

# *The Blue Trooper*

## *A Tale of Circumstantial Evidence*

BY G.G.H.

Towards the close of the last century there lived in the quiet little town of Arnhem, in Holland, a widowed lady named Andrecht. Her health had long prevented her mixing much in society, and for sometime previous to that at which our tale begins, the infirmities of age had rendered her a close prisoner in her old-fashioned snugly-furnished house in the Oberstraat. Although in easy circumstances, her style of living had for many years been extremely plain, and at the time we are speaking of, her whole establishment consisted of an elderly female, who discharged the duties of housekeeper, servant, and companion.

In the month of June, the widow allowed herself to be persuaded by her son, who was established as a doctor in a neighboring village, to pay him a short visit. Consultations were held with a neighboring blacksmith, and a magnificent system of bolts and bars was the result; so strong, indeed, was the confidence reposed in it by the old lady and her maid, that it never occurred to them to ask a neighbor to "keep an eye" upon the premises until their return. The house was, therefore, locked up and left alone. In order, however, that the reader may appreciate the importance of the many apparently trifling circumstances in the drama he is about to witness, it may be well for him to have an outline of the leading features of the locality which was the scene of it.

Parallel to the Oberstraat, and in the rear of the houses on the side of Madame Andrecht's was a canal, the towing-path of which was separated from the gardens of the several dwellings by a thick hedge. The widow's house (which, by the way, was of a far superior character to any in that quarter) was the last but one in the street. On the right, the corner house was occupied by a weaver and his wife; and past this, at right angles to the Oberstraat, ran a street, the Kortestraat, leading to a bridge over the canal, and beyond it, to the principal barracks of the town. In the latter portion of the street was situated the hostelry of Nicholas D—, the Blue Trooper.

The widow's visit extended itself to three weeks. At ten o'clock on the 30th of June, the carriage containing herself and her attendant stopped at her door. There was nothing unusual in the appearance of the house. The front door was opened by the maid. The boxes they brought with them were deposited just within it, and the carriage drove away. Mistress and maid then entered the house and closed the door behind them; but they had taken scarcely a dozen steps along the passage leading to the sitting-room in the rear, when both stood aghast at the scene which presented itself before them. The dining-room furniture had been left in perfect order, and the dining-room door was locked the last thing before they left. It now stood wide open, and revealed the room in the strangest state of disorder; chairs and tables piled into a heap; the carpet torn from its fastenings, and huddled into a corner; the skirting-board and wainscoting torn away through nearly the whole length of the room, the hearthstone lifted from its place; and in more than one place, the planking of the floor removed. There was a tradition current in the neighborhood, that the builder of the house, one Jan Krahert, had buried in it somewhere or other, a fabulous amount of gold. The thieves had evidently been credulous, and had suffered the

penalty of credulity. They had found no gold, for a simple reason—there was none to find. Their search, however, in another quarter, had been more substantially repaid.

A large elaborately-carved and ornamentally-bound press had been broken open, and various articles of jewelry, plate, and other valuables removed. It was the sanctum of the widow, and as such the depository of various memoranda she had made for the benefit of those among whom she intended to divide her property by her will. The bulk of these memoranda had been enclosed in a large leathern pocket-book. That too was gone. Sacrilegious hands had plunged into the very penetralia of the shrine. Two “secret drawers” in the remotest part of it, in one of which the pocket-book was last seen safe, lay topsy-turvy on the floor.

There was a peculiarity in the treatment to which this piece of furniture had been subjected, highly suggestive to the professional detective. The upper rim, in which the heavy bolts shot home, had been removed by the extraction of a few screws. The drawer-locks too exhibited the marks of an accomplished hand. From this press, and a couple of heavy boxes, also adroitly broken into, the bulk of the missing property had been taken. From the position of certain kitchen utensils, it was surmised that a selection had been made for removal, but that, from some cause or other, the marauders had been disturbed in carrying out their plans. Everything, in fact, indicated that they had decamped in haste. The dining-room, and the kitchen which adjoined it, had alone been visited below, while on the upper floor all the rooms but one were locked and undisturbed.

The wealth of the widow was known to be considerable, and it seemed hardly probable that thieves acquainted with her circumstances and habits would have contented themselves with what, after all, could form but an inconsiderable portion of her property. The thieves had probably suspended operations at daylight—at this period of the year extremely early—and been prevented from resuming them. In the garden were marks of a ladder-foot and footsteps. Both, however, had been tampered with, and partially effaced. In a window, directly above, a pane of glass had been entirely removed, and, although the window was found closed, it was obviously by this route that the entrance of the premises had been effected. The burglars had forced the door of the room in which they landed, and proceeded immediately down stairs. The garden door was unlocked. By this they had evidently retired.

It must not be supposed that the good old lady made observations to the extent we have given; the shock she received was too much for her, and she sank down, overcome with agitation and alarm. Her attendant was, also, at first so terrified as to be incapable of summoning aid. On the first alarm the police were on the spot; and there being something to see, a crowd soon sprang up to see it, and besieged the house. For some time it required the active interposition of the officers to prevent the curious, or, it might be, the more materially-minded, from effecting their entrance; and more than once, indeed, it appeared probable, despite their exertions, that the roaring mob would be precipitated pell-mell into the house.

Foremost in the ranks of the beleaguering host, and battling with an energy worthy of a better cause, was the worth master baker H—, whose reputation as the quidnunc of the district was thoroughly well established. How he did battle to be sure! There was almost fury in the good gossip’s exertions to reach the door; but he had his reward. One surge of the huge heaving mass,

and he stands on the step with the police; another, and he is swept within the portal of the house, despite their strenuous exertions to keep him out. It is vain just now to think of ejecting him. The officers have other matter on their hands. He passes for the moment unmolested to the scene of pillage—and alone. His success imparted fury to the mob, chafing with impatience before the closed and guarded door. Each assault, however, resulted in the victory of the police—the imperturbable police—untroubled to all appearances by [curiosity] of their own. [The] angry yelling of the assailants dwindled down to a murmur of disappointment. “Quiet!” shouted one fellow with stentorian lungs, “the master baker will soon be out; we shall have a full account of the whole then.”

Laying this flattering unction to its soul, the noble monster strove to still the cravings of impatience that devoured it. It is not destined to be tried long. A fresh arrival of police enables those who have witnessed the brunt of the attack to enter, and their first act is to hand the master baker politely into the street. His appearance is welcomed with a roar of expectation. A hundred tongues assail his ears. A hundred hands are stretched out to secure his attention. For the first time in the experience of Arnhem the baker is taciturn and gloomy. What has he seen? A volley of questions delivered with frantic energy from below elicited no reply. He stands with an air of irresolution, and almost horror, as he contemplates the crowd. Plucking his hat over his brow, he dives at length into the midst of it, and strives to reach his house, which is on the other side of the street. It costs him a desperate struggle, and the tail of his coat, before he gains the goal. To the amazement, scarcely less than the dismay of his neighbors, he no sooner reaches it than he enters, and unceremoniously slams the door behind him, and leaves anxious expectation standing unsatisfied in the street.

Fortune certainly favored the mob that day. Excitement was forthcoming without the least delay. Hardly had the last remnant of the coattails of the good master baker disappeared within his door, before attention was attracted to the proper front of operations. The weaver we have mentioned as the widow’s neighbor, had succeeded in effecting a lodgment on the steps. He stood, apparently reckless of all remonstrance, clinging to the police. While in this position, the door was opened from inside, and gave him a full view of the realm of mystery within. The next moment he was pushed down, and resumed his station in the crowd.

Momentary as this glimpse into the interior had been, it seemed sufficient to establish in his mind the correctness of surmise he had already formed, if one could judge by such a pithy observations as “Ah! I thought so,” “I suspected something of the sort.”

The bystanders fixed upon him at once. “Eh, what—tell us—eh, what do you suspect?”

“Have a care, Master Weaver,” said a neighbor in a warning tone; “the Pedlar is behind you”

The friendly monitor was too late. The “Pedlar,” a well-known agent and spy of the police, had heard the few words that escaped him. Within an hour the weaver and his wife—the latter had used but little disguise in her insinuations—were summoned into the presence of the justices of Arnhem. They hardly seemed prepared for this; and both at first strongly repudiated any knowledge of the perpetrators of the robbery. The expressions they had made use of were

repeated to them, and pretty distinct intimations given them of the consequences of attempting to screen guilt.

“Well, then,” the weaver exclaimed at last, “if you must have my suspicions—and it’s only suspicion, after all—I believe, whoever else there is, the Blue Trooper has his hand in the game.”

The person thus incriminated was, as we have said, a vintner, carrying on his business near the barracks. His *sobriquet* of “blue” he derived from having served in Van Wackerbarth’s Dragoons, known as “The Blues.” His connection with the widow arose from his having married a servant, who had lived with her for about six years. She had been married from the widow’s house, having by her good conduct succeeded in winning her mistress’s esteem to such an extent, that the old lady had actually advanced the money necessary for their establishment in the hostelry and tavern.

Happily as it had ended, the course of love with the young people had hardly run altogether smooth. Indeed, at its commencement, the maiden had a rather narrow escape of losing either her lover or her place. A moonlight night had more than once tempted the lovers to scroll out, and there was nothing for it but to leave the street door ajar, and Madame Andrecht at the mercy of the world. Pity is of no clime or age. When it rained, this Dutch handmaiden of the last century led her hero to the kitchen, and regaled him with the best. Babbling rumor, with her busy tongues, soon brought the scandal to the widow’s ear; and, as a supplement to many excellent homilies read by the exemplary old dame, a solemn locking of the front door, and a deposit of the key beneath her pillow, formed thenceforward part of the routine of her peaceful life.

Blessings on her innocence! May the wit of all *duennas* be as keen! If there be truth in an old proverb, Love must have had many a hearty laugh. Night after night the front door was safely locked, but night after night there was a meeting of the pair at the door leading into the garden, that was little dreamt of by Madame Andrecht. Transgression in this second form, however, seems never to have been brought to the old lady’s ken; and the pair were married not only with her approval, but with very substantial evidence of her heartiest good-will.

It was now incumbent on the weaver to support his insinuations, or rather, to justify his charge. His grounds of suspicion, he said, rested on two facts. At dawn that morning he and his wife had seen a boat moored opposite the widow’s house; at daylight it was gone. At six o’clock he had passed along the towing-path. At the very spot where he had seen the barge, he had found the handkerchief produced. The article was handed up. It was a blue one, of coarse manufacture, and bore in one corner the initials, N.D.

The handkerchief might be considered evidence against the trooper, but how could the boat connect him with the affair? Marry, thus. Their worships would understand it if he related an incident in the trooper’s courtship. It occurred shortly after the vigorous precautions we have immortalized had been adopted at the front door of Madame Andrecht. The weaver had for some nights had his attention drawn to a noise as of some one clambering over the wall which separated his garden from the street leading to the canal. One evening he lay wait, and captured in the very act the Blue Trooper. His prisoner burst out laughing. “I’m going,” he said, “to bid Hannah good-night.”

From this time for perhaps a week, the passage of the trooper across his garden was continued, but his wife at last had raised objections to its continuance, and the soldier was told that he must in future consider that means of access to his [sweetheart] closed. A week and more had elapsed after this prohibition without their hearing anything more of the trooper, when one morning very early, his wife had called to him that Hannah and her lover were in Madame Andrecht's garden. They watched until the latter took his leave. He climbed over the fence at the bottom of the garden, waved a last farewell from the towing-path, jumped into a boat that was moored in the canal, and pushed off. Since that morning until the marriage of the young couple, they had often in the gloaming seen the boat moored in the canal. In the morning it was always gone. Such was an outline of the weaver's story—plainly, circumstantially told. His suspicions were shared by all who heard him, and an immediate order was issued for the arrest of the Blue Trooper.

If doubts existed in the minds of any as to the propriety of this course, they were effectually dispelled on the entry of the police, who had been engaged in investigating the robbery upon the spot. Before making their report, they recommended the instant arrest of—the Blue Trooper. No doubt they had some strong grounds for their suspicions. No, they had nothing more than this; a shrivelled wisp of paper, so charred, indeed, that it seemed hardly possible to decipher a single word of printed matter it had formerly contained. It had been found by the side of the press in the sitting-room. The aid of science had been invoked, and on being subjected to powerful tests, it proved to be a part of a permit granted by the excise. The date was the most legible part of all. Reference was made to the books of the excise; on that day a permit was granted to Nicholas D—; for thirty gallons of Hollands. The free vintnery was at once brought to a stand, and the trooper, with his household, marched off to the town-hall. Two officers remained on the premises for the purpose of a search.

Public excitement had now become intense. The authorities proceeded at once to the examination of their prisoners; they took the trooper first. His air was calm and self-possessed, and his answers given apparently with the greatest frankness; he admitted in the main the correctness of the facts deposed to by the weaver; but denied positively having been upon the widow's premises since the latter had left Arnhem. The handkerchief was shown him. He owned it at once. When asked where he had seen it last, he answered carelessly that he remembered losing it about six months back; it might be more; he had lost it, and thought no more about it. He was told when and where it had been found. He met the information with a shrug, betokening at once incredulity and indifference.

It was now past noon, and an opinion seemed somehow or other gaining ground that justice had gotten the wrong party by the ear. As stir at the door of the justice-room announced the arrival of the officers who had searched the tavern. The trooper was removed while they made their report. A wary old inspector stood forward. Every cranny of the house had been searched. Had anything been found that could in any way throw light upon the robbery? "Nothing except this," he said. The object, whatever it was, was wrapped in a paper. It was handed up to the bench. A pin might have been heard to fall as the burgomaster proceeded to unroll what proved to be an old leather pocket-book. As to its connection with Madame Andrecht there was not much room for doubt. The fly-leaf bore her name and her address in full, while to put all further doubts at rest, a pocket in it contained two letters addressed to her, which had passed through the post. There was

something peculiar in the position in which the pocket-book had been found at the Blue Trooper's. It was described as being stuffed between the ceiling and the top shelf of a cupboard in the bar.

The widow's health not admitting of her attendance, the book was forwarded to her for formal identification. It was hers, she said, and she had seen it safe in the press on the morning she left Arnhem. Some slight amusement was created by the announcement of the officer who had acted as envoy on this occasion, to the effect that the old lady absolutely refused to give up the book. It was considered needless to insist upon the point, and the evidence in the case was resumed.

The amount of cash in the trooper's house, had struck the officers as in excess of what he could have earned fairly, during the short time he had been in the business. He accounted for it by saying it belonged mainly to his father-in-law, a statement in which the other members of the family concurred. As to the pocket-book he stoutly maintained that he had never seen it before.

This is not what the authorities had expected. The promptness of the arrest and search would, they hoped, have found the criminals with the red hand; and here, after all, they had as evidence against the principal of them nothing but circumstances of suspicion, which, if they were really guilty, they were most likely to have retained. Equally firm was the demeanor of the rest of the Blue Trooper's household. They protested their entire innocence, and stoutly denied ever having seen the pocket-book before. As for the young wife, she exhibited something like temper on the latter point. "It was," she said, "impossible it could have been found in the position described; for she had that very morning, with her own hands, taken down every shelf in the cupboard, and must have seen it had it been there"

It was now evening. The examination had lasted the whole day. The prisoners were remanded, and the audience retired to think and talk of nothing but "the great robbery case," and the guilt or innocence of the parties under arrest. To the absorbing interest taken in the fate of these individuals, we suppose, must be attributed the slight impression made by the announcement which, at any other period, would have produced a nine days' wonder of itself. This was the disappearance, that very morning, of a well-known character at Arnhem, being no other than the keeper of the garrison stores, one Joseph Christian Kuhler. Oddly enough, it seems never to have occurred to any one to connect his disappearance with the great topic of the day; and as the regimental accounts of the money in his hands were found correct, after the issue of the usual notice of desertion, no one thought further on the matter. No one, that is to say, but the police. The police pondered it, and watched.

Another long day of examination. The court was fairly at its wits' end. The composure and apparent truthfulness of the accused couple, with the good repute the trooper had hitherto enjoyed, produced a strong impression in their favor; and a proposal to release them under *surveillance* was being discussed, when there appeared upon the stage a personage who gave a very material impulse to the action of the drama.

A gentleman of good credit in Arnhem, entered the court hastily, and laying a somewhat bulky parcel before the bench, requested and obtained leave to make a statement, which ran thus:—"One Isaac C—, a carpenter in the town, had for some time been in his debt. He had lately sued

him, and obtained a judgment. That morning his debtor had waited on him, entreated him to give him time to make his payment, and on being refused, had given that (pointing to the parcel) as an instalment, or rather a security, for the debt. The parcel was undone, and two silver candlesticks and a silver coffeepot, with the monogram A.A., were brought to light. The proposal had struck him as so strange, that he had at once asked the carpenter how he became possessed of them. The question seemed to stagger him at first. 'Never mind,' he said, after a moment's pause, 'I had to take them for a debt of mine, so I hope you will let them go, at any rate, for the present, towards yours.' Such conduct had of course the effect of still further exciting his suspicion, and he had expressed with tolerable plainness the view he took of the affair, when the carpenter entreated him to take the things, and say nothing more at present, or it would be the Blue Trooper's ruin. "The Blue Trooper?" he had asked him. 'Do you mean Nicholas D—?' 'I do,' the carpenter replied; 'he gave the silver to me for thirty florins, and he owes me thirty more.' 'My only surprise,' the merchant added, 'is that the carpenter himself has not come forward. He could hardly have left my house an hour before the news of the Blue Trooper's arrest was known throughout all Arnhem.'

This was the second glimpse the lynx eyed myrmidons of the law had gained of the produce of the burglary. It stimulated them as a fresh scent will wake up baffled hounds. The carpenter was summoned. He came in breathless haste, and before the question could be put to him, began a voluble account of his share in the transaction just narrated. "Thank Heaven!" he said, 'he had been sent for. He could not have borne the suspense much longer. For the last four-and twenty hours he had suffered all the tortures of a 'guilty man.' How glad he was to have it off his mind. This was how it was. For ever so long the Blue Trooper owed him sixty florins, and never a farthing could he get on account. At last *his* creditors wouldn't wait—one of them had actually sued him—and so he had just told the trooper that matters between them must be cleared up. To his amazement, the trooper declared himself equally eager for a settlement, handed him the articles there (pointing to the table) and told him if he would write of thirty florins he might have them, and as to the balance he would pay that in a few days." Witness was asked whether he was not struck at once with the strange nature of the affair. "Yes, he said; "but as to the idea of the robbery, it never crossed his mind. No, not even when the trooper had cautioned him about disposing of them at Arnhem, and told him that by taking them to Amsterdam the increased value he would get for them would pay his fare. He asked the trooper why he hadn't visited Amsterdam himself for this purpose. 'And so I will,' he received for answer, 'if you will give me time.' Time was, however, precisely what he, witness, had not got to spare, and so he had taken the silver, and made nothing by the transaction. His creditor, the timber-merchant, had the matters for the same sum."

"Did it never occur to you," inquired one of the magistrates, "to inquire how the trooper became possessed of silver plate?" "Yes," was the answer, "I did, and he said it formed part of a legacy left to his father-in-law by a lady whose service he had lived as a coachman."

Such was the carpenter's story, in the delivery of which his manner was restless and uneasy. His manner was, however, at all times rather peculiar. A cloth was laid over the silver, and the Blue Trooper was recalled. His eye wandered nervously round the court; it encountered the face of the carpenter, and a visible tremor passed over his frame.

The court resumed its examination of the prisoner. He admitted the debt of sixty florins. This admission caused a profound sensation. "Have you," he was asked, "made any payment on account of the debt?" A pause; the prisoner bit his lip. The question was repeated. The prisoner somewhat abruptly answered, "No."—"Think again."—"I am certain, no." This time the tone was firm. "You had better not be hasty in anything you say. Have you never given, for instance, any articles of value?"—"I!—articles of value! no." The puzzled stare that accompanied was an excellently feigned—if feigned—expression of surprise.

It was time to try the working of the spell. The cloth was lifted, and the attention of the prisoner directed to the silver pile. "Well, he knew nothing about them; never saw the things in his life before."

The sternest admonitions of the court were unavailing to make him swerve from this denial. The interrogation was resumed. "You say you made no payment on account. You were pressed to do so, were you not?"—"I was."—"And you paid nothing?" A repetition of the strife within. The brawny frame quivered as he faltered out, "I paid nothing."—"Was there money enough in the till?"—"It belonged to my father-in-law."

The trooper's brother was called in. Had his brother recently paid any money to the carpenter, Isaac C——? Why yes, he had paid him thirty florins only the day before yesterday.

The trooper nearly fainted. A buzz betokened the feeling of the audience at the turn taken by the case. The wife and father-in-law of the prisoner were separately called, and gave evidence to the same effect. Thirty florins was the sum, and the day before yesterday the day.

The trooper gradually seemed recovering his self-command. When he was at liberty to address the court, he spoke with a firm voice as follows: "Lying is, I know, a mark of guilt. I am not guilty, but I have told a lie. It is true I told my wife and family I was going to pay Isaac thirty florins. I wanted them for another purpose—one I didn't want my wife to know anything about."—"And that was?" A pause. "I had been gambling, and had lost."

A smile of incredulity sat on the lip of more than one of the occupants of the bench. The trooper took no heed of it. "There," he said, raising himself to his full height, and pouring out a long sigh of relief, "it's over now. My wife may learn that I'm a gambler; but I'm no thief!"

Of the persons to whom he had lost the money he could give no account. He had met them, he said, at a tavern, and was ignorant even of their names.

Isaac C——'s indignation knew no bounds. The possession of the stolen goods had cast a tinge of suspicion on his fair fame, and he insisted vigorously on the matter being thoroughly cleared up. His housekeeper and his apprentice were called. Both had heard the trooper speak of the silver as a legacy. Moreover, the carpenter produced his books, in which, under date of June 30, was an entry, "Paid by Nicholas D——, part payment of bill delivered for sixty florins, three articles, silver, valuable thirty florins."



Public opinion had at last touched ground. The Blue Trooper was the thief. The only point worth considering further for a moment was, whether he had confederates. His removal from the House of Detention to the jail showed pretty significantly what the magistrates thought upon the matter. Justice was about to put him to “the question,” the torture of the rack, in solemn form, to elicit who they were.

The greatest excitement prevailed as soon as the matter became known; and the awful ceremony, already almost in desuetude, formed the only topic of conversation. It was looked upon as certain the prisoner would confess “in the first degree.” Pity for useless obstinacy had almost supplanted the indignation against the criminal, when the case passed suddenly into a new phase, and the horrors of the Chamber of Torture were, at least for a time, postponed. A letter was delivered by the post at the town hall. It was addressed to “The worthy magistrates of Arnhem” It ran thus:

“Another hour, and I shall have passed to where neither the magistracy of Arnhem, nor the general commanding the district of the Rhine, has anything to say. Before I go, let me do an act of justice. You must know that you are making an immense mistake. The trooper and his family are innocent. The carpenter’s story I do not understand. It may be his are the hands that did the work after all. Take the hint. It’s all you’re likely to get from Joseph Christian Kuhler, late corporal in the company of Lelong.”

The writing was not Kuhler’s. It was singularly beautiful and regular, whereas Kuhler’s was not a good hand at all. Fresh doubts—which, to the credit of the authorities, were readily embraced as a pretext for postponing “the question.” Public opinion, however, refused to advance beyond attributing the work to an accomplice in a praiseworthy, but comparatively safe endeavor to save the Blue Trooper from the rack. It was useless to speculate on a case so full of mystery. The only thing seemed to be to wait and watch. One effect the letter, however, had—it drew attention to the missing man. His conduct and character had been unimpeached. Large sums passing through his hands had been honestly disposed of, and his accounts were in perfect order. Was it worth his while, every one asked, for the sake of such a trifle as had been abstracted, to have become a thief!

Popular excitement, far from flagging, rushed with with eagerness into the new channel thus opened up, but with slender hopes of arriving at any definite result. Viewed in any way, the matter seemed shrouded in obscurity; and if at times a ray of light seemed breaking in upon it, it was only to render more profound the darkness into which it immediately relapsed. The police alone, amid the general confusion, preserved the even tenor of their investigations. They were baffled, but not disheartened. And now, as if to support the character of this extraordinary case for versatility, fresh actors arrive upon the scene, and straightway the whole aspect of affairs is changed again.

A gentleman occupying extensive business premises in the neighborhood of Madam Andrecht’s house appeared and requested a private interview with the police. His statement was, shortly, this: On the morning of the 29th of June, Isaac C—— had visited his warehouse and begged for the loan of his barge for that evening. It being inconvenient, he had refused. The applicant became pressing; he had asked him why he wanted it at night. “Some people,” was his reply, “find it handier to move by night.” Taking this to amount to an avowal that he was about to assist

in the removal of a bankrupt's goods, he had remonstrated with him on the dishonesty of the act; the carpenter had suddenly changed his note. His mate, he said, and he wanted the boat for fishing, but they were afraid to say so "because fishing made the boat so dirty." Thinking the thing probable he had at length given a reluctant consent, the carpenter promising faithfully that the boat should be alongside the wharf, in proper trim, by "peep of day;" and he had kept his word.

By "peep of day," having risen to make preparations for a short journey, the gentleman had seen the carpenter and his mate below upon the wharf, making the barge fast in its accustomed place. There were neither creels nor lines for fishing, that he could see, and the floor of the boat appeared perfectly dry. This aroused his curiosity, and he went down; when he got to the boat the men had gone. The pretext of fishing was palpably a false one. What had they been doing? In looking round the barge his eyes lighted on the end of a paper parcel concealed beneath a part of the planking. The boards were loose. He raised them and drew out a parcel, which contained two silver forks; they bore the monogram, A.A. The conversation of the day before rushed upon his mind. They had been helping bankrupts to remove their goods. Annoyed at the employment of his property in such a service, witness had resolved to give the offending parties "an inch or two of his mind;" and on his way to the coach-office made a point of looking in upon them. The carpenter and his apprentice were in earnest conversation when he arrived. They seemed startled by his appearance, and a perfect consternation seemed to seize them when he politely presented them with the forks, and said, "Our fish in the canal are, I suppose, so nice that they make people forget their forks—my service to you—and real silver, too!" The agitation of the apprentice was such that witness, who attributed to them nothing more serious than the removal of some bankrupt's goods, thought he had punished them sufficiently, and went away. He left Arnhem that morning on his tour, and had returned only late the night before. He had heard the outline of the story from a passenger in the diligence on his return, and the suspicions produced by it in his mind became certainty as soon as he learnt the events of the last few days at Arnhem. He believed the whole was an infamous plot of the carpenter to divert suspicions from himself and his confederates. An order was issued for the arrest of the carpenter and all his household. Justice had at last lighted on the real delinquents. Every article of the missing property was found carefully secreted in his house.

The behaviour of this set of prisoners was very different from that of the last. Their denials, indeed, were no less strenuous; but it was clearly impudence, not innocence, that sustained them. On their first examination they differed in the principal facts—soon lost the thread of a tale that had evidently been agreed upon, and at last began to betray and throw the blame upon each other. The rack was hinted at, the hint was quiet enough. Their statements were at last brought into uniformity by their confessing all.

It turned out that the burglary had been committed on the night of the 29th of June. The actors in it were the carpenter and his man, the latter of whom, some years back, had been employed in the house, at the time that the tradition of the Andrecht family, as to hidden treasure somewhere in the old house, was being discussed. It had fired his imagination at the time, and for years had been working steadily on his mind. Opportunity had rendered the impulse irresistible; and the two, in full belief that they should be able to abstract the gold and replace the premises so as to avoid detection, set out to commit their crime. Various causes had delayed them, so that they

almost feared that they must give up the scheme. It was gray morning before they had been able to remove any considerable portion of the thick paneling that had lined the room. What they had laid bare disclosed no signs of gold. Their disappointment was great. Little time remained for them to search. With desperate eagerness they tore up the flooring. Equally without result; and as a last resource, they looked about for subjects of less chimerical character. The press caught their eye. The rim was off it in a trice. The bolts shot back; the drawer locks forced, and the contents turned upon the floor. A hasty selection was made, and they were off. The kitchen utensils, it appeared, had been placed together with a view to search under the floor, and not with any design of being removed. The first alarm, the next morning had found the carpenter, his mistress, and apprentice, on the alert in front of the widow's house.

The language of the weaver and his wife had found a welcome echo in their breasts, and drove them at once to the diabolical scheme of making the trooper the scapegoat of their crime. Taking with him the pocket-book that had been stolen, the apprentice went at once to the Blue Trooper's house, and called for a dram and a light for his pipe. The trooper was in the bar alone. He went into an adjoining room to fetch the chafing-dish, and the moment, during which he turned his back, was that selected by his wily customer for reaching over and laying the pocket-book on the shelf on which it had been found. How well the plan was calculated we have seen. For a time the Blue Trooper's guilt appeared too plain for doubt.

Matters were not even now altogether satisfactorily cleared up, as far as the ex-soldier was concerned. Certain matters, such as the handkerchief and the burned permit, remained to embarrass the partisans. He was released and returned to his business, but it was under the blighting influence of surveillance; and "public opinion," still more despotic than the police, dismissed him with the comfortable imputation of some vague mysterious connection with the burglary in the Oberstraat. He found good help, however, before long, and that from a quarter in which he was little disposed to look for it. The schoolmaster of a village about twenty miles from Arnheim, waited upon the authorities, and produced a sheet of paper on which were the words "Joeseph Christian Kuhler." He asked if they recognized the hand. The "corporal's letter["] was referred to. The correspondence was exact. The quota he was enabled to supply towards the denouement of the piece was this: He had a lad under his charge named Hechting, who was both deaf and dumb. The boy wrote so exquisite a hand as to be in general request for copying official documents and the like. Some three weeks since a stranger had called at his school during his absence, and inquired for Hechting. The latter had come, and after some colloquy with the stranger, carried on by writing on a slate, the two had gone away together. The stranger took him to the village inn, called for a bottle of wine, and when they were alone, produced the rough draft of the "corporal's letter," and requested the lad to copy it. The latter complied without hesitation, and copied the first part almost mechanically. As he proceeded, he exhibited indications of anxiety and alarm, and when the address to the magistrates of Arnheim met his eye, he stopped, and declined to do anything further in the affair. After much discussion on the slate, however, he gave in. The letter was fair-copied; the stranger went away, giving the amanuensis a florin for his pains, and enjoining on him the strictest secrecy as to the transaction. These injunctions the boy had for a while obeyed. A lurking suspicion of something wrong, and the burden of secrecy, had in the end been too heavy for him to bear, and he had disclosed the whole to his master. The latter saw at once the connection between the transaction thus revealed to him and the criminal investigation at Arnheim. Hastening to the inn, he inquired if the landlord remembered the

circumstance of the stranger and the boy having been there. He remembered it well. Who was the stranger? Ah, that he didn't know. Did his wife? No, she remembered the fact of there having been some one—but who it was—stay, she remembered his going down stairs and—let's see who he met—ah, Overblink, the miller—to be sure it was, and they had shaken as if they were old friends. Of course the miller would know who he was. Following up the clue he had thus obtained, the schoolmaster went to the miller direct. He reminded him of the occurrence. Did the miller remember who the stranger was? Remember him, why, of course he did. It was his good friend, the master baker, H——, of Arnhem. The pedagogue cross-examined his informant to make sure that there was no mistake, and then, with this fresh fact in his possession, made straight for Arnhem.

“Master baker H——!” was the astonished exclamation of the burgomaster, when he had heard the story. “The old gossip may thank his stars that we have found the real thieves; he might otherwise have paid dearly for his meddling.” The dignity of the justice had received a shock. He must be sent for and rebuked.

A singular incident marked the baker's arrival at the town-hall. He was met at the top of the steps by the director of the police. The latter had been indefatigable in his exertions in the great Andrecht case; but it was noticed that after the committal of the carpenter and his family he had been almost absorbed in thought. It appeared now as if a weight was off his mind. Laying his hand on the master baker's shoulder, he solemnly, and with something of a savage triumph uttered these words, slowly: “You will never be at large again.” It was true. He never was.

Speculation was hard at work again; and once more the ghost of the “great Andrecht case” rose to plague the good folk at Arnhem, in the intervals of their private and less important avocations. It was charitably and ingeniously suggested that the worthy baker had broken into the house, after the carpenter had left, and finding the havoc made by the latter's raid, had declined encumbering himself with an unrenumerative crime.

The baker was examined privately, and from information they received, the police paid a visit promptly to the weaver's house. The birds had flown! Pursuit was instituted after the fugitives, and the house was searched. The officers who conducted the search returned with blanched faces when their task was done. There was no more mystery about the case. They had reached certainty—a most hideous certainty it was. In the cellar, scarcely covered up with mould, they had found the festering remains of Joseph Christian Kuhler!

The weaver and his wife were overtaken in the flight, and lodged that same evening in the jail of Arnhem. The ample confessions they and the master baker made under their examination removed the last traces of difficulty from this mysterious affair, and enabled the authorities to issue a poor indemnity after all; a public notice that “The Town Council desired officially to declare the Blue Trooper to have been the victim of an atrocious plot.”

The awful details of the second crime may be very shortly told. We must transport our readers to the weaver's house on the evening preceding the commencement of our tale. In a low, dark room on the ground-floor three men are seated, and are playing cards—a fitting trio. Each knows, hates, and fears the other. Kuhler was a personage of no small importance, notwithstanding, so

far as the present company was concerned. Almost all the garrison contracts passed through his hands, and a word, judiciously slipped in by him was often able to make or mar the fortunes of men in the position of the weaver and baker; the latter had, through his instrumentality, obtained a contract for the bread, and in supplying it had more than once indulged in a contract baker's besetting sin. Kuhler detected him, and offered him his choice, to be reported or purchase silence. The hush money was duly paid, and Kuhler, far from losing cast by the act, became thenceforward an object of his victim's still more religious cultivation, and his hate. Not much more amiable was the feeling with which the corporal was regarded by the weaver. One article of the troops' clothing had already been taken from him, and unless he submitted to the most exacting terms, he seemed likely to lose another. The tree fawned and flattered the mighty arbiter of their fortunes, and the potentate repaid them with insolence. On the present occasion, from some cause or other, the weaver thought fit to resent a vulgar taunt, and a quarrel ensued between him and the corporal; the baker joined the opposition. Words grew high, and, at last, accompanied by a coarse epithet, the corporal launched a blow that felled the weaver to the ground. It was no great matter in itself; the weaver was the next moment on his legs and renewed the fight.

The weaver's wife seized a bar out of the loom, and dealt the soldier such a blow, that he reeled and fell upon the floor. In falling, he cut his face against a chest; and he rose and said, with a savage scowl, "Never mind, I'll be even with you yet. And as to you, you dirty cheat—" he said, pointing to the baker. The enchantment had been dispelled. The baker struck the corporal in the face. In a moment the room rang with curses and blows. The woman whispered to her husband, and at once a madness seemed to animate them both. Two foemen and a fury were too much, even for a dragoon, and he fell prostrate beneath their blows. The woman struck him as he lay, till they assured her he was dead.

The reaction of their awful passions left them actually without energy to act. That night they could not even must up resolution to dispose of the body of the murdered man; for the night it was left weltering in blood; at a late hour the baker slunk away to his own house, and the weaver and his wife retired—to rest! Betimes next morning the three were in conclave at the weaver's house. It was then the weaver's wife had noticed the incidents of the barge, which she afterwards turned to such account. The men bore the body to the cellar, and there buried it in the best way they were able, whilst the woman busied herself in washing the stains of blood away.

Their tasks were done, and they stood consulting how they should account for the disappearance of their victim, when suddenly each breath was held—a noise of hurrying feet—loud exclamation against the doers of some hideous act. It seems like a dream, a fearful dream, but it is real. An angry mob is gathered around the door. Every moment seems an age to the three wretches. A cry soon rouses them from their stupor. From amid the hubbub of imprecations there rises a shout of "Make way for the police!" succeeded by the demand of the police to "Stand back, in the name of the law!"

Sheer despair gives courage to the woman. Advancing to the door, she boldly throws it open. Can she believe her eyes? A friendly greeting from a neighbor. It is not their house the mob is thronging about. There has been a burglary, and the police are entering—next door. For the moment they are saved. But for the moment only, unless they can avert suspicion from the

house. Quick as thought, the ready-witted jade has apprehended the real position of affairs, and arranged a plan to suit it; and in a few words the bold, bad woman, laid before them the product of her plotting brain. They stood lost in admiration of the plan. She urged them to instant action in support of it. "Out and among them, thou craven!" she cried, as she half-pushed her husband into the street. "You too, Master Baker, you must not be seen here. Away with you, and spread the rumor. I will take them to the Blue Trooper's first. Stay, marvelous good fortune! here's the trooper's handkerchief, I declare!"

The baker's evil genius was nettled at the woman's quickness and finesse, and devised a fitting pendant of his own. Drawing from his pocket a piece of paper covered with calculations made in pencil, he produced it triumphantly to the weaver and his wife. The latter were at a loss to guess what he intended. He turned to the other side of the paper, and there stood the Blue Trooper's name. It was an excise permit.

A curious circumstance connected with the case was, that the possession of this document by the baker was purely accidental. Some months ago he had made a bargain at the Blue Trooper's inn; and the permit, as no longer of any use, had been handed him for the purpose of making certain calculations.

They were now all in the street. How well they played their parts we have already seen. Their very success appeared to them fraught with a fresh peril. They knew the danger of having diverted suspicion into a wrong channel. The tide might chance to roll back upon themselves. The day the trooper was sentenced to the rack they met to deliberate on the progress of affairs. The woman devised the "corporal's letter." It met with acclamation. Over-caution in the execution proved fatal to the success of a subtilely contrived plan.

The double trial now went on apace. The Dutch law at that period recognized no distinction in the punishment of the two crimes. The baker, the weaver, the carpenter, his housekeeper, and his man, underwent the extreme penalty of the law on the same day. The weaver's wife anticipated her fate by committing suicide in jail.

*Flag of Our Union*, Feb 9, 1861