OLD MARGARET.

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A Novel.

BY

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CHAPTER I.

AT five-and-forty, Van Kenning was a confirmed old bachelor. Wildways said that in fourteen or fifteen years he might marry his housekeeper and settle in life; but this was only looked on as a joke, even by the Duke himself.

"Van Kenning is not such an ass," the Duke said. "He comes of a long-lived stock, and a money-getting stock, and a money-holding stock. He will never let a

woman have the dipping of her hand into *his* pocket."

"Yet he is fond of a pretty face," said a smirking boy nobleman.

"Then he had better get your portrait painted by one of his friends, the artists," replied the Duke, "and get it done before you have spoilt it by fast living. I tell you that Van Kenning is a confirmed old bachelor, and that in twenty years you will look older than he does now, puppy."

The rest of the gentlemen present were seized with a somewhat troublesome cough. The Duke had evidently got out of bed the wrong side that morning.

"Van Kenning is worth half the grinning gabies in the kingdom," the Duke went on. "He is a wise man: he loves his friends, his pictures, his dinner, and the bow-window of his club. He is a happy old bachelor. I

wish to heaven *I* were; but that is past praying for."

It was so painfully true, that the French Ambassador, who happened to be present, showed the tact of his nation by saying that if this weather lasted, the hay would be got in nicely.

"You should know," said the Duke; "your people generally make hay while the sun shines. Will you dine down the river with me to-day, Count, and we will talk that matter over again; and I will catch Van Kenning. His views are very much fixed, he is a staunch freetrader, and knows more about wool than all the council together."

"He is strong for the trades unions, though," said the Frenchman. "Let us have him, however."

Meanwhile, the unconscious Van Kenning had finished his breakfast, and was prepar-

ing to spend his day. When he had shut his street door behind him, and stood in the bright June sunlight, looking up and down the street, he was the best dressed buck in the West-end of the town that day, the dandy Duke not excepted; and he knew it. Was any one looking at him? Not a creature but the policeman; and so he stepped off down the street towards his club, to hear the news.

There was nobody there but old Piffer, whom he hated. And old Piffer said that a glass of Schiedam gin with a small spoonful of honey in it was an excellent thing for the wind, and that he had just been having some of it himself. Van Kenning left the nasty old fellow in the bay window, and struck resolutely eastwards towards the trading and manufacturing parts of the town.

Manufactories, which have now been moved nearer to the coal measures, were abundant then, supporting a vast population in streets now let for mere dwelling-houses. No power was in action then in the city excepting hand-power; steam was not yet utilized, and in so level a country so near the sea, no generation of power was possible by gravitation; that is to say, there was no available water-power. The "hands" had it pretty much their own way, and they knew it, as did their masters also.

The trades unions of those times were little more than guilds, kept together mainly on sentimental grounds. There was indeed little necessity for any combination of labour against capital. The mechanics were in most respects the most powerful and difficult body in the State. *Divide et impera*

was the only way of managing them at all. It is actually true that violent and fatal riots were common between different trades unions, but on the least symptom of oppression by the aristocracy they were united and dangerous at once. They were united and dangerous now.

A girl of their order had disappeared. She was not very beautiful, and by no means of good character, being in fact a general favourite among the young men, more for her wit and sprightliness than for her discretion. No man would have thought of marrying her, but she had disappeared, and more than one lord was suspected, and so they were determined to make an Appius and Virginia case of it.

Certain rumours of this kind had reached good Van Kenning that morning, and he determined to go and hear what

was the matter. For Van Kenning stood in rather a curious position. He was one of the richest men in the State, and his money had been made by trade; yet having realized and retired, he was no longer a representative of the masters, and his knowledge of their ways and habits caused him to be a kind of ambassador between masters and men, exciting no jealousy from either party.

More than once, on occasions similar to the present, had he assisted at keeping the peace; more than once had he been compelled to depart, muttering, "Confound you, fight it out then!" On this occasion, he knew little or nothing of the matter, but he very soon discovered that something was wrong.

He was in a broad and nearly empty street when the boom of a large bell struck

on his ear; he pulled out his watch, looked at it, and fled with two or three others into an archway. It was noon.

Like the green sea-water through the sluices, when the Dutch have flooded the Polders and the Spaniard stands impotently cursing on the dyke, came the swarm of workmen down the street, recruited at each large house by a fresh stream. They were only going to their dinners, but the experienced eye of Van Kenning saw at once that there was something very wrong.

The men were boisterous without being merry, laughing, and yet savage. There was a dim, dull anger in their noise at this noontide which he well knew would break into wild fury when night and leisure came as handmaidens, to see sedition to her red couch. There was something evidently

worse amiss than he had guessed of at first. A lean little old Alderman, who had taken shelter with him, seemed to be the most likely person to inquire of. He asked him what was the matter.

The Alderman was very lean and very slow of speech. He said—

"Van Dysart has carried off Martina, and I wish him joy of his bargain. We shall all be murdered in our beds."

"Do you mean that they accuse him of that?"

"They will when they have cut his throat, and burnt the West End," said the alderman.

"I suppose that I had better put a stop to it, then," said Van Kenning, taking out his watch.

"Don't put yourself out of the way on my account," said the Alderman. "Still, if

you could manage to keep your friends' claws off some of our throats for a year or two I should be obliged."

"The devil shall have the first turn at me, on my honour," said Van Kenning, laughing. "Go to the Club and wait there; I will go and stop it at once. The rascals must be mad."

The street was empty enough now. The old Alderman saw Dandy Van Kenning turn down one of the worst lanes in the neighbourhood and disappear.

This was ten minutes after twelve. When the men returned to the workshops at one, they paused to read this notice posted at the entrance of each factory:—

"We have been in error, and no wrong has been done. Heads of Sections desiring further information are requested to apply to the Divisional Secretary."

One or two did so. The answer was easily given.

"The girl has become tired of her life, and has gone to religion. She is under the protection of Miss Margaret Van Eyck."

"Your authority is good?"

"Van Kenning."

So instead of being a night of riot it was a night of beer, skittles and flirtation after all.

CHAPTER II.

BUT we have not got through Van Kenning's day yet.

He walked thoughtfully through the streets until he came to a certain sundial in a certain square belonging to an Inn of Court, at which he was accustomed to set his watch. (Dent, Arnold, or Frodsham were not in business yet.) And while he was doing so, a footman in the royal livery stepped up to him, and bowing, gave him a letter.

It was the invitation from his Majesty to dine down the river with the French Am-

bassador. He folded it again, and, followed by the footman, went straight to his Club, and taking pen and ink wrote across the King's letter in *French* :—

Kf Of Wfvg gbt Cvshvoez

But thinking of the old dodge of discovering cyphers by the recurrence of the letter E and A he made it more difficult.

Lg, Pg, xgwz, Rcu, and more in the same cypher, the only undiscoverable one ever invented. The King read it, and said, "Hang him, he won't come."

What Van Kenning had written in French was this:—"*I do not want Burgundy*," and he had gone on, "I shall stick to Schiedam. Tell Champagne not to be seen speaking to me. I have stopped a riot for you of which you knew nothing and I but little. I enjoy life, and therefore cannot afford to be seen speaking to you.

"As for the money you want, I have paid it to Margaret. She will give it you. Do not attempt to leave any security with her or with me. Your handwriting would hang us both.

"Is the sheep-dog a wolf? Sometimes I think that it would be better to sink this land under the sea for a day; but then we should drown Margaret, you say. Well, I will not dine with you."

After despatching this insolently seditious letter to his Sovereign, Van Kenning felt that he must do something respectable. And he was singularly befriended by his good or evil genius. For looking out of the club bow-window, whom should he see but the Archbishop, with a book under his arm, walking down the sunny side of the street, and looking into the shop windows.

He descended swiftly, and put his arm into the Archbishop's. The Archbishop turned his highly noble kindly face towards him, and said—

"I was looking for you."

"And I was looking for you," said Van Kenning.

"What did you want with me?" said the Archbishop.

"I wanted to be seen walking with some one respectable," said Van Kenning.

"Not easy just now. It will cost you money. It is an expensive luxury. You must pay for it."

"How much?"

"Forty pounds."

"I will give you all I have, as you know, but this is so strange. You have never asked before."

"My dear man, I have actually no

money left. Never you mind what I have done with my money——"

"As I know, I will not ask," said Van Kenning.

"Well," said the Archbishop, "here is the state of the case. A woman of very bad character has repented of her sins, and being pursued by the bailiffs, requires forty pounds. She has fled for refuge to Margaret, who, of course, declares that her story holds good, and either they must pay the money to-day, or I must, or *you* must. *You* had much better do it."

"Dear me," said Van Kenning, "I paid that money last night. Margaret had it."

"The more foolish you," said the Archbishop.

"You asked me to pay it yourself just now," said Van Kenning, very naturally.

"To screen Margaret; yes. It is a case

of casuistry. Answer me: Can a clock be right if the hands are wrong?"

"No."

"Yes. Margaret is right in what she has done; yet she is utterly wrong. As priest I could not warn her; as man of the world you might have done so. My curate tells me that there was to have been a riot about this woman, but that you stopped it. I almost wish that you had not."

"Is the woman so utterly worthless then?" asked Van Kenning.

"When you and I are in our graves, she will be working mischief and evil," said the Archbishop.

"Yet they say that she is kindly, good-humoured, charitable; and she is certainly popular."

"She is a devil," said the Archbishop.

"She is the last flame which came from Gomorrah before the Dead Sea closed over it."

"Yet you have been so gentle and so good with these women."

"Not with such as this. She is the first I have seen."

"Then why, Archbishop, do you allow her to go into Margaret and Hubert's house?"

"Because I can lay my hand on her—because I can tame her by what your friends call superstition."

"Hush! some one will hear you."

"What do I care? Let the civil authorities tame their fiends by solitary confinement, and leave us to tame our devils in *our* way. I want to mew this woman up."

"But, my dear Pri——I mean Arch-

bishop, are you quite sure that you *understand* women?"

The Archbishop looked down on him with something like contempt.

"I always understood that the accusation which your school brought against us was, that we understood your women better than you did yourselves. I thought that had been always understood. Certainly I see twenty women at church for one man. I always thought that the arrangement between the priest and the woman was an accepted thing. I, who am Archbishop, thought I had seen through the women, and was in hopes that I might get at the men. But when a man of the world like yourself tells me that I cannot even understand a woman, I of course give up."

"Do not be angry, dear Archbishop,"

said Van Kenning. "Come, earn the forty pounds, and let us walk and see Margaret."

"Let us go. She is worth us all."

"One word more, Archbishop. Is this woman really dangerous?"

"Not to us. She is cowardly and superstitious. She is no Jezebel or even Cleopatra. To you she is very dangerous. If you knew what was best for you, you Radicals, you would leave her to our tender mercies."

"But you priests cannot be trusted," said Van Kenning.

"Oh yes we can, if you treat us fairly," said the Archbishop. "We shall win in the long run if you force our hand; we have the women, and the women have you."

"And I could have every church in this town sacked, and every priest hung tomorrow," said Van Kenning, quietly.

"That is quite true," said the Archbishop. "And what a nice life your women would lead you afterwards. There is a woman at the bottom of everything. For you have the thirty thousand Ursulas—I mean Ursula and the thirty thousand virgins—there is a woman in the matter here. Look at this!"

They were opposite one of those nondescript places which might be seen in nearly all towns until the last twenty years. In Paris represented by a flash café, in London by a public-house generally kept by a prize-fighter. They have disappeared, or are disappearing, even in Australia and Washoe; but this was one.

There was a furious riot of some sort inside; and even while they were asking a policeman the meaning of it, the riot overflowed the door, and the rioters came

pouring out before the Alderman and the Archbishop. The two stepped back against the wall, with the policeman, and looked on a sight seldom seen now, but not uncommon then.

"There will be a fight," said the Archbishop.

That was soon evident. The confusion of rioters begun from the very first to show a tendency to make a circle; that circle grew more defined each moment, and on the utterance of a few sharp and terrible words (not producible here), formed itself perfect, in the dead silence of expectation, with two men opposite to one another in the centre.

The man who happened to be facing the Alderman and the Archbishop was well known to both of them: a nobleman, on whose person and face were written three

centuries of careful breeding and irresponsible ferocity; a great man, with the strength of an elephant, and the brain and lissomeness of the tiger; a man bred as carefully as a race-horse, and with about as much education. The last and nearly the most terrible form of this man which we have produced in England, was killed in about his twentieth duel thirty years ago come —. We will call this man Van Dysart.

The man whose back was towards them was evidently more slender and younger; in the mêlée inside he had got uncovered, while Van Dysart had his hat on, pressed over his forehead. When the Archbishop got a good sight of this bareheaded young man he tried to force his way through the crowd to get at him. Van Kenning tried also, but said to the policeman, "There will be blood."

"Death," said the policeman.

But all the archbishops, policemen and aldermen in the world would not have been permitted to interfere between the people and their spectacle—that of two of the governing orders at one another's throat. A well brutalized population loves a fight and hates to see it stopped. There are cases in point: such as that of the fate of the young monk of whom you may read in your Gibbon, during the decadence of the Romans: the fate of any one who would interfere at a bull-fight in Spain, in the present decadence of that country: a solitary policeman at an old English prize-fight:—all these cases prove that a brutalized people will have no one standing between themselves and their sport.

The Archbishop might have got through

and have rendered my pen dumb on the subject, but he was told to stand back. Seeing that he could do no good he stood still, and prayed rapidly and silently, in his great haste, a very singular prayer. He prayed that the bareheaded young man with his back towards him might kill Van Dysart. And all this had taken place in about two minutes and a half.

"My Lord," said the Archbishop's young gentleman, "I have nothing to add to what I said before, when we were separated in the common hell and brothel, into which I only entered because it was the most evil and worst reputed hole in the town, and that therefore I was certain of finding your lordship there. You are a false liar and a false hound. When you say that I blackened your name in a certain quarter you lie. It needed no black-

ening. When you say that I avoided encountering you, you lie again."

"Anything more?" said Van Dysart.

"No. Women scold."

"Then, as you have to die, you had better die decently. You have the sun full in your face; and you have lost your hat. Shift round and get the half sun, and we will both fight bareheaded. There goes *my* hat."

It was past any one's mending now. There was a sharp click and a sliding sound, snake-like and devilish, and the naked steel, mother of blood, was out, and must be wiped clean before it went back to the scabbard.

They stood before one another for nearly a minute, with the points of their swords down, tapping the ground in front of their feet, looking one another steadily in the

eyes. At last Van Dysart said to the dead silence around, "The embrogliato is to come from me, then?"

He put his sword in tierce, level with his right eye, and advanced very slowly on his adversary. His adversary met him also in tierce, so declining, but with every muscle in his thigh ready for his backward spring at the first feint. Van Dysart tapped his sword three or four times against his adversary's, made a rapid flickering feint in carte, and walked away laughing.

For an instant only. Turning and coming swiftly down, he attacked his adversary furiously, while the nearly maddened spectators clawed at one another in their frantic fury, for the devil's own beautiful game had begun with a vengeance now. The past was as nothing, the future was as nothing, in the glorious delight of mad

excitement without danger. Nero had never provided such sport as this for the people. Here were two men of a hated and dreaded order, two of the best swordsmen in Europe, fighting for their glory and delectation. Grand sport.

"Did you speak to me, sir," said the policeman to Van Kenning.

"No," said the Alderman; "I was only speaking to my friend the Devil here. Make room for him between us, will you, constable. The Archbishop has got between him and the show."

The combatants were quiet again, breathing. No blood had been drawn, which pleased the people much, because they had been afraid lest Van Dysart, a safe killer, would only pink his man; but before they had time to swear more than a few oaths the two gentlemen were at it once more.

What are all our sports now in comparison with fencing? Why, a University race takes over twenty minutes to row—time enough to make your will. The Derby can be run and won in three minutes. In this short and last embroglio the competitors lived ten lives in twenty seconds. Eye, hand, brain and muscle acted on one another with a rapidity which was only slowly reproduced by the spark like lightning of their swords. In twenty seconds the swords met and parted fifty times. In thirty seconds Van Dysart was wiping his sword on a white handkerchief, and his adversary, with the same fixed attentive look in his face which he had worn all through the fight, was standing erect; then his knees gave way and he fell down stone dead on his face.

Then the mob let the Archbishop get to

him, and growled at him because he had not stopped the fight. But the Archbishop cared little, for he was kneeling beside the dead youth, holding a crucifix before his sightless eyes, and whispering in his ear from time to time, "Leon! Leon!"

But Leon happened to be dead, and the Archbishop was a practical man and found it out. The policeman came up to take charge of the body, and the Archbishop asked, "Where was Van Kenning?" Van Kenning had gone off arm in arm to the Club with Van Dysart.

The Archbishop shook his head, but gave the policeman gold. "Take the body to my house; I will go and break the news to them."

CHAPTER III.

THIS incident, as the reader may by this time have guessed, did not occur during the wild fierce time which succeeded the last war with France, when the lava stream of national ferocity was beginning to cool and crust, showing from time to time to incautious steppers the molten metal below. The surroundings were very similar, however, and in writing down the incident the pen naturally ran as though one were describing an embroglio of 1820.

But the time was about 1400, and the

place was Ghent. Let one hope that concealing the fact for a single chapter has not puzzled the reader. We are free now; the writer only asks that the reader will allow him to make the characters speak as they would now, and act as they do now, and did act then.

Perhaps one *specialité* of ecclesiastics is their short quick walk. My friend A says that they walk so because they are conscious that they have nothing to do, and want to look as if they were earning their money. My friend B says that it is in consequence of their having worn long ecclesiastical dresses for so many centuries; a theory which sounds rather Darwinian, although B is an orthodox of the most distinguished. C says that they walk in that manner from their haste after good works, and bend their heads from hu-

mility. D only says that he wishes they would walk like other people. However, they walk so. Why not? Does not a dragoon always walk as though he had his spurs on? or a groom as though he had a saddle between his legs?

The Archbishop had by no means walked in that manner while he was sauntering about and looking into the shops; but now he walked in the ecclesiastical manner, and coming swiftly round the corner on to a little girl about twelve years old; who carefully pulled up her outside frock, chose a clean place and knelt down for the archiepiscopal benediction.

It was promptly given in the usual manner, after which the girl raised her head and smiled, and the Archbishop said suddenly, and sharply, "Why, Marie!"

He had just seen her brother killed in the

street, and he was stricken almost dumb. The child was pleased and honoured by seeing him, and rising to her feet reminded him that he had promised to bless a little medal for her, and that he had forgotten to do so. She added, that she was seeking her brother Leon to come home to his dinner.

"He has had his dinner," said the Archbishop to her, with a sort of idea that he was not actually lying, because it was possible that Leon might be supping in paradise, even without the viaticum, having been in the main a most noble and godly youth. "I wish you to come with me, child."

"I will follow you, my father," she said; and they walked on.

"Life is pleasant to you, child?"

"Yes, father; and the Sisters are kind, with the exception of Sister Priscilla, who

is rough, and who says that I have no heart, not even enough to make my beauty a curse to me."

"She should not say such things. I will rebuke her. Turn your face to me."

The girl did so. It was a very beautiful face, with great promise of greater beauty for the future. When it was a little older it was painted by the hand of one of the few who loved her, and it hangs on the walls of the Museum at Bruges to this day, one of the gems of European art.

"She said the other day," continued the girl, "that the woman Martina, who has taken refuge with Margaret, had a better heart than I had."

"She should not speak to the child of such things," muttered the Archbishop. "I must speak to Priscilla. My child, do you fear death?"

"The Sisters say that it is the gate of paradise."

"I do not mean for yourself. For another? Suppose your brother Leon were to die."

"Then my brother Max would have two-thirds of Leon's money, and I should have the other third; that is, if I married John Van Eyck, which I mean to do."

The Archbishop groaned, for none of his theories would fit this case. He decided, however, that he would discuss the matter with Sister Priscilla, instead of scolding her, as he had at first meant; which was a wise resolution, because Sister Priscilla, in spite of all her religious vows, was not a woman who would take a scolding from the Pope himself, leave alone an Archbishop, if she had persuaded herself that she was in the right, and if none of them could prove her

wrong. She was in continual trouble about her vows of obedience. She was always at one time doing penances set her for the breach of those vows. Her practice was to perform the penances with a few additional ones, and then commit the sin over again still more emphatically. She had acquired the character of being a Sister of high merit, but peculiar in one or two ways; given, for example, to persistent and occasionally objurgative contradiction.

There is no doubt that poor old Father Ambrose begged the Archbishop, on his knees, to be removed from the office of confessor to the convent of which she was an ornament, and to be sent upon a mission to the Moors, and that he alleged Sister Priscilla to be the cause of his singular request. He was old, he said, and might earn martyrdom among the barbarians, but he could

not stand the eye of Sister Priscilla. He was afraid to put even the most ordinary questions to the nuns, not for an instant mentioning the *elèves*. The Archbishop released him from his duties, and was foolish enough to send a strong square-headed young Dominican, with the brains of an elephant and the physical strength of a bull. Hence arose a fearful scandal. It was *said* that on his first entrance into the hall of the convent, Sister Priscilla had rushed from the collected nuns, fallen on that young man, and cuffed and towzled him in a disgraceful manner. But scandals in religious houses can be always hushed up (except when they do not exist), and so we know nothing of the truth of that matter. In short, in most things it was considered to be inexpedient to meddle with Sister Priscilla; and one great reason was, that

every one who knew her liked and thoroughly respected her.

Ghent, with all its multitudes, was roaring that day, a little more eager and noisy, if not more busy than usual. In a somewhat noisy street the Archbishop paused before a very large house of stone, even then darkened by time, and beat at a large door with his hand.

Towards the street the house was only a vast, nearly windowless façade. In an instant the bolt was withdrawn, the Archbishop entered, and the door was slammed behind him, for one was never sure in those times whether one quiet man or a couple of thousand lunatics were about to enter.

Here was a change. Here was sudden peace, and nearly silence; for the roar of voices, and the clatter of wooden shoes

over the pavement only came on the Archbishop's ear as the moan of the surf round capes and reefs comes to our ear from a hollow sea shell.

The great house formed at the back three sides of a quadrangle, adorned with flower beds set in green well-trimmed lawns, and broken by groups of shrubs. The fourth side of the quadrangle was made by a high wall, hidden by shrubs, and overarched with whispering poplars.

The Archbishop turned to the little old porter who had let them in, and was saying, "Why, Felix, you are as nimble as ever," when he was interrupted by a very quiet, solemn, and clear voice, which said—

"This is good of you, Archbishop. Come with me to my garden. I wish to speak to you very much."

"Hubert Van Eyck," said the Arch-

bishop, "I have something very terrible to tell you. Marie, go play."

The man whom the world has known ever since, was at that time a not very *handsome* man, but one with a very gentle and intensely melancholy face. He had reddish hair, which was covered by a pink velvet skullcap, trimmed with ermine, otherwise was dressed very much like some Austrian soldiers of the present day, in a white tunic, in a few places slashed with blue satin, and tight-fitting blue silk hose. Such was the graceful figure which took the arm of the Archbishop and led him into the garden.

"I know the news," said Hubert. "I want you to break it to my sister."

"I have come to do so. Where is she?"

The two turned towards a tall building

which formed the left-hand side of the quadrangle. Where it rose from the lawn it was a mere sheet of smooth stone, but aloft began to show out into very early pointed work, and just below the roof developed six long pointed windows. It had, in fact, been the refectory of an old conventual building, of which the house itself had been a cell.

They entered by a low door, and passed up a narrow winding flight of steps, by which probably the superior of the house had in old times mounted to refection, for they came out by a little door on to the daïs, now covered with the various lumber of an artist's studio, and of a very rich artist also. The daïs was covered with costly velvet and satin robes, armour of price, swords and spears. And just where the light, cautiously admitted from one of

the six tall windows, fell, was a full-sized lay figure of man and horse, in full panoply of damascened steel armour, heavily fringed with green satin.

The hall was very dark but for this one light, and another little one far down the hall, for the windows were on one side only, the other blocking out the world with a screen of stone. Looking from behind the dead horse and its rider, they saw below them an easel at which a woman stood painting.

The Archbishop crossed himself.

"She is painting Leon's armour," he whispered. "This is terrible."

"I borrowed it for her yesterday," said Hubert, also in a whisper.

The Archbishop stepped lightly down from the daïs towards her. She was not a beautiful woman, none of her family were

beautiful. The forehead was strained and over large, and the skin upon it was tense. Her features were what is called regular; the eye was of dark hazel, with the concentration of an artist in it; and the mouth had the pout which an artist frequently gets by the habit of contemplating particular points carefully and steadily for a long time together; her figure, though not tall, was majestic, very well held up with a full fine bust. Her hair was closely braided in front of the cap of the time, which spread right and left of her head in two semicircles. Her dress, closed up to the throat, was as close as a lady's riding habit, laced over the bosom with long laces, and falling straight from her hips in long folds; its tissue was green satin, or its equivalent in those times. She was standing with her right foot advanced, which

she was at that moment tapping with her mahlstick, reminding the Archbishop terribly of the action of Van Dysart's sword an hour before. In her left hand she held her palette and her sheaf of brushes. So stood, and now stands to some of us, Margaret Van Eyck.

"Margaret!" said the Archbishop.

"My Lord!" she said, quietly, with a brightened face.

"I am come to see you."

"Mind your way, my Lord; step cautiously over that helmet. That is right. Now, what brings you here?"

"Put aside your brushes, my child."

"Not I. I can talk while I am painting. I am painting Leon's armour. I can call him Leon now, good Lord, for the words have been spoken, and he is to marry me."

"Margaret, listen! You will never marry him."

"Has Van Dysart killed him?"

"Yes."

"I thought it would be so. Please be very silent. If my little bird were to sing now, I would kill it."

And she went on painting.

The Archbishop had in his vocation of priest seen women in most phases of passion and anger. Indeed he had got (having been confessor to some dozen convents) so used to scenes with women, that he had got as much used to them as a doctor; but here he was fairly terrified. The woman not only would not speak herself, but would not let him speak. Once more he said, "Margaret!" but she looked at him so terribly that he forbore. He only said, "May I wait here till you will speak to

me?" and she said, "Yes;" that was all she said, and went on painting.

So the Archbishop sat down on one of the faldstools, which they had there for religious paintings, and watched her. After a few feeble daubs at her work, she put her tackle on one side, and lay down on a bench, with her arms over her head, and her face turned from him, moaning from time to time.

"She will cry soon," said the Archbishop, from his experience, "and then she will remember her religion."

"What is the matter?" said a hoarse voice, like that of a sixteen-year-old boy, in his ear.

"Leon has been killed by Van Dysart," said the Archbishop, "and I have told her of it."

"Hum," said the voice. "A nice youth

too. Perhaps the other one will do now."

"I do not understand you," said he. "Had you not better see to her."

"No; leave her alone," said Sister Priscilla. "When she wants me she will call for me. Let us stay here quiet. She will be like a boar of Ardennes in five minutes, if I know her. She and I have vexed our righteous souls in this hideous city of the plain until we are both half mad. Why God does not destroy Ghent is wonder to me."

"Indeed," said the Archbishop, "it needs prayer and fasting."

"There is plenty of praying; it is this fasting which is wanted," said Sister Priscilla. "It is for you to fix the balance, not a poor nun like me. Who are those at the lower end of the hall, and where is Hubert?"

"That is Hubert at the lower end of the hall," said he. "And there is a man behind him. They are going to tell John."

John Van Eyck was sitting far lower down the hall, in a partially lighted window, copying some older painting than his brother's. The Archbishop and Sister Priscilla saw two figures approach him and tell him the news. They saw the boy —for he was little more—drop his painting tackle and cover his eyes with his hands, and then they saw the two older gentlemen coming slowly up to where they sat.

"They are coming," said Sister Priscilla. "I must rouse her. *He* will catch it."

"Hubert?"

"No, the other. Margaret, get up; here is your brother Hubert and another gentleman."

Margaret roused herself, looked about for her painting things, and not seeing them, looked about her rather wildly. The sight of her brother seemed to restore her, but the group soon found that she was not looking at him but at the man behind him. When she saw him she stood erect and bold, and called to him by name.

Every one present prepared for a scene, but for no such scene as followed. The Archbishop and Hubert hoped that she would have cried. Sister Priscilla hoped she would have scolded. She deceived them all.

She said quietly and sternly—

"Burgundy, stand forth from behind my brother's shoulder and answer."

"Before what court, Madam?"

"Before the court of an injured woman. More kings have lost their lives, my Lord,

in that court than in any other. A seditious mob may be cut down, Duke, but even if you kill an injured woman her wrongs live after her and plague you for generations. Come before my court, my Lord Duke of Burgundy!"

Burgundy stood there before her, looking shamefaced and abashed, as dissipated men do look before women. His hair, cut short across low over his forehead gave him a somewhat silly appearance; his bad complexion, and the working of a rather ugly mouth, did not much improve him; and he had shoved his black and gold velvet bonnet on to the back of his head, which made him look nearly idiotic. If one could see that face in profile, which one cannot, one would find power in it. The Duke of Burgundy, as he stood before Margaret Van Eyck

that day, looked like a guilty fool, and he was neither, at least as politics went in those days. Certainly Louis XVI. was executed for less, but times have changed.

The Duke of Burgundy stood abashed before her anger. "What would you have me do?" he said.

And she replied—

"I want you to prove yourself a Duke—to do justice to yourself."

"But how, and for what? Count Leon was killed in fair duel."

"Fair? yes. But listen to the whole story. I plead as an infuriated woman before my Sovereign. I have had three lovers—Van Kenning, Van Dysart, and Leon.

"I cannot tell you why I did not marry Van Kenning; perhaps he was too old. But

I can tell you why I did not marry Van Dysart:—because he ruined and cast to the dogs—to the dogs of the gutter—a woman with elements of good in her far greater than he ever had; and because I always hated him, Duke. He has avenged my hatred this unhappy day."

No one spoke. She went on: "Leon I would have had, a noble youth, my Lord Duke—a noble youth."

"But what can I do?"

"I want justice, vengeance on the murderer of Leon."

"But it was not a murder. The man also is in good repute, both with courtier and workman. He is one of the shrewdest and most valuable counsellors I have. The Archbishop himself saw the duel; it was perfectly fair, was it not, sir?"

"Perfectly," said the Archbishop.

"It is a lie," snarled Sister Priscilla, in a voice which made them all start.

"I think not," said the Archbishop, very meekly. "I think it was a very fair duel indeed. Most pretty fencing from first to last."

"And you call yourself a priest!" cried Priscilla.

"Certainly, Sister; and consequently speak the truth about what I have seen, without regarding any of your idiotic and impudent declamations about things which you have not seen. It was a perfectly fair duel."

"Well then, you see, Marguerite Van Eyck, I can do nothing. Hubert, what can I do?"

"You can do nothing whatever, Duke. I might fight him, but I should only get killed. I see no use in it; do you, sister Margaret?"

"No, leave him alone," she said, wearily. "You are all against me, sir."

And they went, without one word of further protest from Sister Priscilla, which was odd, for her heart was in this matter. But that exceedingly shrewd woman had perceived that there was some set purpose between the three men, from seeing their eyes meet. She hoisted herself into a high window, and saw the three go away together, with heads bent to her across the grass plot; and when she saw that she said, "God help Van Dysart, with those three against him—a priest, a rogue, and a genius." After which remarkable sentiment she came down and saw to poor Margaret.

CHAPTER IV.

THESE three strange heads, those of Hubert Van Eyck, the Duke of Burgundy, and the Archbishop of Ghent, were indeed close together, in very keen discussion indeed.

"Gentlemen," said the Duke, "let yours then be the open opposition; but remember always that I am assisting you, even when you see me smile upon him. The time may be long, and my hand may never be seen, but the end will come. Good morning. We shall not in future be so familiar as we were."

The Duke went between the flower-beds towards the wall which formed the fourth side of the square, and passing through the shrubs, opened a postern gate and came suddenly on a narrow canal overhung with windowless buildings. A barge lay a little way up, with a closely-drawn awning behind, rowed by four young men, chosen apparently for their good looks and their impenetrable stupidity, and steered by a very old man who had the expression of having seen a great deal. I should not like, had I been the Duke's enemy, to have been with them in that barge on a dark night in a lonely place.

A watchful face was peering from the awning as he stepped in. It was Van Kenning's.

"Well, my Lord Duke, and what said she?"

"She has demanded vengeance."

Not another word was said. At a sign from the Duke the men gave way, and going a little way along the canal, pulled up at some steps which rose from the water to a postern in the wall. Van Kenning stepped lightly ashore, gave a glance round, and disappeared in the doorway. The Duke's young men gave way once more, and soon every ripple had died away upon the surface of the canal.

But the Archbishop and Hubert walked up and down among the flower-beds, and during their walk they came upon a pretty sight which made them pause and withdraw silently.

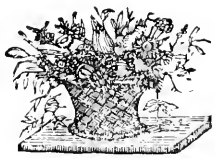
Seated on the grass was young John Van Eyck, then about eighteen, in all the heyday of youth and fine clothes, and on his shoulder lay the beautiful head of Marie.

She had been crying, but was quiet now and playing with a flower he had given her.

"He has told her and has comforted her," said Hubert.

"That is not a very difficult thing to do, my son," quoth the Archbishop.

Hubert only sighed, and they walked quietly away.



CHAPTER V.

IN the best corner of the best public room in a very large and elegant tavern sat Van Dysart, wondering what he would do with himself.

Had he known everything he might have spared himself the trouble of thinking about that matter, for some others had taken his life in their hands. The man thought himself a gay and independent bachelor Poor fool!

The world was well with him: he was rich, handsome, young, well-dressed, of

good health and great personal strength and courage. Politically, also, he had great power. He was the bully of the Court and the representative of the working classes there.

He laughed as he thought, "I am the most dangerous man in Ghent." That was very true; but at the same time, dangerous men in Ghent, about the year 1400, were extremely apt to be unlucky. Advanced Whiggery was tolerated at Court—nay, even flattered and caressed, yet the caresses of that particular Duke of Burgundy were apt to be like certain precious oils which broke the recipient's head.

Lying there, a blaze of blue and scarlet satin, he pondered on what excitement there might be afloat, or who would drop in that morning. He might have saved himself the trouble quite well. There

was amusement enough in store for *him*. Two voices, in rather more than friendly argument, were beginning to make themselves heard as they drew nearer to the room. One he knew, the other speaking in a foreign accent puzzled him.

"I am not a disputant either at backgammon or cards, neither am I a fighting man, Signor Spada, but I must take the liberty of telling you once more that you threw six ace from your ace-point and moved two points into your second table.

Van Dysart lay listening like a cat. That ill-tempered old cur Van Kenning was accusing the terrible Spada of Bologna, best swordsman of the day, of cheating.

By this time they were in the room.

"Sir," said the low growling voice of the Italian, "I have denied the fact once before. I moved six ace."

"You did not," said Van Kenning.

"Sir," said the Italian, "are you ready to fight?"

"Not with a man of your reputation," said Van Kenning, coolly.

"What do you mean by that, sir?"

"I mean with a man of your reputation as a swordsman."

The Italian growled, and threw his sword upon the table with a sniff. Van Kenning did not seem to be in the least disturbed, and the pair stood silent, Van Kenning drumming on the table with his knuckles.

Van Dysart was immensely interested. This was Count Spada of Bologna, the bravest man and the most consummate scoundrel in Europe without any known exception. Van Dysart had heard of his arrival at Ghent, and was dying to make

his acquaintance: of course that old fool Van Kenning had picked him up first, and might have put him *aux mieux* with the Duke had it not been for the quarrel. Van Dysart looked at his man.

A middle-sized bull-necked Italian of about thirty, dressed in white with crimson slashes, with a scarlet bonnet and an ostrich plume of the same colour coming down over his left shoulder; a bullet-headed man, with an eye like polished jet and a beard like closely packed black horsehair, elasticity and vigour in his carriage, and a good-humoured rascality in every line of his face, —such was the terrible Spada of Bologna.

"Two and two do not make five, Count," said Van Kenning; "neither do six-ace make seven."

"By St. Christopher and his holy coat, sir," said Spada, who although devoutly

religious after each of his murders, was not up in details, "if I had a friend in the town, which I have not, you should answer for that language with your life."

"Very good, sir," said Van Kenning. "You threw six ace, and played seven."

Of course there was nothing for Van Dysart to do but to rise and interfere. The blue and scarlet apparition arose from the sofa, to the great astonishment of Count Spada, who snatched up his sword, and retreating towards the door confronted his new adversary with a haughty bow.

"My dear Van Kenning," said Van Dysart, "may I ask what is wrong between you two?"

"He threw six ace and played seven," said Van Kenning, emphatically drumming on the table.

Spada stood erect, a column of unpro-

tected innocence, without a friend in the town.

"Oh, but come, old Van Kenning, you *think* he did."

"I know he did."

Spada's muscles were as stiff as bone; he tapped his sword-hilt.

"Not one friend to back Spada of Bologna," he said, in a low melancholy voice. "If Van Dysart the swordsman could be found, he would not see me wronged thus, for we have heard of one another."

Had Van Dysart looked at Van Kenning's face instead of looking at Spada with a face of silly vanity at the compliment, he would have seen a look of utter wonder in Van Kenning's eyes. The unutterable impudence and dexterity of the Italian's last speech was too much for him, for he had

just been spending what he thought wasted time in trying to teach him Van Dysart's name.

"I am that Van Dysart," cried out that gentleman. "Let me have the pleasure of making my rival's acquaintance."

The Italian took off his bonnet, and saluted courteously.

"You will then doubtless act for me in this matter. Coming an utter stranger into this town, and playing the game of tables with this gentleman (a game we play little in Italy), I am accused of cheating. There is, of course, but one way out of such an affair."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Van Dysart. "No one minds old Van Kenning. He is a non-combatant."

"In Italy," said Spada, "non-combatants keep their tongues between their teeth. If

you think my honour acquitted, Van Dysart, I am content."

"Could any one question yours? Nonsense, my dear Count. A swordsman like you would only make himself ridiculous by an encounter with Van Kenning. Is it not so, my prince of good fellows?"

"I suppose so," said Van Kenning; "but he threw six ace and played six deuce for all that. You are going to take up with him, Van Dysart, I see that. Now in anything which follows from your acquaintance with him, never you have the impudence to say that I did not warn you of him."

And so he turned and went, leaving them both staring.

"A singular man," said the Italian, laughing.

"A very singular man," said Van Dysart.

"He and I proposed to ourselves at one and the same time the honour of alliance with the same young lady. She had the good sense to save me the trouble of putting my sword through him by refusing him. Since then I have liked the fellow."

"But he does not fight," said the Italian.

"No; but we have learnt something from Italian civilization, and one of my grooms carries a knife. You understand."

"Oh, perfectly," said Count Spada. And, to do him justice, he spoke the truth for once.

"Will you drink?" said Van Dysart.

"A hogshead, if you like."

"Will you play?"

"Till morning, if it suits you. I am just now very rich, and shall never be comfortable until I have lost all my money."

"You are a good comrade."

"I am reputed so. My sword is rather rusty. Do you ever have an embroglio in the streets here? I should like a fight before we begun."

"I am the worst man in the world to come to just now. I killed a man in the street only three weeks ago, and my clients would not stand another. They have been disagreeable about *him*."

"Your clients?"

"I mean the working men."

"Ho!" said Spada. "And what was the young gentleman's name who got himself killed?"

"Well," said Van Dysart, "it was rather an ugly business. Let us have some Burgundy."

"I want Burgundy, at least the Duke of that name, most particularly," said Spada;

"and I mean that you should present me to him. But a gallon of the wine meanwhile, if you please."

They had drank two or three drafts—a modern pint of that noblest of wines—before Spada spoke again.

"Now about the young Count Leon. Was it a good rattle? Did he come rattling down on the back of his head, like a gentleman, or did he fall towards you and break your best sword, as that best and jolliest of companions, Nicolo of Padua, did with me when I killed him? I was very sorry for that business, for I loved the man; but we both wanted the same thing, and——what would you? By the organ of St. Agnes! I shed positive tears, sir, when I saw my beautiful Andrea Ferrara broken in half."

Van Kenning said once, that Providence

intended to spare this man by showing him a caricature of his own cruelty.

"I will tell you about it," said Van Dysart, a little sulkily. "I suspected him of telling tales to my detriment in a certain quarter, and I said openly that I should kill him. I was utterly wrong. He behaved most honourably, although he supplanted me. The mischief was done by a nun, one Priscilla. Since I killed him, I have had a letter which proves it. I have it here."

"So you killed the wrong man?"

"It seems so."

"Yet he was a rival?"

"It is true; but I was not very keen on the scent."

"Ha! You are cold-blooded, you Flemings. You are ill, and unfit for play. Let us drink some more, and then take me to the Duke's court."

"Good; I will go comb my hair. Do the Italian gallants wear their hair in your fashion now?"

Spada said that it was the latest fashion. He might have added, among soldiers of fortune and *maîtres d'armes*, but did not. Van Dysart went away to comb his hair.

When he was gone Spada looked puzzled. "There seems to be a soft place in the man; they told me there was none."

Van Dysart came back, and having adjusted their swords, they walked away through the streets towards the palace.

It was evening, and the workmen were abroad sitting almost in thousands in front of their houses. Van Dysart seemed almost ostentatiously to choose the streets which were most frequented by them. Many of them greeted him warmly, most looked kindly at him. It might seem at

first strange that a young nobleman, known as a dicer and duellist and worse, should have power with them, as he undoubtedly had; but in any dispute he had always been on their side, and as for his amours, they had never been among their order. And his strength and splendid physical courage rendered him admirable to a great extent among a people who lived by their strength, dearly loved fighting, and who were as brave as their ancestors. Why, in the last half century England and America have both sent prizefighters to Parliament. And this man had infinitely more brains and mental training than Gully or Heenan.

Besides, why or wherefore does not matter just now, this man was very charitable. In spite of the Gilden there was often sharp distress, and this man's hand was always open. He had a good heart, said

they, and would cure himself of his follies, which after all were only those of his order.

A popular man most undoubtedly. Had he not been lazy and vicious he might have been a rival to Van Kenning. But the working hands could only be fairly led by Van Kenning, whose good word was always for Van Dysart.

"So your rôle is to lead the rabble," said Spada, as they walked along.

"Yes," said Van Dysart, with a sneer. "And not a bad one. You shall see the reception at Court directly of the man who could burn the Duke's palace about his ears in an hour."

"The people are but little understood and not very well treated," said Spada, with a degree of honest emphasis, for his father had been an armourer or blacksmith, and he himself had been chosen as page

for his beauty, and had risen to the position of Mameluke for his fiendish, careless courage, which his amazing physical vitality had saved from being spoiled by vice. In fact, like many another healthy pirate, he rather disliked vice, as interfering with business.

"Of that I know nothing and care less," said Van Dysart. "I want power, and I get it through them. That is all."

"You have no sentimental feelings about the preservation of your order, then?" asked Spada.

"None whatever. All said and done, man, they are worse scoundrels than the workmen. I do not believe that there stands in this street a greater rascal than the Duke."

"You mean the Duke of Ferrara?"

"Yes, of course; the Duke of Ferrara.

Hah! hah! You might have thought I meant the Duke of Burgundy."

"Not I. I agree with you about the Duke of Ferrara. He owes me money. Is he a good paymaster?"

"Yes; for dirty work. I never heard of a man asking for credit of his chimney-sweep."

Spada sung a little Provençal song, and sang it very prettily too. It was indiscreet, looking at the task in hand, but—he couldn't help it.

"Ci git Abelard,
Ci git il;
Parcequ' il croyait,
Ce que tout a dit."

"Quem deus vult perdere." They came to the door of the palace and went in.

Was there ever such a Court before or since? One fancies a great many. But

Ghent at that time was exceptional, by all accounts.

There have been more drunken courts—that of James I. of England, let us say. There have been more extravagantly dressed courts—(that of Venice in 1200). There have been more riotous courts. There have been more ferocious courts; but there have been very few which equalled for combined riot, fury, sumptuary extravagance and general dissipation that of Ghent in those times.

The whole of the entrance-hall and the great stone staircase were crowded by courtiers in all kinds of fantastic dresses.

Van Dysart and Spada pushed their way through all this, up the stairs and into the hall of reception. Here matters were decent. There were chamberlains and officers around the Duke, who ceased speaking as

the two splendid young dandies advanced up the room.

The Duke looked with keen interest at the two new comers, more particularly at Count Spada. He seemed greatly satisfied.

"I have to ask leave to present to you Count Spada of Bologna, Duke."

"I receive Count Spada with all good will and honour," said the Duke. "You will sup with me to-night, you two. Do you make a long stay, Count Spada?"

"Who can say, Duke of Burgundy? I suppose until I have diced away my money, or have killed a man in a brawl, or done something else which will make me fly your Court. Few courts keep me long. I am better known than trusted. Dicing and brawling are the elements in which I live."

"Faith, then you will do here," said the

Duke, with a sneer. "Welcome to Pandemonium, thou fallen angel. I think that, take us all in all, we are the worst set of scoundrels in all Europe. What says Van Dysart, mine enemy?"

"Your Highness's very good friend," said Van Dysart.

"True, true," said the Duke. "There are none virtuous but you and I. Our virtue rusts at times, but it is there. Count Spada, you are welcome."

CHAPTER VI.

THE winter came down, the dykes and canals were frozen, and the snow brought new light and beauty to Ghent, and new misery to the lower part of the working population.

There was no good organization of charity in those days, though perhaps as much of it as there is now. Immense doles were sometimes given, but they were ill administered. The Gilden, one is told, took as good care of *their* broken-down members as do the trades unions and benefit societies of to-day, all

honour to them. There was but small poverty among *them*. It was among the class lower than them, among the hewers of wood and drawers of water, the horse-holders and the innumerable ministers to the summer's luxury, in which the great distress was. Also great numbers of the lower agricultural population, who had gained a scanty subsistence in the country during summer, returned in winter to die warm instead of cold. It was among these classes that the work of the religious bodies lay.

And they did their best possible, notwithstanding occasional squabbles among one another, and a great deal of mismanagement and ignorance (we are not free from *that* yet). Great charities had then, as now, been diverted from their first intention, and had some of them, instead of (as now) being put into commission, been

swallowed by the esurient house of Burgundy for their sins, to the never-ending exasperation of Father Peter and his bosom friend, Sister Priscilla, who were always going to write to Rome about these things, but who never had time.

Father Peter was a secular clergyman of extremely advanced radical views, like his coadjutor, Sister Priscilla. These two worthy democrats between them led the good Archbishop the deuce of a life. They were always urging him to write to Rome for them, and he was always pointing out to them that it would be certain ruin to all three to do so. As for those two, they would have walked barefooted to Rome, and denounced the great and awful house of Burgundy before that most terrible of tribunals.

It was a cold day, and all the architecture

was marked by lines of silver snow upon its frettings, when Sister Priscilla and Father Peter met at a windy street corner, and refreshed themselves with a little sedition.

"A plague on Dukes, *I* say," began Sister Priscilla, "I am sick and stupid with Dukes; and what do we want here with Dukes of Burgundy? I wish he would go back there, and then honest folks might lead decent lives."

"It is good for trade," said Priest Peter, whose nose was blue with cold, who was fasting, who had unwittingly lost a paper containing a handsome list of masses, which had been farmed out to him, and in consequence the money for them; which was part of his miserable income: so he was fractious and impracticable.

"Why?" said Sister Priscilla.

"Why?" snapped Priest Peter; "you may well say why?"

"Then I will say it again," said Sister Priscilla, and did so. Whereupon Priest Peter, well knowing her powers of iteration, asked her suddenly which way she was walking. She on her part answered him after her usual manner, that is to say, by keeping to her subject until she had made an end of it.

"Trade! and you a Christian priest! Trade! Devil's trade! Trade! I wish he would trade away to Paris again. We Flemings were honest until these Burgundians with their scum of Paris and scum of Italy came and polluted us. As far as a Christian may curse, I curse the worthless house of Burgundy."

"Thanks, sweet nun," said a clear, sharp voice behind her. "I will remember you

in my prayers the next time I do not forget to say them. Philip, of that accursed house of Burgundy, would be glad for a direction to the Judenstrasse."

Peter the Priest slunk away appalled. While he had been arguing with Sister Priscilla a large procession had approached them over the silent snow unheard; that procession now stood silent in the bright white street, so fantastically strange and beautiful, that he paused in his terror to look on the splendid picture.

Contrasted with the white snow were a gaudily-dressed group of nobles and courtiers, perhaps numbering some twenty, grouped with unstudied elegance. When I say that they were gaudily dressed, I simply mean to use that word in its old sense, for their clothes were selected with that instinct for pure colour which we lack now,

and for which our best artists are returning, as it were humbly and on their knees, to learn of the men of olden time. The effect to the eye was that of a number of the best and most tenderly coloured butterflies, say purple emperors and Camberwell beauties, on a ground of surrounding snow. Crimson passed into purple, and purple into bright cold sharp blue; maroon declined into brown, and then was lit up with pure primrose yellow, and amidst it all was the gleam of gold everywhere, and the firelike flash of jewels. The slight motion which they allowed themselves was merely marked by the motion of the plumes in their bonnets, that head-dress which all nations have abandoned save the Scotch. Otherwise the magnificent bevy of beautifully-dressed feudalists was still in amused expectation. Further away in the snow the Priest could

see a file of grey steel-clad guards, solemn, inexorable, with thought and responsibility crushed out by routine; behind again, the dim-coloured mob, each man of which was a world to himself, save for a few days in each year, when the privileges of his order were in danger, and he rose, fought, and died as bravely as the best courtier among them all.

Priest Peter stood entranced. Radical and ecclesiastic as he was, he would have made his picture of showily-dressed ecclesiastics, and an entourage of dimly-coloured poor, who should follow the ecclesiastics, and do their bidding humbly. But it was not so: there were the courtiers in all their beauty, grace of movement, power of action, perfection of cultivated colour; behind them grey inexorable guards; behind the guards the people, gazing as near as they

dared at the men who were eating their hearts, yet ready to swarm on them at any moment, and hunt them like wild beasts, and who had, in fact, done so before, and were to do so again, as it were fruitlessly, until the dull thunder of Drake's cannon came booming upon the ear of Parma, and the uncertain dawn of freedom began to grow into certain glorious day, and the romantic art which these nobles represented, to cease upon the world of nature.

Priest Peter, hating it all, still admired: his eye had been educated ecclesiastically, and had taught him what colour was; and, moreover, a man gets his purest and most delicate ideas of colour from the half-toned dresses of the poor. Yet after a minute of admiration for the courtiers, and a glimpse of thought about the political situation which the spectacle showed him, his atten-

tion was entirely absorbed by the group of three, which was in advance of the courtier group, and nearest to him, the group from which he had seceded.

Sister Priscilla, coal black, with her legs planted in a determined manner into the snow.

Philip of Burgundy, afterwards Philippe le Bon—a pale youth, of great physical power but loosely built, dressed in violet velvet with crimson hose, not as you see him now, but brighter and younger, with a sense of humour about that great mouth of his, which we look in vain for afterwards.

John Van Eyck, his alter ego, who was to become his love confidant, the wooer of his bride,—to play Buckingham to his Charles Stuart,—to leave Margaret and Hubert and to follow his darling prince,—to leave the people for the Court,—to leave

his wife to the lottery, his daughter to the nunnery—and yet, though degenerated from his greater brother, to keep his art pure and undefiled through it all: raising our souls nigh heaven, while he must have been dragging his own near hell. An old story this of the handsome youth who stood by young Philip of Burgundy in the snow, dressed in puce satin slashed with crimson. An old old story. The priests insist to one that the merits of the ordinances are not retracted by the unworthiness of the ministrant: may it be so in art? One who was a courtier, and no more, could not have painted the four kneeling angels.

"Nun, nun," said young Philip of Burgundy, "you were cursing our house. What prevents me from delivering you over to justice, and having you fried?"

Sister Priscilla sniffed, and pointed right

over his head at the dull-coloured swarming mob behind the guards.

"Precisely," said Philip. "John Van Eyck, my beloved, this woman is a woman of vast penetration. Van Janssen!"

A courtier stepped up at once.

"Catch me that lurking priest, will you? bring him here, and call up a file of the guards and walk him off to prison."

Priest Peter was at once brought back, five guards were put in possession of his person, and Philip gave them the order to take him to the gaol in the Place.

"Which way, Sire?" asked the courtier.

"Which way, fool? There is but one; back that way, right through the mob, to be sure."

And Priest Peter with five guards was marched solemnly through the swarming

workmen, Philip of Burgundy never waiting to see the result, but marching away with his guards and courtiers in another direction, with the enforced attendance of Sister Priscilla.

"There is nothing against the priest," said John Van Eyck.

"I only wanted to give those dogs a lesson," said Philip. "Now, Mistress Nun, step out; gentlemen, follow."

CHAPTER VII.

"MOVE on, gentlemen," said young Philip of Burgundy; and the procession moved quickly through the snow after him, Philip, John Van Eyck, and Sister Priscilla foremost. Philip in violet velvet and crimson hose; John Van Eyck in puce satin slashed with crimson; and Sister Priscilla in most inexorable and emphatic black. Behind them the courtiers, dressed in colours which would kill Mr. Burne Jones with envy. Behind the grey

steel-coloured guards; behind again the dull brown-coloured mob, swarming along the snow-white street, like a highland river in spate amidst snow-covered meadows.

"Nun," said Philip of Burgundy, "do you know what I am going to do?"

"No good, I should say, if you are your own father's son," replied Sister Priscilla. "But it is a wicked world, and they say that you are not wicked."

Philip of Burgundy laughed, just as he laughed afterwards when Bruges had been destroyed. "She is a vixen, this nun, John," he said.

John Van Eyck was decidedly of opinion that she was little better.

"Hear me, nun," said Philip of Burgundy. "I am going to 18, Judenstrasse, an ugly place, and I am going to take

you, as a religious woman, for respectability's sake."

"To keep off the mob?" remarked Sister Priscilla.

"Exactly so," said Philip.

"What do you want there?" she asked. "But," she continued, "what is the good of asking? Your house are all liars born and liars bred. If I wanted to get the truth from any member of the cursed house of Burgundy I should have to lie myself, in hopes that I might get the truth from you through sheer opposition. Your house is winning, and that is the character which you have gained from the people. I speak as one who knows the people; that is to say, one who knows the opinions of the men's wives. Van Kenning will tell you what the men tell him, and he knows much. Van Dysart will

tell you what the men tell him, and he knows nothing. The men tell their wives their whole soul, and the wives tell me. And the men have told their wives, and their wives have told me, that the house of Burgundy is a rotten, stupid, and cruel house, and that it shall go down."

"How soon, vixen?"

She knelt down on the snow, and began in a loud, shrill voice, the 76th Psalm.

"Take her up, Van Eyck," said Philip, furiously. "Popery is maddening all these fools. What do you mean by kneeling on the snow?"

"Some shall kneel on the snow, but not to thee, Burgundy," was her very quaint answer. What she meant when she spoke was that the trades unions, led by ecclesiastics, would kneel on some winter's

night, before a revolutionary movement. Her words were fulfilled oddly enough afterwards.

While John Van Eyck was dusting the snow off her knees, Philip of Burgundy asked her once more, "Do you know for what purpose we are going to 18, Judenstrasse, and why I have taken you into custody to keep away the mob?"

"Yes," said Sister Priscilla, "yes, *I* know. Thank you, John Van Eyck, *you* are a gentleman. Yes, I know all about it. We are all bent on the same object. Some of us will go to heaven and some to hell. With regard to this expedition: I understand all about it. You want to catch Van Dysart in that house."

"You are right, nun," said Philip of Burgundy.

Sister Priscilla turned on him with a

look of utter scorn. "Of course I am right," she said.

"Shall we catch him?" said Philip.

"He must be a great fool if we do; as great a fool as you are yourself," said Sister Priscilla. "I sent him word that you were coming three hours ago."

The good nature of Philippe le Bon never deserted him. He only said, "Your reason?"

Sister Priscilla looked at him for a moment and then said quietly, "Sir, you are the first true gentleman of your house. I will tell you why I have traversed your plans in this manner. The man's time is not come. I am, like yourself, though for different reasons, engaged in the ruin of this man; but his time is not come. Burgundy, consider. If I had allowed the net to be drawn round that man to-day;

if I had allowed you, in your blundering, stupid Burgundian folly, to take that man in the stronghold of the Jewish illuminati, he would have had the people with him. I want him free for a time, until the people understand him. I want him to have it all his own way, till the time comes which has not come yet. You could have hung him to-day. What then? The murderer of Margaret's lover—I speak to you, John Van Eyck—would have been a martyr. John, I will not have it so. John Van Eyck, leave this man to us—to Priscilla the nun, to Van Kenning the politician, to Spada the scoundrel. He thinks that he is going to be let off so easily. He thinks that he is going to die in peace—he, the murderer of Leon. No! No! Ten thousand times no. Every hound is on his trail. Every sin against him is being

brought up. The Bishop, Father Peter, Spada, Van Kenning, all of us, bad and good, are on his track, and this stupid house of Burgundy chooses to step in between us and our vengeance. Ha! Ha!"

"You are mad, and your sentiments are not those of a religious woman," said John Van Eyck, with the base Court twang.

"You are a greater fool than your friend Philip of Burgundy," said Sister Priscilla, looking at Philippe le Bon. "He will use you and ruin you. Princes always do. But he knows what vengeance is, and I am one in a great plot to avenge the death of your sister's lover."

"But she does not know anything of this?" said Philippe le Bon.

"She asked your father for vengeance, my Lord—at least, my Lord, they say so.

She asked for vengeance. She asked it of Van Kenning, and he asked the Duke."

"You are a very curious sort of nun," said Philippe le Bon. "How do you make all this fit in with your Christianity?"

"I *am* a very curious sort of nun," said Sister Priscilla. "Every one knows it; and I do not make it fit in with my Christianity in any way whatever. One thing I do know. Van Dysart killed my own Margaret's pretty lover, and I will hunt him to ruin for it if I should lose heaven in doing so."

"But surely," said Philip of Burgundy, "her brothers——"

"Her brothers!" said Sister Priscilla, furiously. "Her brothers would quarrel with her if she did not mix their paints right. He, the good Leon, killed like a dog by this scoundrel Van Dysart, would

have been petulant with her after he was tired of her. It is so with men. I have read in Scripture that there is a love between men, a pure and beautiful love surpassing the love of man for woman—of which I know nothing. But, Burgundy, there is a love of woman to woman surpassing the love of man towards woman. I have this love for Margaret Van Eyck. I tried to laugh her out of her love for Leon, but could not, and so I yielded, and he became flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone. And Van Dysart killed our pretty boy in the street, Burgundy, and I am mad against him."

"Madam," said Philip of Burgundy, who was a gentleman after the pattern of his time, "think of your religious vows."

"That is what maddens me," said Sister Priscilla.

Philip could think of nothing particular to say, matters had gone utterly out of his sphere. But he found that he was conceiving a profound respect for this famous nun, although he could not help thinking that she was at no good work.

John Van Eyck, with the dreadful voice of the artist-courtier, remarked—

"If the good Sister is correct, why should we go on to 18, Judenstrasse?"

"Let us go on," said Sister Priscilla. "*He* will think that we have played our trumps. Let us go on. He will shame us through not having been there. But, mind you, Burgundy and Van Eyck, that we must keep our own counsel. Cannot you imprison me for false information, Burgundy?"

"I will speak to my father about it, if it is agreeable to yourself," said Philippe le Bon;

"but I do not think that you would like it. However, I have not the least doubt that my father would hang us all up by the neck, if we asked him. Here is 18, Judenstrasse."

A place like a wynd in Edinburgh. The courtiers swarmed in, with Burgundy, John Van Eyck, and Sister Priscilla. It was a house of bad repute, and the young courtiers were noisy and riotous when they got into the large room upstairs, having no idea in the world for what purpose they were brought there. There was an old lady, who bowed very much, and was glad to see such a gallant company in her poor rooms. Nothing else. No Van Dysart or Spada, not a shadow of them. One jocular young courtier thought that he would amuse Burgundy by kissing Sister Priscilla; which he did: but the next instant the

old Burgundy fist—a very emphatic one—knocked out two of his teeth, and left him lying with his head in the fireplace; and the old Burgundy voice—also a very emphatic one—said, "Curse you, you hound, leave the nun alone!"

That night Philippe le Bon (as he was to be) could not go to bed without John Van Eyck to take off his shoes. And Philip said to John—

"We are not in a good business at all!"

And John Van Eyck asked him what he meant.

"This revenge business. We are all wrong. What does Hubert say of it?"

"I am not my brother's keeper," said John Van Eyck, with a smirk.

"Well," said Philip, "our house has done darker jobs than this. But I don't like it. That nun Priscilla has upset me:

blow out that candle, and go to bed.—What's that? Fallen down? I should think you had, from the noise. Fallen over the page, eh? Kick the young rascal in the ribs, and tell him if he snores I will comb his head with the bedstaff.—I say, John!"

"My Lord!"

"My groom is on the floor there, in the corner somewhere. Kick him, will you?"

John Van Eyck found a young man in a corner near the fire, and aroused him gently.

"You dog!" said Philip.

"My Lord!" said the groom.

"If you do not wake me at dawn to-morrow morning, I will have you flayed alive."

"Yes, my Lord."

"Have you heard the conversation between myself and John Van-Eyck?"

"Every word, my Lord."

"Then you must be put to death."

"Yes, my Lord."

"Go to bed, Van Eyck, do. I do not know which is the greatest fool of us all. Sometimes I think I am, but generally I think it is you; the groom is the wisest man of the lot, for he can tell the truth—a habit which you and I have forgotten."

John Van Eyck went to bed, and the groom and page slept before the fire in the room of young Philip of Burgundy. But in the middle of the night they were awakened. Philip of Burgundy had given the cry which had awakened them, and as he slept naked, as all men did then, what they saw when they started, scared from their slumbers, was the Duke in bed, sitting

up, bare to the waist, with the horror of nightmare on his face, and every muscle in his body rigid.

"The nun is the worst devil!" he shrieked. "Where is my mother?"

The groom, his foster-brother and henchman—an arrangement which prevails still in the Highlands—put his arm round his neck, and tried to soothe him.

"Jan! Jan!" said Burgundy, "I have been dreaming of all the devils in hell, and the worst devils were the nun and Van Kenning. I told Van Eyck to kick you; I would have killed him if he had. But *he* knows that. Do *you* approve of this?"

"Of what, my Lord?"

"Of this—of this horrible conspiracy. If I were to tell you, would you kill a man for me at once?"

"Of course I would, my Lord. Go to sleep; you are joking."

"It were better to have him killed at once. I will go to Hubert to-morrow."

"If you wish my knife into his body, my Lord, you had better not speak to Hubert Van Eyck; he would never permit it."

"Your knife? and into whose body?"

"Maria! into Van Dysart's. Is there a Burgundian who would not assassinate him? but leave him to his own ways, and trust in the devil's justice."

And so Philip of Burgundy fell from his henchman's arms and slept.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE man Van Dysart was utterly doomed. The earth was sick of the dog, and in the whole world he had no friend—at least, no friend who had the least power. I only write the present story to show how a man may be hunted to death by a combination of people acting under different motives for the same object. Some people have a way of making deeply bitter enemies: Van Dysart was one. I fear that I must ask you to follow me while I go through the list of this most

unhappy man's enemies; and I fear also that I must ask you to remember them. If the man had no friend in the world, surely in common chivalry we may remember the names of his enemies.

First, then, Van Kenning—why not John Duke of Burgundy? you say. I answer, that the Whig, Van Kenning, was much more powerful than John Duke of Burgundy. Burgundy knew it. Van Kenning was the Whig of the time; he kept peace between the Court and the workers. He was the soul's health and comfort to John of Burgundy. Van Dysart was one person, Van Kenning was another. Van Dysart was a man who would bet that the cathedral could be knocked down without his own house, built just below it, suffering in any way. Van Kenning, on the other hand, knew well that even the boldest of

the labouring hands were not sufficiently foolish to wish for a redistribution of that fund which is called by some wages fund, by others capital, for say, twenty-five years, with the loss accruing on interest, at that time some thirty-five per cent. Van Kenning considered, as a Whig, that matters could be brought round comfortably without an elective presidency: Van Dysart rather liked the idea of an elective presidency. So they were political enemies, and the political question remains to this very day; it is scarcely altered from its old position. The question still remains—"Are the people fit to govern themselves, or are they not?" To this great question we decline to give an answer here. We only say, that Van Kenning was of opinion that the people in Ghent required guiding; and that Van Dysart, the gamester, said

that he thought that the lowest and least educated class in the community were fit to manage their own affairs. Further than this we have nothing whatever to do with the matter. But it enables us to see that Van Kenning, the respectable Whig, and Van Dysart, the Tory radical, were at loggerheads on political matters.

Now Van Kenning had a devotion to Margaret Van Eyck, to which the devotion of Abelard to Heloise was a boyish passion, to which the love of Petrarch to Laura was a mere piece of maundering sentimentality. He was a man of pure life and of excellent morality. He was what would now be called a doctrinaire radical; a man who felt deeply the wrongs of the people, and a man who would right them by any means. When he was a little younger than he was at the time of which we speak, Margaret Van Eyck had appeared to him one morn-

ing, and in her quiet calm way had required him to come to her brother's studio and sit to her for his portrait. He agreed, and so day after day he sat before her, talking with her about the wrongs of the people. The result in one way is the portrait of the man in minever on the left voile of the greatest picture in Europe; the result in another way was this: that Van Kenning fell deeply in love with her, and that he asked her to marry him.

She said that she would marry no one.

Said Van Kenning, "I think you lie!" for they spoke so in those times.

"I think I do not," said Margaret. "I would not marry any man. Why should I? If you wish to be answered that I love you deeply and heartily, you may go away with that assurance. But I do not wish to marry you. Why should we marry? I

think that I love you too well to marry you. Surely we can love one another without marrying."

"Will you marry another man?" said Van Kenning.

"Which man?"

"Van Dysart."

"Let him marry Martina."

"Leon?"

Margaret put down her palette and her brushes very quietly, and looked Van Kenning straight in the face. "I doubt I did lie, Van Kenning," she said. "I think I would marry him, if he asked me."

"Let it be so then," said Van Kenning, quite quietly.

"In what way?" said Margaret Van Eyck.

"Merely in this way," said Van Kenning: "You are my choice; he is yours; I give

all my life to you and to him. I would give all my life to you, but you will not accept it. My life must be given to you and to him. This answer of yours is death to me; but I will try to do my duty by you and by Leon."

Now it occurred to him that he had *not* done his duty according to his promise, in the fatal duel between Van Dysart and Leon. The only ugly thing in the whole life of Van Kenning was that duel. He could have raised the very devil of democracy over that duel, but did not. He could have stopped it, but did not. The Archbishop, douce man, could have done nothing; but Van Kenning could have roused the people by many cries. Why did he not do so? It is an ugly question, not to be answered by me. Margaret forgave him, and he is walking towards the glory of

heaven in the left voile of the great picture; but he never forgave himself. The most dangerous, ruthless, and deadly enemy Van Dysart had for a time was Van Kenning.

John of Burgundy was of course Van Dysart's enemy. We in these days have done what Sièyes said *he* had done (which he had not), *Achever la politique.* Mr. Bright speaks some sharp truths, and Auberon Herbert does the same. In the cases of Van Kenning and Mr. Bright you expect chronic radicalism; but when you see young aristocrats going in for strong radicalism, as in the cases of Auberon Herbert and Van Dysart, you may depend that something is wrong in the State. We are very sorry to have to make any personal allusions in a novel; but Mr. Auberon Herbert so nobly represents his order, that I think I have full right to speak of him in comparison

with the typical Cimbrian nobleman of the thirteenth century, Van Dysart. These aristocrats have learnt their lessons, and are doing grandly. The people are not out of their leading-strings yet, but require leaders. In the thirteenth century they had such leaders as Van Kenning and Van Dysart. In the nineteenth century they get leaders like Gladstone, Bright, Lowe, and Auberon Herbert. Compare the new with the old, and you will see how far the people are winning; compare Van Dysart with any leader of the day, and form your own conclusions. It seems that the educated class have learnt their duty, and are honestly bent on pursuing it.

John of Burgundy hated the people, and the people hated him; had Van Dysart had the virtues of a good modern nobleman, he might have been dangerous to the terrible

Burgundy himself. He was not dangerous, for the people believed in his virtue, with all their faults; but John of Burgundy thought him dangerous, and Philip his son hated the man heartily.

The Archbishop was a churchman and a gentleman, a perfectly good man in every way. The Archbishop had large revenues, but they were not spent on himself, but on the poor. A decent sumptuousness prevailed in his house, but only for the credit of his church. His sisters lived with him and managed his household; there was not a better managed house in the Netherlands. To the Archbishop the man Van Dysart was a hideous horror.

A priest, be he Catholic or Protestant, lives solely for his religion. It is the breath of his nostrils: there are some hypocrites among the ministers of all creeds, but

we believe but very few; and a mere hypocrite will stand by his cloth to the death, as a mutineer will stand by his regiment when shot and shells begin to rive the earth about him. The Archbishop was no hypocrite, but a thorough true and noble person, unceasing night and day in good works, as gallant a man as any in the Netherlands: radical, as all true priests must be; conservative, as all priests are of necessity. Yet our brave Archbishop had that feminine spite which is born of exclusion. He was married to a bride, to the *Church*. To him the Church was a *wife*. All the powers of his nature were thrown into the Church, and he begot sons upon her, and very noble sons some of them were. Now, with a man of such a nature as the Archbishop's, you will find that it is dangerous to come between him and his wife. Van Dysart was an

open scoffer, and was competing for power among the people with the Archbishop. One of them must go down, and the Archbishop was most emphatically determined that the one who went down should not be he, the Archbishop. The Archbishop had sense, courage, and power; Van Dysart had merely the ear of the more turbulent factory hands; the Archbishop had the ear of the women.

And he had determined that Van Dysart must go. Alone he would have been sufficient to destroy the friendless man, for the man was friendless at Court now; but in addition to the terrible enemies of whom we have spoken above, the unhappy Van Dysart had three others.

The woman Martina, whom, as they said, he had ruined and cast on the streets, but who, in spite of her sins and her wildness,

could rouse Ghent, and rousing Ghent in those times, when there were no chassepôts, was a fearful thing. Thanks to Haussmann, who cut into revolutionary Paris while she was asleep, and made her pay 40,000,000*l.* for it afterwards, the party of order can now pound its St. Antoine at its leisure.* In Ghent, at the time of which we speak, things were not so. A woman of bad character, with a drum, half-a-dozen radical priests, and the same number of trades union leaders, were capable of raising such a wasps' nest about the Imperial ears of Burgundy as made Burgundy think twice—nay, three times—before he dared the hazard of the battle. The perfection of artillery is the death of democracy. Storks and Palliser could have stopped the French

* All this was written before recent events.

Revolution. Fancy the unutterable hay which would be made of any six hundred dusty-footed gentlemen who advanced on Paris from Marseilles *now*. There is something fearful in contemplating the power which is put into the hands of the ruling powers by the mere possession of guns. One comfort is, that the ruling parties have not learnt their power, or liberty would be dead. It was not so in Ghent at this time. The working people were closely packed, and knew personally and by sight every one in any way notorious. They knew Van Dysart and Martina; they knew how he had treated her, but they were used to that. The dangerous party among the workmen liked Van Dysart. The safer and more powerful party loved from the bottom of their hearts Van Kenning. But nevertheless, God often puts green heads on

grey shoulders, and if this girl, young and beautiful yet, were to take it into her head to proclaim her unalterable wrong through Ghent, and call for vengeance, matters might go very ill with Van Dysart. Van Kenning desired that matters should go ill with Van Dysart, and the Duke of Burgundy had hired that utterly scoundrelly good-humoured hound, Spada of Bologna, to see that matters *did* go wrong with Van Dysart.

Duke John and Philippe le Bon were talking together when Spada was shown in. "Come here, you scoundrel," said John Duke of Burgundy.

"Don't call him scoundrel, father," said Philippe le Bon, aloud, and in the very coolest manner. "You must remember that if he is a scoundrel he is also a gentleman."

Spada burst out laughing. "This looks

good," he said to the Duke of Burgundy. "This looks like employment, obligation, and what is more to the purpose, money. But with regard to business. When three thorough-going scoundrels get together, my Lord Duke of Burgundy, they generally mean business, and generally *talk* business."

"Sir," said the Duke of Burgundy, "you are very insolent."

"Of course I am, Duke. If I were not the most insolent man in Europe I should not have been here. I suppose that you want to buy my impudence. It is at your disposal, at a reasonable sum."

"You should be more respectful," said the Duke.

Spada at once cast his bonnet on the floor, advanced to the Duke and kissed his instep. "Anything more required, my

Lord Duke, or shall we have it all over at once."

Philippe le Bon began giggling. "Say what you want, father." And the great Duke John laughed again.

"I want some work from you. Have you diced away all your money?"

"No," said Spada, "I have still some left. I will not trouble you at present." And saying this the magnificent animal drew himself up and showed himself before the two as the beautiful and terrible scoundrel which he was. The splendid elasticity of his body excited the curiosity of the then head of the athletic family of Burgundy. "Why, man," said Duke John, "you are as strong as I."

"If your Highness will give me the chance I will prove that I am the stronger," said Spada.

"I am too old and too fat," said John of Burgundy. "But let us come to business. I want a man out of the way."

"I have put many men out of the way for many Princes, and hope to put many more. It pays."

"As to the consideration?" said the Duke.

"*I* always leave the money part of the business to the Prince," said Spada. "I never yet was disappointed in my expectations by a Prince or nobleman in trifling details of this kind. I am a man who does not bear disappointment. What can be done for the goose can be done for the gander. Now, Lord Duke, who is your man, and how is it to be done?"

"The man is Van Dysart."

Spada, with his nerves of iron, actually started. "I do not understand you," he said.

"This fellow, Van Dysart, must be got rid of," said the Duke.

"But I had orders to that effect before, my Lord Duke. I have been as diligent as a man could be."

"From whom did you get your order?" said the Duke.

"From yourself through Van Kenning, my Lord."

"You can't prove *that*," said the Duke.

"My Lord," said Spada, "let there be honour among gentlemen. I cannot. I never prove anything. The trade by which I live and thrive requires, like your own, a total absence of logic and morality. I have no more logic or morality than you, my Lord Duke. So I am absolutely and entirely dumb. I was doing the thing you want me to do, but in a roundabout manner. Do you want me to get rid of

the man suddenly and sharply; do you wish me to fight him, or do you wish me to assassinate him? In the case of your requiring his assassination, my Lord Duke, I must require the fullest assurances from you that I must go free. It is a part of the business by which I live which I have never taken up. I must make a very stout bargain with you, my Lord, before I do that."

"Confound the rascally Italian," said the elder Burgundy. "I don't want the man *murdered*. I want him *ruined*."

"Oh, that is all!" said Spada. "What a pity it is that we had not understood one another before. My dear Duke, you can make your mind perfectly easy; I am hard at that work, with others. I was afraid that you were going to pay me to cut the throat of my milch cow. My

dear Lord, my good Duke, my most reverend Duke of Burgundy, I live by that young man. Conceive the relief it is to my mind to find that you do not want me to cut his throat. Of course I should have done so. I would cut yours if I was paid for it at a sufficient price. You only want me to ruin him?"

"That is all."

"That is a very easy business; there are others at it with me."

"Allow me to offer you this purse," said the Duke of Burgundy.

"Thanks. Allow me to decline it. I thought you wanted his throat cut. But I get as much as I want for a man of my simple habits out of the poor hound at play. I won't take your money."

"You are an honest rascal," said the Duke.

"Duke, if one rascal may speak to another, I would say that I am an honest rascal."

"Sir?"

"Sir, I will prove it. In this matter you have no need of me. There are two who will hunt that man, Van Dysart, to ruin and never trouble us. You would have thrown the money you would have given me to the dogs, Duke."

"Who are these two?" asked the Duke.

"As usual, a priest and a nun," said Spada. "Soldiers, priests, and nuns govern this world as of old."

"But what priest and what nun?" asked the Duke, aghast.

"The priest is called Father Peter, a Secular; the nun is one Priscilla, a Sister of the order of the Holy Heart."

"I know them," cried Philippe le Bon.

"Doubtless," said Spada. "A young Prince so given to holy works as the heir apparent to the throne of Burgundy *would* know such people."

Philippe le Bon's temper broke down utterly at this. "You infernal dog!" was the only expression which the well-known hereditary powers of objurgation furnished him with.

"I beg your pardon," said Spada, very coolly; "I was talking to your father until you interrupted me. I was saying that this priest and nun will hunt the dog down for us, for love, not for money. Speaking merely as a man of the world and a soldier, I should say that you had better not employ me. My character is not good. I am a notorious bully. I have been seen with you two, and if anything was to happen to this Van Dysart through me, it

would be said at once that you had hired me. The priest and the nun will do the matter quietly. I do not want money; I can win all the money I want from him. I would really not employ me if I was in your place, Duke."

And so the Duke said that he would not.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE went about in these days in Ghent a swift dirty priest, with a little grey dog. And there went usually with him a swift nun, who told beads and said prayers as she walked; and she said her prayers and told her beads with such singular emphasis, that the people of Ghent called her the Cursing Nun.

Whenever these two passed through the crowded streets at the dinner hour of the workmen at high bright noon, a lane was made for them, partly from respect, partly from terror. The enormous rush of work-

men from the factories in Ghent in those days was so great that no women or children dared stay in the street after the noonday bell. Yet this shabby priest and this cursing nun might go where they listed, and the little grey dog might follow the priest with his little pattering feet, for the dog was of the people, and the people, with their feminine instincts, knew it. Neither John or Philip of Burgundy dare take their bloodhounds among the people, but the little grey dog could go anywhere.

There were very few of these little grey dogs then in the Netherlands, and indeed there are but few now. The blood of the Macdonalds has fertilized every battlefield in Europe, yet they for the most part are forgotten, as "the Scotchman abroad" *is* forgotten. But there had come a Macdonald to offer his person and his sword to

John Duke of Burgundy, and he swash-bucklered into a public-house, and quarrelled with a Frenchman; and Gil Macdonald knew the use of the claymore better than the Andrea Ferrara, and the Frenchman killed our bonny Gil; and they buried our bonny Gil: so his mother, in the shadow of Schiehallion, never saw him any more. They thought there was an end and finish of Gil Macdonald, who came, as they believed, from Sweden; but when the priest had said his say, and the turf was patted down carefully, there remained sitting at the grave's head a little grey dog.

No one noticed the little grey dog at all. It was a very humble little dog. Dandy Dinmont, of Charlie's Hope, was not to be born for four hundred years. Yet here sat a little Scotch Dandy at the head of the grave of a Macdonald.

The little dog, like all Scotch dogs, and Scotch men, had not only a true heart, but a keen brain. It thought a great deal about the matter, and then it came to the conclusion that its master was dead, and that it must shift for itself. So it went back into the city of Ghent, from the glacis where its master, poor Gil Macdonald, was buried.

The town was very strange to it, for Gil, glorious lad, was very quarrelsome, and an ill swordsman. His career had been very short. The dog did not know towns; he was from Fortingal, at the end of Glen Lyon, and was in reality brought up by that most unfortunate clan, so dear to every English schoolboy, the Macgregors. I could show how he came into the hands of a Macdonald, if I chose. The situation is the main point. At the beginning of the

fifteenth century there was a little Scotch terrier in Ghent, whose master had been killed in a duel.

What was that little dog to do. It did not know any more than I do. It went back to the town, like Chatterton, but it was utterly unsuccessful. Some said that it was not a dog at all, for who had ever seen a dog like that? Some said that it *was* a *dog*, but an amorphous and improbable dog, and must be put to death. This we all know is a very dangerous argument against any dog, human or other; so the boys took the matter up with their usual good sense, and pelted the dog, because, as they argued, the dog was improbable. Scotch terriers are better known now.

The town was no success for the little grey dog, whose masters have done much of

the noblest share in conquering the earth. The unlucky little brute thought that it would find its way back to its dead master's head, at the grave on the glacis, and die there. The dog's intentions were no worse than these.

But John of Burgundy was building on to his palace, and there were some broken stones lying about, and the little dog had to pass the place; and the Cimbrian youth considered that a Celtic dog was improbable, therefore impossible, therefore to be destroyed. So they pelted stones at it, and one more dextrous than the others cut its head open.

Our little grey Macdonald dog ran swiftly and avoided being killed. What goes on in a dog's head is more than my knowledge can tell, but it got free from the suburbs, and crept along under a wall towards the

glacis. It said to itself, I think, "Why are men angry with *me?*" And behold, as it said so, while it was crouching under the wall, there came towards it a man and a woman in furious anger. The little grey dog lay down and prepared for death.

"Priscilla," said Father Peter, furiously, "I tell you to leave it to God."

"We are instruments in the hands of God," said Sister Priscilla.

"Have you no mercy, no patience?"

"None; Van Dysart must die."

"Hush!" said Father Peter. "Here is one who wants our mercy more than Van Dysart, Priscilla; this is the dog of the Swede who was killed yesterday by Burgundy's groom. I want something to love, Priscilla; I will love this. I am sick of all this hate. I will do what is agreed about the man, but I will love the little dog."

The little Scotch dog had given itself up by now. It would have preferred to die at its master's grave (for, like all good Scotchmen, it was in the matter of sentimentality an idiot), but it was quite ready to be killed by the infuriated priest or the infuriated nun. It propped against the wall and wagged feebly; whereupon the nun burst into a furious passion of tears, and cried "Misericordia! misericordia!"

"Let us take it to Margaret," said Father Peter. And the nun took possession of the person of that little Scotch dog, and carried it to the studio of the Van Eycks.

CHAPTER X.

"WHO comes here?" said John Van Eyck, putting his palette beside him. "A nun and a priest: do not tell me that it is Father Peter and Sister Priscilla. Margaret! Margaret! here are our friends. My feeble souls! how are you getting through this wicked world?"

"As all feeble souls should—by taking something more feeble than ourselves under our protection," said Sister Priscilla. "It was Martina yesterday; it is a little Scythian dog to-day. Here it is. Look at it, you Van Eyck, and paint *pity!*"

She put down the little Scotch dog before him, and the dog thinking that this was the place of execution, propped up against some armour, and wagged its tail. It was such a very poor little dog, and its head was cut open and bleeding. Hubert Van Eyck said, "Be quiet!" very sharply, and then bent down his grand face toward the face of the little dog.

"Margaret, come here."

Margaret was behind him, and had her arm round his neck in an instant, frowning at the others to be silent.

"Oh Margaret, Margaret, did you ever see anything like this? So far from its old home, and without one solitary friend!"

"One of *your* master Burgundy's grooms killed *its* master in a duel yesterday," struck in Sister Priscilla. "We know that much, because the dog's master, who was

from Tartary, spoke French—and Peter can speak French, and spoke to him about religion, and the young man was a good Catholic. He was a handsome young man, and came from among mountains, but said that he was not a Swiss. Well. Will you be kind to the dog if we leave him here?"

Hubert and Margaret Van Eyck were down before the dog, when a very quiet voice said, behind them all—

"The dog is safe to get good treatment here; but he will run away, I fear. Let him follow you two among the people. It will be better in the end, *I* know."

If she did not, who did? for the woman who spoke was Martina.

She was amazingly beautiful, but not with the beauty of the ideal Magdalen, or with the beauty of the Fornarina. Of the

splendour of her beauty there was no doubt; in colour, complexion, form of face, majestic carriage of head, there was nothing left to be desired; yet it was a little marred in three ways. In the first place, the mouth was rather too large, too powerful, and, if we dare say it, too sensuous. In the second place, above her really grand and tender eyes, and above her grand mask, there loomed an awful black thunder-cloud of black eyebrow, which had lightning and fury in it. There was a horrible potential wrath under those terrible black eyebrows, which boded no good to some one. A man had better meet a bear deprived of her cubs than this woman, *if he had made her hate him.* The woman's face was a thunder-cloud; but just now that face was floating in the peaceful summer air which Hubert and Margaret Van

Eyck carried with them everywhere in their goodness.

The third fault in her beauty was this: Margaret had got her to take the simple and temporary vows of the Order of the Magdalen Sub Crucem, which involved an attention to religious duties, abstinence from sin, good works among the poor, a quiet dress, not specified, and the wearing of the hair cut perfectly short close to the head. It was in consequence of this last rule, of cutting away the hair, that you could see that the woman's head had far more at the back of it than an English gentleman would care to see at the back of *his* wife's head. There was power, certainly; but there was also sensuality. A man who was inclined to marry a woman with those eyebrows, that mouth, and that back to her head, would in these scien-

tific times, were he well educated, ask himself, whether he would prefer blowing his brains out before the ceremony, or after. If he was going to make such a fool of himself at all, he would very likely say before.

But she was as charming as Cleopatra. She was one of those women who madden fools. It is no use mincing matters in any way. History tells us most emphatically, that these women have, more often than not, very tender and kind hearts. Generally I think they have a very small capacity for hatred and revenge. Now this woman had.

To those who had a chance of being her masters, this woman, Martina, could be dangerous; to those who would submit, she would be kind. We can go no further now. People recognised matters in those

days which we are not allowed to speak of now. Margaret Van Eyck had taken Martina in. Margaret had submitted to her, as she did to every one else, and Martina the suspected sinner was the mistress in one way of Margaret the saint.

Martina the Cabarus of Ghent, was dressed rather remarkably, because she had been "sitting" for Hubert and for Margaret. She was draped in a sheet of dove-coloured satin, to see how she would do for the Queen of Sheba (young John Van Eyck said she would never do for it, and she did not). She shoved from her shoulders the dove-coloured satin, and sat down on the floor before the little Scotch dog.

The dog did all it knew how to do. It propped up and wagged feebly. The little dog thought that it was to be put to death.

"Little dog from Scythia," said Martina,

lowering her black eyebrows as a thunder-cloud lowers over Schiehallion, "will you take the advice of a madwoman?"

The little dog did not know what to say.

It was a far cry to Ben Lawers. It wagged again weakly.

"You will, then," said Martina, in Gaelic, "take the advice of a clanswoman, and get back to Glenlyon. It may be bad there, but it is worse here. You cannot cross the sea, nor can I. They call me Martina here, little dog, but in the shadow of Schiehallion there are some now who would call me Macdonald. Scotch can be of any nation, as they choose; but, little dog, if you are wise, like our people, get away home out of this hell. If you cannot, go about with Priscilla and Peter. As for me, I shall never get out of it—never more, never more, save when I get into the other hell."

Margaret had her arm round her neck now. "Do you wish to go from us?" she said.

"Yes," said Martina, sharply. "I am a Highland woman; that dog is a Highland dog. I want out. I want Schiehallion."

"How was I to know this, my dear?" said Margaret.

"You might have known it yesterday, when Gil Macdonald was killed, when I cast myself howling about the room. If you knew anything you might have known that I was a Highland woman. And those two bring her dog here to mind me of the old feud between us—you miserable Flemings, lying down like dogs under Burgundy's heel. I tell you that you are frogs and we are eagles."

"My dear," said Margaret Van Eyck, "you rave."

"Highlanders do generally," she replied, raging; "but the lad Macdonald who was killed was to have been married to me in the old country. That is his little dog. I have no more to say. I would rather that the little dog went with Father Peter and Sister Priscilla than with me. I am not worthy of it. The dog has smelt the heather, and so has loved the people, I am unworthy of it. Let the dog go with them."

"Then you are not wild any longer?" said Hubert, kindly. "We have tried to do our best by you."

"All the blessings of the God of love rest on you two Flemings," was the answer. "But I am a Macdonald. I should have told it you before, I doubt, but I did not like, lest you should turn me out, and I am half a Macgregor."

"A Macgregor!" said Hubert, thinking

that she meant some very secret and dangerous society. "What is a Macgregor?"

"Scaith to the bride, blood to the bridegroom of the Maccullums; death in castles, fire in the toun to the Macdonalds; and hell's deep hell to the Donnachies: mother and child, bride and bridegroom all together! That's the meaning of a Macgregor."

Hubert Van Eyck found that he had struck on a well somewhat deeper than he had thought. "And where do all these people come from?" he asked.

"Scotland," she said.

"And where is that?" said Hubert, who did not know. How many people could have mapped the centre of Africa five years ago? (who can do it now?)

"It is beyond the river of death," said the unhappy woman; "but I was there

once, and no Fleming will win there either before death or after. I ask you only, sir, about the little dog. Let him go with that nun and that priest. Scotch folks love the people, and if they do not corrupt the dog she will not corrupt them."

And John Van Eyck, who had been listening, told his brother ten minutes after that this sort of thing would not do. Margaret had taken in a woman who was not only disreputable in life, but was a power among the Radicals. And Hubert was notoriously encouraging Peter and Priscilla, open Radicals. In short, John, like a young prig as he was (though he could paint) told Hubert that it wouldn't do, and that the Court didn't like it. Whereupon Hubert laughed his brave old laugh at John, and Margaret, who had heard the argument, looked at Marie, until

Marie began crying, which is about as much as she ever did.

Yet she and John did well for a time. I wonder whether Marie Van Eyck ever cried over the lottery-ticket business when they were all dead save her? I *believe* she lost her temper; but on this matter history, as far as I can get at it, is perfectly silent.

One only lives for the purpose of giving advice to one's neighbours, and I am going to give a little piece of advice to the wives of artists. My dear madam, if you are such a miserable little prig (of course you are not) as the wife of John Van Eyck, *do not allow your husband to paint your portrait.* The younger of these Van Eycks has done a most terrible and shameful thing. He has painted the wife of his bosom as she was in the flesh. Fancy being tied to that woman for life!

Not being Irish or Corsican we object strongly to righting our innumerable wrongs by assassination. If it was excusable in any case, it would be excusable in the case of Mary Van Eyck. She must have been an awful little woman. She on the present occasion would not come back into the studio until "that woman," meaning "the Macdonald," was gone. Then she came in and made herself disagreeable to Hubert and Margaret, who worshipped her. She was very tiny, very selfish, and very disagreeable; but folks married young in those days, and a bride is a bride until all chivalry and manhood is gone from the world.

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG Philippe le Bon of Burgundy, thought that he would fall in love with Mary Van Eyck at this time, and as he generally did what he liked, he did that. He fell out again in a fortnight—not merely fell out of love, but fell out with the object of his affections, Mary Van Eyck, the bride of John. Burgundy was a fool for his pains; if he had desired to get a reputation for gallantry he should not have selected such a sour-faced little pepper-box as that. She would not stand him at all.

She never to the last knew anything about his objects. She was convent-bred, and so perfectly ignorant of the wickedness of this world. She was most perfectly spotless and religious, yet if she had ever known that young Philip entertained the idea of putting himself in her husband's place, I really doubt whether or no she would not, in spite of her religion, have—we do not like to say the words, but—well—put a knife into his heart. She was the most ferociously virtuous little woman.

But she was more. She was a narrow and rather violent little woman, who was brought up on the narrow-gauge system, and would, had she lived in these days, have applied the same language to the Great Western Railway as the old Pope at Rome applied to the great Montalembert. But she would have stuck to her point

also, which is more than the Pope did. Again, she was a precise little woman who spoke her mind, and she didn't like Philippe le Bon, and she told him so. In fact he grew rather warm in his attentions and wanted to take her hand, and she told him that he was a tipsy young vagabond. She did *not* box his ears. It was a calumny of Van Dysart's, who hated the young Burgundy, as well as he served the old. Philip carried his plan to Hubert, who quietly asked what he meant by making love to other men's wives, which presented the matter in a new light to young Burgundy, and to use a vulgarism, "shut him up."

That fellow Philippe le Bon had a good deal of ill-directed power. I think it is useless to deny that. But his power could be directed by clever people for their own

objects. I hate to hear a Sovereign called "the Good." They tried to lay that title on to the late Prince Albert: his memory was too grand to hold it, and we have dropped it. A man who is called "the Good" is nearly certain to have done nothing at the time when he had to act.

This short *tendresse* with John Van Eyck's wife prevented Philip of Burgundy from going to his Club much. Princes were members of Clubs then as they are now. If he had heard some Club-gossip just then he would have heard something to his very great advantage. He did not, and his pages were not likely to tell him.

Just now that section of society which some folks (heaven knows why) call the people ; others (heaven only knows why) call the working class ; others (nobody knows why) call the *jacquerie* or

mob, were getting very dangerous. They had been Van Kenninged and they had been Van Dysarted. *They* said a little too much. They wanted an advance of wages. Van Kenning had been with them with his figures and had proved to them that it was impossible for them to have it, and they gave him the respectful answer that they were going to have it. Van Dysart had told them that they were quite in the right, whereupon they requested him to "lead on." And as "leading on" meant an instant collision with Burgundy's mercenaries, Van Dysart pleaded an engagement. The factory hands were terribly numerous, and were getting very dangerous; for you must remember that there were few cannon on the earth in those days. Young Philip, who had wits, might have known this, but he was always in the

wrong place. He was now trying to make love to John Van Eyck's wife, who did *not* box his ears. As for John, reigning Duke, he was at Paris. France! France! it was in those times that you lost the frontier of the Rhine, never to be regained; you will be France to your death now, and nothing more.

In these times, in some of these years, Van Kenning thought he would go out for a walk in the morning; and he put on his morning suit of maroon velvet, with crimson satin slashings, and his very newest pair of dove-coloured stockings, which covering his leg up to his middle thigh, showed off that very handsome leg most beautifully. Van Kenning was most particular about his stockings.

And no sooner was he in the street than a little grey dog came up and jumped up

against them. It would have exasperated a saint, if saints wore silk stockings, which some say they do not.

Van Kenning was furious; he went to the length of shaking his gloves (which he had not yet put on) at that little dog. And he used atrocious language to that little dog. He said, "You very naughty little dog, you should not have done this evil thing to my silk stockings." And the little grey dog was very sorry, and it went and propped up humbly against something. And Van Kenning thought it was a new black pump which the dog had propped up against, but looking a second time he saw that it was not a pump at all, but a nun.

"Halloa!" he said. "Is that you, you old lunatic?"

"I would sooner be a lunatic than an idiot. Here, Van Kenning," said Sister

Priscilla. "Let us give up breaking shafts like wags and fools. The people will be up in earnest to-night or to-morrow. Go and see what you can do. I don't want it yet."

"I thought you did," said Van Kenning.

"Not yet, not yet. His time is not come. Revenge would not be sweet yet."

They looked in one another's eyes for just one second: but they understood one another.

"Spada and *he* are round the corner now," she said. "Will you see them first, or go to the heads of the trades first?"

"Why not make a smash at once?" said Van Kenning, brushing his silk stockings with his glove. "It must come to a smash between the trades unions and the nobility soon. Why not now?"

"The people are not ready."

"You mean that you have pity. You must have no pity."

"I have none for him. But I have for others."

"What fools you women are! Well, and what do you want me to do?"

"Get wages raised, you can do that; and leave him alone just now."

"Why?" said Van Kenning. "Will a woman ever give her reasons?"

"Because Margaret wishes it."

"She asked for vengeance."

"Well, then, because I am not sure of Martina. She loves the man still."

CHAPTER XII.

I AM sorry to have to write down the next sentence; but really and truly Van Kenning, as he walked towards the residence of a certain man, uttered the following remarkable opinion:—

"Botheration take all these women, body and bones!"

It is an awful thing to write down, of course; but he continued soliloquizing, which may give us a clue to his atrocious exclamation. I am so little of a scholar myself, that I do not know the Dutch for "Botheration;" in fact, I believe that we

are indebted to the Sister Island for the very word itself; but he *said* it, or words to that effect. *I* believe that he used even a worse expression than even "Botheration." My male friends have advised me, in confidence, that they have often used strong language with regard to that singular habit of the female mind of requiring absolute mastery in all matters. Van Kenning used to say, that a woman would never be anything except a slave or a master.

"It is as near true as anything else," he said. "Women are as clever and as good as men; but they have that hungering for power which makes it impossible to make *friends* with them."

And the oddest thing in the world is that Geoffrey Chaucer was of the same opinion.

"I am going to do that lunatic nun's bidding," he went on, "because I shall offend Margaret if I don't. These women force one on to discount one's position. They will not wait; they will have it all at once, even when they could get more by waiting. This nun, however, is lying; she lied in the most monstrous way. I cannot think why she wants me to put a stop to a *jacquerie* just at the time when Burgundy is not ready. Yet I, like an old idiot, am going to do that same. Where the devil did she get that little dog from? Well, well; it is no use talking nonsense. Margaret wishes it, and Margaret shall have it. But no mercy to Van Dysart. Oh, you hound! If all the others fall off from the quest of your ruin, I will remain true. I wish I could get that little grey dog from that mad nun. There was a little girl once,

an innkeeper's daughter, at Flushing, and I wanted to marry her; but my father would not let me. And she had a wistful patient face like that little dog. I wonder if she will give me that little dog; for I have but little in the world."

So thinking, he strode into the counting-house of the greatest merchant in the Netherlands, Van Helmont; not he of the incubus and succubus, but a member of the family, who had, I think, more sensibly taken to trading instead of writing illimitable balderdash.

"Van Helmont," said Van Kenning, "my time is rather short, but I have something important to say to you."

Van Helmont shoved his black cap from off his forehead, and scratched his head —his head was that of a very square-headed Dutchman—and he said not one

solitary word. Van Kenning had come there to say something to him, and no gentleman is ever so rude as to interrupt another.

"Van Helmont," said Van Kenning, "I have been among the workmen."

"You?" said Van Helmont; "and what do they say?"

"Twenty-five per cent. increase in wages," replied Van Kenning.

"The Duke's troops are in France, I believe," said the practical Van Helmont.

"Mainly," replied Van Kenning. "But it is not a question of troops, it is a question of fact, my dear friend. What are you masters going to do?"

"Hold out," said Van Helmont.

"I don't see how you can. I really, as a practical man, cannot see how you can do it. You know best, of course. You

know that many of you are netting nearly cent. per cent."

"We are doing pretty well," said Van Helmont; "but the capital and risk are ours, you know. I don't go among the workmen. Have you any power to make a proposal?"

"None. But from my experience I should say that matters lie between an increase of twenty-five per cent. or a *jacquerie*."

"Exactly," said Van Helmont. "I will see to it. I shall try ten per cent. first, but you know the trade. I'll see to it. But, Van Kenning, use your influence to keep that Scythian woman Martina with these pestilent folks the Van Eycks. If she gets free again, the devil had better be loose."

"Why?"

"Well," said Van Helmont, "you ought

to know as well as I; you are tradesmaster. But if you don't know that a handsome woman, with her hair down her back, and a good grievance, howling, wont send our fellows wild, you had better go back to the counter."

"I see," said Van Kenning. And so he did.

And walking towards his Club, he once more uttered that atrocious sentiment with regard to women which we have printed above.

CHAPTER XIII.

SPADA and Van Dysart found a very congenial occupation: they gambled at cards night and day. They also drank pretty freely, although neither of them got any way drunk. About four hours in the day they left off their gambling and went down and fenced for an hour most vigorously. Spada, notoriously the best swordsman in Europe, was beaten as often as was safe and decent at the fencing. As to the gambling, he lost large sums to Van Dysart. Van Dysart began to despise the great Italian bully and

gamester, and Spada began to curse his luck. One night, after losing nearly one thousand crowns, he got frantic, rubbed his short-cut hair wildly, and openly cursed Van Dysart to his face. We decline to give his oaths, but they were given with Italian emphasis.

"I wish I had never seen you," he said to Van Dysart. "I wish that your mother had died in childbed before your ill-starred face ever saw the sun. I have played and fought my way from Naples up to your cursed Ghent, and it is rather hard for a man of my reputation to be picked up by a miserable Fleming like yourself, and cast aside like a stale tunny."

"Do you wish to quarrel with me?" said Van Dysart.

"I am afraid," said Spada, "I am afraid of your sword; you fence too well for me.

I think I could kill you, but I am not sure; you are by no means a man I would care to face in anger. I hate you naturally, for you have won my money; but I am a little afraid of you. I never feared any man before, but I fear you. If we ever come to a fight, and you kill me, I hope that you will have the honesty to tell the truth."

"And what is that, sir?"

"That I taught you how to kill me, and that you killed me according to my directions," said Spada. "You see that I never calculated on getting such a pupil. I hate you, as I have told you before, and I would have seen you——never mind his expletives—before I would have taught you my tricks, if I had known that you would have been such a splendid pupil. As it is, we must remain as we are. We shall fight some day, and you will kill me. You

have won my money, and I must go and earn other money."

"You do not say that I have played unfairly?" said Van Dysart.

"If I had caught you doing so, I would have had you out into the street and have made you fight in two minutes," said Spada. "You have played fairly enough; but you have won my money. A man once won all my money and left me a beggar at Prague: I could not get back my money, but I could kill my man. I was not afraid of him, but I am of you. I spilt a glass of wine in his lap as I was paying him his money, and he did exactly what I wanted him to do, he resented it. I had my sword through his heart at five o'clock the next morning. I could not get back my money, but I could kill him, and so the money was no use to him in any way. I would kill you if I could,

only I hate you so deeply for winning my money, that I would not even leave you with the reputation of beating the best swordsman in Europe."

"You are an honest man, and a good swordsman," said Van Dysart, who was a little drunk. "I don't want your swordsmanship impugned in any way whatever. I'll fight any man who says that you are not the second swordsman in Europe, and I will fight any man who says that I am not the first. Let us have another bottle of wine."

"Not on my account, I beg," said Spada.

"No—winners pay," said Van Dysart. "*I'll* pay."

Spada drummed on the table, and the wine was brought and poured into a silver tankard. Spada, with an anxious face,

counted out small silver coins on the table.

"Winner drinks first," said Van Dysart. "Here is to Burgundy!"

"Which Burgundy?" asked Van Dysart.

"Philip of Burgundy, you ass," said Van Dysart. "He has virtues, for I am virtuous when I am kept from cards and women."

If he could have seen the flash of fury in the face of the Italian when he uttered the word "ass," he might have seen something which it would have been good for him to see.

"I will drink to Philip of Burgundy," said Spada, a man who never exceeded. "Are not you rather drunk?"

"I believe that I am: take me to bed."

There was really nothing offensive in this request; in fact we have heard of drunken gentlemen being put to bed by

other gentlemen far later in history than the time to which we refer. Spada got Van Dysart to bed with singular rapidity and dexterity; *he* had probably done the same thing once or twice before.

In those times every one slept naked. Spada stripped Van Dysart, and got him on to the bed of the inn in which they had been gambling. Spada, an old hand at this sort of work, would have liked to see Van Dysart between the blankets, that he might have been more quiet; but when Spada had got him naked, Van Dysart got petulant, and Spada let him lie on the bed as he was.

On the bed was a naked man in a drunken sleep. Spada himself, hound as he was, confessed that he was worthy of having a sword sent through his ribs. One leg hung down beside the bedstead, the other

lay under him. There lay the man on the bed in the magnificence of his beauty, without his clothes, without even his very shirt, for Spada had taken care of that detail. Beside the bed, writing at a desk, sat the inexorable Spada, with the naked man's clothes beside him, making précis of every letter in every pocket. The naked man never moved; and as Spada went on at his awful précis work, he began to get into his head that he was doing a rather awful business.

For every letter which he got hold of for the Duke of Burgundy meant death, or worse than death. Van Dysart, sleeping naked on the bed, was pledged by these letters to a course of politics which we can only describe as being milder than Fenianism. From the letters which Spada got and put in précis, Van Dysart's ruin was

perfectly safe. Spada had been hired by the Duke of Burgundy to effect Van Dysart's ruin, and by getting the man drunk, and putting him to bed naked, he had his business well in hand. There was enough in the poor young man's pockets to condemn him seven times over. He was a political fool, whereas Philip of Burgundy had brains. It was a mere case of Whig against Prince, and we shall see who won.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE case against Van Dysart was utterly and entirely hopeless. The quarrel between the house of Burgundy and the Gilden was at that time a very heavy one, and the mercy of the house of Burgundy was very small. Spada had done much dirty work in his life, and really did not consider this job a peculiarly dirty one: he was hired to do it; and his man was stripped and drunk on the bed—yet the rascal hesitated. The rascal felt pity, the man was so utterly at his mercy: Spada

had needed mercy more than once, and he felt pity now.

From every pocket came the damning documents. Van Dysart had been elected as "head centre" to every revolutionary society in Belgium. His Honour Beales, M.A., Professor Beesley, and Mr. Bradlaugh, were distinctly objected to in certain quarters in our own day; but Van Dysart had gone before any of them by hundreds of miles. To talk Reform in those days was death by the hand of Burgundy. Spada turned towards the bed; the great white chest was quietly heaving now, and Spada said, "I think I can save you, lad. I think you stand well with the priests; but I do what I am paid to do. I will ruin you, but I will try for your life. Ravenna was a nasty hole, but these Flemings are dirtier dogs than we

and have not our genius. I shall go to Paris."

And he went on with his work, putting back the papers of the drunken man just as he found them into the pockets of his clothes—exactly as he found them. "No one," he said to himself "ever trusted *one* person with a conspiracy. I am too notorious a scoundrel. This fellow is an awful scoundrel, but I think I can save his head. I have a fellow-feeling for him."

Précis Number Five: "Van Dysart has been elected head manager of the Woolcombers' trade association." Number Six: "has accepted that office with many congratulations." That would be enough to damn a penniless dog like me, but I will get him through all this. Burgundy is afraid of him, and the priests are for Reform. I will go to the mad priest Peter—

or, no, I will speak to Van Kenning. I will think what I will do. *Quiet.* Let me think."

Van Dysart had moved on the bed while Spada was busy with his papers. This was very dangerous, but Spada was up to the occasion.

"You fool," he said, "why can't you take your drink like a man? You are lying stark naked there after having fought me about putting you between the blankets."

"Where are my clothes?" said Van Dysart.

"Just where I threw them down when I stripped you," said Spada.

"Give me my shirt," said Van Dysart.

Spada gave it to him at once, but his eyes were starting out of his head. He had enough to ruin the man already, and

did not care. It is probable that he would never have thought of looking at the man's shirt at all if he had not asked for it. He, however, gave Van Dysart his shirt at once, and Van Dysart rolled over on to it, keeping it under his breast. Spada knew that there was something left which he must know, and he puzzled how to get it.

He knew that the liquor would die out of the man soon, and that he would become keenly sensible and fractious. There was wine in the room, and looking at it he took his course. He filled a large glass with white Burgundy, and approached the sleeper; knowing that white Burgundy is one of the most dangerous wines in existence, he went to the bedside of the sleeping man, and slopped some of it over his head.

"What is the matter now?" said the crapulous Van Dysart.

"I have been sitting up drinking, and I have got drunk," said Spada. "I am coming to bed."

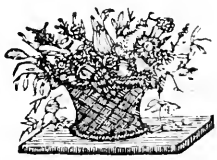
"Well, go to your own bed, and don't come plaguing here," said Van Dysart. "How dare you come into bed with a gentleman?"

"I want to sleep somewhere. Manners are different in different countries. Have some of this."

Van Dysart raised himself up and drank a draught of the white Burgundy, and then he went to sleep again, but without his shirt. Late at night Spada thought he might be cold, so he put his shirt back and put a blanket over him.

When Van Dysart woke in the morning and cried for Cicely Hacket, he found his shirt where he had put it, and found a blanket over him. He asked Cicely Hacket

if she had put the blanket over him, but she repudiated the idea with scorn, and said that the Italian gentleman must have done it, she supposed. Van Dysart was obliged to confess to himself that it was very civil on the part of Spada.



CHAPTER XV.

IT was certainly cool on the part of Spada to make Van Dysart drunk, and to make a précis of his papers for the inspection of the Duke of Burgundy and John Van Eyck. Spada said to himself that he would save the man as a brother rascal. Spada thought that the man was merely associated with the Radicals, as many priests were; indeed, to tell the whole truth, as *most* priests were.

Spada thought that this man, Van Dysart, whom he had been set to ruin, would be

imprisoned for a few years, and then set free for further, and to him congenial rascalities. He thought that he could save his head until he got hold of his shirt, and when he saw what the man carried in the bosom of his shirt, tied up in a sealskin cover, he was fairly puzzled as to the means for saving his brother rascal.

If Van Dysart had gone honestly among the working class, he might have got through with his head on his shoulders. If he had gone in with the secular clergy, who were then, as they have generally been, on the side of the people, he might have done well. But he was a man who would do nothing, and take no side heartily. What Spada found in the bosom of his shirt was an acknowledgment of the fact that he was the seducer of Martina, which would put him all wrong with the workmen; and

next, his certificate as one of the Illuminati, which would utterly ruin him with the priests. It seemed utterly impossible for him to save the man now. Spada was a dog and a bully, but he was paid, and he must earn his money. It seemed to him that he could have saved his man, if his man had left any loophole. But his man was drunk on the bed; and Spada must give an account to the Duke that night.

He wanted to save his man, for scoundrels and convicts have a fellow-feeling; and he was thinking in the street of what he should do.

He was in a fearful temper, and a little grey dog began leaping on him. He kicked and cursed that little grey dog, and then he saw that the three awful figures sitting in a doorway close to him were the proprietors, or at least the abettors, of that little dog.

The person who sat nearest to him had lace over her head, but no gaudry. Next to her sat a regular priest in grey, with his head uncovered; beyond him was a nun in black, of secular order, dark as death.

We are unable to say what Spada said. We will produce it in our own way. "Lorette, Monk, and Nun. After that, the Devil." The Italian bully was afraid of these three; he wished that he had not kicked their dog. He has regretted the kicking of that little dog since. If you want to kick a dog, don't kick a Scotch dog to begin with. And whatever you do, do not kick a dog backed up as this dog was.

The priest spoke first. "Here," he said, "is the man of blood."

Spada said, "My good sir, my good sir."

Father Peter, having absolutely nothing

practicable against Spada, went through the process, which I believe is called *de preciser votre accusation* — that is to say, he called him a "man of blood" once more.

Sister Priscilla was not going to have her wicket bowled down like this. She wanted to know why he had kicked their dog.

Spada instantly explained that it was not their dog at all. It was the dog of Fraulein Macdonald, if it was any one's dog. He (Spada) had an objection to law on many grounds. He had been bothered by the law himself. If there was any law about the dog, it was Fraulein Macdonald's dog.

"I am Lady Van Dysart," said the unhappy Martina.

"The day you prove yourself so, Fraulein Macdonald, I will be glad. Why are you sitting there in such company?"

"We have a common object," said Priscilla.

"I think you are mistaken," said Spada. "Shall I tell her all, Sister Priscilla?"

"That very much depends on what you have to tell."

"He is lying drunk on my bed now," said Spada.

"Come away here," said Sister Priscilla, rising. "Come away with me."

"Go not with the man of blood, Sister," cried Father Peter.

"You old fool, who is likely to trouble me?" said Sister Priscilla, losing her temper with remarkable rapidity. "And if any one did meddle with me, even you cannot deny that I am old enough and ugly enough to take care of myself."

"He is in the pay of Burgundy; he is a traitor; he goes about catching souls," cried Father Peter.

"*Will* you be quiet?" said Sister Priscilla, and indeed Father Peter was not quiet at all, but rambled on to poor Martina, who sat beside him, and with the usual tact of the regular clergy he selected for his topic of conversation the illimitable wickedness of Van Dysart, which drove her half mad.

Meanwhile Sister Priscilla and Spada were talking together under an archway. Spada had begun the conversation by declining to speak, but standing and looking Sister Priscilla straight in the eyes. At last Sister Priscilla said, "Well?"

"I knew that I could make you speak first," said Spada. "You women are awful fools. Would you say what you said just now over again; it struck me as pointed."

"I only said 'Well,'" said Sister Priscilla.

"Yes; and do you see that I made you say it twice over? Nun, nun, we are on a very ugly business together. Can you hear me speak the truth for once, and can you understand the truth when you hear it?"

"If I can't understand the truth when I hear it," replied Sister Priscilla, "it will be waste of breath for you to tell it to me. Shall I call Peter?"

"No, a nun is bad enough, but a half-monk half-priest is worse, and a lady like her who is sitting beside Father Peter is worse than either of the others. I want to say a few words to you."

"I'll listen to you," said Sister Priscilla; "and as you look like a man, I'll heed you as far as I choose."

"If you were not devoted to a religious life I would marry you," said Spada.

"You would do nothing of the sort," said Sister Priscilla. "Two parties are required to every bargain, and in the old times I might have married hundreds of men."

"You refused them?"

"None of them ever asked me; they knew better. But if you are going to begin our present interview by making a fool of me—by asking an old nun to be your wife, I must take the liberty of telling you that I was not, at any period of my life, fool enough to think of marrying any man. I should say that marriage was an utter mistake; but you may rest assured that the very last person I should have selected, before my vows, would have been a rascally dicer and cut-throat like yourself."

"Those are hard words, mistress," said Spada, laughing.

"Well, they *are* too hard," said Sister Priscilla, laughing a hard dry laugh. "Our darling Leon, who is gone to heaven, was a dicer and a duellist. God rest his soul!"

"Who killed him? who broke Margaret's heart?" said Spada.

"We all know," said Priscilla. "It was Van Dysart."

"Shall I kill Van Dysart for you?"

"Yes."

"But the quarrel is none of mine. I could put my sword through him to-morrow; but the quarrel is none of mine."

"Will not Burgundy pay you?"

"The Duke is a very bad paymaster. I would rather get a better guarantee than the Duke's before I did such a thing. I am too well known in Europe. I want to ask you one thing, Sister Priscilla—have you no *pity* for the man?"

"Pity for the man who killed Leon!" she snarled out. "I have no pity for him: when I feel pity for the man who killed Margaret's lover, I hope I may be torn to pieces by wild horses."

Thought Spada, "I have begun at the wrong end. I did not know that women would take up one another's quarrels like this."

"She," broke out Sister Priscilla, "is more to me than all the world beside. And she wanted a lover, and she got one, as well she might, the bonny beauty; and Van Dysart killed him in the street, and I want to find a man who will kill Van Dysart. My pretty bird! think of her losing her lover like that! My pretty sweet!"

"And so on," interrupted Spada. "I frankly confess that I did not know how

deeply you women get attached to one another. If there was any chance of knocking or, if necessary, kicking sense into the head of a nun, I should say that men occasionally get attached to other men quite as deeply as women get attached to women: there is the case of Jonathan and David to prove my words. But, Mrs. Nun, you must know some things, and this among others, you are the superior sex in every way—let that pass; but men in extreme circumstances can feel pity for other men. I am a very great scoundrel, so great a scoundrel that no city in Europe will be open to me soon. I live merely now by my valour and dexterity in the use of my sword. Yet I tell you, woman, that I feel pity, deep pity, for that young man who is now lying drunk and naked on my bed. Do you feel any?"

"None."

"Curse you women, you are more cruel than we are. Why do you feel no pity?"

"Because he killed Margaret's lover."

"Diantre!" said Spada, "what, in the name of the devil, is to be done here?"

"Nothing," said Sister Priscilla.

Spada set his teeth, and began once more.

"Now, my good Sister Priscilla, listen to me. We are bound to hunt this man, Van Dysart, to death. I am (put me first) paid by the Duke of Burgundy to ruin the man. You see how I trust you. I want your assistance; will you give it to me?"

"Of course I will."

"Spoken truly and like yourself! Now we shall get on; now we shall get at results. What line do you propose?"

"I would burn him alive! He killed Leon."

"That is very true; but, at the same time, Leon tried to kill *him*. We will let that pass. As for burning him alive, I doubt very much whether we could manage that. The lad fights so very well that I should require a large sum down, and time to spend it, before I had him out. I *could* kill him, but I should have to go into sharp training first, and I do not care about that. I can win money from him when I choose; it has been my policy to lose to him. I want my money back before I kill him. Do you see?"

"No," said Sister Priscilla.

"I have about me documents which would ruin him," said Spada.

"Where are they?" said Sister Priscilla.

"In my hose," said Spada. "I see some of your trades union friends in the rear. Did you order them here?—because if you

did, I have documents copied from Van Dysart's private papers which would enable me to have you hung in five minutes."

"Go off," said Sister Priscilla; and the half dozen of blouses retreated at once.

"You have power, I see," said Spada; "well, so have I. I think you will act with me. I can either kill Van Dysart, or utterly ruin Van Dysart. I would rather ruin him. Which thing do you prefer?"

"Kill him! He killed Leon."

"That is all very well, and does honour to your heart, but does very little to your head. I have killed more men than I can remember with this old sword of mine, and hope to kill more; but I want to ruin this man, not kill him outright."

"Why?"

"Because I pity him; he is a fool, but he is a man, and I want to spare him."

"He killed Margaret's lover, and he ought to die," said Sister Priscilla. "We get no justice here, you dog of an Italian. You know *that*, if you know anything. I will not go with you in this matter. You are in the Duke's pay, and you wish that he should live to make peace between the Duke and the manufacturing hands."

"Stay a minute, you wild nun," said Spada. "I am a bad man; my mother broke her heart over me. I am in the pay of Burgundy, or why should I be here? I am all that is evil and bad; I give you all that; but why is it that I find you more pitiless than myself? I do not profess religion—you do. Will you help me to save this unhappy dog?"

"No," said Priscilla; "he killed Leon, and Leon was Margaret's lover. You are a half-hearted man!"

So she departed, and Spada watched her fluttering in her nun's dress along the street; but he waited still, because he knew that he was between Martina and the home of the Van Eycks.

"I never could work on those women who have taken the vows," he said to himself. "I have tried it a hundred times, but I have always failed. The woman is at once a fool and no fool. She wants Van Dysart out of the way because he killed Leon; but she is more outrageously inclined for his death because he is deceiving the people and she is deceiving the people. All the devils in hell work at this business."

It was a quaint thing certainly; but it was hardly necessary on Spada's part to call for such a singular audience. The man whom we know as Philippe le Bon,

Duke of Burgundy, had got excessively drunk, and Van Kenning was taking him home to the palace. Van Kenning was, of course, perfectly sober; but the Duke was horribly drunk, and was shouting politics to, as he thought, an empty street. Our scholarship does not enable us to give his French in the original—in fact, the oldest French we know habitually is that of Rabelais, so we must translate the language into plain English.

"Don't care a curse," said the Duke; "don't care a hang—don't care the tenth part of a farthing's worth of a hang. The beggar thinks he is going to get the upper hand of my father and me with his trades unions. Now, you know——where are the beggars?"

"They are not here, my Lord," said Van Kenning.

Philippe le Bon propped himself up into an archway, and said—

"Van Kenning."

"My Lord."

"Where are they? Come, old man, you know where they are as well as another."

"If there is any *tapage nocturne* in the street, my Lord, I know where they will be soon. There is a man watching us now."

It was, in fact, our friend Spada, who came at once solemnly along the street, saluted the Duke courteously, and passed into the next entry to hear what the Duke and Van Kenning had been saying, though he might have saved himself the trouble, for Van Kenning told him everything.

"My Lord," said Van Kenning, "I must warn you that you are very drunk."

"Not more than another," said the Duke,

suddenly aroused. "I am no more drunk than yourself."

"Excuse my contradicting your Lordship, but you are more drunk than I ever was in my life, or ever mean to be."

"I must take care of this," said Philippe le Bon.

"I should recommend your Lordship to do so," said Van Kenning. In fact, Philippe Duke of Burgundy was no drunkard, and only had, in the language of Dandie Dinmont, "a screed of drink at an orra time." The unfortunate fact was that he was dreadfully drunk at this moment, and told everything to a listening Spada.

"You are a devilish good fellow, Van Kenning," said the Duke of Burgundy. "I am obliged to you; and when a Duke of Burgundy is obliged to a man, he either gives him half what he is worth or hangs

him. But I am not Duke of Burgundy yet, do you see? and so you are perfectly safe. Now to attend to business—for Princes must attend to business some time or another, the later the better—how's your mother?"

"I never had any mother," said Van Kenning, quietly.

"He never had any mother," said Philippe le Bon, sententiously. "You will mark that, because it is worthy of notice. I thought so from the very first. Van Kenning never had any mother. What a queer old stick she must have been! I remember her well; she was like him. I say, Van Kenning, some of the party are drunk, and it is not me. Turn the other fellows out. Where is Van Dysart?"

"Does your Lordship want him?"

"You fool, no; I am sick of him—the

earth is sick of him; I'll have no more of him. Spada said that he would kill him for me; but Spada will do nothing until he is paid beforehand."

"Possibly, then, it would be better to pay Count Spada at once," said Van Kenning.

"I haven't got any—hic!—money," said Philippe of Burgundy, "and if I had I should give it to—hic! She has been asking for money a long time now, and she should get some. What between one thing and another, Princes have harder times of it than you fellows. I can't find the ready cash to enable me to get rid of this Van Dysart. What a pity it is that you are not a gentleman, because, don't you see," said Philippe le Bon, with drunken gravity, "if you had been a gentleman, you would have had some fellow sufficiently at-

tached to you to have cut Van Dysart's throat."

Van Kenning eyed Philippe le Bon with strong displeasure, and Spada listened more eagerly.

"My father says," continued Philippe le Bon, "that you agreed to ruin him. Why, in the name of Heaven! has it not been done? He can rouse the *jacquerie* on us at any time; and that fellow Spada has had a good deal of money from us, which he seems to have lost at backgammon with him. I wish Van Dysart was off the face of the earth."

"There are more of your Lordship's opinion," said Van Kenning, speaking loud enough for Spada to hear; "but pity is felt for him in some quarters."

"Where?" said Philippe le Bon.

"Among the women," said Van Ken-

ning, talking loudly for the edification of Spada.

"The nun would have his heart out of his body," said Philippe of Burgundy.

"I am not speaking of the nun," said Van Kenning.

"Anyhow it is very hard to keep a brutal hound like Spada for the mere purpose of assassinating a man, and not have it done after all. Spada has had awful sums of money to do it, and he hasn't done it: that is what I call dishonest. By heaven, I'll do it myself!"

"The trades would scarcely like that, my Lord," said Van Kenning.

"I'll burn Bruges before I am dead," said Philippe; and in fact he did so. But he was now too drunk to be argued with, and Van Kenning had to hold out his hand to Spada, who was in the next doorway;

and between them they got the Prince on his legs, and got him safe to the front door of the palace, under the trees.

Here was a difficulty. There was a crowd outside the door, the centre of which they could not see. It was an ugly business, the getting a decidedly drunk young Duke of Burgundy through a crowd of exasperated "hands." Spada left Philippe of Burgundy with Van Kenning, and pushed through the crowd. He was very soon back again.

"It is that woman," he said, in a whisper.

"What woman?" asked Van Kenning.

"Martina," said Spada. "She has gone mad again, and is beating at the door and demanding to see the Duke, and make him execute vengeance on Van Dysart for the murder of Leon."

"The devil!" said Van Kenning. "Let us get this drunken fool in by the postern here. Be quick, Spada, my good soul, if ever you were quick in your life!"

Spada had seen much of this work in his very eventful life, and young Philippe was bundled in at a side-door without observation.

In five minutes the great door of the principal entrance was thrown open, and there appeared to the crowd outside a great corridor, lined with solemn troops, and lit up with wax candles. Three men came down the steps towards the crowd; the Duke of Burgundy first and alone, and immediately after him Van Kenning and Spada.

The sight was very magnificent, for John of Burgundy had hurried on his royal

clothes, and came step by step down among the people with an air of confidence, dressed in crimson velvet, and covered with jewels. You cannot see such a sight now. "Sartor Resartus" was not written then. The man's clothes and the man's awful power were enough for the crowd: they parted as though he wished to go through them.

His first intention, after he had seen his son brought in drunk by the back-stairs, had been to speak to them. He changed it now, and walked coolly through them: after which he walked coolly back again. All this time Spada and Van Kenning had grouped themselves on the steps in the blaze of light; the Duke John of Burgundy bowed right and left, and the crowd were saying one to the other how noble His Grace looked, when

there was a very singular interruption.

A great light was shining down the steps out of the hall of the palace, and Van Kenning and Spada had grouped themselves carefully in front of that light, in their splendid dresses, looking at the crowd, Spada standing one step below Van Kenning. John of Burgundy, having been through the crowd, had turned at the bottom step, and had bent, speaking to some one there. Next, the crowd saw a tall woman, whom in the great blaze of light they did not recognise for their own Martina, take the Duke's arm and mount the steps with him, followed by a little dog. When fairly in the hall the Duke of Burgundy turned and bowed, with Martina on his arm and the little grey dog between his legs; Spada

and Van Kenning to the right and left of him. It was enough for them; they had had their *coup de théâtre* for nothing, and they went home to their beds when the doors were shut in their faces.

But behind the doors, where the brain of the people was, how was it there? Not quite so comfortable as it was outside. The Duke began at Martina first.

"I have got you now. You were for raising the mob on me."

"You have assassins enough in your pay to kill me, Burgundy, but the people are with me. If you order Spada to kill me he will do it, but it will go ill with Spada, and ill with you."

"Are you going to raise a *jacquerie* on me, woman?" said the Duke.

"If I had meant to do that I could have done it long ago."

"She speaks the truth there, my Lord," said Spada, roundly.

"He speaks the truth there, my Lord," said Van Kenning.

"I know he does," said the Duke. "You wretched Flemings! Any——" I regret to say that the exigencies of modern civilization prevent my writing down the Duke of Burgundy's language. May I be permitted to go as far as to say that what he meant was this—that any indiscreet female and any indiscreet male, with physical courage and the gift of the gab, can lead a mob anywhere.

"Van Kenning and Spada, I thank you for bringing my drunken son home. You can go, and hold your tongues. Mistress,

I am not so sure of you: you will stay here."

"It is an ill place, but I have stood in worse," said Martina the Scotchwoman. "I will stay here."

CHAPTER XVI.

WE leave to wiser and more learned men than ourselves to say how much gunpowder has had to do with the success or non-success of town insurrections. It is certain that in modern times, in crooked streets where artillery cannot act, gunpowder and barricades have given the mob a certain chance of winning. Yet in the old time, without gunpowder, street-fighting was considered extremely dangerous by good and excellent generals. The danger in it was that the heavy cavalry

would be hampered and their horses killed, in which case their men would be caught overladen with their armour. Every man knew the use of a pike or axe, and the fighting was done at close quarters. The mob were no less naturally brave than the men-at-arms, and fought with courage, and what is more, with desperation, knowing what would happen to them, their wives, and their houses if they lost. At Ghent even in these pre-reformation times the citizens and hands, the "Gilden," were laying the foundation of the "Dutch Republic," by teaching their brethren of the other towns that by good street-fighting they could in the end extract better terms from their rulers than they would otherwise have got. Street-fighting was by no means a thing to be despised. The towns were too crowded and too populous.

But the Duke of Burgundy wanted money, and he had a Cabinet Council, at which all our friends assembled at twelve o'clock in the day in the palace at Ghent. It was extremely noticeable that no courtiers were present, but only the men who represented the people, and who were, one or two of them, rather supposed to favour the people a little too much.

Van Kenning was the first man who arrived and was shown into the Council Chamber, through the halberdiers, where he found himself alone for some little time. To him arrived, with the most tremendous formalities and presenting of arms, the Archbishop, who, when the door was shut, said—

"This is absolute madness!"

"What is he going to do?" said Van Kenning. "I have not heard. Why has

he sent for *me?* There was an agreement that——"

"I know," said the Archbishop. "Hush!"

"You cannot know," said Van Kenning, testily; "no one heard it but himself and myself."

"He can keep nothing to himself," said the Archbishop. "If he had only told me I would not have cared, but he has told others. You and he made an arrangement that neither of you were to know anything about one another until you had ruined Van Dysart. That is true, is it not? Don't swear—it is bad manners."

But Van Kenning swore nevertheless.

"It is easy enough to talk about ruining Van Dysart," said the Archbishop; "but it is not quite so easy to do. I was bent on doing it, as far as a Churchman could,

you know, but I am rather sick of the business. The elements seem to choke me every day for carrying on this feud: and this last madness of the Duke's will render it terribly difficult."

"What is it?" said Van Kenning.

"A tax on salt-fish," said the Archbishop.

"Why, the man is mad!" said Van Kenning.

"Assuredly; but he will have his way for all that, and we shall have all our throats cut. If Van Dysart heads the mob and Margaret Van Eyck cannot keep that lunatic Martina in, the mob will win. The Duke has not fifteen hundred men in the place."

"I believe that Martina the Scotchwoman has broken out again," said Van Kenning, and went on—

"Will she not turn against Van Dysart?"

The Archbishop shook his head.

"She loves him," he said, quietly. "She threatens him with death and fury, but when it comes to the point I would not trust her."

They were both silent for a time.

"When this Council is over, come with me to Margaret Van Eyck," said the Archbishop.

Van Kenning nodded. The door was opened, and a little Councillor of the town, in blue velvet, ran suddenly in; and seeing no one but the Archbishop and Van Kenning, stopped himself from making his obeisance to the throne, and coming quickly up to them, whispered—

"Strike, Archbishop, strike! My hands have given notice to leave work to-morrow, and I lose ten thousand."

"On what grounds have they struck?" said the Archbishop.

"This preposterous tax—this salt-fish tax."

"Then, it is known?"

"Did the Duke of Burgundy ever keep a secret? Van Dysart has sold us. It is fearfully serious," said the little Councillor.

"We shall have the people up," said the Archbishop.

"We shall, indeed," said the little Councillor. "Archbishop, do you know where Father Peter and Sister Priscilla are? It is more in your way than mine."

"No," said the Archbishop.

"Why, they are *missing!*" said the little Councillor.

"The—the—Saints protect us!" cried the Archbishop.

"Here is a fine to-do," said Van Kenning. "I shall be no use if those two

lunatics are carrying the fiery cross round. Archbishop, you have let them go loose too long."

The Archbishop spoke out like a man—

"I meddle with no friends of those poor whom Christ has given me. Those two loved the poor in their way, and the poor loved them."

Van Kenning was intensely delighted at the Archbishop's reply; and the two old friends shook hands as honest fellows do when they have been on the verge of a difference.

"Now," said the Archbishop, smiling blandly on the Councillor, "have you any more good tidings for us?"

"Yes," said the Councillor; "Martina is not to be found. She is not at the Van Eycks."

"When did you ask?"

"An hour ago."

"Well, then," said Van Kenning, "I think we are safe in that quarter. She came into the palace last night; and if Margaret has seen nothing of her, she must have been here all night."

"Locked up?" said the little Councillor.

"Most unwelcome guests of the Duke, who stay all night, *are* locked up," said Van Kenning.

"If he puts her to death," said the Councillor, aghast, "we are all undone. I shall sell out, and go to England."

"I think that he only wants her kept in, and, in consequence, has not let her out," said Van Kenning.

The door leading behind the throne was thrown open, and the halberdiers came flashing and clattering on to the daïs, and forming on the steps of it, nearly a hundred

strong, leaving an open space towards the throne. Then there was a pause and a dead silence. Then came a herald, who advanced to the bottom of the steps, and stood like a statue; then from above came two pages, in blue velvet, who put cushions at the feet of the throne, and sat on them; then there was dead silence again, only that Van Kenning whispered to the Archbishop, behind his hand—

"There are more expected surely, than we three? He would never have had all this tomfoolery for *us*."

The Archbishop said, "Hush; read the riddle for yourself. Do you see?"

Slowly through the open door came the Duke of Burgundy, flicking his face with a pocket handkerchief, with his arm round Van Dysart's neck.

Van Kenning was intensely amused.

"If he had done as much for me, I would have gone home and hung myself," he said to himself. "This is fine comedy, and that ass Van Dysart believes it to be real life."

But while jeering, he could not refuse a tribute of honest admiration to Van Dysart himself, as he left the Duke, and came flaunting down the steps of the daïs towards them. Van Kenning bethought himself that once he had a brother, killed in France, as handsome as Van Dysart; yet he thought again that his brother could not have been so handsome, and his brother had never been so beautifully dressed.

When Van Dysart came down to Van Kenning, Van Kenning shook hands with him warmly; and Van Dysart said—

"Good day, old Judas. I thought you were vowed to my death."

"You have found *that* out, have you?" said Van Kenning, coolly. "How many secrets have *you* trusted to the Duke?"

This was very easy to say, for the Duke had given orders that every one should leave the hall; and so the halberdiers went clanking out. A slight difficulty arose between the herald and the two pages with their cushions, as to who had right of going through the door first. It ended in something very like a free fight between the pages and the herald behind the back of the unconscious Duke, to the extreme confusion of the Archbishop. He had just ascertained that the pages, by hard hammering about the herald's head with their cushions, had won, and had run away with his trumpet, when the doors were

closed, and they were invited up on to the daïs, to join the Council.

"I suppose, gentlemen," said the Duke, "that you have heard of my proposal to raise more money? I may shortly say that I propose to raise it by a tax on salt-fish. Archbishop, what do you say to it?"

"We shall have a riot," said the Archbishop.

"And put it down," said the Duke. "What do you say to it, Van Kenning?"

"I agree with the Archbishop," said Van Kenning. "But I would like news from——"

"That is my business," said the Duke, quickly. "What do you say to it, Councillor?"

"If it could possibly be avoided, my Lord Duke——" began the Councillor.

"It cannot," said the Duke. "What do you say, Van Dysart?"

"I think I can carry it through for you," said Van Dysart.

"I think you will be able. There are paper and pens there; just write down your demands for doing so, would you, and give them to me?"

For one instant there was a motion towards Van Dysart from Van Kenning's arm, as though he would have stopped him. But the Duke's eye was on him, and he saw that his bargain must be fulfilled. Van Dysart sat down and wrote out his own infamy and his own deliberate ruin. Fifty thousand crowns if he could persuade the people to submit to the tax; one hundred thousand if he could lead a sufficient number of them out into the town into the open where they could be attacked by cavalry.

It was written, signed, and given to the Duke, who read it, nodded, and put it in his bosom. Then the conversation was resumed by the Duke.

"There is one more detail, Van Dysart, which I should wish for. You were the seducer of that petulant woman, Martina?"

"I fear that is true."

"I want to have her executed; she is a continual plague. That will make no difference in our bargain, I suppose?"

"Yes, that would make a great difference in our bargain," said Van Dysart. "I should want more money."

"Well, you will tell me the difference presently; at present we are agreed, and the Council dismissed. Van Dysart, come to my room in half an hour. I shall see you all to supper, gentlemen. I need not

tell you that this Council is perfectly secret, under pain of death."

They all four left by the door at the lower end of the room, and the Duke followed them to it. When their footsteps had died away, the Duke stood in the middle of the room, and said, quietly—

"Come out, you two."

And from behind the hangings on one side came Spada, and from behind the hangings on the other came Martina.

END OF VOL. I.

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