## THE IDIOT OF DIXMUYDE.

BY W. M. G. KINGSTON.

CHAPTER III.

Marie had gone back anxiously to watch at the window for her father, with whom she hoped Herr Gellert would meet and return. Nothing unusual seemed to be taking place in the town; the streets were silent and deserted, the inhabitants being generally occupied with their mid-day meal. At last she caught sight of two persons coming down the street. They were still a long way off, but even at that distance she thought she could distinguish the figure of her father and her young admirer. The Council must have sat long, and those must be the members returning to their homes after it had broken up. She was sure that she could not be mistaken. Walter Kapell and Herr Gellert approached rapidly. She hurried down to the street door to welcome them. As she opened it they stood on the steps ready to enter. Their countenances were grave and anxious, her father's especially. Several of the councillors who had been following them passed, walking two and two, and talking earnestly. Walter Kapell bestowed a kiss on his daughter's brow as she expressed her joy at his return, and told him how she had suffered from his protracted absence.

"We had grave matters to speak on, my child; but we will put them aside now. Our friend Gellert will dine with us, and do you tell Margaret to place the meal on the table without delay. He will, I fear, have soon to take his departure."

Kapell, followed by his guest, led the way upstairs to the sitting-room, where Marie, having performed her mission, quickly joined them.

In spite of Kapell's intentions, he could not help describing to his young friend the matter which had delayed them so long at the Council. "One thing is certain," he observed, "the enemies to our Protestant faith are proceeding to even greater extremities than heretofore. You were with us when, nearly a year ago, we went to hear those two faithful ministers of the Gospel, Favaux and Mallart, preach in the open air, outside the town. Could persons pretending to adhere to the religion of Christ object to the pure and simple doctrines they put forth?"

"No, indeed," answered Gellert. "Not till then was my mind open to the glorious truths of the Christian faith, and when those beautiful hymns of Marot, sung by the assembled multitude, ascended toward heaven, I felt my heart lifted up in a way I had never before known."

"We must not trust to such feelings alone, though, my young friend," remarked Kapell; "unless the reason and heart are convinced and touched, such feelings as you describe may be very transient. But I was about to tell you what has occurred. On proceeding to Valenciennes, the two ministers, after preaching for some time, were seized by the Government, and several false accusations being brought against them, were cast into prison. They were said to pretend to work miracles, and that in the presence of numerous witnesses they had undertaken to cast out devils. I saw sufficient of them to be certain that such accusations were false; no, their only guilt was that of reading the Bible to those whom they could induce to come and listen to them. Even in this small place many hundreds have been brought, through their means, to a knowledge of the truth. Still they were condemned to suffer death at the stake. That evil-minded and tyrannical minister of our lady governess, the Duchess of Parma—Cardinal Granville—seeing how strongly the minds of the people were moved in their favour, seemed to dread putting their sentence into execution. For six long months they have remained in prison, visited by their friends, while daily the people have crowded the streets, hailing threats of defiance at the authorities, or have pressed about the prison windows, encouraging their beloved ministers, and promising to rescue them in case the attempt should be made to fulfil the sentence. How heartily many here sympathised with their sufferings you may well suppose. Often we have prayed for their deliverance, and the cardinal, observing the love the people have for them, still seemed afraid of carrying matters to extremities. Only this morning, however, news have come that he had sent down peremptory orders for their execution. The civil authorities at Valenciennes dared not disobey. Arrangements were made in the market-place for burning those true and faithful men. Stakes were fixed in the ground with which to secure them, and forty bundles of fagots. As the hour arrived at which they were to be conveyed from their prison to the place of execution, crowds collected from all quarters. Thousands who had heard them preach, asked one another whether they would allow men innocent of any crime thus to be cruelly put to death. Yet the authorities saw no cause to apprehend a disturbance. Some, I doubt not, would have been glad to relieve their consciences, should the people make a successful attempt to rescue the martyrs. But that as it may, a small guard only was appointed to preserve order and protect the executioners. Considerably the two ministers prayed, but the eyes of all they were to suffer death. They knew in whom they trusted. No coward fear paled their cheeks, or caused their limbs to tremble. The false priests of Rome stood round, in vain exerting them to exact. They tried a deaf ear to their temptations. Simon Favaux was the first led forward. The executioners was binding him to the stake, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he uttered the invocation: 'O Eternal Father! save those who trust in Thee.' The crowd, so the report goes, as yaed to and fro. They were excited, yet hesitating. Already fire had been put to the fagots, when a woman from amidst the multitude, taking off her shoes threw it at the unkeyed pile. There were those in the assembled multitude who had been waiting for this signal. Before the guards could interfere, vast numbers of bold men, rushing up to the barriers which had hitherto separated them from the place of execution, dashed them to the ground; while some grappled the broken bars with which to keep back the guard, others seized the fagots, already blazing up, scattering them in every direction, while those who had no other weapons, tore up the stones from the pavement, to use them as missiles against their foes. The slavish executioners of the savage Inquisitors fled in dismay, but the guard rallying, seized the two ministers, and before they could be rescued, dragged them back to their dungeon. The city authorities, dismayed at the popular outbreak, knew not what to do; but the Inquisitors, true to their character, proposed murdering the ministers in prison and burying their heads amid the multitude in the streets. To this the authorities would not consent, fearing to raise the popular indignation to such a pitch that they themselves would be overthrown. Evening approaching, the people in newise calmed, continued traversing the town, chanting the Psalms of David, when information was given them of the proposal of the Inquisitors. They were not seen more rapidly, now passing, crowding, some forward, swaying to and fro like waves of the sea when it is agitated by a raging wind. Some among them proposed that they should venture all and attack the prison at once, but the majority were for delay. Onward they rushed. The guards, frightened by their numbers, fled, without making a feeble resistance. The doors were burst in or torn off their hinges. The crowds rushed in, dashing aside all impediments. The guards fled, happily without attempting to destroy their prisoners as the Inquisitors would doubtlessly have had them to do. The two prisoners, like Paul and Silas, were found in their cells singing hymns, undaunted by the wild confusion around them. They were borne off in triumph, and before the authorities could rally their energies, had been conveyed by faithful friends out of the city. Where they are gone no one knows, but it is believed they are in safety. Fearful, however, is the bloody vengeance which the Inquisitors have commenced for the insult offered to their accursed office. Already detachments of Doom's and Berghen's bands of ordinance, together with a company of the Duke of Arschott's regiment, have been sent into Valenciennes. The prisons are overflowing with men and women, arrested for having participated in the tumult. The slaughter of the so unhappy people has begun. Already ten have been burned at the stake, and an equal number of higher orders, suspected of instigating them, have been beheaded. When the post set off, twice that number were about to be murdered by these demons in human form. No one knows where it will end, and all this done because two innocent men were rescued from destruction."

At far before spoke, Marie's cheek grew pale, and her eye wandered anxiously, now at his countenance, now at that of his guest. The effect produced on young Gellert was very different. As he listened to the account the colour mantled in his cheek, and his eye flashed fire.

"A bitter revenge will they bring down on their heads," he exclaimed. "Oh! that our country men had the spirit to rise in arms and hurl them from the land! Are we tamely to submit thus to be tyrannized over by a handful of foreigners, instigated to their bloody work by the Pope of Rome?"

"Nay—nay, my friend, we cannot defend ourselves with an arm of flesh. Let us seek by earnest prayer the aid of One all powerful to protect us."

"I cannot think, my honoured friend, that we are not justified in drawing the sword in a righteous cause, to defend our lives and dearest liberties from the attacks of tyrants who would enslave, not only our bodies, but our minds and souls," exclaimed the young man.

"Who is there to lead us; under whose banner could we assemble, even if the principle you advocate were the right one, my dear Gellert?" said Kapell. "Those who, from their rank and wealth, might assume the command, either stand aloof, or unite with the oppressors of our country. Such men only as Count Brederode and De la Marck go staggering about the land, mocking at our tyrants, yet doing nothing effectually to oppose them. It was this matter which we had to bring in debate this morning. Two days hence the Ribbonists were to have held a pageant in the town, and hateful as the Cardinal Granville is, we know full well that he will be turned into ridicule, while neither the Inquisitors, nor monks and nuns, nor the Pope himself, are likely to be spared. I, with others, proposed that the pageant should not be allowed to take place. Such are not the means by which the false system of Rome can be overthrown. They may hold its gross errors and abominations up to ridicule and scorn, and teach the people to hate it, but unless their minds are enlightened by the gospel, no sallies of the fortress can be erected against its aggressions and tyrannies. We may exasperate our foes, but we cannot overthrow them. Far greater reason has the system of Rome to dread the sermons and discourses of faithful apostles like Favaux and Mallart, and the free circulation of God's Word, than the mosy opposition of a thousand such pageants as Brederode and his friends, or all the pasquinades and satires which the Rhetoricians of every town in the country united can produce. I regret to say that the arguments of myself and those who shared with me have been of the strain, and the proposed pageant is to take place. May God protect us, and prevent it from bringing down the fury of our foes upon our heads. Do not you think I am right, my young friend?"

"You almost convince me, though I have never seen the matter in that light before," answered Gellert. "But what does Marie think?"

"I agree with my father as regards the pageant, she answered; "but if I were a man, and summoned to fight for a righteous cause, I do not think I should be content to keep my sword in my scabbard; but I sigh! we are weak creatures and have need to pray for guidance."

The conversation was interrupted by the appearance of the waiting-maid to announce dinner, at which meal they were joined by two of the Town Councillors who had sided with Walter Kapell. The conversation, as might be supposed, took a serious turn, and was mostly on the events of the times. His guests urged their host to prepare for leaving the town, should danger threaten. Both declared that they had made up their minds to set him the example, and to escape to the happier shores of England, where they might enjoy the liberty of conscience, and employ their capital and talents to greater advantage than they could at home.

"You are a marke! man, Kapell," observed Herr Duffell, one of the guests, "and if the Inquisitors come to our town, you will be the first to be brought before them."

Marie had been engaged in conversation with young Gellert, while these remarks were being made. She had overheard them, however, and after the meal was over, and their visitors had retired, tried to persuade her father to follow the advice which had been given him.

Although Gellert had purposed returning to Antwerp the following morning, he was my round an excuse for remaining longer at Dixmuyde. Apparently gay and full of spirits, his thoughts often occupied his mind. He did not fail to see the danger in which his friends were placed, and he might by remaining be able to assist Walter Kapell, should his aid be required. Every hour too, that he had been in Marie's company, his admiration for her had increased, and he now felt that she was, even more than he had before supposed, necessary to his happiness. He had not formally demanded her hand from Walter Kapell, but he knew that his intentions were clearly understood. He had already possessed his own father's consent, who was, in the first place, anxious that his son should wed, and that no should obtain a bride of Marie's position in the world, and of the wealth which he believed would be hers.

The latter point, however, had not influenced young Gellert in his choice. He had seen and admired her before he know her name or family. Probably had he been sent by his father to woo a wealthy bride, he would have found some excuse of evading the command, or have looked on her with an unfavourable eye. Marie, who had lived greatly secluded from the world, had met with few young men who were likely to prove his rivals, and they had not been long acquainted before she yielded him her heart. Yet hitherto they had not talked of love, but both were aware that their feelings towards the other were clearly understood. To some it may seem stranger that in a time so full of troubles and horror, such thoughts should have found a place in the hearts of any of the inhabitants of the unhappy Netherlands, but even amid scenes of war and persecution and turmoil and commotion the tender passion still asserts its sway.

CHAPTER IV.

The inhabitants of Dixmuyde were out making holiday. The streets were thronged with gay groups, moving towards the centre of the town, greeting each other with jokes and laughter, and talking of the trial of rhetorical skill and wit to be exhibited at the "Laud-Jewel" about to take place. Unpleasant rumors had, it is true, got about respecting the sanguinary proceedings at Valenciennes and other places, instigated by that faithful servant of the Pope, Cardinal Granville, but many refused to believe them, and others endeavored to cast the thoughts of them aside for that day at least. They would have their amusement first, and then would be time enough to inquire more particularly as to what had taken place; Valenciennes, too, was a long way off. Their humble little town would probably escape the notice of the Inquisitors. They grieved for the sufferings of their countrymen, but personally they had little reason to be concerned. Such are the thoughts generally of men. The thunder-storm on the horizon creates no alarm, but when the dark clouds come gathering overhead, and the artillery of the sky roars forth, and the forked lightning flashes brightly, then the people begin to tremble and to seek for safety under some sheltering roof. Not a few, however, of the leading citizens were grave countenances in spite of their efforts to appear at their ease. The information they had received was too well authenticated to allow a doubt in their minds of the fearful events which had occurred. Still, though their hearts were sad, they had resolved to be present at the pageant, lest some mischief might be assigned for their absence portions to their safety.

Banners with various devices, and gay pieces of tapestry hung from the windows, or were suspended across the streets leading to the central place or square of the town. Here, on one side, rows of seats had been erected, rising one above another in a crescent form, with a gray awning stretched over the structure. In front of it were several stages raised some feet above the ground, with silken canopies overhead, and adorned with flags of various mottoes and devices. Steps led up to the platform by which the "Rederykers," the Rhetoricians, or actors, might ascend to perform their parts. The intermediate spaces were filled by the populace, who were content to stand to witness the spectacle, while people of inferior rank or wealth occupied the seats under the awning, where they could at their ease listen to the speeches and watch the performances.

Although Walter Kapell had wisely desired to prevent the exhibition, for fear of the sentiments which might be expressed by the Rederykers, who were certain on this occasion to give a free utterance to their opinions, he determined to be present and to share the danger, whatever that might be, with the rest of his townsmen.

Young Max Gellert had managed to find several cogent reasons for remaining at Dixmuyde, and had sent off a deputation to his father, giving him the most cogent reason of all, which he had good hope would be received as valid. He now, in attendance on Marie, formed one of Walter Kapell's party as they proceeded to witness the exhibition of the Rederykers, with Herr Duffel, and his pretty little daughter Bertha and young son Bertrand.

Bertrand was a brave youth, and noted among his companions for his talents. He was to have taken part among the Rhetoricians in the trial of their oratorical powers, but his anxious father, fearing that he would give too free an expression of his opinions, and thereby become the mark of their foes, had forbidden him to take part in the performances of the day. He was too good a son to think of disobeying his father, and had been half inclined to shut himself up in the room and remain there till the pageant was over. Bertha, however, had persuaded him to come with her, but though he did so, he walked along with a downcast look and a silent tongue—very unusual in him—the dissatisfaction with things in general being further increased on observing the attention Max Gellert was paying to Marie, and the favor with which she received it, he himself being a devoted admirer of the young lady.

"Who can he be?" asked Bertrand of his sister. "I should judge from his cool and confident manner that he is some great lord, accustomed to have all the young ladies he meets falling in love with him."

Bertha had been till at not Max Gellert from her father, and her own eyes told her the true state of the case between him and Marie. She was sure, however, like a good sister, to comfort Bertrand and restore him to good humor. "He came here on business for his father and is minded to the pageant. He will soon be away again," she observed quietly.

"I wish he had never come," muttered Bertrand. "I did not mind being prevented reciting my verses when I thought I should have been by her side, and repeated them to her, but to be cut out by a stranger! it is too bad. Perhaps, after all, she may not care to listen to them.

Poor Bertrand, he cared little for the gay bands of Rederykers who passed by, some on horseback, others in chariots or cars, and still more on foot. Neither did Marie or Max Gellert pay them much attention; they were, in truth, too much occupied with each other to remark what was taking place around them. Still there bands were worthy of observation. Silk and satin doublets and cloaks were worn by many a brawny pair of shoulders. Feathered hats were seen above shaggy heads of hair, and white gloves were worn by hands accustomed to wield the sledge hammer and saw, the pick-axe or mattock. With each band were banners of all colours and numerous devices. Oft many were the trade emblems of the sturdy artisans who composed the bands, to show that they were not ashamed of their callings. The tailors had their shears exhibited aloft, the carpenters their hammers, the masons their trowels, and so forth. The latter, who outshone most of the rest, had a silver trowel borne at their head, and were greeted with much respect. Not only did each trade form a band of its own, but there were persons in various strange costumes tangled together; some appeared as monks and friars, with priests and a cardinal in his robes at their head. All laughed when they saw the latter, for recognized the hated Granville, for they knew full well that he would afford them no little merriment—as much even as the buffoon who moved among the monks, cutting jokes at their expense and playing a variety of antics.

Places in the front row of the canopied crescent had been reserved for the two magistrates and their families, which not without some little exertion were reached. Just before the trial of skill was to begin, Max began to ascend the platform amid the applauses and shouts of the populace. It would be difficult to describe the dress of the various characters; some appeared as knights in armour, others as courtiers in silken attire; one band was habited in the costume of the distant East, one in that of Hungary, another in that of France, all having endeavoured to be as magnificent as their means would allow. There was also a king with his ministers and court, and an attendant buffoon, who caused great amusement, especially when he warmly greeted the person representing Cardinal Granville, and embraced him with arms akimbo, backwards and forwards across the stage, as if earnestly discussing with him the affairs of state. Other political characters were in like manner brought forward. The general opinion held of the monks was shown by the way their representatives acted on the stage, and the sentiments they expressed, for which need not be repeated. Among them was a burly fellow with shaven crown, who from a huge chest at his side produced papers, sealed with the cross keys and triple crown of the Papacy, which he offered for sale, averring that they were indulgences for every possible sin and curse for every known complaint. The fools from the different stages, after listening attentively for a short time to his remarks, scrambled in hot haste towards him and began to purchase eagerly, chuckling gleefully as they described each especial sin which they would now be at liberty to commit. No one who saw him