

a man's hand—was stretched out to each in turn, which each took to be aid from the comrade gone before. But when the tenth soldier went up, he fancied he heard something like a struggle and a gasp. What was going on? He paused in his climbing, and called in a low voice—

"Is it all right?"

"Yes, yes," whispered someone. "Hush, don't make a noise! Come on, man!"

So they all came up the wall—fifteen Walloon troopers—and once over they found themselves changed to fifteen prisoners. For a dark cloak had been flung over each head, a wet wad stuffed into each mouth, and then arms and legs firmly tied; there they lay, gurgling and choking, and swearing as far as they were able, in the guard-house of the gate, instead of being its masters as they intended, and about to open to the battalion of Spanish troops who were waiting out there in the fog, watching for the signal that their comrades were successful.

Presently someone entered the guard-house with a lantern. The sixteen prisoners turned their eyes and saw a tall old man and a girl. The latter held the light and she stooped and gazed earnestly into each distorted face. When she reached the captain she paused.

"It is he, Burgomaster."

"Who?" he answered, stooping down also.

"It is Captain Maximilien van Artelmonde," she replied, "only son of General van Artelmonde, in command of the Walloon and Spanish troops now beleaguering our town."

The keen old eyes of the Burgomaster began to flash and gleam. Indeed, the maiden had redeemed her promise and given him a prisoner worth having. The only son of the General! Why, his father was said to love him so passionately, that it was believed he would give any ransom to save him from suffering or peril. The Burgomaster could have laughed aloud for very joy, but he kept a grave face, only chuckling down in his beard. "These women, these women; 'tis hard to be up to their tricks." But aloud he spoke courteously.

"I must apologise, Captain van Artelmonde," he said, "for this treatment, but I knew not we had to do with a man of your quality. Here, Jan, Dirck," he called to two of the burgher guard, "loosen these bonds and assist the gentleman to rise. I must entreat you to accept the hospitality of my poor house for the present," he went on. "May I beg of you to come with me?"

The captain stumbled to his feet and went with his captor silently, being perhaps too full of cholera for speech. The Burgomaster and Jacqueline accompanied him, but no more words were spoken till they three stood together in the room where Jacqueline had revealed her plot. It was she who spoke first.

"Where is Quentin?" she said, in a quivering voice—"where is he? And how got you the bird?"

"Quentin Alost," said the captain, and his

dark eyes gleamed with wrath, "is a prisoner in the camp yonder! Herronmonde has fallen, and there I got him and your white pigeon! But he will die to-morrow!" he added viciously.

Jacqueline gave a faint cry. "Die!" she faltered.

"Yes, die; that is certain," he answered, looking with a sort of grim pleasure at her horrorstruck face, "now that our enterprise has failed."

"Then," said the Burgomaster, and, as he spoke, he laid his hand reassuringly on the shoulder of the trembling girl, "if that is so—if Quentin Alost is to die—so must you and your fifteen troopers prepare for death!"

"I," the young man turned with a haughty stare—"I! Do you know who I am, old man? Do you put the life of a vile mechanic against that of a nobleman! You are talking folly, mynheer!"

"It is folly that has a stout cord at the end of it then, Captain van Artelmonde, I do rank the life of Quentin Alost at as high a value as yours and at higher. And whether you agree with me or not, if Quentin dies, so shall you be hung up on the ramparts where your friends can see the show. So prepare yourself."

The young noble looked hard at the Burgomaster. Did he mean what he said? There was plenty of resolution in the stern old face, and he knew these burghers had most strange ideas on points of rank. He glanced round the room. Was there any chance of escape? No—none. He was completely caught in the trap he had laid for others, and by a girl too, this minister's daughter, with whom he had fallen so foolishly in love that last summer at Ghent, when she had been staying with his lady aunt, who had taken a fancy to the handsome clever girl. He was full of rage and mortification; but still, life was sweet. His eyes rested wrathfully, yet full of passion, on Jacqueline who stood, leaning one hand on the table, her face white and set.

"Then if you would save the life of your boorish lover," he cried, nearly beside himself with spite and disappointment, "you must furnish me with a messenger to the General, my father!"

Jacqueline had a retort on her lips, but the Burgomaster checked her with a curious smile.

"Never mind his words," he remarked; "what he means is that he is willing to save his own life. Yes, sir, write"—he put ink and paper before him—"write as I direct, and I will find a messenger."

Gloomily the young captain obeyed.

"We have fallen into a trap," dictated the Burgomaster, "and are prisoners, and unless you send Quentin Alost safe and well into the city by noon I and the others must die on the gallows."

Here the captain paused.

"You will exchange me for this Quentin, then?"

"Ah, no, noble sir," replied the Burgomaster dryly; "oh, no! I would not do you so great an indignity as to value you alone against a vile mechanic, as you just now termed our friend. No, no—that is only a preliminary. I would beg you to resume your writing."

"The Burgomaster," he dictated, as the captain reluctantly took up the pen, "tells me that there is still food enough in the town to last them some time, but that they have none to spare for strangers, and that therefore unless you raise the siege very shortly I must starve."

The young man flung down the pen.

"I will not write it!" he cried.

"Content," said the Burgomaster; "then you hang to-morrow on the ramparts!"

The prisoner writhed in his chair. "It is too hard," he exclaimed; "you make me a craven and a traitor!"

"And what would you have made of me?" suddenly cried Jacqueline. "If I had not detected your vile trick, what would have been happening now?"

"You would have been safe," he said; "none would have hurt you. We should have been riding now to Antwerp to our wedding!"

"Our wedding—our wedding!" she exclaimed. "Do you think if I would not marry you before, that I would now? My friends would have been betrayed, my own people murdered, the town sacked and burnt, and instead of the quiet sleep that is now round us, the shrieks and screams of tortured, dying men and women. And you—you would have made me do this! Oh, you false, black-hearted traitor! If you had been a Spaniard one might have understood; but you have been bribed by foreign gold to betray your own country-people!"

"Hush, my daughter," interrupted the Burgomaster, "we waste time in these recriminations. Sir, will you write, or will you not? It is no use to remonstrate—you must write or die!"

He did write, and ere noon Quentin was safe in the Burgomaster's house. But what somewhat surprised the old magistrate was that the other conditions were also accepted without hesitation, and that that very night the Leaguer was broken up. Next day, however, when the vanguard of the Prince's army marched into the city, bringing news of a victory won over a large detachment of the Spanish force, he saw that it was possible the General had other motives for his action than the desire of saving his only son.

But the little town rejoiced greatly at its deliverance, for there were not many more sacks of flour left in the magazines, and even the rats were getting scarce, and when two months later Quentin and Jacqueline were married at the "Grootekirche," the burghers gave the bride a handsome dowry to prove that they felt she deserved well of the city.

VARIETIES.

THE RIGHT WAY TO WORK.—Every nail driven faithfully, every room thoroughly swept, every detail performed to the best of our ability, is so much done, not only for to-day or to-morrow, but for all time; not only for our employer, or for those about us, but also for posterity.

BE GOOD.—Remember that no man or woman, even the humblest, can really be strong, pure and good without the world being the better for it—without somebody being helped and comforted by the very existence of this goodness.

A COURAGEOUS GIRL.—The girl whose yea is yea and her nay, nay, is, we all confess, the most courageous, whether or not she may be the most successful in daily life; and he who gave the precept has left us the most perfect example of how to live up to it.

THE END.

"Various the roads of life; in one

All terminate, one lonely way:

We go; and 'Is she gone?'

Is all our best friends say."

W. S. Landor.

REFORMATION IS NEEDED.—One reason why the world is not reformed is because every girl would have other girls make a beginning and never thinks of herself.

THE COLDS WERE CURED.

"Were those cough-drops beneficial?"

"They worked like a charm. They have such a horrible taste that the children have all stopped coughing."

NECESSARY FOR FRIENDSHIP.—Without steadiness of character in social life there can be no true friendship.