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THE DOUBLE SACRIFICE, OR THE PONTIFICAL ZOUAVES. A TALE OF CASTELFIDARDO.

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CHAPTER VII.—PRO PETRI SEDE.

We have not yet met with the principal hero of our story. We are now about to make his acquaintance.

We find ourselves in a large room of a stately house in a city of the province of Antwerp.

The appearance of this room is somewhat singular.

Not a hand's breadth of the surface of the walls is to be seen; for they are completely covered with wooden shelves filled with books of all sorts and sizes, great and small, bound and unbound, old and new.

Let us spend a few moments in examining them; for when I see a library, I can find out the mind of its owner, and become acquainted with the man who has collected the books.

Like follows like.

But what books have we here? Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, Volney, Foe—good for lighting the fire.

Milton, Dante, Taffo, Shakespeare, Vondel. Here is something better.

And in the third book case: works on languages, Flemish, French, English, Danish, Swedish, &c. &c.; too long to enumerate.

And farther on: natural science, history, antiquities, and I know not what besides. My belief is that the gentleman yonder at his writing table reading so intently is, to judge by his books, something of an indifferentist, or, as some men say now, a free-thinker.

A free-thinker! This is still a rarity in the Campine; but, good Campiner, if you should meet with such a thing, put on your spectacles, and let them have a good magnifying power, that you may be able to observe him well, for he is well worth the trouble.

A free-thinker, then, is a wonderful sort of animal, who does anything but think freely.

But we have not fully examined the room. The middle is filled with great glass cases, which leave but a narrow passage between themselves and the book-cases.

And in these cases are coins of every age, from the old Romans until now; of every land in America or in Europe; of every form, square, round, or octagon; of every metal, gold, silver, copper—ay, of nickel. Farther, old iron pots full of ashes and bones, varied by stone weapons, rusty daggers and swords, medals, &c.

Still farther, skeletons of animals, little and big; and farther again, a collection of birds, from the mighty ostrich to the tiniest humming-bird. There is a collection of minerals, of seals, of postage-stamps, of portraits. It is a collection, in short, of collections. Last of all, a multitude of grotesque little wooden figures such as little children draw, with a stroke for a nose, another stroke for a mouth, and two great dots for eyes. What are these! Above them is written, 'false Gods from the wilds of America.'

And where is the image of the True God—the image of the Crucified.

You will seek it in vain. It is nowhere to be found.

We may rest assured, then, that we are in the library of a free-thinker.

It is even so; and yet the free-thinker is not so bad a man as you may perhaps imagine.

Mynheer Morren, such is his name, is indifferent as to the service of God; he takes little or no heed of the fulfilment of his duties as a Christian, but he was carefully trained in his youth, and he is an honorable man in the ordinary sense of the words. He is grave in his demeanor, and leads a strictly moral life. He is a kind of philosopher, who is too proud to bow to mysteries which are beyond the sphere of his reason.

He is tolerant, however, and wishes all men to follow their own convictions; so he places no impediments in the way of his wife's piety, who is the very pattern of excellence; nor does he interfere with his only son Victor, who treats in her footsteps, and resembles his father only in his enthusiastic love of study.

For Mynheer Morren, as we have seen plainly enough by the aspect of his room, is a passionate lover of learning, and it is, in fact, the thirst for knowledge, which, for lack of a trustworthy guide, has led him into the way of error.

When five and twenty years ago, he married Rosa Verbruggen, the sister of Mevrouw Van Diel, he was still a believer, or her hand would

never have been his. It was long afterwards, and by slow, very slow, degrees, that the evil lessons of false philosophy had quenched the light of Faith in his soul.

Mynheer Morren had always a special predilection for the study of languages, and, among the seven or eight with which he was more or less acquainted, he spoke English, German, and Italian fluently.

His son Victor fully shared his love for this pursuit.

While his father, as we have said, was busied at his reading desk, he sat at a little table absorbed in his book. After a time he raised his head. 'Father,' cried he, 'Italian is a glorious language. What a poet Dante is. Listen to this verse, how the sound is an echo of the sense.'

Mynheer Morren was well pleased with the interruption, for he passionately loved his son, and he was never better pleased than to witness his intense sympathy in his own linguistic pursuits.

The reading of the passage was interrupted by a knock at the door. It opened at a loud 'Come in' from Mynheer Morren, and Joseph and his sister entered the room, followed by Mevrouw Morren.

'Victor,' cried Morren joyfully, 'here are our good friends from Schrambeek.'

The 'Divina Commedia' was flung hastily on the table, and Victor grasped Joseph's hand heartily, for the two youths were bosom friends.

'Well, well, how are you all at Schrambeek. Is your mother so fully recovered that you can both leave her together? You came, no doubt, by the fast train.'

The young people had so much to say, that they scarcely knew where to begin.

'You received the letter giving an account of mother's recovery.'

'Certainly; but we did not expect her convalescence to be so rapid that you should be already able to leave home together.'

'Yet so it is, or else—'

'But,' interrupted Heer Morren, ringing the bell, 'sit down; we are forgetting everything in the unexpected joy of seeing you both. Well, well, what a pleasure it is. Barbara, to the maid who came to answer the bell, bring two bottles of our best wine and cigars.'

'Good, Mynheer,' was the answer, and Barbara departed on her errand as fast as her old legs would carry her.

'Barbara,' Victor called after her, 'some of my cigars, do you hear.'

Barbara loved her young master dearly, for she had watched over him in his cradle like a second mother.

'Mary and I will go to the garden,' said Mevrouw. 'It is so lovely to-day it will be a real pleasure to enjoy the fresh air in the summer-house; and while Joseph tells you all about his mother's recovery I shall hear it from Mary.'

They left the room, and Joseph sat down with his uncle and Victor at the library-table, while Barbara fetched the wine and cigars.

'You seemed surprised just now,' began Joseph, 'at our coming. I have told you already that my mother is now so well that we felt no anxiety in leaving her alone with Erika, but besides this we had reason enough to make no delay.... Dear uncle, dearest Victor, I have come to bid you farewell, it may be, for ever.'

'To say farewell, Joseph,' they both exclaimed. 'What is going to happen?'

'I see Dante on the table. Well, I am going to his country.'

'To Italy? But what are you going to do there?'

'What am I going to do there. To fight for the Church and against the revolutionists. To shed my blood, probably to offer my life, in the holiest of causes.'

Mynheer Morren was about to reply when a second knock at the door interrupted the conversation, and he had hardly said 'Come in,' when two persons entered who were evidently on a most intimate footing in the house. They were two young gentlemen, faultlessly attired in the fashions of the day.

'Ah!' cried Mynheer Morren, 'here are two more friends. Welcome Ernest! welcome Tommaso! Come in and sit down.'

The visit did not seem to be so welcome to Victor in whose glance at the two visitors a slight expression of contempt might have been discerned.

The two gentlemen made many apologies; they had just come in, they said, as they were passing, to say good day, but finding Mynheer Morren engaged, they would go on, for they feared to disturb him by an untimely visit.

'Certainly not,' was the reply; 'at least stay for a few minutes. Tommaso, you are Italianisimo. I have the honor to introduce my nephew, Joseph Van Dael, who is come to tell us that he is just starting for your country. And,' turning

to Joseph, 'my dear nephew,' he continued, 'this is my friend Ernest Van Doreau, and this Mynheer Tommaso di Roccabianca.'

'It is always a pleasure to me, dear uncle,' said Joseph, 'to become acquainted with any friends of yours.'

'But we will sit down again,' continued the old gentleman. 'Come, drink a glass of wine, and then we will go into the saloon.'

As Mynheer Morren was speaking the Italian fixed a piercing eye upon Joseph, and then exchanged a look with Ernest, which seemed to say—this is not one of our sort.

This fellow, with his fiery eagle glance, was a Roman 'carbonaro,' who had been obliged to leave his country some years before, and was now lurking in Belgium under the high sounding name of Tommaso di Roccabianca.

The saloon, to which they now repaired, was adorned with pictures; the walls were hung with antique leather, one side with costly tapestry bearing the inscription, 'Royaumes fecit.'—It was furnished with fine old carved chests and skillfully wrought cabinets, full of Venetian glass and costly china.

The conversation which had been interrupted for a moment, was renewed, and became more lively. It was carried on by persons of various nations, yet all the party could speak Flemish, for Tommaso, who had already spent some years in Belgium, had, with natural readiness, learnt enough of the language to be able to express himself without difficulty, and to understand it with the greatest ease.

'You were telling us, Joseph,' began Mynheer Morren, 'that you were about to enter the Pope's service, but what induced you to make such a decision?'

The young man, doubtless, was not very willing to lay open the secrets of his heart before strangers, but he answered after short pause.

'I have offered myself, dear uncle, to obtain the grace of my mother's recovery.'

'Oh! And you really believe that you have thereby obtained her restoration to health? It is a miracle, then, my young friend. How can you imagine such a thing?'

'Not so. My mother's recovery may have been simply natural. But, dear uncle, suppose it to have been a miracle, there is no impossibility in the case.'

'Miracles? Nonsense. Old women's tales. Fables believed also by wise men. You would not say that your favorite English poet the great Shakespeare, was an old woman.—What does he say?—'

There are more things in Heaven and earth Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

But I will not make too much of my mother's recovery. The doctor has declared that it was quite contrary to his expectations, and I have reason to believe that it may be ascribed to the health-giving power of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction.'

'Now this is better and better,' interposed Ernest. 'Mynheer Van Diel is absurdly a century behindhand: he believes that a person can be cured by a little oil out of a bottle!'

'Mynheer,' replied Joseph with dignity, 'I will not contradict your assertion; so far as it concerns me personally, I am willing to be accounted, not only one century, but even eighteen centuries behindhand, if they are to be accounted behindhand who are not modern free thinkers. But,' continued he, with increasing energy, 'you wound my Christian feelings, you make a mockery of the holiest points in my belief, and this I can never endure in cold blood. Do you think to shake by doubts that which has been believed for so many hundred years?'

'But I am free, at all events, to express my own opinion,' replied Ernest, 'if I do not believe these things.'

'Alas, that you do not believe them. I venture to prophecy to you that there will come an hour when you shall believe them—an hour when you shall, perhaps, call despairingly for the help of a priest of the Lord. Will God then vouchsafe to you the means of salvation of which you now dare to make a mockery. He alone knows; but I pray Him not to remember your blasphemy against you at that hour.'

The young gentleman betook himself to his cigar, and was soon enveloped in smoke.

'But, Joseph,' said Mynheer Morren, who wished to give a turn to the conversation, 'what has this to do with your determination to go to Rome? Surely you might know that the Papal cause ill deserves support.'

'As I said just now,' replied Joseph more calmly, 'I have entered that service in fulfilment of a vow made to obtain my mother's restoration to health. But how can you say, dear uncle, that the Papal cause ill deserves support? If you neighbor, be he called John Brown or Victor Emmanuel, wished to take you garden from you on the pretext that it is necessary to him in order to make his property four square, would you be pleased with any one who should favor

such a pretext? Would your own Victor deserve to be called your son were he to fail to uphold your rights by every means in his power? And a crowned robber, for whom history is even now heating her pitiless branding iron—a crowned robber shall masterfully snatch from my Father his possessions, secured to him by the most ancient and the holiest rights, and I, a cowardly degenerate son, shall stand by with folded arms instead of drawing my sword in his defence?—Oh, then, farewell to my glorious name of Roman Catholic!'

'Bravo, Joseph,' cried Victor, 'that is well spoken. You are a worthy son of our old crusading fathers. And now see,' he continued, 'what follows from the principles which now pass current in Italy. Let the Emperor Napoleon but once take it into his head to mark the boundaries of his empire by their natural limits of the sea, the mountains and the Rhine, and what would Belgium have to say against it? It is as clear as the mid-day sun.'

'No, caparra!' broke in the Italian, 'there is a great difference between the two cases; Ma Puntata d'Italia corpo di Bacco.' Italian unity of Italy, here is the reason. All Italy pants for it, and the Pope and his personal interests must give way to the common good, or be forced to yield to it. Too long already has our beautiful country languished under the yoke of dukes, priests and foreigners.'

'Italian unity, Mynheer? This is not in the power of the revolution to effect,' replied Joseph. 'It is a dream in which the freemasons themselves have no belief, and their leaders less than any. Do you know what the heads of the Italian movement said of the unity of Italy, which had been too long bruised about in every tone and accent? "The independence and unity of Italy," wrote the freemason F.lice from Ancona in 1829, "are dreams, the principle is vain; but it is a means of exciting uproar, and as such we may use it." The bell weather, Vindice, uttered a cry at Castellamare, in 1838, which removes all doubt as to the aim of the revolution. "We have resolved," so ran the words, "that we will not suffer a single Christian to remain upon earth. We will lay the Church in her grave."—(Cretinon-July l'Engle en face de la Revolution. Ed. 1859, t. ii. pp. 136 and 148)—Madmen! the experience of eighteen hundred years has not taught them that the Church arises from her seeming death, to cast the earth over the coffins of her persecutors. Ah, your motto, "Unita d'Italia," may sound well, if you will; but it is vain, and if you set it in array against ours, "Pro Petri Sede," I forebode to you a final overthrow, though you may first rejoice in a temporary triumph.'

The conversation ran for some time longer on the subject of the Pope, and the necessity of his temporal possessions; but Joseph, strongly supported by Victor, who—half to his father's vexation and half to his satisfaction, showed considerable information and power of argument—gave the two liberals so decided an overthrow that they were fairly driven off the field, and at last left the room in visible mortification and displeasure.

'Per Bacco!' muttered Maso, when they were outside the door, 'if we were in Italy my dagger should soon stop the mouth of this hateful vassal of the Pope; and the son of your Morren deserves nothing better.'

'Joseph,' said Mynheer Morren, 'I am afraid that you have annoyed these gentlemen. You are a doughty champion of your principles.'

'I am sorry on your account, uncle,' replied the young man; 'but they deserve no better.'

'No, no,' said Victor, 'you have used your weapons well. That Maso, with his fiery eyes, seems to be a dangerous fellow. Who knows what he hides under that fine-sounding name, di Roccabianca. Nothing good, methinks.'

The two visitors had just taken leave when Mevrouw Morren returned with Mary from the garden. The conversation now turned upon various matters especially the recovery of the widow Van Dael, Joseph's departure, and the state of Italy. Mynheer Morren being now left alone to maintain his own opinions found so many and formidable opponents that he was obliged at last to acknowledge the Pope's cause not to be so indefensible as he had at first believed, though he still persisted in calling his nephew's determination a folly. 'And yet,' he continued, 'I love you the better for it. It is folly, but it is an heroic folly; and I love the man who will lay down his life for his principles.'

At last the hour of parting came. After a last farewell to Mevrouw Morren, Joseph left the house in company with Victor. The old Heer Morren followed at a little distance with Mary. The two young men conversed earnestly together. Apparently they were exchanging their utmost thoughts.

The train stood ready to start, so that the brother and sister had but just time to get in,

and exchange a last farewell with their friends from the carriage.

'Farewell, farewell!' cried Heer Morren. 'Addio!' was Joseph's answer—he had already mastered one word of Italian, 'farewell till we meet again.'

And the train quickly vanished.

When Mynheer Morren entered his library the next morning, he found, contrary to custom, his son was not there. After making a few guesses as to the cause of his absence, his eyes fell upon an open letter lying upon his table.—He read it, turned white, then red, then white again, his lips were strongly compressed his eyes flashed fire from under his knitted brows, and he rang the bell hastily and violently.

CHAPTER IV.—THE SON OF THE RICH MAN, AND THE SON OF THE BEGGAR WOMAN.

'Well, Peerjan—no news?' inquired Sus, the smith of Schrambeek, from the midst of a group of villagers, of the old Piquet, as he came out of the 'Eagle.'

'That's to say—yes,' was the answer, 'great news, and nothing out of the newspapers.'

'What then? Let us hear. Let us hear; came from many voices.

'Give a guess.'

'That the schoolmaster is going to marry the brewer's daughter.'

'Bah! Everybody knows that.'

'That your Koben caught a man stealing wood yesterday.'

'How! that might easily happen. When I was a Piquet in deed, as well as name, I have caught more thieves than he could shut up in Schrambeek Church.'

'Holla, Peerjan; you are not going to say that we are all thieves, for Schrambeek Church will hold the whole village.'

'Yes; but I don't mean that,' continued the Piquet, who saw that he had spoken somewhat beside the mark. 'Guess again, good people; great news.'

'Come, come, tell us at once; we can't guess.'

'You know the Pope of Rome, eh?'

'No, no, indeed,' replied several voices.

'Know him,' cried Tist, the baker, 'personally, no, by name, yes.'

'But this is the case,' continued the Piquet; 'the Italians want to take away his land from him.'

'The villains,' roared the smith, 'if I could get at them with my sledge-hammer.'

'Be silent, and let me speak,' said Peerjan, 'when I have done, you can do what you will. I say, then, that the Italians want to take away the Pope's land from him; for you must know that the whole of Italy is to make one great kingdom, and they want to have Rome for its capital. So it comes to pass that the Pope and other Princes must give up their dominions.'

And suppose they will not give them up?' inquired Wouter, the carpenter.

'Then I suppose they will be taken by force,' answered Tist; 'that is the fashion now-a-days.'

'That is as clear as water,' muttered the smith, 'but blacker than a smith's face.'

'That's to say,' continued Peerjan, 'that is not so clear as you seem to think; it will not be so easy as it seems. You must know that at this very moment there is a number of young men full of hope, strong and courage as lions, who are going off to Rome to fight for our Holy Father the Pope.'

'Yes, I know that well enough,' scornfully answered the little landlord of the 'Cross Bow.' You think, I suppose, that nobody reads the newspapers but yourself. But what is your piece of news from Schrambeek?'

'Well, if you cannot wait, it is this: Joseph Van Dael is going to set off in a few days; he has entered the Pope's service.'

'Bravo! That is grand!' cried they all.

'And,' continued Peerjan mysteriously, 'I have heard and I believe it is on account of a vow which he had made for his mother's recovery.'

'Well done!' cried they all in amazement; 'all the better.'

'I have always said,' pronounced the baker oracularly, 'that Joseph was a jewel of a young man.'

At this moment Teresa, the beggar woman, approached the group.

'Teresa,' cried the carpenter, 'do you know the news? Joseph Van Dael is going to Rome.'

'As if I did not know it,' said Teresa laughing. 'Well! the young man is in the right, and he is not the only one who will go.'

And the old woman hobbled away on her crutch.

'Well,' said Peerjan, 'if I had thirty or forty fewer years on my shoulders—'

'If I had no wife and children,' added the smith.