JOOST VAN VONDEL

VONDEL'S LUCIFER

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Translator's Preface

It is with a feeling of diffidence that I offer to American readers this the first English version of that unknown Titan, Vondel, a poet of whom Southey's words on Bilderdÿk, another Dutch bard, might also have been spoken:

"The language of a state
Inferior in illustrious deeds to none,
But circumscribed by narrow bounds,…
Hath pent within its sphere a name wherewith
Europe should else have rung from side to side."

This translation of the "Lucifer" is the result of years of careful study, and I may therefore be pardoned for calling it a conscientious effort. My object has been to give merely a literal but sympathetic rendering. It has been my aim to preserve the old poet in all his rugged simplicity, for every syllable of this classic has been hallowed by centuries. It is sacred, and every change is but a desecration.

Sacred as is the body of such a poem, yet how much holier is its spirit—the elusive properties of its soul! But how seldom does the translation of a great classic prove other than the breaking of the chalice and the spilling of the wine! Yet if but some faint aroma of its original beauty linger around the fragment of this offering—this version of Vondel's grand drama—I lay down my pen content.

I am aware that less accuracy and a greater freedom might in many places have produced a more ornate and highly finished rendering; but this, it seems to me, would have weakened a poem—a poem whose chief merit is its remarkable virility. Every word in a translation of a classic, not in the original, is but the alloy that lessens the proportion of true gold in the coin of its worth. Felicitous paraphrasing is often only a confession of inability to translate an author into the true terms of poetical equation. Mere prettinesses are surely not to be expected in a poem so sublime and stately. I have therefore followed the text of the original very closely.

The body of the drama was written by Vondel in rimed Alexandrines. This part of the play I have rendered into blank verse—a metrical form far better suited to the English drama, and also more adapted to the genius of our language. It is obvious, too, that this admits of much greater accuracy in the translation.

I have, however, scrupulously adhered to the original metres of all the choruses—most of them very involved and intricate, some modelled after the antique—even to preserving the feminine and interior rimes; for the utility and beauty of the chorus is in its music, and the music consists in both metre and rime. I have also generally followed Vondel's capitalization and punctuation, and his spelling of the names of the characters, as Belzebub, Rafael, Apollion, etc.

With the much discussed question of Milton's indebtedness to Vondel this effort has nothing to do. I mention this merely to show that this version was not made that it might be adduced as proof of Vondel's influence on his great English contemporary. It has a much higher reason to commend it; namely, the intrinsic value of the original as a poem and as a national masterpiece. My desire has been to give Vondel; and Vondel is a sufficient justification.

At the same time, I was not displeased when I received a letter from a distinguished American scholar, stating that this translation also incidentally fills a wide gap in the Miltonic criticism, and that it thus supplies a great desideratum.

With this version of Vondel's masterpiece I have also been asked to give a sketch of the poet and his time, and an interpretation of the drama, since there is so little in English on the subject.

In writing the former, I found much of value in Mr. Gosse's charming essays on Vondel, in his "Northern Studies." I must also acknowledge my great obligations to Dr. Kalff's "Life of Vondel."

Before closing I wish to thank the poets and scholars of the Netherlands for their encouragement. Their kind reception of my effort was a gratifying surprise to me.

I must also take this opportunity to record the kindness of that eminent scholar, Dr. G. Kalff, Professor of Dutch Literature in the University of Utrecht, who, though overwhelmed with professional duties, with the most painstaking care examined every part of my translation, giving me, furthermore, the benefit of his critical observations. The brilliant article on Vondel and his "Lucifer," with which he has favored this volume, is an added reason for my gratitude.

I also thank Dr. W.H. Carpenter of Columbia University for his kind interest in my work, and for his invaluable introduction.

And, finally, to my friends, Prof. Henry Jerome Stockard, the Southern poet; Dr. Thomas Hume, Professor of English Literature in the University of North Carolina; and Dr. C. Alphonso Smith, Professor of English in the University of Louisiana, I also express my thanks for some excellent suggestions.

Introduction

Vondel's Lucifer in English

It has become a matter of literary tradition, in Holland and out of it, that the choral drama of "Lucifer" is the great masterpiece of Dutch literature. The Dutch critics, however, are by no manner of means unanimous in this opinion. In point of fact, it has been assigned by some a place relatively subordinate among the works of this "Dutch Shakespeare," as they are fond of calling Vondel at home. No other one, however, in the long list of his dramas and poems, from the "Pascha" of 1612 to his last translations of 1671, the beginning and the end of a literary career, in which one of the greatest of Dutch writers on its history has pronounced the poetry of the Netherlands to have attained its zenith, will, none the less, so strongly appeal to us, outside of Holland, as does the "Lucifer." Vondel's tragedy "Gysbreght van Amstel" may have found far greater favor as a drama, and the poet may possibly in his lyrics have risen to his greatest height; but neither the one nor the other, in spite of this, can have such supreme claims upon our attention.

Why this is so is dependent upon a variety of reasons. It is not solely on account of the lofty character of the subject, nor because we have an almost identical one in a great poem in English literature, between which and the "Lucifer" there is a more than generic resemblance. The question of Milton's indebtedness to Vondel is no longer to be considered an open one, and has resolved itself into an inquiry simply as to the amount of the influence exerted. This is an interesting phase of the matter, and, since it involves one of our great classics, an important one. The two poems, nevertheless, however great this influence may be shown to be, are by no manner of means alike in detail, and one main source of interest to us, to whom "Paradise Lost" is a heritage, is undoubtedly to compare the treatment of such a subject by two great poets of different nationalities. The paramount reason, however, why the "Lucifer" should appeal to us is because it is, in reality, one of the great poems of the world; because of its inherent worth, its seriousness of purpose, the sublimity of its fundamental conceptions, its whole loftiness of tone. When the critics praise others of Vondel's works for excellences not shared by the "Lucifer," they extol him immeasurably, for there is enough in this poem alone to have made its author immortal.

It is a matter of surprise that down to the present time there has been no English translation of "Lucifer," although, after all, its neglect is but a part of the general indifference among us to the literature of Holland in all periods of its history. Why this should be so is not quite apparent; for wholly apart from the important question of action and reaction as a constituent part of the world's literature, the literature of Holland has in it, in almost every phase of its development, sublimities and beauties of its own which surely could not always remain hidden. An era of translation was sure to set in, and it is a matter of significance that its herald has even now appeared.

That the first considerable translation of any Dutch poet into English should be Vondel, and that the particular work rendered should be the "Lucifer," is, from the preëminent place of writer and poem in the literature of the Netherlands, altogether apt.

It is particularly fitting, however, that such an English translation, both because it is first and because it is Vondel, should be put forth, beyond all other places, from this old Dutch city of New York. There is surely more than a passing interest in the thought that, at the time of the appearance of Vondel's "Lucifer" in old Amsterdam, in 1654, its reading public was in part New Amsterdam, as well. Whether any copy of the book ever actually found its way over to the New Netherlands is a matter that it is hardly possible now to determine; but that it might have been read in the vernacular as readily here as at home is a fact of history. Only two years after the publication of the "Lucifer,"

that is in 1656, Van der Donck, as his title page states, "at the time in New Netherland," printed his "Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant," in which occurs the familiar picture of "Nieuw Amsterdam op 't Eylant Manhattans," with its fort, and flagstaff, and windmill, its long row of little Dutch houses, and its gibbet well in the foreground as an unmistakable symbol of law and order.

Strikingly enough, too, during the lifetime of Vondel we were making our own contributions to Dutch literature; modest they certainly may have been, but real none the less. Jacob Steendam, the first poet of New York, wrote here at least one of his poems, the "Klagt van Nieuw-Amsterdam," printed in Holland in 1659, and from this same period are the occasional verses of those other Dutch poets, Henricus Selyns, the first settled minister of Brooklyn, and of Nicasius de Sille, first colonial Councillor of State under Governor Stuyvesant. Steendam, after he had returned from these shores to the Fatherland, is still a New Netherlander in spirit, for he continued to sing in vigorous, if homely, verses of the land he had left, which in his long poems, "'T Lof van Nieuw-Nederland," and "Prickel-Vaersen" he paints in glowing colors:

Nieuw-Nederland, gy edelste Gewest
Daar d'Opperheer (op 't heerlijkst) heeft gevest
De Volheyt van zijn gaven: alder-best
In alle Leden.

Dit is het Land, daar Melk en Honig vloeyd:
Dit is't geweest, daar't Kruyd (als dist'len) groeyd:
Dit is de Plaats, daar Arons-Roede bloeyd:
Dit is het Eden.

A translation of Vondel, from what has been said, is, accordingly, in a certain sense, a rehabilitation, a restoration to a former status that through the exigency of events has been lost. While this may be considered from some points of view but a curiosity of coincidence, it is in reality, as has been assumed, much more than that: it is a pertinent reminder of our historical beginnings, a harking back to the century that saw our birth as a province and as a city, to the mother country and to the mother tongue.

Of the literature of Holland, from the lack of opportunity, we know far too little. The translation into English of Vondel's "Lucifer" is not only in and for itself an event of more than ordinary importance in literary history, but it cannot fail to awaken among us a curiosity as to what else of supreme value maybe contained in Dutch literature, and thereby, in effect, form a veritable "open sesame" to unlock its hidden treasures.

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NEW YORK, *April* 4, 1898.

Introduction: Dr. Kalff

When Vondel, in 1653, finished his "Lucifer," he stood, notwithstanding his sixty-six laborious years, with undiminished vigor upon one of the loftiest peaks in his towering career.

A long road lay behind him, in some places rough and steep, though ever tending upwards. What had he not experienced, what had he not endured since that day in 1605 when he contributed a few faulty strophes to a wedding feast—the first product of his art of which we have any knowledge!

After a long and wearisome war, full of brilliant feats of arms, his countrymen had, at length, closed a treaty full of glory to themselves with their powerful and superior adversary. The Republic of the United Netherlands had taken her place among the great powers of the earth. In the East and in the West floated the flag of Holland. Over far-distant seas glided the shadows of Dutch ships, *en route* to other lands, bearing supplies to satisfy their needs, or speeding homewards freighted with riches.

Prince Maurice was dead. Frederic Henry and William II. had come and gone. De Witt, however, guided the helm of the ship of state; and as long as De Ruyter stood on the quarter-deck of his invincible "Seven Provinces" no reason existed to inspire an Englishman with a "Rule Britannia."

Knowledge soared on daring wings. Art reigned triumphant. The Stadhuis at Amsterdam was nearing completion. Rembrandt's "Night Patrol" already hung in the great hall of the Arquebusiers, and his "Syndics of the Cloth Merchants" was soon to be begun.

Fulness of life, growth of power, and the extension of boundaries were everywhere apparent. The life of the period is like an impressive pageant: in front, proud cavaliers, in high saddles, on their prancing steeds, with splendid colors and dazzling weapons, while silk banners gorgeously embroidered are waving aloft; in the rear, beautiful triumphal chariots and picturesque groups; around stands a clamorous multitude that for one moment forgets its cares in the glow of that splendor, though often only kept in restraint with difficulty.

In the midst of this busy, murmurous scene, Vondel with steady feet pursued his own way; often, indeed, lending his ear to the voices with which the air reverberated, or feasting his eyes upon color and form; often, too, lifting his voice for attack or defence; though still more often with averted glance, and lost in meditation, listening to the voice within.

Life had not left him untried. In many a contest, especially in his struggles against the Calvinistic clergy, he had strengthened his belief on many a doubtful point, developed his powers, and sharpened his understanding.

He had lost two lovely children; his tenderly beloved wife, who lived for him, had left him alone; his conversion to Catholicism had cost him much internal strife, and had brought with it the loss of former friends; his oldest son, Joost, had plunged him into financial difficulties, which resulted in ruin: yet beneath all this his sturdy strength did not fail him.

The fire of his spirit, not suppressed or smothered by the piled-up fuel of early learning, but constantly and richly fed with that which was best, burned with a fierce flame, ever hungry for new food. Treasures of art and knowledge he had gathered, even as the honey-bee culls her store out of all meadows and flowers; for towards art and knowledge his heart ever inclined—towards those muses of whom, in his "Birthday Clock of William Van Nassau," he said:

> "For whom all life I love; and without whom, ah me!
> The glorious majesty of sun I could not gladly see."

In an awe-inspiring number of long and short poems, he had, since those first lame verses, developed his art; he had taught his understanding to make use of life-like forms in the construction of his dramas; his feelings he had made deeper and more refined; his taste he had ennobled; his self-restraint he had increased; his technique he had made perfect.

Did his Bible remain the fount from which he preferred to draw the material for his dramas, he also gladly borrowed his motifs from the past of classical antiquity, and from the every-day Netherland life around him. His own fiery belief and deep convictions, and irrepressible desire to give vent to them, caused the person of the poet to be seen more clearly in his characters than we observe to be the case in the productions of his masters, the classic tragedians.

"Palamedes" is a tempestuous defence of the great statesman Oldenbarneveldt—a defence full of intemperate passion, bitter reproach, and burning satire. How fiercely glows there, in each word, in each answer, in transparent allusion and in scornful irony, the fire of party spirit! How often, too, do we there hear the voice of the poet himself, as it trembles with tender sympathy or with lofty indignation!

"Gÿsbrecht van Amstel," a subject dearer to the burghers of Amsterdam than most others, is illuminated with the soft glimmer of altar-candles mingled with airy incense. That same light, that same perfume, we also perceive in "Maeghden," "Peter en Pauwels," and "Maria Stuart."

The Christ-like, humble thankfulness of a Dutch burgher falls upon our ears in the "Leeuwendalers," that charming pastoral, in which the wanton play of whistling pipe and reed is constantly relieved by the silvery pure tones of ringing peace-bells.

Does the history of the development of the Vondelian drama teach us more about the man Vondel, it also most clearly shows us the evolution of the artist. Especially after his translation of "Hippolytus" he had weaned himself from the style of Seneca. More and more he became filled with the grandeur of the Greek tragedians, Sophocles and Euripides above all others. Æschylus he had not yet made his own; that hour was not yet come.

In "Gÿsbrecht van Amstel" we feel, for the first time, that Vondel acknowledges the Greeks as his masters, that he strives to follow them in their sublime simplicity; in their naturalness, that never degenerates to the gross; in their freedom of movement, so different from the stiffness of the school of Seneca; in the exquisitely delicate manner in which the lyric is introduced into the drama. In "Joseph in Dothan," "Leeuwendalers," and "Salomon," we behold the poet pursuing the same path, and here the influence of the Greeks is still more perceptible.

We have attempted in a few rapid strokes to give a brief outline of the time in which the tragedy "Lucifer" had its origin, and also of the man, the poet, who created it.

When Vondel first conceived the plan of writing this tragedy is not known. However, it is well known that this subject had early made an impression upon him. In the collection of prints entitled "Gulden Winkel" (1613), for which Vondel wrote the accompanying mottoes, we already find the Archangel whom God had doomed to the pit of hell. In the "Brieven der Heilige Maeghden" (1642), and in "Henriette Marie t'Amsterdam" (1642), we also find mention of the revolt of the Archangel. In the first-named work the strife between Michael and Lucifer, with their legions, is already seen in prototype. About 1650 he had undoubtedly resolved upon a plan to expand this subject into a tragedy.

Was the fallen Archangel for a long period thus ever present to the poet's eye? Did that subject so enthrall him that, at last, he could no longer resist the impelling desire to picture it after his own fashion? For the causes of this interest we shall not have far to seek.

The seventeenth century was, more than almost any other, the age of authority, and "Lucifer" is the tragedy of the individual in his revolt against authority. Vondel, the Catholic Christian, to whom the ruling power was holy—holy because it came from God; Vondel, the Amsterdam burgher, reared in the fear of the Lord, and full of reverence for those in authority as long as his conscience approved; Vondel must thus have been deeply impressed by the thought of the presumptuous attempt of the Stadholder of God, "the fairest far of all things ever by God created," in his revolt against the "Creator of his glory." Out of this deep agitation this tragedy was born.

Only a genius such as that of Vondel or Milton could bring itself to undertake so dubious a task—out of such material to create a poem; only the highest genius could succeed in such gigantic attempt. Only such a poet can translate us on the mighty wings of his imagination into the portals of

heaven; can present to us angels that at the same time are so human that we can put ourselves in their place, but who, nevertheless, remain for us a higher order of beings; can dare to bring into a drama a representation of God, without offending His majesty.

With chaste taste the poet has only rapidly sketched the scene of the drama; by means of a few suggestive strokes, awaking in reader and hearer a sympathetic conception: an illimitable spaciousness radiant with light; an eternal sunshine, more beautiful than that of earth, mirroring itself in the blue crystalline, above which hover hosts of celestial angels; here and there in the background, the dazzling pediments, towers, and battlements of ethereal palaces; far away, upon the heights beyond, the golden port, from which God's "Herald of Mysteries" came down into view. The earth lies immeasurably far below; high, high above, "So deep in boundless realms of light," God reigns upon His throne.

In that endless vast live and move the inhabitants of Heaven in tranquil enjoyment. "Grief never nestled 'neath those joyful eaves" until the creation of man. Pride and envy now awake in the breasts of the angels, and their suffering begins.

Lucifer's passionate pride, which in its outbursts occasionally reminds us of the heroes of Seneca; his dissimulation in the conversation with the rebellious angels; his wretchedness when Rafael has opened his eyes to an appreciation of his position; his obstinate resistance and untamed defiance —all this Vondel has portrayed for us in a masterly manner. Belzebub, more than Lucifer, is the real genius of evil, the wicked one. He is this in his inclination towards subtle mockery and sarcasm; in his hypocrisy; in his wily use of Lucifer's weakness to incite him to destruction; in the art with which he, while himself behind the curtain, directs the course of events.

After the grand overture of the drama, wherein men and angels are placed over against one another, we see how, in the second act, Lucifer comes on the scene, mounted on his battle chariot, excited, embittered; and then the action develops itself in a remarkably even manner. The clouds roll together; more threateningly, more heavily they impend; the light that glows from the towers and battlements of Heaven grows tarnished; the seditious angels gradually lose their lustre; the thunder approaches with dull rumblings; one moment it is stayed, even at the point of outbursting, where Rafael, "oppressed and wan," throws himself appealingly on Lucifer's neck; then it precipitates itself in a terrible storm of strife between desperate rage and the powers above. The fall of man is the sombre afterpiece of this intensely interesting drama.

All of this is discussed in verses that know not their equal in nobility of sound, in fulness and purity of tone, in rapidity of change from tenderness to strength, in wealth of coloring.

Through its opulence and beauty this tragedy holds a unique place in our literature. Only "Adam in Ballingschap" can be placed beside it. Only Vondel can with Vondel be compared. If, however, one should compare this production with the best that has been produced in this kind of poetry by other nations, its splendor remains undimmed; beside the masterpieces of Æschylus, Dante, and Milton, Vondel's maintain an equal place.

To this tragedy and to other works of Vondel and of some of our other poets we proudly point, if strangers ask us in regard to our right to a place in the world's literature. It could, therefore, not be otherwise than that a Netherlander who loves his countrymen should be glad when the bar between his literature and that of the outside world is raised; when other nations are furnished occasion to admire one of our national treasures, and are thereby enabled to have a better knowledge of the character and the significance of our people.

We heartily rejoice over the fact that Vondel's drama has been translated into English by an American for Americans, with whom we Netherlanders have from time immemorial been on a friendly footing. We rejoice, too, that this rendering into a language which is more of a world tongue than our own will also give to Englishmen an opportunity to enjoy Vondel's work.

Were this translation an inferior one, or were it only mediocre, we should have no reason to be glad. Then, surely, it were better that the translation had never been made; for to be unknown is better than to be misknown.

But in this case it is otherwise. Although no translation can entirely compensate for the lack of the original, it is, however, possible for the original to be followed very closely. This is well shown by this rendering, which to a high degree possesses the merit of accuracy, while, at the same time, the spirit and the character of Vondel's tragedy are felt, understood, and interpreted in a remarkable manner.

Whoever is in a position, by the comparison of the translation with the original, to form an individual opinion of Van Noppen's work, will probably be convinced, even as I have been, that here an extraordinarily difficult task has been magnificently done. May this translation, therefore, aid in the spreading of Vondel's fame. May it also be followed by many another equally admirable rendering of the poetry and prose of the Netherlands, and may thereby, furthermore, the bond be drawn more closely between America and that land which at one time possessed the opportunity to be the mother-country.

G. KALFF,
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UTRECHT, HOLLAND, *October* 10, 1897.

Vondel: His Life and Times

"Vondel! thousand thousand voices
Echo answer—grandly sing
Praises to our greatest poet,
Hailing him the poets' king."

Dr. Schaepman.

THE DUTCH RENAISSANCE

"Yes, truly, it is a great thing for a nation that it get an articulate voice—that it produce a man who will speak forth melodiously what the heart of it means."

Profounder truth, that keen aphorist, the Sage of Chelsea, never cast into heroic mould.

The consciousness of a great literature is a grander basis for national exaltation than the possession of victorious fleets and invincible battalions. The nation whose highest aspiration and most glorious impulse, whose noblest action and deepest thought, have been crystallized into fadeless beauty by the soul of native genius, has surely more lasting cause for pride than she whose proudest boast is a superiority in mere material achievement.

The everlasting shall always have precedence over the momentary; the time-serving heroics of to-day are the laughter-compelling travesties of to-morrow; the golden colossus of one age is the brazen pigmy of the next. Beauty alone is unfading; art alone is eternal.

"All passes: art alone
Enduring—stays to us;
The bust outlasts the throne;
The coin, Tiberius.

"Even the gods must go;
Only the lofty rime,
Not countless years o'erflow,
Not long array of time."

Happy the country blest with a heritage of noble deeds! Thrice happy she whose glory is a treasury of noble words! Only from great actions can gigantic thoughts be born.

Nowhere was the Revival of Learning more joyfully received than in the Netherlands. At the bidding of the Renaissance, the monasteries, those storehouses of the knowledge of the past, unlocked their precious lore. The classics were now for the first time conscientiously studied; not so much for themselves, as to shed the light of the past upon the present, to furnish suggestions for new discoveries.

Erasmus was but the pioneer of a host of scholars and philosophers. Thomas-à-Kempis was but the forerunner of a race of distinguished literati. The following generation also studied the moderns; and the wonderful genius of Italy, as well as the brilliant talent of France, now lighted up the dark recesses of the Cathedral of Gothic art.

The Reformation, like a tiny acorn, first pierced the rich mould of civil life. Then bursting into the sunshine, it towered into the sky of religious life an imperious oak. The dormant energies of the Low Germans were now kindled into a blaze of creative activity. As in Italy, this first revealed

itself in the increased power of the cities, the Tradesmen's Guilds, the Chambers of Rhetoric, and the growing privileges of the citizens; for example, the burghers of Utrecht and of Amsterdam. It next manifested itself in the Universities and in the Church.

Hand in hand with this extraordinary intellectual development went the sturdy manliness of a vigorous national life. It was the era of enterprise and adventure; of invention and discovery. Daring was the spirit, attainment the achievement, of this age—this age that dared all.

Proud in the philosophy wrested from experience, the race sought to extend its intellectual empire even in the domain of transcendentalism. Knowledge, like Prometheus, bound for centuries to the gloomy cliff of superstition, suddenly rent its bonds and stood forth in all of its tremendous strength, gigantic and unshackled; a god, flaming to conquer the benighted realms of ignorance! Imagination, like a fire-plumed steed, preened for revelries, soared to the stars, and roamed unbridled through the boundless deep of space.

The world ran riot for truth. In England, Italy, France, and Spain, as well as in Holland, arose a race of explorers that gave to the earth another hemisphere, and discovered another solar system in the universe of thought.

The world called loud for blood. Truth was not to be attained without sacrifice; freedom was not to be won without battle. Universal struggle was to precede universal achievement. A whirlwind of death now swept over the earth, leaving in its wake carnage and disaster. The passions of men burst asunder the chains of duty and religion, and swooped on the nations with desolating rage.

The world was in travail. Hope was born, error vanquished, tyranny dethroned. The dawn of a new life had come. The night was over. The sparks of war became the seeds of art. The Netherland imagination was suddenly quickened into creative rapture by the contemplation of the heroism of the great Orange and the founders of the Republic.

A generation of fighters is always the precursor of an epoch of singers. The panegyrist and the historian ever follow in the train of the soldier and the statesman; the epic and the eulogy as surely in the path of great deeds as the polemic and the satire in the track of wickedness and folly.

The sculptor and the painter are evoked from obscurity only by the call of heroes. The musician and the poet—the voice of the ideal—stand ever ready to blazon forth the glory of the real. Unworthy actions alone are unsung.

The foundations of the Dutch Republic had been laid by a race of Cyclops, in whose battle-scarred forehead glowed the single eye of freedom. A race of Titans followed, and built upon this firm foundation a magnificent temple of art and science, above whose four golden portals were emblazoned, chiselled in "deathless diamond," the names, Vondel, Rembrandt, Grotius, and Spinoza, the high-priests of its worship.

It is of Vondel, the one articulate voice of Holland, whose heart ever kept time with the larger pulse of his nation, that we would now speak.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

Justus van den Vondel was the son of Dutch parents, and was born at Cologne, November 17, 1587. It is curious to note that above the door of the house where the greatest bard of the Low Germans first saw the light hung the sign of a viol, a maker of that instrument having at one time lived there. The poet used to point to this fact as having been prophetic of his poetic future; and it was, surely, not an uninspiring coincidence.

The elder Vondel was a hatter, and had fled to Cologne from his native city, Antwerp, to escape the persecution then raging against the Anabaptists, of which church he was a zealous and devout member.

In Cologne he had courted and married Sarah Kranen, whose father, Peter Kranen, also an Anabaptist, had likewise been driven from Antwerp by the fury of the Romanists. Peter Kranen was

not without reputation in his native city as a poet, and had won some distinction in the public contests of the literary guilds, of one of which he was a shining ornament. So it seems that our poet drank in the divine afflatus, as it were, with his mother's milk.

It is related that Kranen's wife, being pregnant, was unable to accompany her husband in his hurried flight; and, being left behind, was confined in the city prison, where her severe fright prematurely brought on the crisis. Being strongly importuned by a cousin of the young woman, who was required to furnish security for her re-appearance, the magistrates finally permitted her to complete her travail at her home.

After the birth of her child, when her cousin again delivered her, sorrowful and heavy at heart, into the custody of the jailer, he whispered comfortingly in her ear, "With this hand I have brought you here; but with the other I shall take you away again."

The time of her execution drew nigh. It was intended that she should be burnt at the stake with a certain preacher of her sect. When this became known, the cousin went to the dignitaries of the Church and asked if, in case one of her children be baptized by a Catholic priest, the mother would have a chance for her life. The clergy, ever anxious to welcome an addition to the fold, and more desirous to save a soul than to burn a body, replied that it might be so arranged.

One of the children, a daughter, who was already with the father at Cologne, was then hastily summoned. Upon her arrival, accordingly, she was baptized after the manner of the Catholic ritual, and received into the Church.

The mother, now free, hastened to the arms of her joyful spouse, and the daughter who thus saved her mother's life afterwards became the mother of Vondel.

So even Vondel's Romanism, of which much will be said farther on, might thus be considered as foreshadowed and inherited.

The year of Vondel's birth was also the year of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, whose tragic end he was destined to celebrate. Shakespeare, the most illustrious poet of the hereditary enemies of Vondel's countrymen, was just twenty-three years old, and had already been married four years to Anne Hathaway. William the Silent, "the Father of his Country," had only three years before, in the flower of his age, been cut off by the red hand of the assassin.

The early childhood of the poet was spent at Cologne. He never forgot the town of his birth, and, after the manner of the poets of antiquity, sang its glories in many an eloquent rime.

After the storm of persecution had spent its fury, the Vondels slowly returned by way of Bremen and Frankfort to the Netherlands. They rode in a rustic wagon, across which were fastened two strong sticks. From these was suspended a cradle, in which lay their youngest child. This simplicity and their modest demeanor and unaffected piety so impressed the wagoner that he was heard to say: "It is just as if I were journeying with Joseph and Mary."

The family first stopped at Utrecht, where the young "Joost" went to school. His early education, however, was very meagre, ending with his tenth year; so that he whose attainments were afterwards the admiration of his scholarly contemporaries, and the wonder of posterity, commenced life with the most threadbare equipment of learning.

Surely the plastic imagination of the boy must have been wonderfully impressed by the grandeur of that gigantic Gothic pile, the Utrecht Cathedral, and its tremendous campanile, pointing like a huge index finger unerringly to God, and towering so sublimely above the beautiful old town and the fertile meadows all around!

In 1597 we find the family in Amsterdam, of which flourishing city the elder Vondel had recently become a citizen, and where he had opened a hosiery shop.

This business must have proved remunerative, as one of his younger children, his son William, afterwards studied law at Orleans, and then travelled to Rome, where he applied himself to theology and letters, a course of study which in that age, even more than to-day, must have been beyond the means of even the ordinary well-to-do citizen.

Though the subject of our sketch was not so fortunate in this respect as his younger brother, yet he made good use of his opportunities; and it is recorded that, even before he had reached his teens, his rimes attracted considerable attention among the friends of the family.

When only thirteen years old, we find his verses complimented as showing unusual promise. It was Peter Cornelius Hooft, the talented young poet, son of the burgomaster of the city, who was at that time pursuing a course of study in Italy, who incidentally made this passing reference in an interesting rimed epistle to the Chamber of the Eglantine at Amsterdam.

This Chamber was one of the literary guilds founded in imitation of the French *Collèges de Rhétorique*; and it played so important a part in the literary history of the city and in the life of our poet that we ask indulgence if an account of it cause what may seem a little digression.

Under the rule of the House of Burgundy, the French feeling for dramatic poetry had been introduced into the Netherlands. This was fostered, not only by the exhibitions of the travelling minstrels, but also by the impressive and often gorgeous Miracle and Mystery Plays of the clergy. In the wake of these followed the more artistic Morality Plays. These allegorical representations did much to create a purer taste and to waken a greater demand for the drama.

The people suddenly began to take unusual interest in declamation and in dramatic exhibitions; and Chambers of Rhetoric, for the indulgence of this new taste, were soon established in all of the prominent cities of the country.

These societies also began sedulously to cultivate rhetorica, or literature, and soon became nothing less than an association of literary guilds, bound together in a sort of social Hanseatic league, designed for their own defence and for the fostering of their beloved art.

Each was distinguished by some device, and usually bore the name of some flower. They were wont also to compete against each other in rhetorical contests called "land-jewels," to which they would march, costumed in glorious masquerade, and to the sound of pealing trumpets and of shrill, melodious airs.

As was natural, the follies of the Church were too tempting a subject for these Chambers to resist; and many of them, long before the thundering polemics of Luther were heard, had dramatized a stinging satire on the clergy, revealing their vices in all of their hideous coarseness, and making their follies the butt of their unsparing mockery.

When the Reformation, therefore, trumped her battle-cry, there throbbed a responsive echo in the hearts of the Netherlanders, long disgusted, as they were, with the excesses of a dissolute priesthood.

These societies, therefore, exerted no little influence on the social, religious, and intellectual life of the country, and became a powerful aid to the awakening of a national consciousness and to the up-building of the language and the literature.

Among them all, no other attained the distinction of the Chamber of the Eglantine at Amsterdam. This Chamber, whose device was "Blossoming in Love," was founded by Charles V., and to it belonged many of the most prominent citizens of that opulent city. All religious discussions were forbidden within its walls; and there, in that age of religious discord and rabid intolerance, both Catholic and Protestant met together in the worship of Apollo. It was to this honored body that the name of the young Vondel was introduced, and upon him, therefore, its members kept an attentive eye.

We next hear of Vondel as a youth of seventeen. He had, it seems, all the while been assisting his father in the cares of the little hosiery shop; but his mind was with his books, and he employed every spare moment in reading or in study.

About this period a friend of the family was married, and the young poet must needs try his wings. Accordingly, he wrote an epithalamium, which, unfortunately for the poet, still survives. As might have been expected, the too-aspiring youth soared on Icarian wings. However, he was not conscious of this at the time; and lame and faulty as these first efforts are, it may yet be surmised that he felt the thrill of inspiration and the rapture of creating no less than when, in later life, he forged

those Olympian thunderbolts that fulmined over Holland, causing tyrants to shake and multitudes to tremble.

Soon after the wedding-verses, Vondel wrote a threnody on the assassination of Henry IV. of France, which was but little better than his former effort.

We hear no more of our young poet till, like the deer-stealing youth, Shakespeare, he stands, in his young and vigorous manhood, blushing at the altar. Maria de Wolff was the name of the bride that the twenty-three-year-old husband had won to share his destiny.

History does not record the circumstances nor the incidents of his wooing; but from what we know of his character, we will venture to say that it was ardently done.

Of the sonnets and the love-verses that this passion must have inspired in the soul of the young poet nothing, unfortunately, seems to be known. He who had, as a boy, written tolerable verses at the marriage of another must surely, as a man, have done something better at his own.

"All the world loves a lover," be he ever so humble. But the loves of the poets are of especial interest.

We therefore confess our disappointment that no record exists wherein we could see the poet in the sweet throes of that heart-consuming passion. But, for all that, we feel that he loved like a poet, and we know that his marriage proved to be a most happy one.

His wife was in full sympathy with his every thought and aspiration, and wisely left her star-gazing husband to write verses while she stayed behind the counter and sold stockings. She was the daughter of a prosperous linen-merchant of Cologne, and was fortunately of a practical turn of mind.

Thus, when Vondel succeeded to the business of his father, she took upon herself not only the management of the shop, but attended to the house-keeping as well.

ASPIRATION

In 1612 appeared Vondel's first drama, "The Passover." It was the first of that splendid series of Bible tragedies to which, in the field of the sacred drama, neither ancient nor modern times furnish a parallel. This play, which covertly celebrated the recent escape of the Hollanders from the yoke of Spain, was played in the Brabantian Chamber of the Lavender, to which Vondel, whose family came from Brabant, naturally belonged.

This poem showed the results of his years of study, and was far superior to his earlier efforts, indeed, it gave such promise that Vondel was immediately invited to become a member of the Chamber of the Eglantine, and thus at once stood on an equality with the most distinguished literati of the day.

Among these was Roemer Visscher, "the round Roemer," as he was known among his intimates. Visscher was celebrated for his epigrams, and was called "the Dutch Martial." He was a good type of the Dutch merchant of his time, and on account of his wit and jollity was very popular with the other members of the society.

With his friends Coornhert and Spieghel he had taken upon himself the serious task of purifying and enriching his native tongue.

And it is in the works of these three men, who at this time were all well advanced in years, that we first see the promise of a literature and the consciousness of a national destiny.

The stilted and artificial phraseology of the Rhetoricians was soon succeeded by a natural, flowing style. Originality once more asserted its right to a hearing. Nature was studied with enthusiastic contemplation. Art was once more set on her high pedestal and worshipped.

Visscher looked with a philosophic eye on the follies of the day, and his keenest epigrams were pointed with a honied humor that deprived them of their sharpest sting.

But it was more as a patron of letters than as a poet that he deserves to be remembered. At his house all of the young Bohemians of the day were wont to gather, and many the contests of wit and many the battles in verse that took place in this, the first literary salon of the Netherlands.

But there was another attraction at the house of this worthy burgher. The jovial Roemer had two daughters, the blooming but sober Anna and the beautiful and vivacious Tesselschade.

These young women, on account of their many personal charms and numerous accomplishments, furnished a glowing theme to a generation of poets. It is related that they could each play sweetly on several instruments, sing, paint, engrave on glass, cut emblems, embroider, and converse brilliantly.

They were by no means prigs, however, for they also excelled in healthful bodily exercise, as swimming, rowing, and skating; and they were no less discreet and modest than accomplished and refined. Nor must it be forgotten that they themselves also wrote verses full of sweetness and tenderness; verses, too, not without lofty and noble sentiment, that are yet treasured among the brightest gems in Holland's diadem of song.

It was into this charming patrician circle that our middle-class poet was now introduced, and he manfully continued his attempts to remedy the defects in his education, that he might meet the many talented and learned men who came there, on an equal footing.

Vondel was now twenty-six years old, and began to apply himself assiduously to the study of the languages. He took lessons in Latin from an Englishman, and through his great industry he was soon able to read Virgil and Ovid. He also began the study of French, and translated "The Glory of Solomon" of Du Bartas, which he considered a most admirable poem. About the same time he wrote his second tragedy, the "Jerusalem Desolate," which, on account of its severe simplicity and elevated style, was the theme of much favorable comment.

At the house of the Visschers, Vondel was wont to meet, on terms of easy comradery, among other rising young men of the day, the erratic but brilliant Gerard Brederoo, the greatest writer of comedies that Holland has ever produced.

Brederoo was the son of a poor shoemaker of Amsterdam, and on account of his extraordinary talents was eagerly welcomed into the most select circles.

Quite a contrast was the young aristocrat, Peter Cornelius Hooft, of whom we have already spoken. Hooft was a patrician of the patricians, and was the most accomplished and elegant man of his day, the first gentleman of his age.

He had already distinguished himself by several remarkable poems, a superb pastoral, and one or two powerful tragedies.

It was in the field of history and biography, however, that he was to win his greenest laurels. His history of the Netherlands and his biography of Henry IV. of France, written in a terse, forcible, epigrammatic style, have gained for him the appellation of the "Dutch Tacitus." Motley calls him one of the great historians of the world.

Then there was Jan Starter, the son of an English Brownist, who was destined to be one of the sweetest lyrists of his adopted country; and Laurens Reael, another scion of aristocracy, a handsome young man of some poetic power and considerable learning, fated to become the friend of the great Oldenbarneveldt, and, after a splendid career as a soldier, the governor-general of the Dutch East Indies.

Another visitor to this hospitable house was Dr. Samuel Coster, a dramatist of no mean ability, who is now chiefly remembered as the founder of Coster's Academy, an institution founded in imitation of the Accademia della Crusca of Florence.

Anna and Tesselschade were, of course, the centre of this constellation of literary stars, and few of the young men who met at their home left it with heart unscorched by the fierce blaze of love. Vondel was already married; but to the passion that these two beautiful women excited in most of the others, Dutch literature owes its most exquisite love lyrics.

The ardent Hooft wooed the staid Anna only to be rejected. However, the young knight sought and soon obtained consolation elsewhere. Brederoo, with all the fervor of his romantic nature, poured out his soul in a cycle of burning love poems at the feet of the golden-haired and dark-eyed Tesselschade. To her, too, he dedicated his tragedy "Lucelle," calling the object of his adoration "the honor of our city, the glory of our age."

Few women in any epoch have exerted such wonderful influence upon the literature of their time. Not a poet of the day who was not inspired by their beauty and character; not one, furthermore, who did not dedicate to them some production of his genius. And yet they do not seem to have been the least spoiled by such excessive notice. Their good sense and modesty only heightened the excellent impression excited by their beauty and their talents.

How incomplete a sketch of Vondel's life and age would be without a more than passing reference to these accomplished sisters will be better appreciated when we see the poet himself paying court to one of them, charmed not only into a passion of the heart, but also into taking a step which exerted a powerful influence on his life and works.

At the Visschers', in the circle of his friends, the aspiring poet was wont to read the latest effusions of his pen; that he was much benefited by the criticism to which his verses were there subjected cannot be doubted.

His friendship with the most noted men of the day warmed his ambition into a fever of aspiration, and, like Milton, he early determined to devote his whole life to the cultivation of his beloved art.

With the aid of Hooft and Reael he translated the "Troades" of Seneca, which he then sublimated into a tragedy of his own, the "Hecuba of Amsterdam." This evoked considerable praise from the critics of the day. At this time, also, he showed his advancement in technique and his improvement in style by several lyrics of extraordinary merit.

It was thus in the midst of an admiring circle of distinguished friends that we find Vondel cultivating his art. There, in the bosom of that Catholic family, the Visschers, the poets of that age found rest from the storm of religious discord that raged without.

Arminian and Gomarist, Remonstrant and Contra-Remonstrant, were waging that fierce battle of the creeds that is yet the foulest blot upon the fair name of the heroic and tolerant Republic.

Thus the Visscher mansion was the temple of the Muses, where beauty alone was worshipped. Religion was left by the visitor at the threshold. Art alone was the garment that gave admittance to this wedding-feast of poetry and philosophy.

"STORM AND STRESS."

Whether through the contemplation of the fierce dissensions that then raged in the little Republic, or through a natural melancholy of temperament, Vondel now became subject to the most distressing depression.

Occasionally he would flash from his gloom into one of those firebrands of invective that, thrown into the ranks of his enemies, created a blaze of discord from one end of the country to the other; occasionally, also, he was inspired for loftier themes, as his "Ode to St. Agnes," which first showed his tendency towards Catholicism.

Then he would relapse into his melancholy. He lost his appetite and became afflicted with various bodily ills. He seemed hastening into a decline. This lasted several years, during which several important changes had taken place, not only among his friends, but also in the ruling powers of the state.

On the 13th of May, 1618, John van Oldenbarneveldt, the aged Advocate of the States-General, the greatest statesman of his time, and the fiery patriot upon whom had fallen the sacred mantle of William the Silent, was beheaded. He had watched the destinies of the infant Republic with the tender

solicitude of a loving shepherd; he was now devoured by the wolves who, in the guise of religion and of patriotism, had crept into the fold. He had given eighty years of devotion to the up-building of his country; he was now to seal that devotion with his blood. He had made his native land a theme of glory among the nations of the earth; he was now accused of selling that glory for the gold which he had always despised.

A thankless generation had, under the cloak of virtue, committed one of the most infamous and revolting crimes in human annals. Where shall we find a parallel? The gray hairs of the man, his learning, his ability, his unsullied life, his splendid achievements in behalf of his native land, his grand renown, his unselfish devotion, his patriotism—all this must be considered when we compare his sad end with the fate of the other political martyrs of history, too many of whom have been unduly exalted by the manner of their death.

Is it to be wondered at that such an important event caused the deep-thinking poet the revulsion that only comes to high-born souls?

Is it surprising, furthermore, that that revulsion found its expression in what is perhaps the finest satirical drama of modern times?

This period was the crisis in our poet's life. The Contra-Remonstrants, or Gomarists, as the extreme Calvinists were called, having disposed of their hated enemy Oldenbarneveldt, had now begun to play havoc with the liberties of the people. Art and literature next suffered through the blasting censorship of their fanatical clergy.

The religious tolerance that had formed the glory of the country only a decade before was now succeeded by a rabid bigotry that with insensate fury cut at the vitals of all that was healthful and inspiring. Life, property, and freedom were in peril. Nothing was safe.

Grotius, "the father of international law," and also so distinguished as a scholar that he was called the "wonder of the age," was imprisoned, with the fate of his friend the great Advocate staring him in the face. From this fate, moreover, he was only saved by the diplomatic ingenuity of his devoted wife, who aided him to escape from his prison at Loevestein, ensconced in an empty book-chest which the unsuspecting warden of the castle thought full of books. Others of note were in hiding or in exile.

The boasted freedom of the freed Netherlands had turned to the direst form of oppression—the tyranny of a religious oligarchy.

And yet it was not an easy victory for the Contra-Remonstrants. Every inch was bitterly contested by their foes in Christ, the moderate Calvinists, or Remonstrants.

This struggle, like the conflicts of the Florentine factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, divided the country into two hostile camps. Even those of other religions allied themselves with the one or other of these sects; for sect had now come to mean party. Vondel, with whom religion and patriotism were fused into one white heat, was not long in choosing the party of the Remonstrants—the side of freedom.

We shall hereafter view this remarkable man as the poet militant. For having once taken the sword in hand, he did not let it fall until his arm was palsied by death.

Much as he loved peace, his enemies hereafter took good care that he should never want occasion to defend himself. It must be added, however, that the poet was even more renowned for attack than for defence. He was ever at the head of the onset, ever in the thickest of the fray.

The sword of this crusader for the liberties of his country—the most formidable and dreaded weapon of the age—was a pen; and the production that fell like a bombshell into the Gomarist camp was the allegorical tragedy of "Palamedes, or Murdered Innocence."

Under cover of the ancient legend of Palamedes, which lent itself most readily to such analogy, he had portrayed the murder of the old Advocate, and painted his judges in such strong colors and with such accurate delineation that each was recognized, and forever invested with the shame and infamy he so richly merited.

The greatest excitement prevailed, and the first edition of the poem was sold in a few days. The Goliath of error, slain by the pebble of satire, lay on the ground, gasping in agony. The David who had with one swift arm-swing of thought accomplished this wonderful feat, suddenly found himself the most famous man in both camps.

In the meantime the party in power sought to repress the book; and as the poet was thought to be in danger of imprisonment, or of even a more tragic fate, he was advised by his friends to go into hiding, which he did.

Threats were made against the man who had so rashly dared the fury of those relentless iconoclasts—the reigning Gomarists. It was muttered that he ought to be taken to The Hague to be tried, even as Oldenbarneveldt.

Meanwhile Vondel was concealed at the house of Hans de Wolff, a brother of his wife, who was also married to his sister Clementia. They were, however, afraid to harbor him any longer; and his sister, it is said, upbraided him for his itch for writing, saying that no good could come of it, and that it would be better for him to attend more strictly to his business.

Vondel's only reply was, "I shall yet tell them sharper truths;" and he straightway sat down and wrote some cutting pasquinades. These, however, upon his sister's advice, he threw into the fire, which he afterwards regretted.

He next found shelter in the house of a friend, Laurens Baake, who received him gladly. Here he was hidden several days; and the sons and daughters of his host, being highly cultivated and exceedingly fond of poetry, were much pleased with the society of so distinguished a poet, and for him made things as comfortable as possible. Vondel ever proved grateful for the many favors received at their hands in the hour of his need.

His hiding-place was at last discovered, and he was brought before the court. The plea made by his lawyer in his behalf was that the play "was poet's work and could be otherwise interpreted than was commonly done."

Some of the judges expressed themselves very severely; and if their counsel had prevailed there is no doubt but that the poet's career would have ended with the "Palamedes." However, the old Batavian spirit also asserted itself, others saying that civil liberty was but a mockery when a man was no longer allowed the freedom of speech. The result of the trial was that Vondel was fined three hundred guldens, which was paid by a friend—indeed, by one of the judges themselves—who was secretly favorable to Vondel and his party, and had encouraged the poet to write this very drama. We are here reminded of the fate of the great Florentine. Dante, a patriot, yet an exile, accused of treason, and under sentence of death; Vondel, forced to flee from an oligarchy of unctuous hypocrites, in fear of his life, and arraigned as a fomenter of discord. The ideas of the great Hollander on government, and on politics also, were not unlike the ideal Ghibellinism of the illustrious Tuscan.

Of course, the very nature of the play made it popular, and the various attempts at its suppression only made it more so. Two other editions shortly followed. Within a few years thirty editions were sold. "*Nitimur in vetitum semper cupimusque negata.*"

Prince Maurice, the Stadholder, whose powerful personality on account of his share in the death of the Advocate was also severely handled by the poet, died while Vondel was giving the finishing touches to his drama. Long years afterwards, when the poet was an old man, he was wont to relate how on the very morning that the news came to Amsterdam from The Hague that the Stadholder was on his death-bed, his wife came to the foot of the stairs that led to the room where he was writing, and cried, "Husband, the Prince is dying!"

To which he replied:

"Let him die! I am already tolling his knell."

Frederic Henry, who was the next Stadholder, was known to be at heart in favor of the Remonstrants.

It was reported that the whole tragedy was read to him in his palace, and that he was exceedingly pleased with it, finding much of interest in the various episodes. Strange to say, upon the walls of the room where he heard the drama hung a piece of tapestry upon which the history of the Greek Palamedes was artistically pictured. Pointing to this, the Prince said mockingly, "This tapestry should be taken away, otherwise they might suppose that I also favor the cause of Palamedes."

Apart from its influence on the time, and the interest of its allegorical allusions, the "Palamedes" is a splendid tragedy, and its intrinsic worth alone would make it immortal. One of the choruses, especially, is justly celebrated for its idyllic beauty. It has often been compared to the "L'Allegro" of Milton, and, indeed it bears, in many particulars, much resemblance to that exquisite lyric.

TESSELSCHADE

Soon after the completion of the "Palamedes," Vondel was again for a long time in a state of hopeless melancholy. He did not yield to its depressing influence, however, and at the age of forty began the study of Greek, in which he made rapid progress.

He still associated with his fellow-Academicians, though no longer at the home of Roemer Visscher.

This patron of learning had now been dead for several years. Other changes also had taken place. Starter, after the publication of his "Frisian Bower," seized with the spirit of adventure, had enlisted as a private soldier, and died, a few years afterwards, in one of the battles of the Thirty Years' War. Laurens Reael had gone to the Indies, and, after winning the highest honors as soldier and statesman, had come back again to his native land, which he continued to serve in a diplomatic capacity for many years.

Hooft had been honored by Prince Maurice with one of the highest dignities in the state. He had been appointed Judge of Muiden; and here, in his castle, in the society of his lovely wife and beautiful children, he gave himself up to his books. It was here in his "little tower," one of the four turrets of this castle, that he wrote his splendid history. Here he composed many of those charming lyrics that combine the lusciousness of the Italian after which they were modelled, with the domestic sweetness of the Dutch. Here, too, he wrote his great tragedies, "Baeto, or the Origin of the Hollanders," and "Gerardt van Velsen." Hooft was essentially a student and a scholar; a thinker rather than a fighter. He did not, therefore, like Vondel, the burgher, plunge with flaming soul into the conflict. The patrician was too fond of studious contemplation and of elegant ease to allow the discord of the outside world to mar the serene harmony of his retirement.

Brederoo had burnt himself out with the intensity of his passion for his adored, but not adoring, Tesselschade. Poor fellow! after all his poetic wooing and flattering dedications, he had met with the bitter disappointment of a refusal; and, after a meteoric career, died, at the age of thirty-six, a heart-broken man. The delicate lyre-strings on that Æolian harp had been snapped by the rude blast of unrequited love, and from the broken chords now surged the mournful music of the grave. His dazzling genius—eclipsed in its noon-tide splendor by the swift night of death—was quenched forever. Such was the sad but romantic ending of the most brilliant man of his age, the greatest humorist that Holland has yet produced.

And Tesselschade, the beautiful inspirer of this passion? To her, too, time had brought its changes.

Neptune's trident, it seems, had more attraction for her than the lyre of Apollo, whose strings she had so often set into melodious vibration. After being wooed for a whole decade by all the younger poets, she had at last been won by a gallant sea-captain, Allart Krombalgh, and was now living happily in blissful quiet with her husband at Alkmaar.

Tesselschade was now thirty years of age, and had lost none of the extraordinary beauty of early youth. Deep golden hair, of which each tiny thread seemed just the string for Cupid's bow; large dark

eyes, darting rays of love, and deep with infinitudes of tenderness; a low but broad, smooth forehead of marble whiteness; an exquisite mouth; a decided chin that spoke of a will reserved; a chiselled nose with delicate, sensuous nostrils—these were the most striking features of a face that was as remarkable for its earnest and captivating expression as for its great beauty and radiant intelligence. Add to this a glowing complexion of wonderful purity, and a slender but symmetrically-shaped figure, and you have a picture of the most beautiful and talented woman of her generation.

All the poets honored the bride with their choicest verses. Elevated as was Vondel's epithalamium, sweet and graceful as was Hooft's, agreeable as were the many other poems that the occasion inspired, the young Constantine Huyghens wrote a eulogy in a tender and delicious strain that surpassed them all.

At Alkmaar the happy couple had an ideal home, exquisitely furnished with pictures and embroidery done by the skilful hands of Tesselschade herself. Here, with art and music, in the midst of the amenities of domestic life, she lived many happy years.

Tesselschade, however, did not give up her passion for poetry. She continued her relations with the charming circle of her admirers, and corresponded with Hooft in Italian.

Even before her marriage she had begun translating the "Gerusalemme Liberata" of Tasso; and now, with the aid of Hooft, the best Italian scholar in the Netherlands, she continued this absorbing work. This version was never printed, and has, unfortunately, been lost.

In 1622 her sister Anna, the friend and correspondent of Rubens, visited Middelburg, the capital of Zealand, where she met the shining lights of the School of Dort, as the didactic writers of the day were called. At the head of these was the celebrated Father Cats—the poet of the commonplace—the most popular, though by no means the greatest, poet of the Netherlands. Simon van Beaumont, the governor, a lyrist of some talent; Joanna Coomans, called the "Pearl of Zealand;" and Jacob Westerbaen also gave her sweet welcome.

Attentions were showered on the honored guest, and her visit gave occasion to that well-known collection of lyrics entitled "The Zealand Nightingale," which was dedicated to her. Upon her return from Zealand, Anna was also married, and from this time forth she slowly ceased her literary relations with the School of Amsterdam, and now gave herself entirely up to domestic duties.

Not so Tesselschade. Her imagination was too intense, her conceptions too vivid, to find any attraction in the realistic didacticism of the Catsian circle. Her muse was not to be restrained by household cares. Her friendship with Hooft and Vondel remained unbroken; and we shall have occasion to meet her again.

Since his "Palamedes," Vondel, overwhelmed with his strange depression, had written but little. In 1630 he burst into a blaze of satire that swept the country like a whirlwind of flame. His poems of this year were entitled *Haec Libertatis Ergo*, and were of unsparing severity. "The evils of the time," said the poet, "are too deep-seated to be eradicated by a poultice of honey." Like Juvenal and Persius, he did not spare the knife, although he knew that every thrust only made his enemies more bitter and his own position more uncomfortable. His absolute fearlessness was the theme of admiration, not only among his friends, but even among his enemies. The higher the person, the stronger his invective; the more powerful the object of his dislike, the more cutting the edge of his sarcasm.

Never was satire so crushing and at the same time so keen; never mockery so unanswerable, polemic so overwhelming.

A Titan had thrown mountains of irony upon the heads of a thick-skulled generation of vipers. Their discomfiture was so complete that not even a hiss broke from the silence of their annihilation. The whited sepulchres of the sovereign hypocrites of the Republic now stood black as night in the face of noon.

Though a fiery patriot and an enthusiastic adherent of the House of Orange, Vondel received but little favor at the hands of Frederic Henry. This was probably due to the poet's unpopularity with the clergy, and to the hatred that he had excited among the Church party in power—the

uncompromising Contra-Remonstrants, whose enmity the Stadholder would doubtless have incurred by an open friendship with aman whose avowed determination it was to accomplish their downfall.

About this time occurred the death of William van den Vondel, a younger brother of the poet, whom he loved most tenderly. This youth had been educated in France and Italy, and possessed extraordinary gifts and many accomplishments. He had also written some poems of great promise, but was now cut off in the flower of his youth by an insidious malady that he had brought with him from Italy, a sickness thought by many to have been due to poison.

The poet never ceased to mourn this idolized brother, and almost half a century later he was heard to say: "I could cry when I think of my brother. He was much my superior."

In the same year Vondel made a journey to Denmark in the interest of his business. Upon his return journey he was the guest of Sir Jacob van Dÿk, the minister from the Court of Sweden to The Hague.

At Van Dÿk's country seat in Gottenburg he wrote a poem in honor of Gustavus Adolphus. This production is chiefly remarkable as foreshadowing several important political events. He prophesied that the great Swede would attack the Emperor of Rome, tread upon the neck of Austria, and bring the Eternal City itself into a panic of fright—all of which happened within four years. He was, however, silent as to the fate of the King, and said nothing about his tragic death in the hour of victory.

So we here, also, see Vondel in the capacity of the classic *vates* and of the Hebrew seer. Before his piercing ken even the time to come delivered up its hoarded secrets. The past, the present, and the future were the provinces of the grand empire reigned over by his kingly spirit.

THE "MUIDER KRING."

The old Chamber of the Eglantine had now fallen into a decline. Many of its choicest spirits had gone over to Coster's Academy; the others, Vondel and his friends, as has already been related, were accustomed to meet for mutual help and criticism at the hospitable home of the Visschers.

After this charming home was broken up, the literary centre of the Amsterdam School was changed to the Castle of Muiden, a few miles from the metropolis.

At the Visschers' the budding talent of the country had been carefully nurtured and placed in the warm sunlight of a mutual and invigorating sympathy; at Muiden, however, it was seen in its full flower.

It was here that the literary genius of the Netherlands reached its highest efflorescence; nor has it ever again reached the sublime standard of those golden days.

Soon after being appointed Judge of Muiden, Hooft had rebuilt the old castle; and now it stood, a romantic structure, crowned with turrets and towers. It was picturesquely situated on an island in the centre of a small lake. A feudal drawbridge connected it with the outside world, and it was embowered in lofty trees and surrounded by gardens and orchards.

There is no more charming picture in literature than that of the aristocratic host of Muiden, with his handsome, intelligent face and his elegant manners, in the midst of his guests, the genius and the flower of the Netherlands—a scene rendered still more interesting by the presence of talented and beautiful women.

Here, beneath the shade of the spreading lindens and the noble beeches, they would lighten the heavy summer hours by games and conversation, and by the discussion of affairs of state.

Or, perhaps, too, they would listen to the classic muse of the learned Barlæus, or to the dramatic recitations of Daniel Mostert; or, occasionally,—O! inestimable privilege!—they would be thrilled by the powerful verses of the sublime Vondel, destined to become the greatest poet of his country. Here, also, they were often enchanted by the tender songs of the beautiful Tesselschade, the Dutch Nightingale, richly warbling her own deep notes, while her nimble fingers swept the guitar; or, perhaps, singing to the accompaniment of the celebrated Zweling, the first great composer of the

Netherlands. Or it may be that another sweet singer, Francesca Duarte, would sometimes add her mellow tones to those delightful strains, while the distinguished company applauded with eloquent silence.

Here, too, before her apostasy to the Dort School, came the gentle Anna Visscher to read her noble rimes; while often, also, Vossius, the first Latinist of his age, and Laurens Reael, the renowned statesman, soldier, and erotic poet, would lend the dignity of their presence. Here, furthermore, came the young Huyghens, the most versatile of a versatile race, and one of the most celebrated wits and poets of his day.

The "Muider Kring" ("the Muiden circle"), as this salon is known in the literary history of the Netherlands, is yet the proudest boast and the perennial glory of Holland; for this was the Elizabethan era of Dutch literature. Hooft, as the social centre of a literary constellation, exerted, perhaps, even more influence upon his age by his magnetic personality than by his remarkable writings.

STRUGGLE AND ACHIEVEMENT

It was amid such congenial surroundings that the genius of Vondel grew to maturity.

Soon after the satires of 1630, he translated Seneca's "Hippolytus," which he dedicated to Grotius. Grotius was still in exile, and the publisher of this translation, fearing the displeasure of the authorities, tore the dedication leaf out of every copy.

Vondel's next effort was the "Farmer's Catechism," which was full of a rollicking humor that, at the same time, was not without its sting. Vossius, in his professional study at Leiden, laughed heartily upon reading it, and it occasioned much mirth among the Arminians, or Remonstrants, everywhere.

Some satirical poems of the same period were much keener, and unmercifully ridiculed the blunders of the government, the general extravagance, and the increase of avarice and ostentation among the citizens.

Shortly after this came his "Decretum Horribile," a powerful polemic against the Calvinistic doctrine of election and predestination as interpreted by the Gomarists. This savage attack on their belief filled the Ultra-Calvinists with rage, and caused the name of the poet to be execrated as the personification of infamy.

Hear his fierce outburst against the great Calvin himself:

> "That monster dread that from a poison-chalice
> Pours out the drug of hell in unctuous malice;
> And makes the gracious God a very fiend."

No wonder that in the eyes of these stern followers of Calvin he was himself a very devil, nor is it extravagant to say that he was hardly less feared by them than his Satanic majesty himself.

From every pulpit the Contra-Remonstrants hurled anathemas at the offending poet.

Not one of their gatherings from which his name did not rise to the throne of divine grace in clouds of execration. Not a preacher of the sect that did not call down the wrath of Jehovah upon the head of the blasphemer who had dared to mock the arrogant tenets of his exclusive faith.

Vondel, however, did not pause in his path one instant, answering their maledictions with stinging satire, and their abuse with overwhelming invective.

Yet it must not be thought that our poet was forever forging thunderbolts of satire at the blaze of his wrath. He also found time for the amenities of life; and thus we often find him in the companionship of those distinguished friends who contributed so much to his pleasure and his growth.

About this period the moribund Chamber of the Eglantine was merged into Coster's Academy, which now became the theatre of the city.

Shortly afterwards Vondel wrote his verses of welcome to Hugo Grotius upon his return from exile—verses full of severe condemnation of the party that had banished him. Then followed a song of triumph for the naval victories over the Spaniards, and several satires against the clergy, who were again fomenting restrictive measures against the freedom of conscience. All of these productions glowed with the fierce jealousy for personal liberty which had become the poet's ruling passion; for his verse ever gave utterance to his dominant emotion. In his own words: "I needs must sing the song that fills my heart."

His "Funeral Sacrifice of Magdeburg" alone was free from this contentious spirit. This was a heroic poem in praise of Gustavus Adolphus, the bulwark of Protestantism, and his splendid victory over Tilly and Pappenheim at Leipsic—that terrible vengeance for the fearful sacking of Magdeburg!

In the beginning of 1632 the illustrious Atheneum of Amsterdam was opened with imposing ceremonies, to which occasion Vondel contributed an excellent poem.

Not long afterwards, Grotius, on account of his too open opposition to his old enemies, was again banished from his fatherland. A price of two thousand guldens was set on his head, which gave Vondel cause for another trenchant pasquinade. He did not, however, dare to publish this, for fear of calling upon himself the same violence that his friend had escaped. Grotius himself wrote Vondel a letter of thanks for his interest in his behalf, adding that it could do no possible good to publish the poem, and that it would therefore be unwise for him to put himself into danger.

An elegy on the death of Count Ernest Casimir and an ode on the triumph of Maastricht saw the light, however, and were much admired by all parties of his countrymen.

Vondel now began his great epic, "Constantine." This poem had for its subject the journey of Constantine to Rome, and was intended to be complete in twelve books, after the model of Virgil's "Æneid." The poet had for several years been preparing himself for this immense undertaking by a thorough study, not only of the great epics of antiquity, but also of those of Tasso and Ariosto.

Besides reading the various Church Fathers and the historians who had written on this period, he also entered into a correspondence concerning the subject with Grotius, who was much pleased to hear of his plan and who also gave him considerable information.

While Vondel was busy with his epic, his wife bore him a son, whom, in honor of his hero, he named Constantine. The child died, however, and not long afterwards the mother also. This terrible affliction cast a gloom over the life of the poet from which he never entirely emerged. Full of pathos is his letter to Grotius stating his loneliness, and adding that all his interest in his epic had departed: "Since the death of my sainted wife, I have lost heart; so that I shall have to give up my great 'Constantine' for the present."

The poet was never able to resume this stupendous work. It was too suggestive of memories of a happiness forever lost. After keeping the manuscript by him for several years, with the vain hope that his interest might be reanimated, he at last destroyed it. It was thus that Dutch literature lost its greatest epic, a poem which would doubtless have added to the renown of the author, and reflected lustre upon his country.

In 1635, Grotius, who was now the Swedish Ambassador to France, published his Latin tragedy, "Sophompaneas," of which Joseph was the hero. Vondel, who was still in his shop in the Warmoesstraat, having laid the "Constantine" aside, and wishing to employ his leisure time, made a Dutch rendering of this play, of which the author wrote Vossius as follows:

"I understand that Vondel hath done me the honor to put my 'Sophompaneas' with his own hand, that is to say, in his artistic manner, into our Holland tongue. I am under great obligations to him, because he, who is capable of so much better things than I, hath now, in his translation of my play, given his labor as a proof of his friendship."

Vondel, in translating, often sought the advice of his friends, saying, "Each judgment views the matter in a different light; and the judgment of one is poor beside the opinions of many." He also said that he found the work of translating serviceable to gain a knowledge of the technique,

diction, thought, and peculiarity of an author. Moreover, he discovered that it not only kindled his imagination, but that it also suggested new thought, and was conducive to his own improvement in language and in form. For this reason he translated so many of the classics, of which more will be said at the proper time.

The Academy having become too small for the public that now thronged to the theatre, Dr. Coster sold the building to the regents of the City's Orphan Asylum and of the Old Men's Home. The managers of these charitable institutions, then, as an investment, built a new theatre in its place. Here, twice a week, plays were presented, with great profit to the management.

The new theatre was completed in 1637, and the first drama played on its stage was Vondel's fine tragedy, "Gysbrecht van Amstel." This play had as its subject the defeat of the old hero, Sir Gysbrecht, and his banishment from his native city, Amsterdam, soon after the death of Floris V.

This historical event was supposed to have occurred about Christmastide, and the drama was accordingly presented on New Year's Eve. The "Gysbrecht" is the most popular of all of Vondel's plays, and it is interesting to note that, from the night of its first presentation, two hundred and fifty years ago, until the present time, it has been presented every New Year's Eve on the stage of the theatre of Amsterdam.

Some of the situations in this drama are based upon various episodes in Virgil's "Æneid." One of the characters, also, is made to prophesy the future glory of the city; which, moreover, may easily be interpreted as prophetic of the grandeur of the greater "New Amsterdam" beyond the sea, a circumstance that should give it additional interest to Americans. The "Gysbrecht" was dedicated to Grotius, who acknowledged the honor as follows:

"Sir: I hold myself much beholden to you for your courtesy and your great kindness to me; for you, almost alone—at least there are but few besides you—in the Netherlands, seek to relieve my gloom and to reward my unrewarded services. I have always held your talents and your works in the highest esteem."

He then goes on to speak of the charming proportions of the play, and of the "verses, pithy, tender, heart-melting, and flowing." Then he continues: "The 'Œdipus Coloneus' of Sophocles and the 'Supplicants' of Euripides have not honored Athens more than thou hast Amsterdam."

To Vossius, at Leiden, Grotius also wrote in a no less complimentary strain concerning this production.

We had the privilege of seeing this drama on the stage in Amsterdam one New Year's Eve a couple of years ago, and we confess that it was not until we heard the magnificent recitative of the superb Bouwmeester, the great tragedian of Holland, in this beautiful play, that we fully appreciated the grandeur and the sublimity of Vondel, and the power and the sweetness of the Dutch language.

Part of the Roman ceremonial, with its splendid ritual, is introduced into one of the scenes of the "Gysbrecht;" and this has been taken as foreshadowing Vondel's conversion to Catholicism. Naturally this gave offence to many of the bigots among the Calvinists, who saw in it only the glorification of popery.

Vondel then wrote a tragedy, "Messalina," which, however, he destroyed because some of the actors, while rehearsing their parts, through some adventitious remark of the poet, had inferred that the play possessed a certain political significance, and that it was an allegory picturing forth some of the notables of the day, after the manner of the "Palamedes."

The poet fearing that it might breed mischief, and seeing that it was impossible to rectify the matter, since it had already become a subject of conversation among the actors, begged the parts of the three leading *rôles*, pretending that he wished to make some important corrections. Having obtained possession of these parts, he took good care to burn them, thus preventing the presentation of the play, and putting a stop to the silly chatter of the players.

ROME!

His next undertaking was the translation of the "Electra" of Sophocles, being aided in the work by Isaac Vossius, a son of the celebrated Leyden professor, who was himself also a profound scholar. As was usual with this poet, the translation of this tragedy was followed by one of his own, the drama of "The Virgins; or, Saint Ursula." This he dedicated to the city of his birth, Cologne; where, the legend says, a British princess, with eleven thousand other maidens, at the command of Attila, the ferocious Hun, suffered a martyr's death. This tragedy also received the praises of Grotius; and it may safely be said that no man of his time, with the possible exception of John Milton, was so capable of judging according to the rigid rules of the antique as Grotius. For besides being the most learned man of his age, an accomplished Grecian, and an unsurpassed Latinist, he was himself a poet of no mean order.

"The Virgins," notwithstanding its beauty and tenderness, was the cause of much sorrow to the friends of Vondel, in that it unmistakably showed the poet's inclination towards Romanism.

True, as has been narrated, this had for some years been suspected from the tone of several other productions that preceded it; but then it was only a suspicion, now there was no longer a doubt.

Vondel was plainly on the high road to Rome, and it was whispered that he, having become tired of his loneliness, had been attracted by a certain Catholic widow, whose seductive charms were largely responsible for his wavering faith.

The widow here referred to is supposed to have been the fair Tesselschade, the friend of his youth, who, after ten years of wedded bliss, had at one stroke been deprived of both her eldest child and her husband, and was now living with her one remaining child, a daughter, in resigned widowhood at Alkmaar. We are now again to see this remarkable woman as the inspirer of the muse of Holland.

Barlæus in his "Tessalica" wooed her in elegant Latin; and Vondel dedicated to her his translation of the "Electra" of Sophocles, and also his next Biblical tragedy, "Peter and Paul," which was even more decided in its Romanism than its predecessor.

Tesselschade, however, preferred her black widow's weeds to the white raiment of a bride, and continued in her retirement, alone with the memory of her happy past. Her spirit shone only the brighter in its progress through the valley of tribulation to the heights of resignation. She had been chastened by affliction and saddened by sorrow, yet she did not lose heart, but still enjoyed the society of her friends. She still took an admirable part in the drama of life.

In 1639, the French Queen Dowager, Maria de' Medici, paid a short visit to Amsterdam. Tesselschade not only sang a song before her, but also presented her with an Italian poem of her own composition. She had finished her version of the "Gerusalemme," and was now busy translating the "Adonis" of Marini.

The young poets Vos and Brandt, the poetess Alida Bruno, and others of the rising literati, sought her friendship. Tesselschade was still the Queen when the Muses went a-maying, and her sovereignty remained undisputed until the day of her death.

In 1640 appeared Vondel's Biblical tragedy, the "Brothers," which was thought by the critics to surpass all that had preceded it. It was dedicated to Vossius, whose comment upon reading it was, *Scribis æternitati*. Grotius wrote the poet a letter, and was also loud in his praises, comparing it with the most famous tragedies of antiquity, adding significantly, "and do not forget your great epic, 'Constantine.'" By others this drama was thought to combine the tenderness of Euripides with the sublimity of Sophocles.

In the same year, also, followed two more Biblical tragedies, "Joseph in Dothan" and "Joseph in Egypt," which also occasioned much remark, and were not inferior to the best plays that had gone before.

Vondel was now universally acknowledged to be the greatest poet of the time. The ascent of Parnassus, however, is not as easy as the *decensus Averni*. By years of study, constant watchfulness, and perpetual striving for self-improvement, and a prayerful devotion to his art—thus alone did he attain the summit of such achievement.

In him was seen purity of diction, clearness and terseness of expression, power of logic, richness and agreeableness of invention, and a style that was at once mellifluous and sublime.

The tragedy, "Peter and Paul," to whose open Romanism reference has already been made, was his next effort, and was soon followed by the "Epistles of the Holy Virgin Martyrs," which were twelve in number, and were dedicated to the Holy Virgin Mary, whom he called "the Queen of Heaven," and named as Mediator with her divine Son. This was a sufficient acknowledgment of his conversion to the Catholic faith to alienate many of his warmest friends. This, however, though it must have brought much grief to his sensitive heart, did not cause him to regret having made a step that he had so long been meditating.

Before beginning these "Epistles," Vondel had translated many of the epistles of Ovid that he might absorb the grace and the spirit of Ovid's epistolary style. His own effort was deemed not less graceful and spirited. Their literary merit, however, did not, in the estimation of his Protestant friends, compensate for their justification of popery.

Even Hooft, Vondel's life-long friend and brother in art, grew cold; and we find the following reference to this in one of the poet's letters to the Judge of Muiden. Vondel writes: "I wish Cornelius Tacitus a happy and a blessed New Year; and although he forbids me a harmless *Ave Maria* at his heretical table, yet I shall nevertheless occasionally read another *Ave Maria* for him that he may die as devout a Catholic as he now shows himself an ardent partisan." Their friendship was yet further broken by other circumstances which had their origin in the first cause of separation.

In 1645, Vondel wrote a lyric poem on a miracle which the Catholics taught had occurred at Amsterdam about the middle of the fourteenth century. This was too much for his Protestant friends, and he became the subject of innumerable lame lampoons and petty pasquinades, in which his espousal of the Catholic legend was coarsely ridiculed.

Hooft, in a letter to Professor Barlæus, also expressed his opinion in the following words: "Vondel seems to grow tired of nothing sooner than of rest. It seems he must have saved up three hundred guldens more, which are causing him a good deal of embarrassment. And I do not know but that it might cost him even much dearer than this; for some hot-head might be tempted prematurely to lay violent hands upon him, thinking that not even a cock would crow his regret."

These productions, however, were only the prelude to a greater work that was to follow—his "Mysteries of the Altar," which was published in the autumn of 1645.

This poem was a glorification of the Mass, and was divided into three books. Vondel, in writing this able work, was assisted by the counsel of the most learned and the most profound men in the Catholic Church. The doctrines of Thomas Aquinas and other celebrated schoolmen, and the teachings of the best modern authorities were here poetically combined, and the poet was hailed on every side as the ablest defender of the tenets of the Church of Rome.

This poem provoked a celebrated reply by Jacob Westerbaen, one of the most noted of the School of Dort, who, while praising the art of the new champion of Catholicism, at the same time attacked his doctrinal position with such piercing analysis and with so great display of theological dogma, that, in the opinion of the Protestants, Vondel was ingloriously vanquished. The Catholics, of course, thought differently.

Jacob, Archbishop of Mechlin, to whom Vondel's poem was dedicated, sent the author a painting with which Vondel was at first greatly pleased. Learning, however, that it was only a bad copy, he gave it away to his sister, no longer wishing to have such a poor reward for so great an undertaking before his eyes.

A prose translation of the works of Virgil was the next thing that this indefatigable worker essayed. This version received the commendation of most of his contemporaries. Barlæus, indeed, found fault with it, saying that it was without life and marrow; adding, cynically, that Augustus would surely not have withheld this Maro from the flames. But, then, Barlæus was such a thorough Latinist that his own language seemed foreign to him. He would have had the translator preserve the peculiarities of the Latin at the expense of his native tongue. And, then, was he not also Vondel's rival for the hand of Tesselschade? Praise from him surely was not to be expected. The universal opinion was that it was a difficult work excellently done. This translation was also the forerunner of a drama. "Maria Stuart" was the name of the tragedy which the bard now offered for the perusal of his countrymen.

The poet represented the unhappy Queen of Scots as perfect and without stain, while her victorious rival Elizabeth was painted in infernal black.

This subject naturally gave the proselyte occasion to display his burning zeal for Rome; and upon the publication of the play a great outcry was raised against both drama and author. Some of Vondel's enemies, indeed, were so incensed, and raised such a commotion, that the poet was brought before the city tribunal, and fined one hundred and eighty guldens; "which," says Brandt, Vondel's biographer, "seemed indeed strange to many, seeing what freedom in writing was allowed at this time, and because, also, even to the poets of antiquity more was permitted than to most others." Abraham de Wees, Vondel's publisher, however, paid the fine, being unwilling that the poet should suffer by that which brought him profit.

Hugo Grotius was now dead, but shortly before his decease he had written several pamphlets whose object it was to effect some reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant. Vondel now translated those portions of these favorable to the papacy, combining them in a polemic called "Grotius' Testament." Whereupon many said that he had now gone too far in his zeal for his adopted church; for it was claimed that upon the statements of Grotius he often put a construction not favored by the context. It was even insinuated by some that he had not acted in good faith.

Brandt himself made this intimation in a preface written by him to an edition of Vondel's collected works which was published in the year 1647. Brandt was then yet a mere youth, and was rankling with the memory of a severe and unjust reprimand that the older poet some time before had given him. He therefore acknowledges in his naïve biography that he eagerly welcomed this opportunity to be revenged upon the distinguished offender, and accordingly made this dose of his gall as bitter as possible. The poet felt the insinuation keenly, and for a long time suspected Peter de Groot, the son of the great lawyer, as the perpetrator of the offending paragraph. Many years afterwards, however, the smart of the wound having departed, the real culprit confessed his sin to the then aged poet, and obtained the asked for absolution.

It was in 1641 that Vondel openly embraced the Catholic faith, though his tendency in that direction had been apparent in his poems many years before. We have already referred to the report that his love for a beautiful and wealthy widow, Tesselschade, had been the main instrument in drawing him from his Protestant moorings, and this was doubtless to some extent true. And yet it is almost certain that Vondel would have embraced the cause of Rome even without the alluring wiles of this fair enchantress.

Many of his relatives, including his brother William, belonged to that faith. Many of his dearest friends also were of that denomination. His daughter Anna, furthermore, had not only entered that church, but had also taken the veil. Moreover, he had long been drifting away from the creed of his early childhood, the Anabaptism of his parents. The severe pietism of that belief had never strongly appealed to him. True, he had espoused the cause of the Arminians, as against their enemies the Gomarists; but it was only because they were the under side, and because their cause was also the cause of civil liberty, that he had entered the lists with them.

The perpetual discord, the disunion, the bickerings, the bitterness, and the persecutions among the different Protestant sects of the period were exceedingly repulsive to him. He did not forget that under the banner of Protestantism his country had triumphed over the common foe. He did not forget that Calvin had been the herald of science and the apostle of liberty. He did not fail to remember the glories of the past. But the contemplation of that proud past only increased his abhorrence of the petty present.

Calvinism had indeed done much for Holland; but the inevitable reaction had come, and its excesses could not be justified. Calvinism had come to mean dogma; and dogma had no attraction for his poetic mind. Calvinism had become the foe of freedom; and freedom was the very breath of this flaming patriot. Calvinism had shown itself an enemy of the arts, of poetry, and of the drama; and these were as the very soul of Vondel.

How could he know that this was only a fleeting gloom, from which the sun of Calvinism would again emerge, radiant with all of its original glory? He was weary—weary of the discord, and longed for peace.

Is it to be wondered at that the poet gradually drifted, even as Cardinal Newman, into a haven that promised such longed-for rest? Is it surprising that he who had so long been chilled by the cold formalism and the frigid austerity of the dogma of the North should now find it agreeable to thaw out his soul in the glow of the religion of the South? Then, too, the beauty of the Catholic ritual, the pomp, the grand processional, the holy days, the glorious music, the noble symmetry of the Roman architecture, the awe-inspiring antiquity of the Church, the magnificence of its domain, the splendor of its organization, allured the imagination of the poet with irresistible power; and his reason followed, a not unwilling captive.

Nor was it the hasty choice of a regretted impulse. Everything tends to show—we have traced the gradual growth in his poems—that it was a long-contemplated step from which, once taken, nothing should ever be able to remove him. It is, therefore, in Vondel that we find one of the most able and ardent champions the Church of Rome has ever had. No saint ever more truly deserved canonization than this high priest of Apollo, flaming with zeal for his adopted faith.

Vondel was a crusader born five hundred years too late—a crusader, too, a lion-hearted defender of the Cross, most of whose battles were fought beneath the brow of Mount Zion and within the very gates of Jerusalem.

Few crusaders, indeed, had fought so long and so well; few had won so many victories, had slain so many enemies, as this indomitable hero of Amsterdam.

Though bitterly opposed to the Contra-Remonstrants, he, however, helped them in decrying the growing spirit of ostentation and the vices of the day. And although he openly sided with the Remonstrants, he never joined them. But as a flower turns its head to the sun, so he, too, gradually turned towards the old belief.

At this period, when Protestants were in turn persecuting heretics and, reveling in their sudden freedom, were indulging in all sorts of fanatical excesses, Catholicism, purified, began to live again. Furthermore, to the poetic temperament of the poet and his stern sense of justice, the bigotry of the Gomarists seemed no less odious than the more open persecutions of the Catholics of the preceding age.

It was thus that Vondel, long tossed upon a sea of doubt, sought anchorage in a harbor where winds were calm. It was thus that this great man was led to take a step which called down upon him for many years hate, aversion, and ridicule.

But in spite of all this he remained true to his new faith, and became a fervid Catholic; one ever consistent and true to his adopted church. Here he could remain undisturbed in his reverence for antiquity, in his worship of beauty, and in his love for poetry and art. Here there was ever a labyrinth of mystery for his aspiring soul to explore. Here the plan of salvation was not reduced to the bare expression of a logical formula.

UPWARD AND ONWARD

But we must again make brief reference to the friends of our poet, who one by one preceded him to the grave. First Reael died. Then Hooft and Barlæus soon followed, and were both buried in the New Church at Amsterdam. Above the tomb of each Vondel wrote a short epitaph. But the keenest loss was yet to come. In 1649 Holland lost the brightest jewel in the crown of her womanhood, and Vondel, his dearest friend. Tesselschade, after many sorrows, entered peacefully into rest.

A few years before she had had the misfortune to lose her left eye from a spark that flew out of a smithy as she passed. She bore this sad accident with cheerfulness; but a greater calamity yet awaited her. The pride of her heart, her one remaining child, her beautiful daughter Tesselschade, was suddenly cut off in the bloom of maidenhood. The disconsolate mother struggled in vain against this terrible sorrow. A year later she followed her loved ones to the tomb. She, also, was laid away in the New Church, by the side of the dead Titans of her generation who had so often made her the theme of their inspired song; where, too, Vondel himself, the greatest of them all, was eventually to lie.

For Vondel's beautiful threnody we have unfortunately no space, but shall content ourselves with quoting the first strophe of Huyghens' touching elegy:

"Here Tesselschade lies.
Let no one rashly dare
To give the measure of her worth beyond compare;
Her glory, like the sun's, the poet's pen defies."

Shortly after the death of his dear friend, Vondel gave up his hosiery shop in the Warmoesstraat to his son, while he himself went to live with his daughter Anna on the Cingel, on the outskirts of the city. The poet was now sixty-two years of age, and he doubtless thought to end his days in peace and studious retirement. But the battle of life for him had only just begun. He was never to know the meaning of rest.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.