

as he began to discuss the question of the young folks' marriage. Finding his host firmly insisting on giving his daughter only the dowry he had before mentioned, Master Woerden made but a feigned remonstrance to these terms, and in the end conceded the disputed point. It was then decided that the marriage should take place in eight days.

As they returned to Amsterdam the next day, William ventured to ask his father why he had thus agreed to Master Van Elberg's terms.

"My son," replied Master Woerden, gravely, "do not disturb me about trifles. The contract for herring is a serious matter and requires all my thoughts."

Once more in his own house, Master Woerden shut himself up for hours in his own room, and when he at length came forth he gave his servant a large package of letters to mail.

Three days later the old man, with his wrinkled face alight with triumph, whispered to his son:

"Ah, William, I have your dowry all ready for you."

On the day appointed for the wedding Woerden and his son returned to Broek. This time they were received with great ceremony. The wide folding doors that are only opened for christenings, weddings and funerals were drawn apart, and a large party assembled.

The master of the house, however, came to meet them with so pale and troubled a countenance that William feared he had some bad news to make known. Master Woerden did not share his son's alarm, for he knew only too surely the cause of his host's distress.

"What troubles you, dear friend?" he said, with a hypocritical smile. "You look anxious and worried."

"Ah! I am cruelly embarrassed. I must speak with you at once."

"Can it be this marriage that displeases you? Do you wish to retract your consent?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, then, let us go on with the ceremony; when that is over and our friends are amusing themselves we can speak at our ease of other matters."

Master Van Elberg hesitated. He would gladly put all else aside until his distress of mind was explained; but seeing also how much wiser it would be to take the advice thus given him, he gave the signal for the marriage to go on.

A few moments later the wedded pair were kneeling at the altar to receive the church's blessing on their union, and immediately on the return of the party to the house, Master Van Elberg hurried his guest into his private room.

"My friend," he said anxiously, as soon as he had closed the door, "I have engaged to deliver 400,000 herring to you in 15 days, and I have not yet succeeded



A VARIATION OF TWO SUITS.

in getting a single one. They are all sold."

"Of course they are!" cried Master Woerden, with a burst of laughter; "I have myself bought them!"

"Ah!" cried Van Elberg, after staring a moment at his companion in utter amazement. "What then do you expect—"

"That you will fulfill your engagement. Listen to me, my friend. You will one day leave your daughter a large fortune, and I shall do as much for my son. That is all very well for the future, but for to-day they are not on equal terms. I shall give my son a share in my business, but you give your daughter only 4,000 ducats. I have not wished to disappoint our children's hopes, but I have planned to compel you to be more just in your arrangements."

While Master Woerden thus spoke his companion was becoming more and more bewildered.

"This is what I have done," continued the merchant of Amsterdam; "you have engaged to sell me these herring at ten florins a thousand, but I already have them. You can only retrieve your honor by buying them from me. I will sell them to you for 50 florins a thousand. Thus you will pay me 10,000 florins, and we are quits."

"It is well," replied Van Elberg, who had now regained control of his scattered have caught me finely."

He bowed ceremoniously to his companion, turned to his desk and drew up a check for the required sum, which he handed to Master Woerden with another bow.

The two fathers then returned to the parlor to partake in the wedding festivities.

Eight days later the merchant of Broek came to visit his daughter, who now lived with her husband at Amsterdam. He found Master Woerden in great tribulation.