

for; *item*, that the turner's wife had punished her old blind mother-in-law with one day's imprisonment on bread and water, because the poor drudge had upset the coffee-pot; *item*, that both the daughters of the hawker had gone a dancing with the peasants in the public-house, and to such effect that every pane had jingled in the windows. Mr. Van Brenkelen would hear all this in perfect silence, nor would he ever attempt to edge in a word; for he might as well have tried to put his arm between the spokes of a wheel when the carriage is running at full speed.

But when it happily fell that Dora just stopped to cough, or Griet stooped down to pick up half an ounce of worsted that had dropped in the heat of her gesticulation, then Mr. Van Brenkelen would lose no time, but, laying his pipe aside, start at once at full speed likewise; and, lifting up his voice, he would say—

"Very well, Mrs. Griet; very well, Mrs. Dora; but I must repeat what I have said a thousand times before, this place is the centre of heathendom, and it won't be long till we are like Sodom and Gomorrah. For there is no fear of God before the eyes of this people, and His commandments are counted less than the grass that grows on the street. Old and young, it's all one. We are in the days of Noah. People eat and drink, and gamble, and raffle, and dance, as if life were a horse-fair, and this earth of ours a ball-saloon. Those who have a breath in their nostrils live merrily and jovially, as if there were neither death nor eternity; and those that are dead are shovelled away pell-mell, and folk dance over their graves. I should not wonder if I awoke one morning, and found the whole village swallowed up by an earthquake, for the ground that bears us pants under the weight of this iniquity."

"Just so, just so," the women would answer; "you are quite right, Mr. Van Brenkelen. It's every bit true, and no mistake."

"And"—thus Mr. Van Brenkelen would continue—"would to God there were an ear willing to listen to a good word; but every one is deaf, except when the money rings in the pocket, and the corks fly out of the bottles. And yet, bad as things are, the evil is not too great to be cured by an almighty and merciful God. But no

one wants to be cured, and this is the worst of it. For I think (not to praise myself, for it is through God's grace)—I think that I never was silent about all that, nor was Mr. Welter, who lives opposite, and agrees with me that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and we at least, through the goodness of God, have children who can read and write, and who don't break other people's windows, nor run through their neighbour's fences. And why cannot your children, and those of your neighbours, be like ours? You say—'We have no school;' but that is a poor back-door; for you know as well as I, that Mr. Welter, who lives opposite to my door, offered, long since, to keep a school for your children which wouldn't cost you a farthing; and I am willing to give my barn for the purpose of a schoolhouse, and large enough it is to contain all the children of the village. But you cannot have forgotten that, when Mr. Welter had announced last spring that he was to open his school on Monday morning, the children kept playing and screaming before his door, and refused to go in. Now I say, Mrs. Griet and Mrs. Dora, you cannot have forgotten that."

Now when Mr. Van Brenkelen addressed the women in that style, they would keep as quiet as if they had tied up their tongues with the worsted they had bought, and they would look down into their aprons, squeezing and ruffling it between their fingers, as if they had found there the cause of all the evil that was going on.

"Don't destroy your apron," Mr. Van Brenkelen would then continue; "for the mischief does not lie in your dress, but in your hearts. God knows that I wish you all good, and have no pleasure in your hurt, nor has He himself, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. But you may be sure that, notwithstanding all that, you and your children will be lost for time and eternity, if you don't change your way and turn to God. For to show how exceedingly He hates sin, God has suffered His own beloved Son to be punished in our stead by the public execution of the cross. Now, if we don't turn away from that sin, and take refuge with that merciful Substitute, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? It is bad enough, indeed, that we are sinners and guilty, but still there is a