

way open to heaven, if we will only give up sin and listen to God. But you not only *commit* sin, but you *love* it, though knowing that its wages are death and eternal perdition. And this often makes my heart sick, when the present state of our village occurs to my mind. For God is my witness, I am kindly disposed to the people, and if there was only a desire to hear a good word, and to care for better things than money and brandy, I should be ready to open my heart and my house, and everything I have, as surely as my name is John Peter Van Brenkelen."

So Mr. Van Brenkelen used to speak to his customers, and then he would slightly lift his cap from his head to bid them good-bye, after which he often turned to the window to look up to the sky, knowing that the remedy must come from above, for there was none below.

CHAPTER II.

FROM WHICH THE READER MAY LEARN THAT SODOM LIKEWISE IS VEXED WHEN A RIGHTEOUS MAN LIVES IN IT.

Now the words which good Mr. Van Brenkelen spoke behind his counter, were not buried among the bags of meal and salt. Dora took care that not many minutes passed before all he had said was reported to her husband; and Griet was not slow in giving an account of Mr. Van Brenkelen's "shop sermon," as she called it, to her neighbours next door, and opposite, and round the corner. There would have been no harm, however, in reporting the grocer's sayings, if they had stuck to truth and reported correctly; even the bellman might have performed a service by trumpeting them out at every corner of the street. But the talkative women so rendered Mr. Van Brenkelen's words, and with so many additions and interpolations of their own, that his well-mixed cordial turned into a decoction of gall and wormwood.

One evening the text thus altered, and with its annotations, was brought before the assembly at *The White Horse*. Sitting over their beer and brandy, the members of that company exhausted their wit and eloquence in refuting the assertions of the methodistical grocer. The arguments, however, which were brought forward in favour of the reputation of the community

against Mr. Van Brenkelen's slanderous criticism, consisted chiefly of abuse, and execration, and blows, which were applied to the bar with such power, that the tumblers and glasses returned their responsive vibrations.

"I should like to know," cried, among others, the hawker, while finishing his tumbler and ordering another to stir up the fire of his eloquence, "I should like to know why those hypocrites Van Brenkelen and Welter are better than myself, or anybody else. They may sit down together all the day, reading their Bibles and singing their psalms, but I don't care a fig for that, for it doesn't fill my barrel with sour-crust, nor make my chimney to smoke. Their children may be able to read and to say a hymn, but I don't see that they are a bit better than mine. Last week the grocer's boy, and he is a lad of fifteen, was attacked by the butcher's dog, and trembled and cried, and looked for all as if he was turned inside out, like a stocking. Then my William, who is only thirteen, and can neither read nor write, came up and kicked the beast down. Now I ask, what is the use of all that reading and writing? I never learnt it, and I have got through the world as well as the grocer Van Brenkelen, and the tailor Welter. The one may be able to paint his house every year; I have learnt to live as comfortably as he, and never paint at all. The other may be able to afford a horse and cart to visit his customers on their farms; I visit mine as punctually as he does, and it is on my feet. I don't see what reading and writing, Bible and hymns, have to do with all that. I know perfectly well how much I must charge for three yards of calico, without taking a pencil in one hand and a slate in the other. And I have no need to turn up a Bible to know that I would be a scoundrel if I sold cotton for linen."

"Ay," cried a voice from the audience, "but you sold half linen for entire, to the baker's wife, the other day."

A laugh arose, and several of the company took their glasses from the bar and emptied them with loud applause.

"That's a base lie!" continued the hawker, beckoning with his hand to quiet the noise, "I'm sure the tailor Welter has spread that report, to get the people to buy from himself. I am quite aware of his