

ITALY; WITH SKETCHES OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "VATHEK." **THIRD**
EDITION. IN TWO VOLUMES. **VOL.**
I. **LONDON: RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW**
BURLINGTON STREET, Publisher in Ordinary to His
Majesty. 1835.

ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME justly admired Authors having condescended to glean a few stray thoughts from these Letters, which have remained dormant a great many years; I have been at length emboldened to lay them before the public. Perhaps, as they happen to contain passages which persons of acknowledged taste have honoured with their notice, they may possibly be less unworthy of emerging from the shade into daylight than I imagined.

Most of these Letters were written in the bloom and heyday of youthful spirits and youthful confidence, at a period when the old order of things existed with all its picturesque pomps and absurdities; when Venice enjoyed her piombi and submarine dungeons; France her bastile; the Peninsula her holy Inquisition. To look back upon what is beginning to appear almost a fabulous era in the eyes of the modern children of light, is not unamusing or uninteresting; for, still better to appreciate the present, we should be led not unfrequently to recall the intellectual muzziness of the past.

But happily these pages are not crowded with such records: they are chiefly filled with delineations of landscape and those effects of natural phenomena which it is not in the power of revolutions or constitutions to alter or destroy.

A few moments snatched from the contemplation of political crimes, bloodshed, and treachery, are a few moments gained to all lovers of innocent illusion. Nor need the statesman or the scholar despise the occasional relaxation of light reading. When Jupiter and the great deities are represented by Homer as retiring from scenes of havoc and carnage to visit the blameless and quiet Ethiopians, who were the farthest removed of all nations, the Lord knows whither, at the very extremities of the ocean,—would they have given ear to manifestos or protocols? No, they would much rather have listened to the Tales of Mother Goose.

London, June 12th, 1834.

CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Passage to Ostend.—The Capuchin church.—Ghent.—Quiet and Content, the *pre de Meir*.—Silence and solitude of the town, contrasted with the tumult and uproar

Visit to the cabinets of pictures in Antwerp.—Monsieur Van Lencren's collection of paintings.—The Canon himself.—His domestic felicity.—Revisit the cathedral of St. Baptist.—Mynheer Van den Bosch, the organist's astonishing flashes of execution.—The effect of the music of Jomelli.—Blighted avenues.—Slow travelling.—Enter the *Meerdyke* prospects.—Reach Meerdyke.—Arrival at the Hague.

The Prince of Orange's cabinet of paintings.—Temptation of St. Anthony, by Wouvermans.—Mean garrets stored with inestimable productions of the Indies.—The wardrobe of Hecuba.—Disenchantment.—Cabinet of natural history.—A cabinet of Joseph Yorke's.—Two honourable boobies.—The Great Wood.—Parterres of the *canals*.—Fishy locality of Dutch banquetting rooms.—Derivation of the inhabitants' *galligaskins*.—Escape from damp alleys and lazy waters.

Leave the Hague.—Leyden.—Wood near Haerlem.—Waddling fishermen.—Ent

Confusion of tongues.—Mine hostess.

Amsterdam.—The road to Utrecht—Country-houses and gardens.—Neat Lapdogs.—Arrival at Utrecht.—Moravian establishment—The woods.—Shops.—to Utrecht.

Arrival at Aix-la-Chapelle.—Glimpse of a dingy grove.—Melancholy saunterers
Arrival at Cologne.—Shrine of the Three Wise Sovereigns.—Peregrinations of the
Catholicism.—Azure mountains.—Visionary palaces.

Borders of the Rhine.—Richly picturesque road from Bonn to Andernach.—Sche
valley.—The river Lahn.—Ems.—The planet.—A supposed Apparition.—A little

Inveterate Idlers.—The planet Orloff and his satellites.—A Storm.—Scared wor
Manheim.—Ulm.—The Danube—unlimited plains on its margin.—Augsburg.—
House.

Extensive woods of fir in Bavaria.—Grand Fair at Munich.—The Elector's
Costume.—Garden and tea-room.—Hoydening festivities there.—The Palace a
Peter's thumb.—The Elector's collection of pictures.—The Churches.—Hub
country.—Village of Wolfrathshausen.—Perpetual forests.—A Tempest.—A night

Mittenwald.—Mountain chapels.—Saint Anna's young and fair worshippers.—
range of prospects.—A mountain torrent.—Schönberg.

Steinach.—Its torrent and gloomy strait.—Achievements of Industry.—A sleepy

Bolsano.—Indications of approaching Italy.—Fire-flies.—Appearance of the
Volsugano.—Prospect of Hills in the Venetian State.—Gorgeous Flies.—Fort
precipices and enter the territory of the Bassanese.—Groves of olives and

groups.—Pachierotti, the celebrated singer.—Anecdote of him.

Villa of Mosolente.—The route to Venice.—First view of that city.—Striking prospect of the grand canal.—Church of Santa Maria della Salute.—Interesting group of the Basilica Maggiore.—The Redentore—Island of the Carthusians.

Church of St. Mark.—The Piazza.—Magnificent festivals formerly celebrated in the Piazza.—Campanile.—The Loggetta.—The Ducal Palace.—Colossal Statues.—Giants' Statue.—St. Mark's great Square.—Venetian intrigue.—Confusion of languages.—Madame de Rosen.

Excessive heat.—The Devil and Senegal.—A dreary shore.—Scene of the Doge's trial.—St. Mark.—Swarm of Lawyers.—Receptacles for anonymous accusations.—The victims.—Statue of Neptune.—Fatal Waters.—Bridge of Sighs.—The Fondamenta della Croce.—Oratorio.—Profound attention of the Audience.

M. de Villoison and his attendant Laplander.—Drawings of ancient Venetian coins.—The master-piece in the church of San Giovanni e Paolo.—The distant Euganean hills.

Isles of Burano, Torcello, and Mazorbo.—The once populous city of Altina.—The habits of the inhabitants of the Islands.—Solitary fields infested by serpents.—Remains of an ancient Basilica.—The Cathedral of Torcello.—San Lorenzo's chair.—Dine in a Convent.—The music.—Singing of the Marchetti.—A female orchestra.

Coast of Fusina.—The Brenta.—A Village of Palaces.—Fiesso.—Exquisite singing.—The enchantment and fascination.

Reveries.—Walls of Padua.—Confused Pile dedicated to Saint Anthony.—Devotion.—Magnificent Altar.—Sculpture of Sansovino.—Colossal Chamber like Noah's Ark.

Church of St. Justina.—Tombs of remote antiquity.—Ridiculous attitudes of the statues.—Excursion to Fiesso.—Journey to the Euganean hills.—Newly discovered ruins.—St. Anthony.—A thunder-storm.—Palladio's Theatre at Vicenza.—Verona.—An amphitheatre.—Its interior.—Leave Verona.—Country between that town and Mantua.

of the Gonzagas.—Paintings of Julio Romano.—A ruined garden.—Subterranean

Cross the Po.—A woody country.—The Vintage.—Reggio.—Ridge of the Apennine mountains.—Arrive at Modena.—Road to Bologna.—Magnificent Convent and commotions in Bologna.—Proceed towards the mountains.—Dreary prospects.—Proceed with them.—Return to the carriage.—Wretched hamlet.—Miserable repast.

A sterile region.—Our descent into a milder landscape.—Distant view of Florence and of ancient credulity.—Paintings.—A Medusa's head by Leonardo da Vinci.—The Medici.—Exquisitely sculptured figure of Morpheus.—Vast Cathedral.—Garden and its resemblance to an antique Roman garden.

Rambles among the hills.—Excursions with Pacchierotti.—He catches cold and commotion, and send a deputation to remonstrate with the Singer on his imprudence.—Castle and Gardens of the Garzoni Family.—Colossal Statue of Fame.—Groves and Wood of the Marchese Mansi.—Return to Lucca.

Set out for Pisa.—The Duomo.—Interior of the Cathedral.—The Campo Santo at Leghorn.—Beauty of the road.—Tower of the Fanale.

The Mole at Leghorn.—Coast scattered over with Watch-towers.—Branches of rapids

Florence again.—Palazzo Vecchio.—View on the Arno.—Sculptures by Cellini.—The Austrians to the memory of the House of Medici.—Evening visit to the Garden of the Neapolitan Duchess.

Detained at Florence by reports of the Malaria at Rome.—Ascend one of the hills.—Chapel designed by Michael Angelo.—Birth of a Princess.—The christening.—A

Pilgrimage to Valombrosa.—Rocky Steeps.—Groves of Pine.—Vast Amphitheatre.—Convent.—Wild Glens where the Hermit Gualbertus had his Cell.—Conversations in a consecrated Cleft.—The Romitorio.—Extensive View of the Val d'Arno.—Return

Cathedral at Sienna.—A vaulted Chamber.—Leave Sienna.—Mountains round Rome.—
A grim fraternity of Cats.—Dreary Apartment.

Leave the gloomy precincts of Radicofani and enter the Papal territory.—Cortona.—
Bolsena.—Forest of Oaks.—Ascend Monte Fiascone.—Inhabited Caverns.—Viterbo.

Set out in the dark.—The Lago di Vico.—View of the spacious plains where the
splendour.—Present silence and desolation.—Shepherd huts.—Wretched political
Rome.—Sensations on entering the City.—The Pope returning from Vespers.—
Reveries.—A visionary scheme.—The Pantheon.

Leave Rome for Naples.—Scenery in the vicinity of Rome.—Albano.—Malaria
Promontory.—Terracina.—Ruined Palace.—Mountain Groves.—Rock of Circe.
Beautiful prospect.—A Deluge.—Enter Naples by night, during a fearful Storm.
Courtly Mob at the Palace.—The Presence Chamber.—The King and his Court.
Illumination at the Theatre of St. Carlo.—Marchesi.

View of the coast of Posilipo.—Virgil's tomb.—Superstition of the Neapolitans
scene.

A ramble on the shore of Baii.—Local traditions.—Cross the bay.—Fragment
reservoir constructed for the fleet of Nero.—The Dead Lake.—Wild scene
unfathomable gulph.—Sadness induced by the wild appearance of the plain
narration.—Melancholy evening.

The Tyrol Mountains.—Intense cold.—Delight on beholding human habitations.

First day of summer.—A dismal plain.—Gloomy entrance to Cologne.—Labyrinth
Geist.

Enter the Tyrol.—Picturesque scenery.—Village of Nasseriet.—World of boughs

Rapidity of our drive along the causeways of the Brenta.—Shore of Fusina.—A
appearance.—Visit to Madame de R.—Cesarotti.

Excursion to Mirabello.—Beauty of the road thither.—Madame de R.'s wild-look

Rome.—Strole to the Coliseo and the Palatine Mount.—A grand Rinfresco.—The

The Negroni Garden.—Its solitary and antique appearance.—Stately Porticos of t

Naples.—Portici.—The King's Pagliaro and Garden.—Description of that pleasur

Determination to visit the Grande Chartreuse.—Reach the Village of Les Echell
the Desert.—Portal of the consecrated Enclosure.—Dark Woods and Caverns.—C

Thick forest of beech-trees.—Fearful glimpses of the torrent.—Throne of Moses
Profound calm.—Enter the convent gate.—Arched aisle.—Welcomed by the fa
Conversation with them.—A walk amongst the cloisters and galleries.—Picture
adorned with historical paintings of St. Bruno's life.

Cloisters of extraordinary dimensions.—Cells of the Monks.—Severity of the c
interior.—Marvellous events relating to St. Bruno.—Retire to my cell.—Stran
Appalling occurrence.—Vision of the Bishop of Grenoble.—First institution of
translation.

Mystic discourse.—A mountain ramble.—A benevolent Hermit.—Red light in
hills.—Approach of night.

Pastoral scenery of Valombré.—Ascent of the highest Peak in the Desert.

benediction of the Fathers.

Revisit the trees on the summit of Saleve.—Pas d'Echelle.—Moneti.—Bird's-
from the summit of Saleve.—Youthful enthusiasm.—Sad realities.

Chalet under the Beech-trees.—A mountain Bridge.—Solemnity of the night.—T

THE LOW COUNTRIES AND GERMANY. LETTER I.

Passage to Ostend.—The Capuchin church.—Ghent.—Quiet and Content,
the presiding deities of Flanders.—Antwerp.—The Place de Meir.—Silence
and solitude of the town, contrasted with the tumult and uproar of London.

Ostend, 21st June, 1780.

WE had a rough passage, and arrived at this imperial haven in a
piteous condition. Notwithstanding its renown and importance, it is
but a scurvy place—preposterous Flemish roofs disgust your eyes
when cast upwards—swaggering Dutch skippers and mongrel
smugglers are the principal objects they meet with below; and then
the whole atmosphere is impregnated with the fumes of tobacco,
burnt peat, and garlick. I should esteem myself in luck, were the
nuisances of this seaport confined only to two senses; but, alas! the
apartment above my head proves a squalling brattery, and the
sounds which proceed from it are so loud and frequent, that a
person might think himself in limbo, without any extravagance.

In hope of some relief, I went to the Capuchin church, a large
solemn building, in search of silence and solitude; but here again
was I disappointed. There happened to be an exposition of the holy
wafer with ten thousand candles; and whilst half-a-dozen
squeaking fiddles fugued and flourished away in the galleries, and
as many paralytic monks gabbled before the altars, a whole posse
of devotees, in long white hoods and flannels, were sweltering on

either side.

This papal piety, in warm weather, was no very fragrant circumstance; so I sought the open air again as fast as I was able. The serenity of the evening—for the black huddle of clouds, which the late storms had accumulated, were all melted away—tempted me to the ramparts. There, at least, thought I to myself, I may range undisturbed, and talk with my old friends the breezes, and address my discourse to the waves, and be as romantic and fanciful as I please; but I had scarcely begun a poetic apostrophe, before out flaunted a whole rank of officers, with ladies and abbés and puppy dogs, singing, and flirting, and making such a hubbub, that I had not one peaceful moment to observe the bright tints of the western horizon, or enjoy those ideas of classic antiquity which a calm sunset never fails to bring before my imagination.

Finding, therefore, no quiet abroad, I returned to my inn, and should have gone immediately to bed, in hopes of relapsing into the bosom of dreams and delusions; but the limbo I mentioned before grew so very outrageous, that I was obliged to postpone my rest till sugarplums and nursery eloquence had hushed it to repose. At length peace was restored, and about eleven o'clock I fell into a slumber. My dreams anticipated the classic scenes of Italy, the proposed term of my excursion.

Next morning I arose refreshed with these agreeable impressions. No ideas, but such as Nemi and Albano suggested, haunted me whilst travelling to Ghent. I neither heard the coarse dialect which was talking around me, nor noticed the formal avenues and marshy country which we passed. When we stopped to change horses, I closed my eyes upon the dull prospect, and was transported immediately to those Grecian solitudes which Theocritus so enchantingly describes.

To one so far gone in the poetic lore of ancient days, Ghent is not the most likely place to recall his attention; and I know nothing more about it, than that it is a large, ill-paved, plethoric, pompous-looking city, with a decent proportion of convents and chapels,

monuments, brazen gates, and gilded marbles. In the great church were several pictures by Rubens, so striking, so masterly, as to hold me broad awake; though, I must own, there are moments when I could contentedly fall asleep in a Flemish cathedral, for the mere chance of beholding in vision the temple of Olympian Jupiter.

But I think I hear, at this moment, some grave and respectable personage chiding my enthusiasm—"Really, sir, you had better stay at home, and dream in your great chair, than give yourself the trouble of going post through Europe, in search of places where to fall asleep. If Flanders and Holland are to be dreamed over at this rate, you had better take ship at once, and doze all the way to Italy." Upon my word, I should not have much objection to that scheme; and, if some enchanter would but transport me in an instant to the summit of *Ætna*, anybody might slop through the Low Countries that pleased.

Being, however, so far advanced, there is no retracting; and I am resolved to journey along with Quiet and Content for my companions. These two comfortable deities have, I believe, taken Flanders under their especial protection; every step one advances discovering some new proof of their influence. The neatness of the houses, and the universal cleanliness of the villages, show plainly that their inhabitants live in ease and good humour. All is still and peaceful in these fertile lowlands: the eye meets nothing but round unmeaning faces at every door, and harmless stupidity smiling at every window. The beasts, as placid as their masters, graze on without any disturbance; and I scarcely recollect to have heard one grunting swine or snarling mastiff during my whole progress. Before every village is a wealthy dunghill, not at all offensive, because but seldom disturbed; and there sows and porkers bask in the sun, and wallow at their ease, till the hour of death and bacon arrives.

But it is high time to lead you towards Antwerp. More rich pastures, more ample fields of grain, more flourishing willows! A

boundless plain lies before this city, dotted with cows, and speckled with flowers; a level whence its spires and quaint roofs are seen to advantage! The pale colours of the sky, and a few gleams of watery sunshine, gave a true Flemish cast to the scenery, and everything appeared so consistent, that I had not a shadow of pretence to think myself asleep.

After crossing a broad expanse of river, edged on one side by beds of osiers beautifully green, and on the other by gates and turrets preposterously ugly, we came through several streets of lofty houses to our inn. Its situation in the "Place de Meir," a vast open space surrounded by buildings above buildings, and roof above roof, has something striking and singular. A tall gilt crucifix of bronze, sculptured by Cortels of Malines,^[1] adds to its splendour; and the tops of some tufted trees, seen above a line of magnificent hotels, add greatly to the effect of the perspective.

It was almost dusk when we arrived; and as I am very partial to new objects discovered by this dubious, visionary light, I went immediately a rambling. Not a sound disturbed my meditations: there were no groups of squabbling children or talkative old women. The whole town seemed retired into their inmost chambers; and I kept winding and turning about, from street to street, and from alley to alley, without meeting a single inhabitant. Now and then, indeed, one or two women in long cloaks and mantles glided by at a distance; but their dress was so shroud-like, and their whole appearance so ghostly, that I should have been afraid to accost them. As night approached, the ranges of buildings grew more and more dim, and the silence which reigned amongst them more awful. The canals, which in some places intersect the streets, were likewise in perfect solitude, and there was just light sufficient for me to observe on the still waters the reflection of the structures above them. Except two or three tapers glimmering through the casements, no one circumstance indicated human existence. I might, without being thought very romantic, have imagined myself in the city of petrified people which Arabian

fabulists are so fond of describing. Were any one to ask my advice upon the subject of retirement, I should tell him—By all means repair to Antwerp. No village amongst the Alps, or hermitage upon Mount Lebanon, is less disturbed: you may pass your days in this great city without being the least conscious of its sixty thousand inhabitants, unless you visit the churches. There, indeed, are to be heard a few devout whispers, and sometimes, to be sure, the bells make a little chiming; but, walk about, as I do, in the twilights of midsummer, and be assured your ears will be free from all molestation.

You can have no idea how many strange, amusing fancies played around me whilst I wandered along; nor how delighted I was with the novelty of my situation. But a few days ago, thought I within myself, I was in the midst of all the tumult and uproar of London: now, as if by some magic influence, I am transported to a city equally remarkable indeed for streets and edifices, but whose inhabitants seem cast into a profound repose. What a pity that we cannot borrow some small share of this soporific disposition! It would temper that restless spirit which throws us sometimes into such dreadful convulsions. However, let us not be too precipitate in desiring so dead a calm; the time may arrive when, like Antwerp, we may sink into the arms of forgetfulness; when a fine verdure may carpet our Exchange, and passengers traverse the Strand without any danger of being smothered in crowds or crushed by carriages.

Reflecting, in this manner, upon the silence of the place, contrasted with the important bustle which formerly rendered it so famous, I insensibly drew near to the cathedral, and found myself, before I was aware, under its stupendous tower. It is difficult to conceive an object more solemn or more imposing than this edifice at the hour I first beheld it. Dark shades hindered my examining the lower galleries; their elaborate carved work was invisible; nothing but huge masses of building met my sight, and the tower, shooting up four hundred and sixty-six feet in the air, received an additional

importance from the gloom which prevailed below. The sky being perfectly clear, several stars twinkled through the mosaic of the pinnacles, and increased the charm of their effect.

Whilst I was indulging my reveries, a ponderous bell struck ten, and such a peal of chimes succeeded, as shook the whole edifice, notwithstanding its bulk, and drove me away in a hurry. I need not say, no mob obstructed my passage. I ran through a succession of streets, free and unmolested, as if I had been skimming along over the downs of Wiltshire. The voices of my servants conversing before the hotel were the only sounds which the great "Place de Meir" echoed.

This characteristic stillness was the more pleasing, when I looked back upon those scenes of outcry and horror which filled London but a week or two ago, when danger was not confined to night only, and to the environs of the capital, but haunted our streets at mid-day. Here, I could wander over an entire city; stray by the port, and venture through the most obscure alleys, without a single apprehension; without beholding a sky red and portentous with the light of houses on fire, or hearing the confusion of shouts and groans mingled with the reports of artillery. I can assure you, I think myself very fortunate to have escaped the possibility of another such week of desolation, and to be peaceably lulled at Antwerp.

LETTER II.

Visit to the cabinets of pictures in Antwerp.—Monsieur Van Lencren's collection.—The Canon Knyff's house and gallery of paintings.—The Canon himself.—His domestic felicity.—Revisit the cathedral.—Grand service in honour of St. John the Baptist.—Mynheer Van den Bosch, the organist's astonishing flashes of execution.—Evening service in the cathedral.—Magical effect of the music of Jomelli.—Blighted avenues.—Slow travelling.—Enter the United Provinces.—Level scenery.—Chinese prospects.—Reach Meerdyke.—Arrival at the Hague.

Antwerp, 23rd June, 1780.

AFTER breakfast this morning I began my pilgrimage to all the cabinets of pictures in Antwerp. First, I went to Monsieur Van

Lencren's, who possesses a suite of apartments, lined, from the base to the cornice, with the rarest productions of the Flemish school. Heaven forbid I should enter into a detail of their niceties! I might as well count the dew-drops upon the most spangled of Van Huysum's flower-pieces, or the pimples on their possessor's countenance; a very good sort of man, indeed; but from whom I was not at all sorry to be delivered.

My joy was, however, of short duration, as a few minutes brought me into the court-yard of the Canon Knyff's habitation; a snug abode, well furnished with ample fauteuils and orthodox couches. After viewing the rooms on the first floor, we mounted an easy staircase, and entered an ante-chamber, which they who delight in the imitations of art rather than of nature, in the likenesses of joint stools and the portraits of tankards, would esteem most capitally adorned: but it must be confessed, that amongst these uninteresting performances are dispersed a few striking Berghems and agreeable Polembergs. In the gallery adjoining, two or three Rosa de Tivolis merit observation; and a large Teniers, representing the Hermit St. Anthony surrounded by a malicious set of imps and leering devilesses, is well calculated to display the whimsical buffoonery of a Dutch imagination.

I was enjoying this strange medley, when the canon made his appearance; and a most prepossessing figure he has, according to Flemish ideas. In my humble opinion, his reverence looked a little muddled or so; and, to be sure, the description I afterwards heard of his style of living favours not a little my surmises. This worthy dignitary, what with his private fortune and the good things of the church, enjoys a spanking revenue, which he contrives to get rid of in the joys of the table and the encouragement of the pencil.

His servants, perhaps, assist not a little in the expenditure of so comfortable an income; the canon being upon a very social footing with them all. At four o'clock in the afternoon, a select party attend him in his coach to an ale-house about a league from the city; where a table, well spread with jugs of beer and handsome cheeses,

waits their arrival. After enjoying this rural fare, the same equipage conducts them back again, by all accounts, much faster than they came; which may well be conceived, as the coachman is one of the brightest wits of the entertainment.

My compliments, alas! were not much appreciated, you may suppose, by this jovial personage. I said a few favourable words of Polemberg, and offered up a small tribute of praise to the memory of Berghem; but, as I could not prevail upon Mynheer Knyff to expand, I made one of my best bows, and left him to the enjoyment of his domestic felicity.

In my way home, I looked into another cabinet, the greatest ornament of which was a most sublime thistle by Snyders, of the heroic size, and so faithfully imitated that I dare say no Ass could see it unmoved. At length, it was lawful to return home; and as I positively refused visiting any more cabinets in the afternoon, I sent for a harpsichord of Rucker, and played myself quite out of the Netherlands.

It was late before I finished my musical excursion, and I took advantage of this dusky moment to revisit the cathedral. A flight of starlings had just pitched on one of the pinnacles of the tower, whose faint chirpings were the only sounds that broke the evening stillness. Not a human form appeared at any of the windows around; no footsteps were audible in the opening before the grand entrance; and during the half hour I spent in walking to and fro, one solitary Franciscan was the only creature that accosted me. From him I learned that a grand service was to be performed next day in honour of St. John the Baptist, and the best music in Flanders would be called forth on the occasion, so I determined to stay one day longer at Antwerp.

Having taken this resolution, I availed myself of a special invitation from Mynheer Van den Bosch, the first organist of the place, and sat next to him in his lofty perch during the celebration of high mass. The service ended, I strayed about the aisles, and examined the innumerable chapels which decorate them, whilst

Mynheer Van den Bosch thundered and lightened away upon his huge organ with fifty stops.

When the first flashes of execution had a little subsided, I took an opportunity of surveying the celebrated Descent from the Cross. This has ever been esteemed the master-piece of Rubens, which, large as it is, they pretend here that Old Lewis Baboon^[2] offered to cover with gold. A swingeing St. Christopher, fording a brook with a child on his shoulders, cannot fail of attracting attention. This colossal personage is painted on the folding-doors which defend the grand effort of art just mentioned from vulgar eyes; and here Rubens has selected a very proper subject to display the gigantic boldness of his pencil.

After I had most dutifully surveyed all his productions in this church, I walked half over Antwerp in quest of St. John's relics, which were moving about in procession. If my eyes were not much regaled by the saint's magnificence, my ears were greatly affected in the evening by the music which sang forth his praises. The cathedral was crowded with devotees, and perfumed with incense. A motet, in the lofty style of Jomelli, performed with taste and feeling, transported me to Italian climates; and I grieved, when a cessation dissolved the charm, to think that I had still so many tramontane regions to pass before I could in effect reach that classic country. Finding it was in vain to expect preternatural interposition, and perceiving no conscious angel or Loretto-vehicle waiting in some dark consecrated corner to bear me away, I humbly returned to my hotel.

Monday, June 26th.—We were again upon the pavé, rattling and jumbling along between clipped hedges and blighted avenues. The plagues of Egypt have been renewed, one might almost imagine, in this country, by the appearance of the oak trees: not a leaf have the insects spared. After having had the displeasure of seeing no other objects for several hours but these blasted rows, the scene changed to vast tracts of level country, buried in sand and smothered with heath; the particular character of which I had but too good an

opportunity of intimately knowing, as a tortoise might have kept pace with us without being once out of breath.

Towards evening, we entered the dominions of the United Provinces, and had all their glory of canals, treck-schuyts, and windmills, before us. The minute neatness of the villages, their red roofs, and the lively green of the willows which shade them, corresponded with the ideas I had formed of Chinese prospects; a resemblance which was not diminished upon viewing on every side the level scenery of enamelled meadows, with stripes of clear water across them, and innumerable barges gliding busily along. Nothing could be finer than the weather; it improved each moment, as if propitious to my exotic fancies; and, at sun-set, not one single cloud obscured the horizon. Several storks were parading by the water-side, amongst flags and osiers; and, as far as the eye could reach, large herds of beautifully spotted cattle were enjoying the plenty of their pastures. I was perfectly in the environs of Canton, or Ning Po, till we reached Meerdyke. You know fumigations are always the current recipe in romance to break an enchantment; as soon, therefore, as I left my carriage and entered my inn, the clouds of tobacco which filled every one of its apartments dispersed my Chinese imaginations, and reduced me in an instant to Holland.

Why should I enlarge upon my adventures at Meerdyke? To tell you that its inhabitants are the most uncouth bipeds in the universe would be nothing very new or entertaining; so let me at once pass over the village, leave Rotterdam, and even Delft, that great parent of pottery, and transport you with a wave of my pen to the Hague.

As the evening was rather warm, I immediately walked out to enjoy the shade of the long avenue which leads to Scheveling, and proceeded to the village on the sea coast, which terminates the perspective. Almost every cottage door being open to catch the air, I had an opportunity of looking into their neat apartments. Tables, shelves, earthenware, all glisten with cleanliness; the country people were drinking tea, after the fatigues of the day, and talking

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

