't bother her with the telling. Years past, I of-

fended her when I did not know that she was married, and so I ask you to let all matters about me rest while she is with you. I have too much pride to willingly allow any one, especially a woman, to be bored with my affairs. It is sufficient that I could be of some small service to her and to you, so say no more about it."

I heard voices in an inner room, and following Buytenhof, entered the living room, where half a dozen people sat around the fire. Some of them I knew, and I drew up a chair, well pleased to rest in pleasant company, where I might look on the fair face of Antonia. She greeted me in her usual distant manner, and if I had in days past let my fancy run riot a bit, I soon saw that her concessions were only caprice, or perhaps

a kindly word for old acquaintance sake.

For the first time since I stepped on shore from "The Eendracht" I found myself in company with Jan Groesbeck. I felt the nerves in my arm quiver, and my fingers sought the hilt of my sword. A dull red rose in his face as he looked at me, and I was conscious that he noticed the motion of my hand, although with a mere nod in greeting, he turned to speak to Madam van Slyck.

"Here is van Blerckom himself," shouted Buytenhof, "he can supply the rest of the tale."

"I'm slow of speech, friend Buytenhof," I said, "and withal a trifle hungry, for I forget just when I broke my fast, so, by your leave, I will drain a beaker and taste this venison — then,

if I can supplement a tale of which I do not know the beginning, I am at your service."

"Tymen, the carpenter, has been telling us of your wild ride down the river behind the dogs, and had just reached the point where you had buckled on your skates to test the strength of the rotten ice, when you came in."

I laughed. "Oh!" said I, "is that all? Well, it will keep. In the meantime, there is a tale which Groesbeck knows well, and one he likes to tell. I have known of a surety of two separate and distinct times, when he has told it with great effect. I choose to hear it now and you, too, Buytenhof, will be interested in it." I looked at Groesbeck as he stood facing me. "It is a tale," I continued, "about one Blerckom, an intimate friend of Groes-

beck's I fancy, as 'birds of a feather flock together.' Jan Groesbeck, tell us about one Johannes Blerckom whose mother drowned before his eyes, while he laughed in drunken glee."

Buytenhof said in an undertone, "Why do you ask that lout to tell us anything, he is only here on sufferance. He returns to Holland soon."

"Not till I settle a score with him," I replied. Groesbeck said not a word as I ate and drank with Buytenhof. Raising my glass to Madam van Slyck I bowed, then turning to Groesbeck I said, "This is no place for a quarrel, but you will state, here and now, that the Blerckom, your friend, and the van Blerckom, who stands here, are not one and the same person."

He was no coward, but like most bullies knew when he was worsted, so he said, though with no good grace: "The gentleman is right. I mistook him for another."

Having the sense to realize that he was not wanted, he bowed and left the room. He was a good swordsman, one of the best, and some day we would meet and then — why then — the better man would win.

Evidently Tymen had painted our journey in glowing colors, for he liked well to play the hero, and so there was a call for my part of it, but I made as light of it as possible, and turned it off in a few words. It was a wonder though, that I reached New Amsterdam, for as I look back over those hours on the ice, when it would bend almost to breaking under me, I knew

that it was only the thought of Antonia and her peril that kept me from giving up to fear and taking to the shore.

The night fell early, and the knots blazed up; warmed in body and soul by the cheer of old friends and the presence of Antonia, I dreaded going forth, but life is made up of musts and must nots, and there was the Patroon's ship to be seen to.

Without even a "by your leave" the Governor had levied on her cargo of supplies for his soldiers, and it was much depleted. As the shadows deepened, I drew my cloak about me, and rose to go.

"Wait," said Buytenhof, "I will go with you as soon as I get my heavy cloak, it is upstairs."

The company had gradually dis-

persed, and Antonia and I were alone.

"Will you not thank me for protecting you against the Indians before you go?" she said.

"I thank you for many things," I replied; "and so you knew that they called you my wife?"

"Yes, Pompey told me," she replied.

"I do indeed thank you," I said, "and deeply regret that you were caused so much discomfort. If at any time I can be of use to you, Madam, my life is always at your service."

I had thought, in my haughtiness of spirit, that I had practically saved her life, but so strange an influence had this woman, that the entire standpoint had changed, and I was the humble servitor, rendering thanks to this sovereign lady. I took her hand

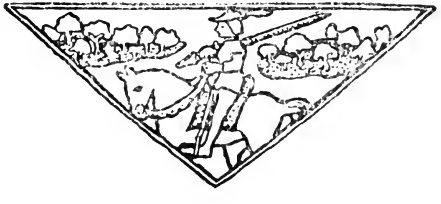
and looked into her eyes, but they told me nothing, and yet I knew that of one stigma I had been freed, that to her I might still seem a moral coward but never again a physical one. Sometime perhaps, she would know that I was guiltless of the sin she laid at my door that day on "The Eendracht."

"I hope," I said, "you will yield to the entreaties of your friends and stay within the town, it is safer."

"Oh!" she replied with a laugh. "Yes, I shall have to, for I cannot depend upon the care of an Indian fighter who lives at the other end of the Hudson, and they seem to find it necessary to send to Rensselaerswyck for you to protect me, and I assure you that I am not willing to put a *stranger* to so much trouble."

I was hurt, I confess, so with only a

cold "good-night," for Buytenhof was on the stairs, I wrapped my cloak about me and went out of the house. One of two things was evident, she could not forgive, or she did not care, and either one made my position an awkward one, so it was better for me that my work called me far away from New Amsterdam.



CHAPTER XV

"Thou liest in thy throat; that is not the matter I challenge thee for."

BUYTENHOF left me at the inn and I slept a troubled sleep; now going down into the deep sea to find Antonia caught in the seaweed; again standing on a precipice while her voice implored me to help her. I woke early and went out into the inn yard to look at some horses, which had arrived from Holland the day before. As I stepped into the yard who should I see, talking to one of the stable men, but Jan Groesbeck.

I drew my sword and bent it so that point and handle nearly met. It had been a trusty friend in many a battle and if my skill equalled its metal there would be no question of the issue.

A sneak is not always a coward, and Groesbeck was counted one of the best swordsmen of Holland. I stripped off my coat, threw it to Tymen, who had just come in, and cried, "On guard!" The ground was slippery with ice and rough with stones, but all the pent-up fury of the years since he had told that tale on "The Eendracht" strengthened and nerved my arm.

So quickly and quietly had the thing been done that none save the stable men and Tymen heard us as we faced each other. There was the

quick incessant flash of steel as our blades crossed again and again. I saw at once that his skill was more than mine but I felt the strength of the devil and fought like a mad man.

The shuffling of our feet and our hurried breathing drowned all other noise. I knew by his labored breath that I was tiring him, and that my superior strength and staying power would tell very soon.

Suddenly from the interior of the inn I heard the voice of Buytenhof, "Come this way, cousin, there is a fine lady's saddle horse for you to look at." Then in reply came the answer in familiar tones, "I am coming. cousin, but don't you hear the clash of steel?"

I faltered only an instant but it was long enough for Groesbeck to give

me an ugly prick in the shoulder. Like a drowning man a thousand thoughts filled my brain, but over and above all was the necessity of ending the matter instantly.

With sudden strength I struck a blow that sent his sword out of his hand and over the low shed into the street. At that moment Buytenhof and Antonia appeared in the doorway. She went quite pale and cried, "You are wounded" and sprang down the steps. I had not noticed that the blood from my shoulder had dyed my shirt quite red. "It is only a pin prick, Madam," I said, and at that the inn and the stable men began to go round, and the next I knew I was lying on the ground with a surgeon binding up my wound and my head pillowed on Antonia's lap.

I closed my eyes again, hoping that the surgeon would take much time over his work and I heard her say, in a scornful tone, "How foolish men are to kill each other for fancied wrongs." Truly, what had I accomplished? Nothing, but disarming my enemy and playing the part of a weakling before the woman I loved.

I struggled to my feet, stammered my apologies and thanks and stumbled into the inn, a sorry figure. Throwing myself upon the bed, man that I was, I could have cried like a child for very impotence.

I heard the voice of Buytenhof in the room below, then his step on the stair, and with hands like a woman, he tended me night and day until the wound healed. During those days and nights, I was many times out of my

head, and long afterwards I found that I talked of things which had been sealed in my heart since I landed from "The Eendracht."

A fever set in, and it was three weeks before I left the inn. Rumors came to me of the devotion of the Englishman, called Captain Bramhall, to Madam van Slyck. I knew him as a gay young blade, as well as my companion at the bouwerie and Indian camp. At the feast at Dominie van Orde's, I was told that he was one who had found the strict rules and regulations of Connecticut altogether too rigid for his comfort and so he, with a few companions of like nature, had decided to take up their abode in New Amsterdam. He was of noble blood, and I did not altogether believe that he had given the right name,

in fact, I knew to the contrary, when he told me of his father at Breda, but it was no affair of mine. I might want concessions myself sometime. He was handsome, brave but unscrupulous, and a woman's chances of happiness with him would depend on her versatility. I would hate to have kin of mine tempted to try it. He was a man to tire of Venus herself, and for Antonia's sake I hoped the rumor was not true.

Although she had pillowed my head and bravely helped the surgeon, no message had come to me during my illness, and the only words she said were those of criticism of the encounter. If she looked on me with less scorn than before Jan Groesbeck had retracted his statement, her attitude towards me had not changed other-

wise, and I seemed destined to place myself in an unpleasant light before her.

CHAPTER XVI

"Of this alone is even God deprived, the power of making that which is past never to have been."

IN other days a difficulty had stimulated my ambition, and in other matters Dutch stubbornness had often carried me on to ultimate victory, but this situation seemed beyond me, and, with the feeling that I should perhaps see her for the last time that night, for I was well enough to journey north, I dressed to go to a feast at the Governor's. My life stretched out before me, like an endless desert. There were few of my kin nearer than

Friesland, and the quiet of the wilderness would give opportunity for years, yes, centuries, of thought, if you count time by heart throbs. During the days of my convalescence, I had planned my future. Some miles west of Rensselaerswyck lay my purchase in the Mohawk Valley. Ah! how fair a land it would be if I could have my heart's desire. As soon as I could settle my affairs at Rensselaerswyck, I would go there and live. Later I might go to Friesland, and bring some of my own people back with me to this lovely land.

I was pale and thin, and my eyes stared at me from under pent-house brows. I scowled at the image in the mirror, and asked it what right it, a thing that would scare the ravens, had even to think of a beautiful wom-

an. As I left the inn, Buytenhof joined me and rallied me on my sober looks. "A fine man for a merry making," he cried, "we are not bound for a feast of funeral baked meats, but to give God-speed to Bramhall, who sails to England to-morrow, to bring back much that belongs to him, for he proposes to settle here permanently.

Another indication that his suit is prospering, thought I.

The Governor's mansion was ablaze with candles; men, richly dressed in satin coats with ties of priceless lace, were passing in and out, while handsome women in stiff brocades smiled as if the dangers of a new world were nothing to them. My own coat of black velvet and fur, was brightened only by diamond buttons, and my six feet two of darkness seemed a shadow on

the brilliant scene. Sounds of music came to us, and the atmosphere was totally different from the disturbance I remembered a month ago.

Again Antonia had the place of honor, and next to her sat Captain Bramhall. She was in a merry mood and apparently so absorbed with the Governor and her right-hand neighbor, that she did not notice me.

Once I caught her eye and she smiled, but I heard her say, "I have no patience with duels and duellers," so I made no further attempt at recognition. I was to leave, with Tymen and the horses I had bought, early on the following morning so, almost as soon as the company had left the table, I went to the Governor to bid him goodbye.

He rallied me on my single "cursed-

ness" as he called it, and offered all sorts of assistance to find me a mate if I would come back to New Amsterdam. As I turned from him I heard Madam van Slyck say, "Will you go without a word to an old friend?" My heart gave a bound, but I saw Bramhall smiling at her, and I suddenly felt that she had told him of the foolish fight in the inn yard and only the woman in her made her tolerate me at all. With a few cold and formal words I said goodbye, and joined Buytenhof. As I went out the door I turned and looked back. She was laughing at some drollery of Bramhall's, and I fancied it referred to me for they both glanced toward the door.

"What wonder?" thought I. "He is gay and debonair, while I am neither one nor the other."

CHAPTER XVII

"Come spur away,
I have no patience for a longer stay
But must go down,
And leave the chargeable noise of this great town;
I will the country see
Where old simplicity,
Though hid in green,
Doth look more gay
Than foppery in plush and scarlet clad."

I HAD purchased two fine riding horses, one a black and one a bay. They curvetted well in the keen air when Tymen and I mounted in the early morning. The rough, long journey lay before us, and as we struck into the open country, I turned in my

saddle and looked back on the sleeping town.

A thin curl of smoke rose in a straight line from the chimney of Madam van Slyck's house, and I said under my breath, "God bless the sweetest woman in New Amsterdam."

In the bay the ship which would carry Bramhall to England lay at anchor. With sudden anger at fate, at him, at Antonia herself, I was on the point of cursing; but healthier thoughts came to me, and I galloped on, determined to make the best of my life alone. I would have been in a fine state of rage, had I known then, what Buytenhof told me years later, when we were both quite old and gray.

It seems that Madam van Slyck sent for him to consult him on a family matter, and he took occasion to tell

her much that I had said to him in my delirium. I had even rehearsed that last day on "The Eendracht," and had told how I had believed until that day, that she was coming to join her father, not her husband. All this, with many embellishments in relation to my life among the Indians, he had poured forth, and had wound up with my statement, that never again would I speak word of love to any woman.

All this was a breach of confidence which would have ended a life-long friendship, had I known. I thought long afterward of what Tymen once said, "What you don't know, won't hurt you."

We took the road along the river, and I wondered how many times more I would traverse the miles between

New Amsterdam and Rensselaerswyck. Once sailing, again with dogs and skates, and now on horseback; well I had almost exhausted the different methods of conveyance; fate seemed to decree that I should have a different one each time.

I had been too busy with my own thoughts to watch for the sleeping giant on my way down, but now I remembered, and when we reached the Katsbergs there he lay watching and waiting.

This last visit among the old friends of "The Eendracht" had made me older, and I had come to the point where I must go further into the wilderness, away from all temptation to return to the place where I might watch the face of Antonia. A great unrest possessed me. I had

found her, only to be more thoroughly convinced than ever before that she could be nothing to me. My life in the new country had been near to nature, and my love for her would not be content with the crumbs she might deign to throw me from capricious fancy. In the clear sweet air of the morning a great desire to possess her filled me, my blood tingled in my veins and I looked back toward the city, now lost in the distance.

Are you worth the devotion of my life, I said, or shall I marry some Dutch girl and settle down into a worthy citizen?

Then I remembered the poniard, even now, in my doublet, and I was ashamed. For your sweet sake, I whispered, I will found a new settlement in "dat schoonste landt" and

make it worthy of you, although you will never see it.

The journey up the river was without incident. On my arrival at Rensselaerswyck, Vrouw van Orde plied me with questions, and I knew not whether I told truth or falsehood when I described the gown of her niece, Neltje, as green with yellow spots. It might have been red with green spots, but where Antonia was, all other women were as if they did not exist.

Van Curler had already approved of my new settlement for he was always for the greatest good of the greatest number. He furthered all my plans, voluntarily giving me some of his most valuable men.

I think he suspected the cause of my unrest, and I am quite sure that he was

the only one among my friends who did not offer to assist me in finding a wife among the fair Dutch girls of the different settlements.

So the days passed, full of preparation for my new colony.

It was February when I left New Amsterdam, and by the last week in March I had arranged all my matters in Rensselaerswyck and, with Tymen, who insisted upon going with me, was once more in the Mohawk Valley.

In April the snow was still drifted on the distant mountains, but there were signs of approaching spring in the valley, and our temporary shelter was warm and weather proof. At least a dozen people, besides a few friendly Indians, had joined us, and when the first shy flowers of spring came we

were quite a settlement. The Mohawk, swollen by the melting ice far up the mountains, rushed past, and the steady fall of the axe and the hammer indicated a prosperous colony. My permanent house was up to the roof; of bricks, laid in different colors, and already block houses and stockades were building.

The forest tempted me, and thinking of many things I walked aimlessly along the trail. I looked up and saw a white birch with leaves like a squirrel's paw. Instantly my thoughts turned back to the day on the "Privateer," and Tymen's words about the journey of Buytenhof. A great longing to see him came over me; to hear something of Antonia before I went north as I must later, to treat with the Canadian Indians.

I turned and went back to the settlement, and under the spell of an irresistible longing I left Tymen in charge of my interests, and taking an Indian to paddle the canoe, I turned my face south, with no purpose save to go down the Mohawk and then the Hudson until I should meet "The Squirrel." I would then return with Buytenhof to Rensselaerswyck and induce him to come with me to my new settlement.

The air was cold, but ere we reached Halfe Maan it was warmer, and at Rensselaerswyck the leaves were far advanced.

Goede Vrouw van Orde was deep in the study of tulip culture, for she intended this year to distance all her neighbors in bulbs and blossoms, so I knocked twice before she heard me.

Her welcome made up in warmth, however, and she plunged into the gossip of the town, of her letters from Holland and from New Amsterdam. There were many friends on the ocean on their way to the new land, and I let her talk on without interruption, for I was deeply interested in all she said. I hoped that a word would drop about Antonia and her affairs, and I was not disappointed, although the matter was not entirely to my liking. There were rumors abroad that Captain Bramhall was about to marry her. At any rate he had returned from England and seemed to be a permanent resident of New Amsterdam. I laughed as I said, "*How* has he returned, on wings? He could not possibly have reached England by now, much less return."

"I am ahead of my story," laughed Madame van Orde. "He started, as you know, but he met a ship returning and got on board. I believe he will go later when his love affair is settled. Antonia denies any engagement, but she is proud and capricious and does not choose to publish her affairs to the world. David Buytenhof is coming north on 'The Squirrel' to make us a visit, and then we will know all about New Amsterdam; he must be well up the river by this time, for he was to start some time ago."

The Dominie came in to supper, and van Curler soon after. We were in close converse until bed-time, for there were signs of Indian uneasiness and a call had been issued for a medicine lodge, to be held back from the river a few miles south.

I was worried a bit, for it would be like Buytenhof to explore too far inland for safety, so I planned to leave at dawn, hoping to reach "The Squirrel" before she came to the point where the Indians were assembling.

The pink light of the sun's first rays touched the Hudson as the canoe shot out from shore. My first trip down the river, on sledge and skates, seemed far in the past, as I watched "het greene bosch"[1] fly backwards while the grass carpeted the ground, even to the water's edge. Far in the east an eagle soared high and then darted down for some stray lamb; occasionally a canoe would cross our path, indicating that the Indians were assembling somewhere near. At noon of the second day we saw, far to the south, the white

[1] The pine trees.

sails of "The Squirrel." She lay at anchor, but without the precious freight she bore away from "The Eendracht" that day so long ago.

CHAPTER XVIII

"Far from the gay cities and the ways of men."

THE Captain and two of the crew were in earnest conference on deck when we drew alongside, but there was no sign of Buytenhof. I climbed the ladder, leaving the Indian rocking in the canoe. The Captain greeted me with unfeigned joy and relief, hastening to tell me how great was his anxiety, because at noon of the day before, Buytenhof, with three of the crew, had gone inland to explore a little stream, saying that he would

return at sunset. At three o'clock, also, of the day before, Captain Bramhall and the ladies had gone for a walk, and nothing had been seen or heard of either party since.

The Captain dared not leave the ship, hoping that some of them might return at any moment. With grave foreboding, I asked him, "Who did you say went with Captain Bramhall?"

"The ladies," he replied, "Madam Buytenhof and Madam van Slyck."

"Good God, man," I cried, "didn't you know that there was a medicine dance to begin three days ago, in this vicinity? Weup the river have known it for a month, the couriers have been all through the river country."

He shook his head and his lips blanched, for visions of flames, of torture, of all the diabolical orgies of

a medicine dance came before us as we stood facing each other. If I could reach the lodge and use the sign of a mystic circle of which I had been made a member I might be of some help, if they had fallen into the hands of Indians who were on their way to the dance.

We held a hurried council of war and decided that I should go alone with the Indian. I had saved the life of the man who paddled my canoe, when he was sinking for the third time in the waters of the Mohawk, and I knew that I could trust him.

We were on the west bank of the river, just at the foot of the Katsbergs. Drawing the canoe up on shore, and hiding it in the bushes, we walked rapidly and noiselessly inland. We could hear, far in the distance, the

noise of the tom-toms. It was evening before we reached the outskirts of the camp. My thoughts were not pleasant, for once before I had seen a medicine dance and the horror of it came to me sometimes in dreams until I would waken with a shriek.

As I stood on the hill I looked down on a weird scene. As far as eye could reach were indications of a great camp. In the center stood the lodge, covered with skins and branches of trees to protect from the sun the dancers and hundreds of spectators crowded under its roof.

The beating of the tom-toms, the whistling of the few dancers left, the wailing of the squaws, showed that the dance was nearly over. As the almost nude bodies swayed back and forth, two fell and were carried out

apparently dead; the medicine chief leaned over and painted them with weird colors while the women, weeping and wailing, poured water over them to revive them, if possible.

One showed signs of life but the other lay inert. In a few moments a woman rushed out from the crowd of spectators and throwing herself beside the body, began tearing her hair out in handsful; then grasping a knife, cut great gashes in her arms.

The camp was in a turmoil, for the news of the death had reached the guard; men howled and women shrieked, for death indicated bad medicine, and the bad God would show his wrath, while the good God would turn away his face. A rush was made to kill horses so that the dead man could travel comfortably

through the happy hunting grounds. It was an evil time to happen on a camp of Indians, but I was convinced that at least some of the people we were seeking were either beyond the camp or had been captured and were probably bound somewhere near, for even a white enemy must wait until after the ceremonies were finished. I hoped, as it afterwards proved, that Buytenhof had perceived his danger in time to lie low and take a circuitous route back to "The Squirrel," for he was a good woodsman, and well-versed in Indian tactics.

Haste was necessary and in the excitement I passed unheeded to the door of the lodge. If it is possible for an Indian to express surprise, the chief certainly looked it when I entered. Unless I could command in-

stant attention my chances for being carried off and bound were good. I made a sign of one of their mystic rites knowing that among so many some one would understand it. Then addressing the chief, I said: "I have been sent, under the guidance of the good God, to avert if possible the wrath of the bad God; I have sought the medicine chief to tell him that if any white people are in captivity, especially if they have been taken since the beginning of the dance, that they must be liberated at once or some dire disaster will befall the tribes. Possibly the medicine chief himself." The life of a medicine chief is more or less in jeopardy at such a time, and I knew it.

There was a semblance of probability in what I said, for a white man,

without a mission, would know that he would have short shrift among so many excited Indians. My Dutch calm stood me in good stead, but my heart was beating rapidly and my hand was very near the hilt of my sword. Through the trees at the left I could see a light and hoped that in that direction I would find those I sought. No reply came from the chief, but he looked me steadily in the face. He knew that his reputation as a medicine chief was at stake and that *good* not *bad* medicine was hoped for at this ceremony. If there was any way to conciliate the good God, it was to his advantage to take it.

"I know the Curler," he said, "and his word is good. Are you from him?"

"I am," I replied, "and my time is limited. A boat with sails is waiting

for me at the river and unless I return soon with precious freight, your people will suffer." As if to make a fitting climax to my statement a flash of lightning almost blinded us and a peal of thunder rolled and reverberated through the Katsbergs.

The chief seemed impressed, and calling two braves he gave them some instruction in a low tone and told me to follow them. I was playing a dangerous game, but it seemed the only chance for we were too far from a settlement to call for help.

Leaving the lodge we turned into a trail which wound around and then up a hill. The sound of shrieks grew fainter and the thunder nearer and more incessant as we hurried on. The light I had seen was quite in another direction and I was beginning to sus-

pect treachery when we turned sharply to the right and I saw a small wigwam. A few words passed between the guides before we entered.

A flash of lightning showed me Madam Buytenhof asleep on a pile of boughs while Captain Bramhall was bound to a post with thongs. It was but short work to cut the leather and with a quick "Thank God," he grasped my hand.

"Where is Madam van Slyck?" I cried.

"Safe on 'The Squirrel,' I hope," he said. "She had turned off the trail to pick some flowers, when these devils overtook us. Quicker than it takes to tell it, we were bound and then brought here. I had given up the chance of help when I saw you in the door."

And so she was *alone* in the woods. I wish I could have been sure that she *was alone*. What chance was there that she had returned to "The Squirrel"? None—for she was not there when I left. How powerless I seemed. What curious chance had made the Captain the protector of Madam Buytenhof, and left the woman he loved to wander into the hands of the Indians?

The noise of our voices had awakened Madam Buytenhof and, like a tired child, she sat up and sighed. Bramhall went to her at once and put his arm protectingly about her. He was thoughtful of her comfort, even if his heart was torn with anxiety for another woman.

"Take us back to the chief," I said to the Indians. Madam Buytenhof cried

from fear and exhaustion until I told her harshly to keep her strength for the journey before her.

The camp had quieted down, and only low moans and lamentations came from the widows; the chief, with several others, sat in a semi-circle waiting for us.

"This will help you," I cried, "but I cannot promise you good harvests until I find another white woman, who is lost, and if any harm comes to her you will be cursed." I felt as if I had power to bring down calamity if a hair of her head should be touched.

"Give these people two guides," I continued, "and safe conduct to the boat with sails, on the river, and then give me two Indians to help me find the lost white woman, and I give you the word of a Curler that you will have

the fair countenance of the good God."

The time seemed endless, as they sat and waited, stolid and immovable. Finally the chief made a signal and said, "Let it be as the white chief says, the word of a Curler is good."

I hoped that for the sake of my cousin I could fulfill my promises, but the game was worth the chance.

I could understand why Bramhall was determined to go with me, but he was quite willing to listen to reason, and saw at once how necessary it was for him to go with Madam Buytenhof. With his soldiers, he might have helped Antonia, and the mere fact of his being in the party showed me that he had probably acquired the right to protect her, but alone, my knowledge of the Indians would serve her better.

I feared, however, that we were too late to help her in any way.

The Captain gave me a clear description of the spot where they last saw her. The lightning and thunder had ceased; no rain had fallen and only the dew wet our feet as we walked to the borders of the camp. The Indians walked before us towards the river, and I saw how tenderly Bramhall supported Madam Buytenhof as he bent to reassure her. I had slipped a knife into his hand, and I knew, that he would protect his companion with his life.

As if to prove my words true the elements had quieted down, and the first faint streak of dawn was pink in the east, for it had taken quite all the night to carry out the little I had accomplished.

Believing that they would find Buytenhof at the river, I had impressed it upon them, that it would be wiser for them to wait for me, and I had quite insisted that no one should leave the boat. I felt that if any help was needed it would be in the way of haste up the river. I believed that I would find her, but in what case I could not tell. I chose two Iroquois for my companions, knowing that they were familiar with every by-path of that particular locality. We waited only to take a bite of food, and started northeast. I had repeated Captain Bramhall's words to them as nearly as I could remember them.

It seemed to me that we travelled hours in a circle, ever growing smaller, until we halted by a brawling stream which pitched and tumbled down

over great stones to a still pool of inky blackness far below.

"Surely not down there," I cried, as the Indians, single file, picked their way from stone to stone down the slimy trail. With a direful thought of what might be at the bottom, I stumbled after them. As the shadows deepened, I saw a form lying close to the pool. Pushing the Indians one side, I reached the spot with a bound.

"Dead," I whispered, my love swallowed up in a great pity for this lovely woman, who must have suffered untold agony before the end.

As I reached her I saw her hand move. She looked up at me with unseeing eyes and talked of tulips and poplar trees, crying querulously for "Pompey." Her hands were burning with fever, and her ankle was doubled

under her so that I knew there must be a sprain if not a break.

I lifted her and laid her on the soft ferns a little higher up and folded my cloak for a pillow. My thoughts went back to the stableyard of the inn when she had dealt so tenderly with me. The ankle was badly bruised, but with leaves brought by the Indians, and the cold water of the brook, I managed to bandage it with her stocking.

She was but a feather's weight to me, and her hot cheek touched mine as I lifted her in my arms. Telling one Indian to go before, and the other to follow me, we slowly retraced our steps up the slippery path.

With what emotions I listened to her constant talk of the Indians, the country, "The Squirrel" and her constant cry "I am so tired, so tired." Finally

she slept, but the heat of her body never grew less and I knew that only haste could save her. Fright, exhaustion and hunger had done their work and every nerve must be stretched to reach the boat and woman's nursing. At the top of the hill I stopped to make her more comfortable, and then silently and rapidly strode toward the river. Having found her, the Indian's knowledge of the shortest paths was of infinite service, and we hurried on over the narrow trail. She would waken occasionally, but was never rational, and when I saw the white sails of "The Squirrel" I gave earnest thanks to God, though I was not a praying man.

There were several on the deck, and Buytenhof with Bramhall was patrolling the shore. Haste was needed and

I carried my burden below and left her to the nursing of the women.

Dismissing the Indians with presents for the chief, we hastily hoisted all sail and pointed north toward Rensselaerswyck and a doctor.

All that night as I lay on the deck I could hear the coming and going below and the constant murmur of a voice I shall never forget in this world —no, nor in the next. Although the fever subsided somewhat, before we reached Rensselaerswyck, she recognized no one, not even Pompey. The wind kept up steadily and we passed the fort without saluting, hoping that few would be at the wharf to meet us, but the sails had been seen and I was thankful to find Dominie van Orde waiting for us. The river was high so we had no trouble landing. In a few

words the situation was explained, and once more I bore a precious burden in my arms, but this time I carried her to the Dominie's house. Now if human skill and the prayers of a holy man could cure she would have every chance.

The days came and went and, through Catryntje Buytenhof, who would come out and walk with Bramhall, I had more than daily bulletins. I did not join them often for I noticed that he was constrained when I did, and of course his claim was greater than mine, but my anxiety was equal to his though I had no right to express it.

Reason came when the fever left, but the horrible weakness seemed difficult to cure. It was now a question of time and endurance, and two weeks

after I had laid her in the great bed in the guest chamber at the Dominie's he sent for me.

"We have good news," he said softly, "the doctor says she will live."

"Have you sent for Bramhall?" I asked. He hesitated a moment and looked at me curiously, as he said: "No, it will be time enough for him in the morning."

I was too thankful to care for aught but the fact that she would live and I wanted to be alone, so I went to the hall where we kept the trading stores. I sat by the huge fireplace, now full of ashes, and it seemed as if years had passed since the night the Indian called me to go to New Amsterdam, while in reality it was only months, for that was December and this was only May. How curiously we reckon

time. All of life may be lived in a few hours, the rest of the years are as nothing.

A stealthy step aroused me, as it did in December, and again an Indian messenger stood before me. This time it was a trusty friend, and I motioned to him to sit on the other side of the fireplace, and gave him a pipe and tobacco.

He had come from the new settlement and he told me how "Curler" had sent many men to help and my buildings were going up rapidly. All this was pleasant to hear, but he brought a message which meant that I must, at once, go to the great lake at the north and treat with the Indians assembling there. They would wait my coming, but were impatient, and unless we could come to some

agreement soon my new settlement would be at the mercy of the northern tribes.

My duty stared me directly in the face—I was responsible for the new settlement in the wilderness, on me would fall the blame of its destruction, and I must go at once.

What could I do for Antonia? Nothing. Surrounded by friends and with a lover waiting for her recovery, what could she want of me.

A light shone from her sick-room as I left the storehouse and I turned away with sweet and bitter thoughts. I left a note for the Dominie, to be delivered in the morning, and mounting my horse, rode off with the Indian towards the Mohawk Valley.

CHAPTER XIX

"The sea of Fortune doth not ever flow,
She draws her favor to the lowest ebb;
Her tides have equal times to come and go;
Her loom doth weave the fine and coarsest web;
No joy so great but runneth to an end,
No hap so hard but may in fine amend."

AT the settlement all was excitement, and I was received with open arms, for the sentiment seemed to be that I would save them from future depredations.

Van Curler had also been notified and had a day's start, as he had gone directly north instead of waiting to return to Rensselaerswyck. Tymen

was again to be left in charge, somewhat to his distress, although he liked well his semblance of authority. I gave him minute instructions in regard to the interior of my house for I remembered well the housewifely cupboards and great stores of linen that my aunt would think necessary. In the early winter I would go to Friesland and bring her back with as many of my kin and old neighbors as would care to try the new country. I was surprised at the great progress during my short absence, but many and willing hands accomplish much and it looked as if by the first frost my house would be ready to live in. From Tymen's constant interest in and work on my temporary home, which would fall to him when I should move, I suspected that some rosy-cheeked

maid of New Amsterdam or Rensselaerswyck had touched his too susceptible heart, but I kept my own counsel.

It was a charming morning when we struck into the forest, and the spirit of the new land filled us with vigor and courage. I was proud of the new settlement, and was determined to make so good a treaty that it would be firmly established, at least until we were sufficiently strong to resist attack. It was May when we started, and would be August ere we could return, if all should go right.

Between us and Canada lay fishing, shooting, adventure of all kinds, and to the youths with us it was their first taste. As far as years went, I was not much older than they, but it seemed to me as I watched their eyes kindle

at the sight of a deer that I belonged to a past generation.
We strode on with the spring in our veins, and at nightfall pitched our camp near some cool spring.
One day nearer Canada, thought I, one day farther from the Hudson. What would happen before we should return?

Our mission to Canada was finished. Loaded with presents the Indians were content, and we had made a good treaty. The journey south would be a pleasant one, for the country at this time of year was very beautiful. Habit made us keep vigilant watch for treachery, but we reached the lake without mishap.
Black clouds hung low as we embarked in the canoes. It would have

been well, had we heeded the portent, but anxious to reach our journey's end we set forth. Just before we reached Split Rock, van Curler's canoe filled, and, in an instant, he was in the water. Strong swimmer that he was, he found it difficult to breast the waves, now rolling high in the fury of the storm. Suddenly he sank. His life was worth a score of mine, and I sprang after him. The lightning was brilliant, and as I rose to the surface with him in my arms a dozen Indians were near to help. We were near shore, and in a short time he was quite himself.

"It was hardly worth while," he said, as he opened his eyes, "it has been predicted that at this spot I shall lose my life, so you have only deferred it."

Building a great fire, we halted for the night. The storm calmed, but all

through the night there was a distant mutter of thunder, as if the storm king rebelled at the loss of his prey.

CHAPTER XX

"His heart in me keeps him and me in one,
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides:
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,
I cherish his because in me it bides:
My true love hath my heart and I have his."

IT was September, not August, when we turned our faceshomeward. Theleaves were beginning to turn and the forests were aflame with red and gold.

When we were within a day's journey of "dat schoonste landt" we pitched our last camp and built a fire, for a chill wind came from the north. Indian fashion, we sat about in a semi-

circle, wondering what had happened since our going.

Jan Groesbeck was with us, for we had found him a captive among the Indians and, as he had sinned against me, not I against him, I could afford to demand his release. I felt towards him as I did towards a snake and I was glad when he said that as soon as he could leave the country for good he would do so. All imported reptiles should be returned to their own country.

Our ears, trained to Indian service, heard the sound of a galloping horse in the distance and soon, on the horizon, we saw a solitary horse-man coming towards us. The figure was familiar and long before we could hail him I recognized Tymen.

What had he to tell me?

I let the others ply him with questions, and when they slept he and I lay long before the fire while he told me many things.

"And what of Rensselaerswyck?" I asked.

"I was there but a short while ago," he said, "Madam van Slyck had recovered, Buytenhof had gone back to New Amsterdam, some said Amsterdam."

"And what of Captain Bramhall?"

"He has gone away by sea for good," was the reply.

"Alone?" I asked.

"No, not alone," he cried, "she went with him, and they say the villain has a wife, or maybe two, already."

"It is a lie," I said, "she would not have gone under such circumstances."

"And why not," he cried angrily, "a woman who will play with an honest man as she did will follow her own inclinations, no matter whom she hurts."

I looked at him, silent from sheer surprise. How dared he — to my face. To save myself from what I would regret I turned on my heel and left him. And so this carpenter had seen and understood my feelings. I had worn my heart on my sleeve and he had dared to speak of it to me. No wonder she could not care for one who showed his feelings in the market-place. Poor child, how I pitied her. Would the glamour of a few months pay for years of misery. Perhaps, if he had been a man among a thousand, but he was unstable, and would not do his part. I had studied him well,

for my love was deep enough to wish her the greatest happiness. From savages I could save her, but among the dangers of civilization I was powerless.

All night I walked up and down, up and down. At daybreak I mounted my horse and turned towards the south. For years a certain hope had buoyed me up, although I had not acknowledged it. While she was yet unwed, there had been a chance. I had chosen to blind myself to this hope, and did not know its strength until Tymen told me that tale the night before.

The horse shied at a deer as we galloped through the forest, and at the edge of the trail I drew rein. Before me lay the valley ; the Mohawk, like a silver thread, wound in and out,

while nestling near, was the sturdy settlement. Surely, as it lay there, it was "the fairest land." Slowly I rode along, noting the block house, the strongstockade, thewell-builthouses and the air of prosperity.

My own house was under cover and close to it the one I knew best and should miss, with its home-like comforts. Some of the slaves rushed out from their quarters, and I threw my rein to black Jack, whose features were entirely lost in his grin.

Much to my surprise, Goede Vrouw van Orde stood in the door. "How good of you," I cried, "you cannot tell how I dreaded this lonely homecoming. Where is the Dominie?"

"On the roof of your new house waving his hand to you, don't you see him?" she said.

"Let's go and find him," I cried, as excited as a child.

"No, go you," she laughed, "and I will follow shortly."

I walked swiftly over towards my house while Tymen's words repeated themselves over and over—"She is gone, she is gone."

I stood still and looked out over the valley. A shadow, like the wing of a great bird, lay on the river, and the water ran dark as the current of my own thoughts. For the first time, I really faced the fact that I had lived in a fool's paradise; that, notwithstanding the utter hopelessness of my heart's desire, I had stubbornly, and without acknowledgment to myself, been buoyed up by the thought that sometime, somehow, I would be blessed by the gracious presence of

this woman. I had had the consciousness that she was free and in the new country, but now—my thoughts moved slowly.

I turned and looked at my new house: strong, well built, it would stand for centuries, and the settlement would grow, perhaps, to a great city; my name might go down as the pioneer of a sturdy city. The world's stepping stones of progress are not made of happiness, thought I. I must work here and let toil and ambition drown remembrance, or I shall go mad. There was a curious stricture in my throat. I had ridden hard to lose, if possible, that breathless feeling of impotent endeavor which had possessed me ever since Tymen had told his tale, and my thoughts went ever in a circle—"She is gone, she is gone."

The door yielded to my touch and I saw the great fireplace waiting for its backlog. Had the great disappointment, the yearning to protect Antonia from pending disaster turned my brain? I saw her standing before me, dressed as she had been on "The Eendracht" except that now the golden chatelaine hung low on her gown. We gazed at each other in silence — then she smiled.

"You are vastly inhospitable," she said. "Will you not say that I am welcome to 'dat schoonste landt'?"

She came towards me holding out her hand. That same elusive fragrance of some flower came to me, penetrating my dull understanding. The madness, so long held in check, the hunger, so long denied, took possession of me and, still without a word, I crushed

her to me, even as I did the bit of lace in the Indian wigwam. As I felt her heart beat I forgot Tymen's wild tale. Stupid fool that I was, I had not seen what every one else understood, that the English Captain sought Catryntje Buytenhof, not Antonia.

"Not welcome you?" I exclaimed, "you are Godsent."

She leaned against the tile of the fireplace, and looked up at me with the quizzical smile I remembered so well. "You see," she said, "You vowed that you would never speak word of love to any woman—you were so blind, so blind. You would not see and so"—she looked down with a humility I had never seen in her before, "and so—I came to you." Her mood changed, she drew herself up as she said, "I love you even as you

love me and I have dared to save our happiness. If I have been unwomanly you have yourself to blame, but *I* must bide the consequences."

Once more she laughed and again that madness crept over me and my tongue was loosened. What I said I cannot tell, but all the longing, the self-denial, the love of years came to my lips, and she knew that in the length and breadth of the whole new land, there was no man so blessed as Johannes van Blerckom.

As we stood there, looking out over the Mohawk Valley, I felt to the full the seelenfollenschweigen. The tap of the hammer, the whir of the mill, the sound of the anvil came to us. She had read my heart long before, while I, stupid boer, had not been able to even spell the *a*, *b*, *c*, of hers.

But was it entirely stupidity, was it not rather humility, the knowledge of my own short-comings, and the feeling that it would be impossible for anything so sweet to be wholly mine. Then too, in all earnestness of spirit and righteous indignation she had forbidden me speech with her. Circumstances had forced me to disobey the edict, but if at times I had forgotten, a haughty look or word would bring back to me that day on "The Eendracht."

Now she had come to me of her own sweet will and we talked low and earnestly until the shadows fell. The Dominie had gone down the steps of the roof and the outside ladder. As he met us on the porch, he took both our hands and gave us his blessing.

For three days they tarried with us,

the most welcome guests my roof had ever covered, and then, with a strong guard, myself included, they journeyed back to Rensselaerswyck. We had planned many things during those three autumn days and had decided upon the twentieth of October for our wedding day. Much must be accomplished in the meantime, so I tarried but a day at Rensselaerswyck, returning to the valley—always "dat schoonste landt" now, for there I had found my happiness.

I had determined to take my wife to Friesland, to Stavoren, my home on the Zuyder Zee. We would return to the new world the next summer and, in the meantime, Tymen would carry out my plans for the new settlement. In my great happiness a longing for the sea and for Friesland came over

me. For "the Frieslander shall be free as long as the wind blows in the clouds and as long as the world shall endure."

The deer ran in the forest, the red leaves reflected their glory in the Mohawk on the day my canoe shot out from shore to take me to Rensselaerswyck. I turned to take a long look at the house where I had known happiness, and at the fertile fields where I hoped to return to live blessed years, and to sleep the eternal sleep.

As I turned away, there came a vision of disaster, something might yet intervene between me and happiness. I spoke a sharp word to the Indian and took up the other paddle; action must take the place of thought. We fairly flew through the water until we

reached the falls and never slackened speed until I saw the rattle watch at Rensselaerswyck and knew that all was well.

CHAPTER XXI

"Why, man, she is mine own;
And I was rich in having such a jewel
As twenty seas, if all their sands were pearl,
The water nectar, and the rocks pure gold."

THE town was in gala dress, but I had not yet donned my wedding finery. Van Curler met me and went with me to get the license, and the Dominie brought me word of the welfare of my lady.

Later we went to the Dominie's house where Antonia would give herself into my keeping. The poor-box was fastened outside the door for

the contributions of the morrow, the front door was open and the best room hung with ground pine and oranje boven. On the kos lay a wedding present of a Bible with silver clasps, the white pages waiting for the first record to be written. For a few moments only was I allowed to have Antonia alone, I must be content with crumbs until the morrow. I gave her my wedding gift of a golden casque set with diamonds, and went away to the Manor house with van Curler.

We sat late into the night arranging many things, my will, which I left with him, and his matters to be transacted in Amsterdam.

If, in years to come, the history of the Manors is written, I hope some worthy chronicler will tell posterity

of the noble man, Arendt van Curler, whose great heart and good judgment laid the foundation of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck.
He was a Hollander, blonde, erect, grave. He spoke little, but when he did others stopped to listen. We talked of Friesland and of my great desire to take Antonia there for a time.
"Go to the meadows and the canals," he said, "I can see the North Sea, the herds of cattle, the flight of the lapwings," His thoughts were far away, and I wondered if he too longed for home. "Come back," he continued, "You are needed in this glorious new world."

How much women make of a wedding. Could I have taken Antonia

by the hand and gone on board the little sailboat without the wedding speeches, the healths and Godspeeds to the bride, I would have been better pleased, but custom and convention rule, even in a new land.

The air was clear and sweet and the sky blue on the morning of the twentieth. In deference to the wishes of Goede Vrouw van Orde, I doffed my sombre black and arrayed myself in satins and lace like the men of fashion. It was a better face that gazed into my eyes from the mirror in New Amsterdam, but even so there were too many lines of care to make it a handsome one. However, it should look at its best, for was it not to mate with the most beautiful woman in the world? I was becoming a dandy for the sake of a woman.

I carried a precious package to present to the Dominie's wife, nothing would please her better. It was an Admiral Lietkin bulb, and would make her envied by every man and woman in New Amsterdam, yes and in Amsterdam too. The one word "tulips" would send her off on a talk of hours' duration, and I knew that the bulb would be a welcome gift.

The hour drew near and van Curler, in bridal array, called to me. The rest of the morning was like a dream; the bride without her widow's cap; the gifts; the feast; the insidious sack that made the young man merry, all was like a dream.

I seemed so old in the midst of merry-making. My years were no more than those of many counted young, but I

SIDE · BY · SIDE

had lived so much; had waited so long for my best and dearest, that I felt half savage when I held her to me for the instant we were alone ere we made our way to the waiting boat.

With smiles and tears the good folk of Rensselaerswyck bade us good-bye, a safe journey, and a swift return. A good breeze filled the sails of "The Hope" as we drew into mid-stream. Side by side we stood watching the silver crescent in the sky. The days passed and the Katsbergs, ablaze with autumnal glory, smiled on us as they had frowned that April day.

"How near I was to death," Antonia whispered, as we watched the light and shade in the valleys and on the mountains. A canoe crossed our path and the face of an Indian looked up at us. Antonia was by my side and I

drew her close, as she said, "They make me shudder always, but now that we are together, I will forget all fear, for you have always been between me and danger. You see I had to go to you for you would not come to me, and self-protection is the first law of nature." I loved to hear her laugh ring out, and even the patroon might envy me that day.

We spoke but once of Catryntje. Our own happiness was too near to let a shadow darken it. Our great love, so long denied, had made us selfish.

The days on the river passed all too quickly, but we were bound for Friesland and the year was waxing old.

"The Eendracht" waited in the harbor but we must tarry a day at the Governor's house, for there were matters of state to settle before I

should report to the Company at Amsterdam. In the same degree that I had loathed the man who had sailed away in August on board "The Princess" I looked forward with joy to a meeting with the new Governor.

A free Frieslander, like myself; a man of my own country and son of my old pastor, Stuyvesant would welcome me almost as a kinsman.

I was not mistaken in him. We were received with true hospitality and for the third time Antonia sat at the Governor's right—but under such changed conditions that the very hangings in the hall took on, for me, a brighter tint.

My conference with his Excellency, lasted far into the night, and as he bade me "Sleep well," he said: "Van Blerckom, I shall govern the bur-

ghers for their advantage, and for the advantage of the chartered West India Company,"

At noon of the following day "The Eendracht" would sail eastward and, from early morning, Pompey was full of importance, arranging everything for the comfort of his mistress.

The huge sails of the windmills turned in the breeze as we stood once again on the deck of the great ship, but this time watching the shores recede.
A gun rang out from the fort; a canoe filled with Indians, crossed our bow.
"Am I a coward, Antonia?"
Her hand sought mine, as she whispered, "Forgive me."

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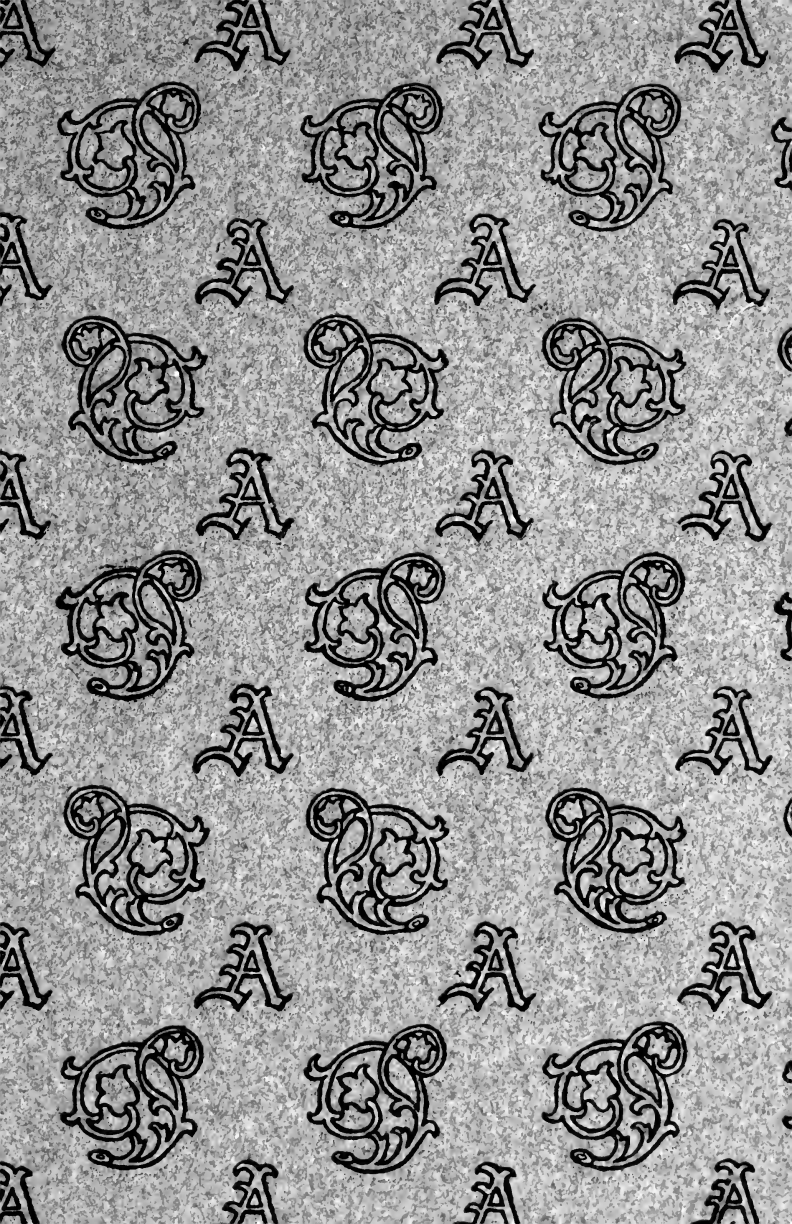

ANTONIA

JESSIE VAN ZILE BELDEN