

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

## SORNES IN ANTWERP.

BY THE EDITOR.

Antwerp, a busy town on the "lazy Scheldt," was, under Charles V., the most prosperous city in Europe. But Spanish tyranny and the terrors of the Inquisition reduced the population to, at one time, 40,000. It is strongly fortified, and has stood many a siege. The glory of the town is its magnificent cathedral. Its lofty open spire Napoleon compared to Mechlin lace, and Charles V. used to say it should be preserved in a glass case. Its interior is unique in this, that it has three aisles on each side of the nave. The perspective of the arches, supported on 125 columns, is very fine. The glory of the church is Rubens' masterpiece—his wonderful "Descent from the Cross." I confess to a lack of appreciation of Rubens. I can see little beauty in his figures, and they have often a vulgar coarseness that is offensive to good taste. Of course, the masterful life and rich colouring of his pictures indicate the consummate artist. But there is none of the poetic feeling of Raphael, nor of the seraphic purity of Fra Angelico. Crowded around the venerable cathedral, like mendicants around the feet of a priest, are a lot of squalid old houses, that greatly mar its beauty.

The Hotel de Ville, with a splendid facade 300 feet long, rising to the height of 180 feet, contains some fine historic halls, one with an immense chimney-piece, with famous Bible reliefs. In a neighbouring church-yard is an artificial Calvary, forty feet high, crowded with statues of saints and angels. Beneath is a grotto in imitation of the Holy Sepulchre, and an iron-grated purgatory, in which carved figures in painted flames beseech aims for masses to procure their release. It has all the horror of Dante without any of the poetry.

The picture gallery is wonderfully rich in "chefs d'oeuvre" of Flemish art; but none impressed me more than a dead Christ, by Matsys, whose deep pathos brings tears to the eyes. In the public squares are fine monuments of Rubens, Teniers, and Vandyck, and the streets bear the names of famous painters.

In this prosaic country even the dogs have to work for their living, as seen in the cut, which represents a common street scene in Antwerp. The large building at the top of the cut flanked with towers at the corners originally formed a part of the old castle of Antwerp. It was afterwards the seat of the Inquisition, and is now a museum of antiquities.

My most delightful memory of Antwerp is that of its sweet chimes. There are in all, in the cathedral tower, ninety-nine bells—the largest, at whose baptism Charles V. stood godfather, and gave his own name, weighs eight tons. Every quarter of an hour they ring out a beautiful "carillon," and at the full hour they proclaim in more elaborate melody the flight of time. My hotel was in the Cathedral Square, and at night I lay awake listening to the exquisite strain and thinking of Longfellow's musical lines:

"As the evening shade descended,  
Low and loud and sweetly blended,  
Low at times and loud at times,  
And changing like a poet's rhymes,  
Rang the beautiful wild chimes.  
Then with deep sonorous clangour  
Calmly answering their sweet anger,  
When the wrangling bells had ended,  
Slowly struck the clock eleven:  
And from out the silent heaven,  
Silence on the town descended,  
Silence, silence everywhere,  
On the earth and in the air."

## THE LITTLE RED ROCKING CHAIR.

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

The neighbours up and down both sides of the narrow, noisy street knew that chair. On every pleasant day it sat in the doorway of a tenement house midway of the block, and many a passing workman or busy housewife glanced at it with a smile. It was little and old and red. There was a faded cushion on the seat and a little diamond-shaped tidy on the back, and the chair and the cushion and the tidy belonged to little Berta Guild.

Sometimes big Jim Guild, the cabman, brought her out into the hall and set her in the little rocker when he went away early in the morning to his day's work, but that was only when it was very pleasant and warm, for little Berta was not like other children. Something was the matter with her back, something had always been the matter with it from babyhood. She could not walk far without becoming tired, nor could she play like the other children, and liked better to sit and rock in the little red chair and watch their romps.

Once, for a long three months, the lit-

tle chair was empty. Sometimes it stood in the doorway just the same as ever, but Berta lay upon her tiny bed within and wondered what the street looked like in the wintry weather. The doctor, who had taken a more than ordinary interest in her, told Big Jim that his little girl might run and dance and be happy like other little girls before the snow flew again, and they all waited for that time longingly.

At last the time arrived when she could go out, when she could walk quite a little way on by herself. It was a gala day for the street. Everybody nodded and smiled at the red chair (newly painted for the occasion) and its little occupant, and the wintry-faced old woman across the street who kept the notion store could hardly keep away from her window long enough to attend to the needs of her customers. Her old face fairly beamed through its wrinkles before the day was over.

"And to-morrow," said Tilly Guild, Berta's older sister, stopping to gossip with the old lady when she ran across in the evening for a yeast cake, "and to-morrow Berta and I are going as far as papa's stand. Won't that be fine?"

"Indeed it will!" declared the old lady.

And indeed the whole street thought so when the two little girls started off the next morning for "papa's stand." They came back in an hour, and Berta's eyes shone like twin stars. The world was so pleasant, and it was so good to walk like other little girls!

She sat down in the little red rocker, her face animated with the self-importance that comes with convalescence—and for another reason. Sister Tilly had gone across to the queer little shop to buy two cents' worth of candy. Papa had given each of them a penny. It was because of this that her eyes were fastened on the shining window of the store, behind which she could see Tilly earnestly conversing with the old lady. She could see them quite plainly, and she knew they were talking of her, for they were looking her way, and once Tilly waved a reassuring hand to her.

"And please, Tilly, don't gossip," had been Berta's parting injunction, and Tilly was surely forgetting it. The little lips quivered and the eyes were dimmed with tears. Waiting is very hard when one is convalescent.

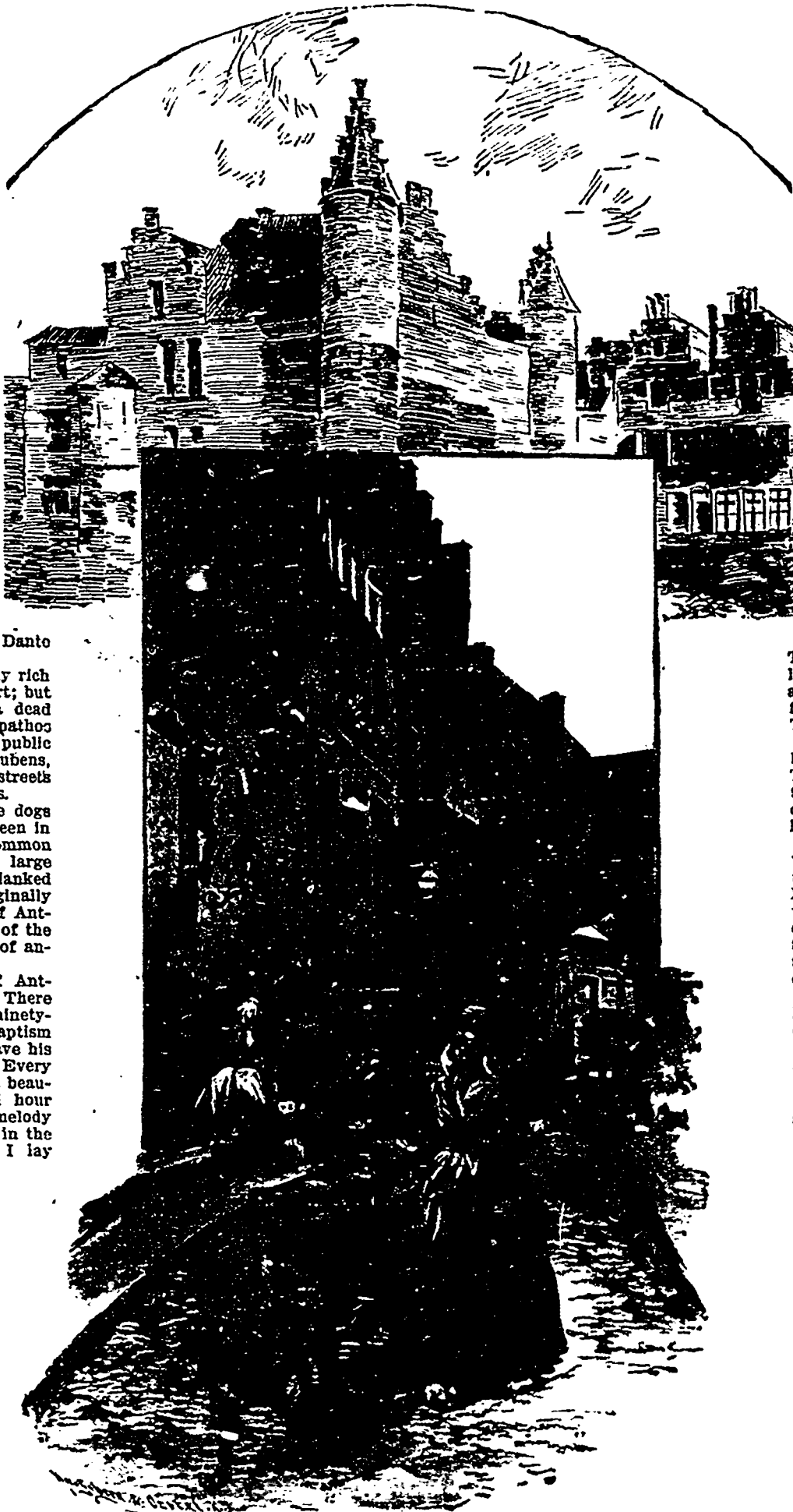
"Yes," Tilly was saying volubly. "Berta's all right now, and mamma let us go as far as papa's stand to-day. My, but he was glad to see us!" Tilly was as fond of gossip at fourteen as the old lady herself. "He let us sit inside the cab," she pursued, "and he'd have taken us for a drive, only he was afraid of losing a fare, and the cab business has been so bad this spring. No, I don't believe I'd better have any of them coloured drops, because papa said they mightn't be good for Berta, an' the worst of chewin' gum is she always forgets an' swallows it; she's that hurried—"

There was a sudden confusion in the street—a shout, the rattle of heavy wheels, the pounding of flying hoofs.

Tilly ran to the door, her hair flying, her eyes wild. She glanced across at the doorway of the tenement house. The little red rocking-chair was empty.

The white-faced driver pulled in his frightened horses at the corner and looked back. He saw the girl run out of the little shop and gather the little, still figure up from the dirty street. He heard her single agonized cry as she pressed little Berta to her bosom. Then the crowd shut out his view, and he climbed weakly down from his seat and went back.

The little red chair stands sometimes in the doorway now, but people who know hurry by with averted faces; and the wrinkled old woman in the store across the street does not go near her window the days the empty chair rocks in the hall, and often wipes her eyes while she waits upon her customers.



SCENERY IN ANTWERP.