

Blind Rosa.

By HENDRICK CONSCIENCE

(CONTINUED.)

Tottering like a drunken man, the stranger turned towards a pine-copse, and stood there quite unmannered by his grief, leaning his head on a tree. When his agitation was partially allayed, he went slowly towards the village. The path led by a solitary churchyard; pausing at the foot of the cross, he uncovered his head, and, said, in a low and solemn voice:

"Here, before the image of the Saviour on the cross, Rosa plighted her troth to me; here she promised to remain ever true, and wait till I should return to my native village. We were overpowered by our sorrow; this bench was wet with our tears; and, quite mad with grief, she received from my hand the little golden cross—the love-pledge which I have so dearly redeemed. Poor friend! perhaps I am now standing on thy grave!"

With these melancholy thoughts, he sat down desponding on the kneeling bench, and remained there for a long time, unconscious of everything around him. Slowly, at last he turned his head, and gazed at the churchyard, where little hillocks indicated the most recent graves. It grieved him to see the many wooden crosses which had fallen through age; and which no child's hand had thought of raising up again over a father or a mother's resting-place. His parents, too, slept here; but who could help him to find their graves?

So mused he, long, sadly, and despondingly; mysterious, impenetrable eternity pressed upon his soul like a leaden tombstone, when suddenly a man's footsteps startled him out of his despairing thoughts.

Along by the side of the churchyard wall crept the old grave-digger, spade on shoulder. He bore the unmistakable marks of age and poverty; his back was bent by perpetual toil; his hair was white, and his face all covered with deep wrinkles; but strength and energy still lived in his eye. The traveller recognised his rival, Lauw, at first sight, and was about to hasten forward to greet him. But the bitter disappointments which he had already met with deterred him, and he resolved to say nothing, but wait to see whether Lauw recognised him.

The grave-digger paused a few paces off, and, after he had looked at him with apparent indifference, he began to mark off a long quadrangle, the limits of a new grave. Now and then, however, he cast a side look on the stranger, who sat before him on the bench, and a selfish and invidious kind of satisfaction seemed to sparkle in his eyes. The traveller, deceived by the expression which had suddenly passed over the grave-digger's countenance, felt his heart throb with the expectation that Lauw would approach and address him by his name.

The grave-digger looked at him again for a moment keenly, then feeling in the pocket of his tattered waistcoat, pulled out an old book bound in dirty parchment, to which a pencil was attached by a leather thong. Turning round, he seemed to note down something on one of the leaves. This act, taken in connection with the exulting expression of his countenance, surprised the traveller so much that he went up to the grave-digger, and said with curiosity:

"What were you writing in the little book just now?"

"That is my affair," replied Lauw Stevens, gruffly. "You have stood a terribly long time on my list; I was making a cross at your name."

"You recognize me, then?" exclaimed the stranger joyfully.

"Recognise!" said the grave-dig-

ger in a bitter and mocking tone; "I don't know that; but I remember well, just as if it had happened yesterday, that an envious villain once threw me into the river and nearly drowned me, because I was loved by Rosa the wheelwright's daughter. Since then, many an Easter candle has been burnt; but"—

"You were loved by Rosa!" interrupted the stranger. "It is not true, I tell you."

"Ah, you knew it well enough, spiteful fellow that you were! Had she not for a whole year worn the silver consecrated ring which I had brought with me from Scherpenheuvel? And did you not tear the ring forcibly from her, and throw it into the water?"

A sad smile passed over the traveller's countenance.

"Lauw! Lauw!" he exclaimed, "we do wrong; memory makes us children again. Believe me, Rosa did not love you, as you suppose; she took your ring only out of friendship, and because it was consecrated. In my youth, I was rough and rude, I fear, and did not always act nobly to my comrades. But shall four-and-thirty years have passed so destructively over men and things, and left nothing but our wretched passions unchanged? Ah, Lauw, shall the only man who recognises me be my enemy—and will he continue my enemy still? Come, give me your hand; let us be friends. I will make you happy for the remainder of your life."

The grave-digger withdrew his hand sharply, and said, in a gloomy and surly tone:

"Forget! I forget you? It is too late! You have poisoned my life. No day passes but I think of you; and do I think of you to bless your name, do you suppose? You yourself may determine that—you who have been the cause of my misery."

Folding his trembling hands, the traveller raised his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed in despair:

"God! God! hate alone knows me!—hate alone does not forget me!"

"You have done well," resumed the grave-digger, laughing, "in coming here to lie beside your blessed parents. I have kept a capital grave for you; I will lay the proud Long John under the roof-ledge, where the rain-water may get at him, and wash all the malice and villany out of his corpse."

A sudden trembling shook the traveller from head to foot, and a lightning-flash of indignation and wrath shot from his eyes. This violent excitement, however, quickly gave way to a feeling of dejection and pity.

"You deny your hand to a brother," he said, "who returns to the home of his youth, after an absence of four-and-thirty years! The first greeting which you address to your old comrade is bitter mockery! O Lauw, this is not right; still, be it so; let us say no more about it; only tell me where my blessed parents lie buried."

"I don't know," said the grave-digger surlily. "It is more than five-and-twenty years since they were brought here; and I have dug fresh graves on the same spot three times since then."

There was something more than ordinarily painful to the traveller in these words; powerless, he let his head sink on his breast, while he stared intently on the ground, quite overwhelmed by his sorrow.

The grave-digger resumed his labour, but with an unsteady and hesitating hand, as if some deeper feeling were now at work within him. He looked and beheld the stranger's anguish, and seemed inwardly shocked at the secret and long-cherished revenge which had actuated his conduct, and impelled him to torture his fellow-man so

mercilessly. This change of feeling was visible upon his countenance; the contemptuous smile had vanished, and he looked at his mourning comrade with rising sympathy. He then slowly approached him, and, taking his hand, said, in a low but impressive voice:

"John, friend, forgive what I have said and done! I have acted cruelly and maliciously. But, John, you do not know how much I have suffered through you."

"Lauw!" exclaimed the other, grasping his hand with emotion; "those were errors of our youth! And see how little I calculated on your hostility: your very naming me was itself an inexpressible joy to me. I am still grateful to you for that, though you have torn my heart by your bitter mockery. And now tell me where Rosa lies buried? In heaven she will rejoice to see us reconciled, and standing like brothers beside her last resting-place!"

"Buried!" exclaimed the grave-digger. "God grant that she were buried, poor thing!"

"What? what do you mean to say?" cried the traveller. "Is Rosa still alive?"

"Yes, she lives, if her heavy lot is worthy the name of life."

"You make me tremble. For God's sake, speak! what misfortune has befallen her?"

"She is blind."

"Blind? Rosa blind! She has no eyes with which to look on me again! Alas, alas!"

Overcome by grief, he tottered back to the bench, and sank down upon it. The grave-digger approached him.

"For ten years she has been blind," he said, and begs her daily bread. I give her twopence every week; and when we bake, there is always a little loaf set apart for her besides."

The traveller sprang up, and warmly pressing the grave-digger's hand exclaimed:

"Thanks, thanks! God bless you for your kindness to her! I will take it on myself to reward you in His holy name. I am rich, very rich. To-day we shall meet again; but now, without losing a moment, tell me where she lives; every minute is another minute of misery to her."

With these words he drew the grave-digger by the hand towards the gate of the churchyard. From the wall Lauw pointed with his finger in the distance:

"Do you see the smoke rising from yonder little chimney behind the copse? There is the hut of the broom-maker, Nelis Oems, and there Rosa lives!"

Without waiting for further directions, the traveller hastened in the direction pointed out, and passing through the village, soon reached the solitary dwelling.

It was an humble hut, built of dry twigs and mud, but clean outside and carefully white-washed. Not far from the door lay four little children sprawling on the ground in the warm sun, or making wreaths of the blue corn-flowers and red poppies. They were barefoot and half-naked; the eldest, a little boy of six, wore nothing but a linen shirt. While the three little sisters looked at the unknown visitor with shyness and timidity, this little fellow, on the contrary, gazed at him with a certain surprise and interest, mingled with an open-hearted ingenuousness. The traveller laughed kindly to the child, but, without stopping, entered the hut, where he found the father in a corner busy with his brooms, and the mother with her wheel by the hearth.

These people seemed to be about thirty years of age, and appeared quite contented with their lot. Everything about them was as clean as rustic life would admit of in a dwelling so confined.

To be continued.

Fifteen Years Ago

From No. 26 of St. Peter's Bote

The warmest day this year at St. Peter's Monastery was on July 23rd, it being 87° Fahrenheit. Rainfall during the month was 4.37 inches. Most of this fell during the last three days of the month. — On the 7th of August a correspondent writes from Münster, saying that this is the new name for the post-office of St. Peter's monastery. — At a meeting of the Monastery S. D. Mr. Albert Nenzel was elected as chairman, C. L. Mayer as secretary and Albert Breher as treasurer. It was decided to have six months of school with Brother Adolph as teacher. The church is to be partitioned off for the purpose. The S. D. comprises sections 7, 18, 19, 30 and 31 of T. 37, R. 21 and sections 12, 13, 24, 25 and 36 in T. 37, R. 22. This fall there will be about 18 to 20 children of school age.

On the 3rd of August a correspondent writes from Leofeld that in spite of the heavy rains Friday, July 29, Father Meinrad hauled the new bell and statue to Leofeld. Although he was soaked wet, he immediately opened the box to see if they were in good condition. He was highly pleased with the result of his inspection. The bell with the hangings weighs 600 lbs. Prior Alfred blessed the bell on the 2nd of August. The name "Maria Dolores" was given it. On this occasion the statue of St. Boniface was also blessed. These ceremonies were followed by a Solemn High Mass celebrated by Prior Alfred. P. Peter officiated as deacon and P. Meinrad as subdeacon, with Fr. Leo as master of ceremonies. After High Mass 30 women were enrolled in the Confraternity of Christian Mothers.

Rosthern reports that two prominent pioneers were in from the Quil Lake district, i. e. Bernard Hatke and Mat. Bartholet. In the course of the summer Mr. Hatke broke with one team 50 acres and Mr. Bartholet even 25 more than that. The rails for the C.N.R. are being laid about ten or twelve miles east of their place.—A number of new landseekers went out to the Colony; Messrs. Spielmann, Jansen and Sucking of Illinois, and Niemeier, Held and Kaiser of Missouri.—Prior Alfred is in town for a few days. Father Peter and Fr. Hugo were likewise in town recently.—One of the new arrivals is Mr. Gessl.—Mr. Benz who had gone to Germany to get his family, arrived here with his wife and three children; all are healthy and in good spirits.

ADDENDA:

On the 21st of August the first High Mass was celebrated in Assumption church at Dead Moose Lake. For this purpose Father Chrysostom had taken along Mr. George K. Muench and his two boys (11 and 12 yrs. old respectively). It was quite a surprise to the parishioners when the singing began, as no one had been told that a High Mass would be held. In the afternoon the Rev. Father brought Mr. Muench and his boys home and then left immediately for Manning's (Fulda) driving across the prairie between Dead Moose Lake and Waldsee, reaching his destination at 8 P.M. Next day (Monday) he held services in St. Joseph's church and then held a meeting, at which Mat. Fleischhacker, Henry Kalthoff, Anton Jaeb and Joseph Duer were elected as a building committee for the erection of a small priest's residence near Mr. Manning's log house south of St. Joseph's church.

—One may learn what is in the human heart by what comes out of it.

FOLLOWING THE TEACHER.

A teacher was instructing a class of infants in the Sunday School and was letting the children finish the sentences to make sure that they understood.

"The idol had eyes," she said, "but it couldn't—"

"See," cried the children.

"It had ears, but it couldn't—"

"Hear."

"It had lips, but it couldn't—"

"Speak."

"It had a nose, but it couldn't—"

"Wipe it!" shouted the little ones.

"Father, what do they mean by gentleman farmers?"

"Gentleman farmers, my son, are farmers who seldom raise anything except their hats."

Rural Municipality of Humboldt No. 370

PUBLIC NOTICE.
Please take notice that the Council intends to put in force By-law No. 6, a by-law of the Rural Municipality of Humboldt No. 370 providing for the prevention of the deposit of dirt, filth, stones, and other things on the Public roads, and for the prevention of the ploughing of roads and the encumbering and obstructing of the same. Everyone found doing any of the things/above mentioned will be prosecuted as provided by said by-law, so please govern yourself accordingly.

By Order
F. I. HAUSER, Sec. Treas.

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