

"I cannot profess to understand your new philosophy, Hans; it is only charitable to suppose that your reason is affected—that indeed you are gone mad, as Father Augustus suggested last year."

"If this be madness, then I would that you also were mad, good Cuthbert. But so did they judge St. Paul himself, when he testified concerning Jesus Christ, that He should save the people from their sins."

"Well, Hans, I had a lingering hope that your prison doors would have been opened. It rests now with the King, and if you refuse his Royal clemency, then I fear this will be our last meeting."

"I have sworn allegiance to a greater King than Philip of Spain, and can say nothing but what He shall command me," replied the prisoner. "Though Philip should give me 'his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.'"

Hans continued his labour when the sun favoured him; and, notwithstanding numerous disadvantages, he felt that his last work far excelled all former productions, in spirituality of expression.

The summer ended, and found Philip still lingering in Spain; but he did not forget the heretic. When, indeed, did that cruel-hearted monarch ever neglect an opportunity of gratifying his malignant feeling against all who crossed his will? Besides the King's unfailing memory and minute journal, the busy emissaries of Rome, residing in Bruges, sent more than one request for permission to try, and, if guilty, to condemn the prisoner. Philip's vengeance slept until the month of October, when he gave orders that the victim should be given over to the Inquisition.

Early one morning, when Hans awoke, he was surprised to see a light in his cell; some one was holding a lamp near his crucifix, attentively and minutely examining it. Then, to his dismay, as Hans looked, the lamp was set down, and its bearer knelt before the figure, making the sign of the cross. Hans sprung from his bed of dirty straw, and the movement caused the kneeler to turn round: it was Cuthbert himself, who, strongly against his will, had been deputed to carry the King's message to the friend of his boyhood. He rose, and lifted the lamp. Hans quietly stooped and picked up his tools, as if he meant to put a few more touches to his work.

"It does not want another stroke," said the priest, surveying it again, with undisguised admiration. "I am filled with wonder when I think of the implements by which it has been wrought. Surely if His Majesty once saw this, he would reverse his sentence."

"Then my fate is at last sealed?" exclaimed Hans.

Cuthbert mutely signified assent; he had no heart to utter the truth.

"Well, I am ready; only let me alter one or two features: I see that after all I have made a mistake."

"Mistake!" said Cuthbert, "it is perfect. Stop, Hans; stop! what are you doing? Now, indeed, you *must* be mad." He seized the sculptor's arm—but it was too late; with a few dexterous strokes of his stone and nail, Hans had completely destroyed his beautiful piece of carving. The figure was too much mutilated to serve any religious purpose. He shook off Cuthbert's hand, and looked sadly on the wreck before him.

"Here I bury my ambition: my last earthly hope has perished. But never again shall a fellow-creature be tempted to sin by my work. I,