

THE RECRUIT

By HENDRICK CONSCIENCE

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER II.

The hour for departure is come. Yonder, before the huts, stands a fine young man — his staff on his shoulder, and a bundle on his back. His eyes, once so quick and lively, now move slowly and heavily, his face is calm, and everything seems to indicate in him a tranquil and collected mind; but his heart beats quick, and his breast heaves with repressed emotion.

His mother holds one of his hands in hers, and overwhelms him with the tenderest expressions of love; the poor woman sheds no tear, and her lips tremble under the restraint which she puts on herself to conceal her grief. She smiles on her son to console him; but this forced and melancholy smile is sadder than the bitterest lamentation.

The other widow is endeavouring to console the little boy, and make him believe that John will soon come back again; but the melancholy feelings with which, during the past year, his parents had looked forward to this day, had taught him to regard the departure as a dreadful calamity — and nothing could comfort him.

The grandfather and Trien are within doors, making the last preparations for the journey; they have cut a great hole in a loaf of bread and filled it with butter, carrying this with them, they go out and stand beside the young man.

The stable is open, the ox turns its head and looks with a sad expression towards its master, uttering at intervals a low and melancholy sound. One might have supposed that the beast knew what was going on.

All is ready, and he is about to depart. Already he has firmly pressed his mother's hand and advanced a step; but he pauses a moment longer to cast a last look of affection around him — on the humble cot where his cradle stood — the hearth, and the wood where he had wandered when a child — and on the barren fields, which, as a young man, he had so often made fruitful by his labour. Then by turns his glance falls on all the objects which he loved, even on the ox, his trusty friend during many hard day's toil; he covers his face with his hand, to conceal the tears which roll over his cheeks, and sighs inaudibly, "Farewell!"

Now he raises his head, shakes back the long hair from his brow, and walks forth with a determined air.

All follow him; for they will not leave him yet. A little farther on, there hangs under the linden-tree, at the cross roads, an image of the Virgin. Trien had hung it up there on a beautiful May evening, and John had made a bench for the knees at the foot of the tree. At this sacred spot, where they daily kneeled and prayed, their trembling lips were to pronounce an anxious adieu.

The linden-tree may now be seen in the distance — the spot which is to witness their fatal separation. The young man slackens his pace, while his mother, in the midst of tender caresses, thus addresses him —

"John, my son, do not forget what I have told you; at all times have God before your eyes, and never omit to say your prayers before lying down at night. So long as you do this, your heart will remain pure; but should it happen that you forget it on any occasion, then think next day on me — on your mother, and again may you return to the right path, and be good; for he who thinks on his mother and his God is strong against all evil, my dear child."

"I will always, always think on you, mother," replied the young man in a low tone; "and if I am sad, and lose heart, then shall the thought of you support and console me — for I feel to well that I shall be unhappy; I love you all too much."

"And, then, do not swear, my son, and lead a profligate life. You will go to church regularly, will you not? And as often as possible, you will let us know how you are? And ever keep in mind, that the most trifling news from her child, makes a mother's heart glad. Oh! every day will I pray to your guardian angel, that he may not forsake you."

The sweet tone of his mother's voice moved the young man deeply; he did not venture to look at her, so overpowering an emotion did her beaming maternal glance raise in him at this solemn hour; he listened to her with sunken head. His only reply was now and then a deeper sigh, while, "Mother, dear mother!" were the only words he could utter.

Silently they approach the cross road. The old man going on the other side of the youth, said to him, with an earnest voice —

"John, my son, you will do your duty, will you not, without murmuring, and with pleasure? You will obey your superiors; and if injustice is done you, bear it in silence? Be courteous and obliging to all; show good-will towards every one, and what is given you to do, do thoroughly. Then will God aid you, and your superiors and comrades love you."

Trien, her mother, and the boy, are already kneeling on the grass under the linden tree, beside the bench, and are engaged in prayer. John has no time to reply to his grandfather's exhortations; his mother leads him to the bench — all kneel down and pray with uplifted hands.

The wind sounds gently among the firs; the spring sun beams mildly on the sandy highway — the birds overhead sing a joyful song — all in calm and solemn, and the pious whisperings of the praying family ascend audibly through the linden branches.

It is over; all stand up, and every eye is filled with tears. The mother embraces her son with bitter lamentation, and though the others stand ready to say the melancholy farewell, she will not let her dear firstborn go; again and again she kisses away the tears from his cheeks, and utters unintelligible words of love and sorrow.

At last she sits down on the little bench exhausted and fainting, but still weeping.

John hastily embraces his grandfather and Trien's mother; with kindly force separates himself from his little brother, who clung crying to his legs; once more presses his mother to his breast, kisses her brow, and with a final adieu, hastens towards the village without venturing to look round, till he has turned the corner of the wood, and is out of sight of his relations.

It was with difficulty that Trien, carrying the bread under her arm, was able to follow and overtake him.

For a long time both young people stood beside one another without speaking; their hearts beat quickly; a dark blush of modesty suffused their brow and cheeks — they did not venture to look at each other. Great hour! in which two human souls tremble in each other's presence, with the consciousness that a long-cherished and holy secret is about to be revealed.

John took Trien's hand shyly and timidly, as if to touch it were a crime, and let it fall again as if it burnt him.

After a pause, during which perfect silence reigned, he took her hand again, and, in a tone unlike his ordinary, sighed —

"Trien, will you not forget me?" A flood of tears was the maiden's only reply.

"Will you wait till John comes back from soldiering?" said the young man again. "May he take with him that one consolation at least, that he may not die of grief?"

The maiden raised her large blue eyes, and gazed on him with a long sad look, penetrating his soul like a ray of fire, and filling his heart with a blessedness hitherto unknown to him.

He continues to stand there unconsciously: how it happens he knows not, but his burning lips have touched the young girl's brow. As if terrified, he draws back and leans upon an oak. There before him beams the maiden's countenance with the fire of modesty and happiness; he lays his hand upon his heart, for he feels as if it would break in pieces, so violent is its beating. Yet an indelible smile plays upon his face, his eyes sparkle with a manly glow, proudly and confidently he raises his head; a single glance from his beloved seems to have infused into him a giant's strength and courage.

Behind the wood a well-known voice is heard; some one approaches singing a merry song. It is Charles, who is also to be a soldier, and is now on his way to the village.

Trien makes great efforts to hide her confusion. The surprise awakes her out of her dreams; she casts a hasty look on her friend, and urges him to go, that Charles may not overtake him, and that no strange eye may perceive what has taken place between them.

But Charles advances rapidly to join his fellow-traveller. Trien perceives it, and says hastily:

"John, when you are gone I will care for your mother, grandfather, and little brother; I will go behind the plough, as it is proper I should do, and care for the ox that it came to no harm. I am strong and healthy, and will manage so that on your return you will find everything as you left it."

"Everything?" repeated the young man, looking deeply into her eyes, "everything?"

"Yes, everything; and I will not go to any merry-makings so long as you are away, for without you I can have no pleasure in them. But — you, too, must not drink, nor take up with pretty girls, as that profligate smith talks about, for were I to learn that, I would soon lie in the churchyard!"

Just at this moment Charles slaps John's shoulder with his heavy hand, while he sings, with a tone of mock sadness:

"Alas, my love, I now from thee must part,
Must to the wars — ah, how it tears my heart!
Farewell! — forget me not!"

The young girl blushed deeply. John, perceiving her perplexity, replied to his comrade's jest in a careless tone, and seizing him by the arm, proceeded with him to the village, while Trien walked silently behind.

At last they reach the village. Before the "Crown" stand three young fellows with knapsacks on their backs, waiting for John and Charles.

Every one is kissing parents and friends. Trien alone kisses nobody; but in the secret glance which she exchanged with John as she gave him the bread, lies an affecting utterance of the soul.

The recruits set out towards the city. Trien leaves the village without shedding a tear; but, behind the fir-wood, her heart is too full. With her apron to her eyes she returns to the hut, where all would be empty but for memory, which fills up the gap caused by the departure of the son and the lover.

CHAPTER III.

On a clear day in August, Trien left the village on her way home, in high spirits; she seemed in great haste, and happiness was painted on her smiling countenance; light

were her footsteps in the dusty sand of the highway, and now and then some unintelligible sounds escaped from her panting breast as she talked with herself.

In one hand, she held two great sheets of writing-paper, and in the other, a prepared quill, and a little bottle of ink, which the parish-clerk had made her a present of.

On the way, pretty Kate, the wooden-shoemaker's daughter, came singing out of a side-path, with a bundle of clover on her head, and compelled her friend to stop, by calling out:

"Ho there, Trien! where are you running with the paper? Why such haste? Is there a fire anywhere? Tell me, how goes it with your John?"

"With our John?" replied Trien, "that the Lord God alone knows, Katie dear. Since he went away, we have heard from him only thrice, that he is in good health. It is now half a year since a comrade from Turnhutz left a message from him to us at the 'Crown'. But it must be a difficult thing to send word, for he is somewhere beyond Maestricht, and it isn't every day that an acquaintance comes from so great a distance to our quarter."

"Can he not write, then, Trien?"

"He used to be able to do so; for when we were little, and went together to school in the parish-clerk's house, he once carried off the prize for his writing. But I daresay he has forgotten it all, like me."

"What are you doing with the paper, then?"

"Why, Kate, two months ago I sought my old writingbook, and have been learning it all over anew; and I wish to see now whether I can write a letter. Whether it will succeed or not, I cannot tell; have you ever written a letter in your life, Kate?"

"No; but I have heard many letters read; for my brother, Dries, who dwells in the city, writes almost every month to us."

"What kind of a thing is a letter? What is in it? Is it just the same as if you were speaking to some one?"

"Save ye, Trien! that would be a fine thing, indeed! It is always full of compliments and big words, which you could scarcely understand."

"Ah! Kate, how shall I ever manage it rightly? But if I were to write like this, for example: 'John, we are anxious, because we do not know how you are. If you do not send us news quickly, your mother will fall ill, and so forth; he will understand that, won't he?'"

"Yes, you simple little, heart; but that is no letter; everybody speaks that way — those who have been taught, as well as those who have not. Wait a moment — ay, this is the way it always begins: 'Much-honoured parents, — Trembling, I take the pen into my hand to — to, — now, I can't find out what comes next.'"

"To — write!"

"Oh, you know more about it than I! You think me very stupid. That is bad of you, Trien."

"But, Kate, what can you be thinking about? If he takes the pen into his hand, he doesn't do it to spread a piece of bread and butter. I can't help laughing at you. I do not understand why your brother Dries always trembles when he begins a letter. Writing must surely be very difficult to him. It is a bad thing, too; for when one trembles, one never writes well."

"No, that is not it; but Dries follows his own ways in the city, and is always wanting money, and father is so angry with him, and that's why he trembles. But tell me, Trien, how is your cow?"

"Pretty well, now. She has suffered much, poor thing; but she has come through it safely, and is almost herself again. We have sold the calf to a peasant from

CALL IN TO MY SHOWROOM
and look over the New

BRISCOE Special

the Car with the Half Million Dollar Motor.

The Price is within reach of everybody
wanting an up-to-date Car.

I WILL GIVE YOU A DEMONSTRATION ANY TIME

Let me know your requirements
and I can supply your wants in anything for the Farm.

My MOTTO: A SQUARE DEAL and SERVICE
at all times, DAY OR NIGHT.

E. D. LELACHEUR

THE HUMBOLDT MACHINE MAN
Main Street HUMBOLDT, SASK.

We Have A Full Line Of PAINT

House paint — Implement paint — Floor paint — Wall paint — Kalsomine — Floor Varnish — Linoleum Varnish — Floor Wax and all colours of Automobile Paint and Varnish in fact everything to brighten things up and make them look like new. Call and see, and get colour cards.

A full line of Drugs, Chemicals and Patent Medicines. Marlatt's Gall Stone Cure always on hand, also Ad-ler-i-ka.

School Books and School Supplies in any Quantity.

Large Assortment of Gramophones & Records

Send us a trial order. Mail orders a speciality.
Write us in your own language.

W. F. Hargarten

Pharmac. Chemist • Bruno, Sask.

For Wedding Gifts and Rings

see

E. Thornberg

Watchmaker and Jeweller

Issuer of Marriage Licenses. Main St., HUMBOLDT, SASK.

Fullness of Tone! Adaptability! Beauty!

Let us explain, why these three outstanding qualities produce new and increased pleasure when you listen to the

MELOTONE

With the Melotone, the music of any Record is expressed most harmoniously. Delicate upper tones which formerly were lost, are now made audible by the sounding chamber, which is constructed of wood on the principle of the violin. The Melotone is able to play all kinds of Records BETTER than other Phonographs. The Melotone Factory in Winnipeg is the only one in Western Canada. This Instrument is fast taking the lead over all other phonographs and, as to construction, durability and low price, it is now excelled by none. It offers the largest selection of Records in Western Canada, at from 20 cts. upward. All instruments are guaranteed, and you get your money back if not everything is as represented.

M. J. MEYERS Jeweller and Optician HUMBOLDT

You are safe in a threefold way, if you bring your prescription to us: 1) We use for the prescription exactly what the doctor prescribed, every article being of standard strength, fresh and pure; 2) We examine and reexamine the prescription, whereby every error as to drug or quantity is excluded; 3) We are satisfied with a reasonable profit and charge the lowest prices for the best quality. These are three reasons why you should buy from us.

G. R. WATSON, HUMBOLDT, SASK.
DRUGGIST The Rexall Store STATIONER

Advertise in the St. Peters Bote.

Humboldt Tailoring Comp., Practical Tailors
Suits made to order. Cleaning, Pressing, Dyeing and Repairing garments of every description. Send goods per parcel post, and we quote a minimum price, after examining goods received. Humboldt Tailoring Co., Humboldt, Sask.

When looking for LAND
see me. I can sell you land at all prices and on the terms you want.

A. J. RIES, ST. GREGOR.