

over to the *mercies* of the Inquisition. This course was, however, strongly opposed by a few members of the ecclesiastical council ; they urged that mild measures might prove effectual in restoring him to the true faith, while such harsh treatment as the Inquisition dealt out would be sure to strengthen his prejudices. This heretic promised to be the first sculptor of the age, and Bruges would lose more than the Church would gain by shortening the life of her most illustrious citizen.

"Perhaps," suggested one, who loved the sculptor's art, "the flattering notice of the Spanish King, or incessant labour has turned his brain."

Two or three humane brethren assented ; and finally it was agreed that a young priest, named Cuthbert, should visit the prison to ascertain whether a night spent in confinement had restored the captive's sense and calmness. Cuthbert had been most earnest in the sculptor's defence ; he had known him all his life—they had been boys together ; and although advanced years found one in the college and the other in the studio, yet the old friendship remained. The brethren reasoned that, knowing the sculptor's strength and weakness well, Cuthbert would use the right weapons, and bring forward the most convincing arguments ; and the young priest himself, as he set out on his painful errand, entertained great hopes of success.

But his friend had acquired a fresh strength, of which he knew nothing, and this crisis was developing powers and principles that Cuthbert had never measured, or even suspected. There had always been one bond of sympathy between the two friends, and that was their passionate love of the beautiful ; in all other things their characters were as unlike as their features. Yet even this same passion differently influenced the two men. With the sculptor it was a purifier, lifting him above sensual and worldly delights : it was ever drawing him upwards, in his earnest pursuit after what was true and perfect. Naturally devout, he tried to satisfy his yearnings by the gorgeous religion established in his country ; but here disappointment met him at every step ; the legends of the saints disgusted him by their improbability and childish nonsense : their lives suggested nothing that his own imagination had not surpassed.

Many paths he followed, and was bewilderingly attracted for a time, and thought that surely he had found what he sought ; but all ended in disappointment, until Providence placed the Bible in his hands. Then, for the first time, he understood the true character of Christ, which the Romish Church so distorts in her representations. Here was something beyond his loftiest conceptions, the embodiment of his ideal of true beauty and purity that no art on earth had ever faithfully portrayed. At first it was only as an artist that he read the sacred volume, and looked upon the "altogether lovely" One. But while he gazed upon spotless purity, a new consciousness stirred within his soul—a consciousness of self and sin ; and as he sank lower and lower in his own estimation, the other grew in beauty and majesty ; and by the light of holiness the sculptor saw himself as too dark and impure to be worthy of even looking at One who "knew no sin."

But He who pierces only to heal, presently revealed Himself as a Saviour as well as a God. After displaying His own riches and matchless beauty, and opening the eyes of the sculptor to see his spiritual