

offer you money; I will rather make you the proprietor of a small farm, and be the protector of your children even after my death.'

The worthy folks looked at him with tearful eyes, and seemed scarcely to know rightly what was going on.

While the traveller was about to make them fresh assurances of his good intentions, Peterkin took him by the hand, as if he had something to communicate to him.

'Well, dear child, what have you got to tell me?'

'Mr. John,' replied the boy, 'look, the laborers are coming home from the field. I am sure to meet Rosa. Shall I run and tell her that you are come?'

The traveller seized Peterkin by the hand and drew him hastily toward the door, and said:

'Come, come, rather take me to her!'

So saying, and bidding a hasty good-bye to the people of the house, he followed the child, who was proceeding with hasty steps in the direction of the centre of the village.

As soon as they came to the first houses, the peasants rushed out in surprise from barns and stables, and looked after the traveller and the boy as if they were a wonder to behold. In truth, they presented a singular spectacle: the child in his shirt and barefooted, dancing along and laughing and frolicking, with a hold of the unknown person's hand. The astonished people could not perceive what the rich gentleman, who seemed to them to be at least a lord, had to do with Peter the broom-maker. Their astonishment increased when they saw the stranger bend down and kiss the child. The only thought that entered their minds was that the rich man had taken the child from his parents in order to bring it up as one of his own. People from the city, who have no children of their own, are often accustomed to do this; and little Peterkin was the prettiest child in the village, with his large blue eyes and bright curly locks. Still, it did seem amusing that the rich gentleman should take the child along with him in nothing but his shirt! The traveller walked rapidly on. The whole village seemed lit up, as it were, with a magical glow. The verdure of the trees seemed of a brighter green; the lowly huts of the inhabitants wore a holiday smile; the birds sang with enchanting melody; the air was impregnated with balsamic odors and life-giving energy.

The traveller's attention had been diverted from the child to enjoy all this new blessedness. In this state his gaze was directed to a distance, and he endeavored to pierce through the foliage that seemed to close up the path at the other end of the village.

Suddenly the child seized his hand with all its might, and said:

'Look! look! There comes Rosa with our Trinny!'

And, in fact, an old blind woman now made her appearance, led by a little girl, and coming along through the village. The traveller, instead of following the hasty invitation of the child, stood still to contemplate, with grief and sorrow, the poor blind female who was approaching with unsteady steps. Was this his Rosa? Could this be the beautiful and amiable maiden whose image still lived so brightly and youthfully in his heart?

This reflection lasted only for a moment. He led the child along with him, and ran to meet her; but when he was now only a few paces from her, he could no longer contain himself, and exclaimed:

'Rosa! Rosa!'

As soon as this sound reached the ears of the blind Rosa, she withdrew her hand from that of her leader, and her whole frame began to tremble; but, recovering herself, she stretched out her arms, and ran forward, crying, 'John! John!' She then felt in her bosom for a golden cross that hung about her neck by a string, which she broke in two, and, holding up the cross to him, fell upon his breast. Disengaging herself, however, from his arms, she gently took him by the hand and said:

'Oh, my dear friend, do not think it is because I am not overjoyed at finding you again; but there is a vow which I made to God, and which I must first perform. Come with me to the churchyard.'

He scarcely understood what she meant; but there was something so solemn and sacred in the tone of her voice, that he yielded without hesitation. Without noticing the bystanders, who had run from all quarters and stood about them, he led Rosa to the churchyard. Here she went to the seat beneath the cross and beckoned to him to kneel down beside her, saying, 'I made a promise to heaven that we should make our thanksgiving together on this spot.' She raised her clasped hands, uttered softly a prayer, and then threw her arms about her friend's neck and embraced him. In the meantime Peterkin danced about the people from the village, clapping his hands, and crying out, 'It is Long John! It is Long John!'

## Chapter V.

### THE PLEDGED VOW BECOMES A REALITY.

On a fine autumn day in 1816, the diligence from Antwerp to Turnhout drove along the road at the accustomed hour. Suddenly the driver drew up at a short distance from a lonely inn and opened the coach-door. Two young travellers leaped out, laughing and exultingly, and spreading out their arms like birds escaping from captivity and which are again essaying their wings in perfect liberty. They looked at the trees and the beautiful blue sky with the rapture which we experience when we have left the city and are enjoying the unbounded scene of nature with

every breath we draw. Looking toward the field, the younger traveller exclaimed enthusiastically:

'Listen! Listen!'

In fact, at this moment an indistinct sound of music was heard through the trees. The air was of a quick and merry character, so that in hearing it one could scarcely refrain from dancing. While the younger of the two stood pointing with his finger in silent delight, the other said, as if in mockery:

'There, under the lime-trees, to trumpet and horn,  
Around in the dance a gay crowd is borne;  
And none of them all, who there laugh and sing,  
Think on sorrow or death; or any sad thing.'

'Come, come, friend John, do not be so soon inspired; probably it is nothing but the celebration of the appointment of a new mayor.'

'No, no,' said the other; 'this is no mere official rejoicing. Let us go and see the village girls dancing; it is so pretty!'

'First of all, let us go into the village and get a glass of ale at Baes Joosten's, and inquire what is going on, and enjoy the pleasure of an unexpected surprise.'

The two travellers stepped into the inn, and thought they should have split their sides with laughing as soon as they put their heads within the room. There stood Baes Joostens, stiff and upright as a poker, against the chimney. His long blue holiday coat, full of folds, hung down nearly to his feet. He saluted his well known guests with a forced smile, in which a degree of shame was apparent; and he scarcely dared to budge, on account of his stiff shirt-collar, which at every movement pricked his ears.

When the travellers entered, he called out impatiently, but without turning his head:

'Zanna, Zanna, be quick! I hear music. I told you that you would be too late!'

Zanna came running in with a nosegay, and looking so beautiful, with her nicely-plaited high-peaked cap, her woollen gown, rose-colored bodice, and large golden ornament on her breast in the form of a heart, and her earrings! Her face wore the blush of joyous expectancy, and resembled a huge flower unfolding its dark leaves.

'A lovely peony, that opens its blossoms on a fine May-day!' exclaimed the younger of the two companions.

Zanna had now drawn the two glasses of beer, and ran, singing and laughing, with her flowers, to the door.

Baes now called out, at the top of his voice, very impatiently:

'Lisbeth! if you don't come down directly I will go without you, as sure as I am standing here.'

An old clock that hung on the wall pointed at this moment to the hour of nine, and called out, in a sombre tone, 'Cuckoo! Cuckoo!'

'What bad taste is this?' inquired one of the travellers. 'Have you sold the beautiful clock that used to stand here, in order to torment yourselves all the year round with this death-song?'

'Yes, yes,' said the landlord, laughing, 'be as merry as you please over this bird; he brings me in yearly many golden ducats. A good field that needs no manure.'

Four cannon shots were now heard in the distance.

'Oh, dear! oh, dear!' shouted the landlord, 'the feast has begun; that woman will sicken me with her delay!'

'But,' asked the elder traveller, 'what is going on here to-day? Is it fair-time? Or has the king come to the village?'

'Oh, there are wonderful things going on here to-day,' replied the landlord; 'if you knew all, you might fill a book with it, and tell no stories. The old cuckoo also has his place in the history of Blind Rosa.'

'"Blind Rosa!" What a fine title!' interrupted the younger traveller; 'that would make a fine companion to the "Sick Youth."'

'No, that won't do,' replied the other; 'as we are going out to collect matter for tales, we must share fairly in the invention of them.'

'Well, then,' said the younger, half mournfully, 'we can afterward draw lots about it.'

'Be it so,' replied the other. 'And now, landlord, push away these ugly shirt-collars from your ears and tell us all about it. Whenever the book is printed, you shall get a copy for your trouble.'

'I cannot undertake to explain it all to you now,' he replied, 'for I hear my wife coming downstairs to set out with me. But come along with us to the village, and I will tell you by the way why the cannon are firing and the music is playing.'

(To be concluded.)

There are a dozen reasons at least why it is to the interest of every farmer to buy his implements from a local maker rather than patronise imported articles. That long-established firm, Messrs. Reid and Gray, of Dunedin, has a reputation which extends far beyond the confines of this Dominion, of making farm implements which not only look well but, what is more important to the farmer, wear well. In purchasing a New Zealand-made farm implement the buyer has this further advantage that should any part be broken or damaged in any way it can be easily and quickly mended or replaced. Furthermore, this firm employs local labor, circulates money in the district, and helps in every way to advance the interests of the Dominion....