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Literary Selections.

GERARD VAN KAMPEN.

Drop, drop, drop—drip, drip, drip—a hopelessly, helplessly wet afternoon. All that July day one unbroken unmottled sweep of cloud had stretched across the sky. You might have painted the landscape with chalk and ashes. Over rich pasture and sluggish canal, over the Zuyder Zee and the German Ocean, the same dull wearisome, unvaried shadow; for our scene lies in Holland, and it opens in the little village of Muiden, a league from Amsterdam, and on the borders of the great inland sea.

When the sun comes out again, its long street of low white houses, with their formal garden plots, and still more formal trees, will look pretty enough. Now the same dull rain confuses all; the place seems deserted; a boy may occasionally cross the road on some errand, a drenched fowl may occasionally be seen in the lane that runs down to yonder white farm; and then they retire, and then leave the place to its destination. That high bank to the north, which shuts out all view of the Zuyder Zee, is the great dyke, on the strength of which depends the very existence of the surrounding country. It is towards that I am going to take you; for our business lies at the cottage yonder which nestles at its foot, close to the enormous sluice gates that commands the tides.

A neat little place it is, to be sure; like the rest, low and whitewashed, save that there is a broad, yellow band of paint round the windows. The walk through the garden is paved with brick, now slippery and shining with wet; the garden itself is laid out in square or star-shaped, or octagonal beds, neatly trimmed with box; there is a yew tree on each side of the outer gate, the one bearing the form of a lion rampant, the other intended to represent a peacock with spread tail, and in the green moat that surrounds the whole, good Gerard van Kampen—for that is the name of the owner—had erected one of those buildings, half ship, half summer house, where Dutchmen are wont to enjoy their pipes till sunset and then leave the apartment to the possession of frogs and typhus. A well to do man is master Gerard, keeper of the sluice gates, near which he lives, and owner of five acres of the best land in the Sticht. How the whole country as we go in, seems choked with water! ditches overflowing, furrows turned into currentless rivulets, every horse-hoof or pattern mark in the road proving the saturation of the earth. It is enough to remind one of Babel's verse:

"They always ply the pump, and never think they can be safe but at the rate they sink; they live as if they had been run around, and when they die are cast away and drowned. A land that rises at anchor, and is moored. In which men do not live but go abroad."

Let us go in and see what the interior of the cottage can show us.

A comfortable little kitchen indeed; the fire just sufficient to make the great pot that hangs over it simmer; the fireplace lined with blue and white tiles, intended to represent Scripture history, as indeed after a sort they do. There is Isaac bound and lying upon the altar, while Abraham levels at him a monstrous blunderbuss, into the pan of which the angel is about to empty a jug of water. There is the judgment of Solomon—the king is seated in a full bottomed wig while the officer wears the habit of the Amsterdam hanger guard. There is the marriage of Tobit, celebrated by a gentleman in ruff and bands. As to the dresser, its pewter dishes glitter like silver; the red tiles of the floor look as if it were an impossibility that a speck of dirt should ever have fallen on them, while the great black oak table, with its curious carved legs, shines with a brightness that suggests hours and years of patient rubbing, and generations of deceased house-wives. There are one or two engravings, such as they are: the burgomaster of Leyden offering his body for the food of the enraged and famishing multitude, but declaring that he had sworn not to surrender the town to the Spaniards, and that by God's grace he would keep his oath; the murder of William of Orange, by Balthazar Geraarts; and portrait of the then Stadtholder, afterwards William III, of England.

But it is too bad to have been so long in describing the room, and as yet to have said nothing of its young mistress, who is working by the fire side. Elsie van Kampen is the old Waterwarden's only child; her mother died at her birth; and she has indeed been a sunbeam in that little house. Rather tall with her fair hair, and fair complexion, and blue eyes

of her country, there is a brightness in her eye, and an archness in her smile, which saves her from the besetting fault of the beauties of Holland, tameness and insipidity. But now her face is rather sad, and woe it may be. Her lot is thrown in very troublesome times; distress and danger are gathering round her; three-fourths of Holland are in the hands of the enemy, and two or three days at farthest may send the tide of war into Muiden itself. There is a step on the garden walk; she starts up and the door opens—a tall, strong built man enters, throws off his dripping cloak and folds her in his arms.

"Well, father?"

"It is too true," is the reply. "The French are in full advance on Naerden. They say the place cannot hold out a day, and then—it is our turn."

"And what do you mean to do?"

"I stay here, French or no French. It shall never be said that old Gerard van Kampen left his post without orders. But you must to Amsterdam, and that by to-morrow at latest."

"But, father, I cannot leave you here; I will not, indeed. If it is your duty to stay by the sluices, it is mine to stay with you."

"You must not think of it, Elsie. The French soldiers are devils in human form. I have heard of doings of theirs at Woerden, which makes one's blood run cold. Go you must, and that by daylight to-morrow; and I shall step out and hold council with the rest how we may best send the women there, by land or by sea. By noon to-morrow there must be nothing but men in the place."

I must stop a moment to explain as briefly as may be how affairs then stood in Holland. Louis XIV., claiming the United Provinces in right of his wife, as a portion of the Spanish monarchy, poured an army of 170,000 men, under Conde, Turenne, and Luxembourg, from the southeast, Guelderland, Overijssel, and the Province of Utrecht were overrun. The city of Utrecht opened its gates. Town after town, fortress after fortress was captured. Scarcely an hour had brought intelligence to Louis, then keeping his court in a villa in the pleasant village of Duizerden, of some new conquest. His ally, our Charles II., was straining an exhausted exchequer to equip a fleet capable of matching that of De Ruyter; and the terms—if terms they can be called—which were proposed to the Dutch, almost involved their annihilation as a separate people. William of Orange had an army such as it was, of 70,000 men, but the greater part had never been under fire, and the whole were demoralized by surrender upon surrender, and retreat after retreat. The allies attempted to bribe him to desert the cause of his country, by offering him the independent crown of the province of Holland. "You cannot hope," said they, "otherwise to escape seeing the ruin of the United Provinces." "That," he replied, "lies in my own hands; I shall die in the last ditch before that ruin comes."

Grieved, terrified, perplexed, Gerard was a true Hollander in one respect; he never lost his appetite. Little taste had poor Elsie for her supper that evening; but her father, seating himself with great deliberation at the table, and fortifying himself by his accustomed dram, commenced a fearful attack on the good brown bread and well cured bacon which adorned it, cutting slice after slice of both one and the other, replenishing his tankard more than once, and concluding his repast with a still vigorous assault on the Parmersend cheese.

"Come, Elsie," he said, "you must keep up your spirits, and be glad that we have a refuge so near at hand. How long Amsterdam itself will be safe, God only knows; but it is safe at least as yet; your good aunt will be glad to give you a home, I know, till I find lodgings for us both there."

"It is you I am thinking of, father.—If those terrible French come here—what will become of you?"

"I shall be safe enough, child; I'll warrant, you that I have taken care of myself before. When they are fairly on the road from Naerden, I shall be off on that to Amsterdam; but there are reasons why, till that, my post is here. Get what things you want together, and remember that you will most likely never see again what you left behind. I dare say I shall be out for a couple of hours."

Now at the same time, and not so very far from that very place, there was one who was thinking—oh, how fondly and anxiously—of Elsie. And good right

had Egbert Vanderveide to let his thoughts wander to the cottage that lay at the dyke side, and the fireplace with its Scriptural tiles and the dear mistress of both. For was she not his own affianced bride? And, when peace should be made, was he not to bring her back to his snug little farm near Weesp, to be the sunshine there that she had been in the cottage of her birth? There had been heavy firing all day from the Northeast; night had closed in; but still the roar and flash of the French canon startled the darkness. It was understood that Naerden was at the last extremity; all day long the road to Amsterdam had been thronged with fliers; and now, close under the huge church of St. Lawrence, some of the bravest hearts in the little town were assembled, and held anxious debate as to the possibility of any defence. Egbert Vanderveide was among them. The night had cleared. It was chilly after the rain, and a fire hastily kindled in the market-place, threw fantastic shadows on the tall brick tower of the church, and the stepped gables, and the quaint barge-boards of the surrounding houses.

Suddenly, the sound of a horse hoof on the Naerden road. Five minutes suffice to bring in the rider and tell the news. Naerden had fallen. At that very moment the atrocities of Woerden were being acted all over again. Defence? who could dream of defence? By this time to-morrow Muiden will be in the hands of the French; by this time day after to-morrow, Amsterdam itself.

Muiden! and Egbert idle Weesp? He had a treasure there more precious in his eyes than all the ingots in the Stadhuis at Amsterdam. He would ride at once. His horse was in the little inn of the town; it bore the sign of the Roode Leeuw, and a huge red monster dangled and creaked backwards and forwards, over the entrance arch. Let others take what care they would of horses, or money or goods, he would see Elsie and Gerard at Amsterdam, as fast as human energy could carry them thither.

It is nearly midnight. He rides out of the little town. Now there is no sight nor sound, save a ruddy glow at the north-east. No! that is not the break of day, though day will break in that quarter. It is the glare of flames, even then rioting through miserable Naerden, and lighting up scenes which a man could hardly believe to exist on this side of hell. Across rich pastures and promising barley fields, over polder and fenstille pressed onward, traversing that low flat slip of land protected only by the dyke from the waters of the Zuyder Zee.

"Master Kampen! Master Kampen!" The old man was in his first sleep. There had been a long and anxious consultation. Every thing was prepared for flight. Men, women and children were to start for Amsterdam at dawn of day.

"Master Kampen! Master Kampen!" and a heavy hand shook the cottage door.

The little lattice opened above. "Who is there? and what do you want?"

"An order from the States. Come down at once."

The old man is standing in the doorway, and has broken the seal of the envelope. "What! open the dyke gates?"

"It was so carried at ten o'clock in the Stadhuis. 'Let the sea have the country rather than the French!'" was in everybody's mouth.

"Then I must go and get assistance; we shall want twenty men at least. God help the miserable country!"

"So he will, Master Gerard, if we help ourselves. Have with you to the village."

All is expectation on the edge of the dyke. Before you, the calm waters of the Zuyder Zee, rippling in the moonshine. Behind you, the rich fertile pastures of South Holland and the Sticht of Utrecht. At your feet, that wonderful erection of timbers, beams of thirty inch oak, braced with cross riveters, and studded with masonry; flood-gates hanging on a mountainous mass of Norwegian granite; bolts and bars, and undergirders—the very triumph of the carpenter's art. Men and women, and children, on the great dyke; closer to the great gates, Gerard van Kampen, with a ponderous mallet in his hand—the village blacksmith and his men, with crowbars, and the sturdiest youngsters of the villages with pickaxes and spades, and mattocks.

"At it again, lads!" shouted the Warden of the Dyke; "God have mercy on the man who is on Diemermeer polder now!"

"Amen," said a venerable old man who stood by. "In half an hour it will be twelve feet under water."

"Twelve, Master Van Helst? Work away lads—a good fifteen. So I say again, God have mercy on the man who is there."

You ought to say Amen to that prayer, dear Elsie: you have the deepest interest in that polder. For even now its thick mist is rising above Egbert Vanderveide, and forming in the moonlight such a halo round his head as that with which we encircle the gloried.

The brave Dyke resists stubbornly. There is heaving and pushing and hammering; mighty strokes are rained down on staple and bar; axes and hatchets bite fiercely on upright and cross beams; saws cut into the heart of the English oak; but the great mass quivers not yet.

"It will be daylight before we are through," said Gerard van Kampen. "Try again, lads, with a will!"

A wild confusion of clamor and strokes—yes, it trembles now. More than one huge timber has given its terrible death groan. More than one staple has been snapped in two. It shakes in good earnest. Here and there a little cataract of water gushes through the wounds of the erection. "Now—stand back, all! Back! Philip van Erekel! It is going!"

One terrible struggle of the yet palpitating timbers, and then, with the roar like ten thousand wild beasts, the Zuyder Zee leaps through the breach. A stream forty feet broad and twenty feet deep, rushes into the country. Down go cottages and hayricks; carts and cattle and the wrecks of farms are dashed along by the flood; the land is as the Garden of Eden before it, and behind it a foaming waste of waters. The dyke sides crumble away; it is as though the Zuyder Zee were pouring itself at once over the land; women and children shriek with terror; even the boldest of the men look ghastly white in the moonshine.

And the roar of that water proclaims to the Great Monarch, "Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther!"

Egbert Vanderveide is half way across Diemermeer polder. His spirited little pony has borne him stonily on. Suddenly he grows restive, turns from the road to the right, will obey neither rein nor spur, takes the bit in his teeth and starts at full gallop.

"Why, what ails the beast now?" said the rider. And vigorously he plied both whip and spur, and right heartily he pulled the rein; it was like trying to stop the wind. On, on, on, still.

They are out of the polder. To the right is the ruins of a castle, capping a rise of the softest turf. Thither the brave little horse gallops, and there at the summit he stops.

"Why the beast is bewitched!" again exclaims the rider.

What is that dull distant roar—like the wind on a stormy day upon a wooded hill? the air is perfectly calm; and there is neither hill nor wood to the north.

A singular, fearful noise. A rushing now rather than a roar.

"And what is that glare through the moon's haze on the polder?"

It is water.

Now he sees the truth. The Zuyder Zee is let loose. Marsh and lowland will be blotted out from the continent; will the rise of the castle of Zalst still peer above the inland sea?

Yes; doubtless the Angel that stood in the path of the rider was a friend. And often and often, in the long summer evenings, would Egbert and Elsie Vanderveide be asked by their children for the story of how they cut the great dyke of Naerden, and how the good little pony would go to the Castle of Zelst.

And this story of that never-failing providence of OUR FATHER, which ordereth all things in Heaven and in earth, is strictly true.

A BIT OF ALPINE SCENERY.

The Alps, resembling a strong and prominent knot of the muscles of the earth's granite, constitute a chain of mountains which extends over a space of three hundred leagues, from the mouth of the Rhone towards Marseilles, to the plains of Hungary. The links of this chain become depressed toward each extremity, and gradually lose themselves in the level country. In the centre they rise to an enormous elevation, inaccessible to the steps, and scarcely perceptible to the eyes of men. Their summits, circled by the battlements of a natural fortress, stand out in bold relief from the deep azure of the heavens—brilliant in dazzling whiteness under the

first light of morning, warmly colored like the rose at mid-day, and softening down into the hue of the violet as evening declines; these varying tints are produced by the reflection (more or less powerful) of the sun on the sheets of eternal snow with which the ridges of the mountains are clothed. When we first look upon them from the valleys of Italy or France, at a distance of sixty or eighty leagues, they inspire the same sentiment, arising from infinity of height, which is produced by the sea or the firmament as regards immensity of extent.—It is a spectacle which paralyzes the beholder, and from fear to terror, from astonishment to admiration, carries the thoughts of mortal man up to the Creator, for whom alone nothing is elevated or boundless; but man feels himself reduced to nonentity under the stupendous architecture of these elevated regions, and utters an involuntary cry; that cry is a confession of his own insignificance, and a hymn to the omnipotent power of the Architect. It is from this cause that the heart is usually more impressed with piety on the sea or on the tops of mountains, than on the level plains. The mirror of Illis works, in which the Divinity is represented, being on a grander scale. He is there retraced and revealed with more distinct and impressive features.

Toward the southern or Italian side the slopes of the hills are abrupt and steep as an artificial rampart raised to protect and shelter that fertile country, the garden of Europe. On the north, stretching in the direction of France, Savoy and Germany, the Alps descend from the clouds to the borders of the lakes and the level of the plains by the most gradual and gentle declivities; these may be described as immense ladders, with steps proportioned to the faculties of man. As soon as you quit the inaccessible region of snow, frost and eternal ice, formed by the domes of Mont Blanc and the Jungfrau, the slopes become gradual; the roots of these gigantic pinnacles seem to swell the soil which covers them, and they become clothed with earth, teeming with vegetation, with greensward, shrubs, flowers and pasture land, moistened by the incessant filtration of melting glaciers, which dissolve under the heat of the sun. The eminences diverge widely on all sides as they gradually decrease in altitude, like buttresses, the foundations of which are deeply and extensively sunk, to capacitate them for bearing the incalculable weight which they are constructed to carry. Thus they form and hollow out, between each separate ridge, narrow beds, which soon become formidable ravines, expanding rapidly into valleys, basins and extensive plains, at the extremities of which we perceive, from the heights, the sparkling of transparent lakes, from whence foaming rivers take their course, to seek a distant and still lower level.

Upon the flanks of these diminishing Alps the traveller encounters, here and there, a scattered cottage or insulated habitation, resembling a tent constructed of wood, built solely for the summer, to which the shepherds, in following their flocks, ascend with the spring, and from whence they depart on the approach of autumn. Below this elevation villages are found grouped together at the foot of a cascade, and sheltered from the fury of the avalanche by forests of pine. The beams and planks which form the houses of these villages are furnished by the same tree, which protects them from the melting snows.

These houses, covered by a wooden roof, which overhangs the walls like the brim of a hat widened to protect the face from the rain, seem as if they were shaped and sculptured by the knife with curious and patient skill; they resemble the toys of whitewood which the shepherds carve for their children while they are watching the cattle. External stair-cases, ornamented by balustrades carved in arabesque, lead from the ground-floor to the higher story. Doors, surmounted by hollow niches, containing statues of virgins, heroes or saints, give admission to the upper apartments, which are lighted by windows in lattice-work, with lozenge-shaped panes of glass set in leaden frames. Long galleries with Gothic balustrades surround the entire building, under the open air, like a festooned girder encircling the waist of a bride.—Stems of May-trees, or springs of nutritious plants, suspended from the roof by their roots, hang over the exterior gable and form a ceiling of colored mosaics. Through the windows of the kitchen we perceive the reflection of a large fireplace, which emits a perpetual blaze.

Branches and splinters of pine, artistically cleft and piled under the gallery, (a certain sign of opulence,) constitute a wood-house, well supplied to meet the exigencies of the winter. At the side of this pile are placed folding-doors, which open into extensive stables, floored with planks of pine, cleansed and shining like the table of a careful house-keeper. The luke warm and perfumed breath of betters issues from these doors, mingled with the piteous lowing of young bulls calling for their absent mothers. A movable wooden bridge, thrown over the entrance to the stables, with a long and gradual descent, conducts the carts loaded with hay to the granary for fodder. Dry forage and yellow straw issues from all the windows of this vegetable magazine; abundance is everywhere mingled with simplicity. In the middle of the court, a hollow trunk of pine drains through an iron pipe water from the mountain-streams into an enormous wooden trough, to satisfy the thirst of the cattle.

On whatever side you regard the flanks of the Alpine region, whether on the nearest eminences, the slope of the glacier, the roof of the dwelling-place, the walls of the building, the store of wood, the stable or the fountain, the eye encounters nothing but pine, alive or dead. The Switzer and pine-tree are brethren. It seems as if Providence had assigned to every distinct race of human beings a special tree, which accompanies them, or which they follow throughout their terrestrial peregrinations; a tree which affords them nourishment, heat, drink, shelter; which gathers them together under its branches, forms, as it were, a member of the domestic circle, and becomes, in fact, a household god, attached to every individual hearthstone. It is thus with the mulberry in China, the date in Africa, the fig in India, the oak in France, the orange in Italy, the vine in Spain and Burgundy, the pine in Switzerland and the palm in Oceania. The animal and vegetable world are bound together by invisible ties; annihilate trees and man must perish.

A STORY OF THE GREEN MOUNTAINS.

The green mountains of Vermont, which extend through the greater part of the counties of Washington, Chittenden and Rutland, have been the scene, in bygone days of many hard fought battles not only with the Indians, but battles with bears, wolves and catamounts.

The early settlers were, in order to carry out their plans of civilization, obliged to encounter all these natives of the forest. People of the present day, with their fine houses, fast horses, railroads, telegraphs, &c., can hardly imagine how their forefathers, a century ago, accomplished so much, both in clearing the wilderness of foes, and in felling the forests, preliminary to cultivation. But times have changed: Although the people of the nineteenth century have made some remarkable discoveries in the scientific world still it must be admitted they have sadly degenerated in a physical point of view. Just imagine one of our modern girls, accustomed to ride in her father's cushioned carriage, going to mill on horseback with a bag of corn for a saddle. The man and woman of a hundred years ago.

In 1777, when the British General, Burgoyne, with his army, was marching from Canada, along the Western boundary of Vermont, a woman whose husband was in the American army, set out for the gristmill, accompanied with her horse, which carried the grist on its back. The road which she traveled was lonely being nearly all the way through thick woods. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when she left her home and as she had been there many times before in the afternoon, she thought she had sufficient time to carry out her plans successfully. She was well aware that if any obstacle should arise to impede her progress, and thus retain her till after dark, she might meet with trouble.

Unfortunately, when she arrived at the mill, a distance of about four miles from her home, she found that she would be obliged to wait an hour and a half for her grist. At first she thought she would return without it; but a second thought told her that if she did this, her children would have to go without their supper. Finally she made up her mind to run the risk of being overhauled by the wild beasts. Leaving the mill as soon as her grist was ready she proceeded on her homeward voyage as rapidly as possible, lest night should overtake her before she got half way to her destination. Distant

howlings in the wilderness told her that she had not passed unobserved. They continued to grow nearer. At last, when about a mile from her home, the wolves overtook her. She used every means to urge her horse along with speed. The drove of wolves at the horse's head were every few minutes receiving additional reinforcements along the path. Things were coming to a crisis; she saw plainly, that in all probability, she could not reach home before she and her horse would be overwhelmed and fall a sacrifice to the wolves. But, just then, she thought of a motive which might save her own life, by leaving the horse and grist of corn to its own fate. It required some dexterity to carry it into effect.—But she found this was her last chance. She accordingly steered her horse under some trees whose branches came so near the ground, that by rising from the horse, she could reach them and at full gallop, the horse turned under them and she, by a dexterous jump, succeeded in catching hold of a branch and climbing up into the tree, while the horse with the remainder of its load, reached home. The gallant woman remained in the tree until all was quiet; the wolves not seeing her, when she came down and gained her home safe about an hour after the horse.

THE NOBLE REVENGE.

The coffin was a plain one—a poor miserable pine coffin. No flowers on its top, no lining of rose-white satin for the pale brow; no smooth ribbons about the coarse shroud. The brown hair was laid decently back, but there was no crimped cap, with its neat tie beneath the chin. The sufferer from cruel poverty smiled in her sleep; she had found bread, rest and health.

"I want to see my mother," sobbed a poor child, as the city undertaker screwed down the top.

"You can't—get out of the way, boy; why don't somebody take the brat away?"

"Only let me see her one minute," cried the hapless, hopeless orphan, clutching the side of the charity box, and as he gazed into that rough face, anguish tears streamed rapidly down the cheek on which no childish bloom ever lingered.—Oh! it was with a piteous to hear him cry, "only let me see my mother only once!"

Quickly and brutally the hard-hearted monster struck the boy away, so that he reeled with the blow. For a moment the boy stood panting with grief and rage; his blue eyes distended, his lips sprang apart, a fire glittered through his tears, as he raised his puny arm, and with a most unchildlike accent, screamed, "when I'm a man I'll kill you for that!"

There was a coffin and a heap of earth between the mother and the poor forsaken child, and a monument stronger than granite built in his boy-heart to the memory of a heartless deed.

The court-house was crowded to suffocation.

"Does any one appear as this man's cousin?" asked the judge.

There was a silence when he finished, until with lips tightly pressed together, a look of strange recognition, blended with laughly reserve upon his handsome features, a young man stepped forward with a firm tread and kindling eye, to plead for the erring and the friendless. He was a stranger, but from his entrance there was a silence. The splendor of his genius entranced, convinced. The man who could not find a friend was acquitted.

"May God bless you, sir, I cannot."

"I want no thanks," replied the stranger, with icy coldness.

"I—I believe you are unknown to me."

"Man! I will refresh your memory."

Twenty years ago you struck a broken-hearted boy away from his mother's poor coffin. I was that poor miserable boy."

The man turned livid.

"Have you rescued me, then to take my life?"

"No, I have a sweeter revenge; I have saved the life of a man whose brutal deed has rankled in my breast for twenty years. Go! and remember the tears of a friendless child and the heart that can wrong him."

The man bowed his head in shame, and went out from the presence of a magnanimity as grand to him as incomprehensible, and the noble young lawyer felt God's smile in his soul forever after.

Mr. Ferguson says that the prettiest sewing-machine he ever saw was about seventeen years old, with short sleeves, low-necked dress and with gaiter boots on.