



MAX HAVELAAR

OR, THE COFFEE AUCTIONS OF
THE DUTCH TRADING COMPANY

MULTATULI

INTRODUCTION BY
PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER

MULTATULI (the pen name of Eduard Douwes Dekker; 1820–1887) was born in Amsterdam and served as a colonial official in the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia) for almost twenty years. His protests against abuses in the Dutch colonial system led to tension with his superiors and eventually to his resignation in 1856. He hoped that the novel *Max Havelaar* (1860), by bringing the problems to public attention, would lead to meaningful reform and his reinstatement as a senior official. The book was a great success and provoked public and political debate, eventually leading to changes in colonial policy, and Multatuli became a celebrated author. Yet he argued that these changes did not truly address the issues he had exposed, and was disappointed that *Max Havelaar* had not propelled him into an illustrious career in public administration or politics. He eventually concluded that Dutch colonialism was doomed to fail. Multatuli's social criticism continued in his later work, such as the popular play *School for Princes* (1872) and the semiautobiographical novel *Woutertje Pieterse* (1890), about a young boy in late eighteenth-century Amsterdam. Today he is regarded as Holland's greatest writer of the nineteenth century and the father of contemporary Dutch literature. His many admirers have included D. H. Lawrence and Sigmund Freud.

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Or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company

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Translated from the Dutch by

INA RILKE

and DAVID McKAY

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PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT fifty years ago, at a diplomatic reception in London, one man stood out: he was short by European standards, and thin, and he wore a black fez-like hat over his white hair. From his mouth came an unending cloud of aromatic smoke that permeated the reception hall. This man was Agus Salim, the Republic of Indonesia's first ambassador to Great Britain. Referred to in his country as the Grand Old Man, Salim was among the first generation of Indonesians to have received a Western education. In this regard, he was a rare species, for at the end of Dutch hegemony over Indonesia in 1943, no more than 3.5 percent of the country's population could read or write.

Not surprisingly, Salim's appearance and demeanor—not to mention the strange smell of his cigarettes—quickly turned him into the center of attention. One gentleman put into words the question that was on everyone's lips: "What is that thing you're smoking, sir?"

"That, Your Excellency," Salim is reported to have said, "is the reason for which the West conquered the world!" In fact he was smoking a *kretek*, an Indonesian cigarette spiced with clove, which for centuries was one of the world's most sought-after spices.

Is my tale about an Indonesian at the court of King James the greatest story of the millennium? Certainly not, though I must smile at the irreverence shown by my countryman. I include it here because it touches on what I would argue are the two most important "processes" of the millennium: the search for spices by Western countries, which brought alien

nations and cultures into contact with one another for the first time; and the expansion of educational opportunities, which returned to the colonized peoples of the world a right they had been forced to forfeit under Western colonization—the right to determine their own futures.

The latter process is exemplified by what is now an almost unknown literary work: *Max Havelaar: Or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*, a novel by Eduard Douwes Dekker, a Dutchman, which he published in 1859 under the pseudonym Multatuli (Latin for “I have suffered greatly”). The book recounts the experiences of one Max Havelaar, an idealistic Dutch colonial official in Java. In the story, Havelaar encounters—and then rebels against—the system of forced cultivation imposed on Indonesia’s peasants by the Dutch government.

D. H. Lawrence, in his introduction to the 1927 English translation of the novel, called it a most “irritating” work. “On the surface, *Max Havelaar* is a tract or a pamphlet very much in the same line as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” Lawrence wrote.

Instead of “pity the poor Negro slave” we have “pity the poor oppressed Javanese”; with the same urgent appeal for legislation, for the Government to do something about it. Well, the [American] Government did do something about Negro slaves, and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* fell out of date. The Netherlands Government is also said to have done something in Java for the poor, on the strength of Multatuli’s book. So that *Max Havelaar* became a back number.

Before telling you more about *Max Havelaar* and its author, I would like to go back in time, even before the start of the last

millennium, to tell you about the search for spices. The key word to remember here is religion.

For hundreds of years, spices—clove, nutmeg, and pepper—were the primary cause of religious conflict. Their value was inestimable: as food preservative (essential in the age before refrigeration), as medicine, and, at a time when the variety of food was almost unfathomably limited, for taste.

In AD 711, Moorish forces conquered Córdoba in southern Spain. By 756, the Muslim ruler Abd al-Rahman proclaimed that he had achieved his goal of spreading Islamic culture and trade throughout Spain. That country became the world's center for the study of science and the guardian of Greek and Roman learning that had been banned by the Roman Catholic Church. By controlling the land on both sides of the entrance to the Mediterranean, the Moors were also able to maintain control over trade with the East, the source of spices and other important goods. Christian ships were not allowed to pass.

For several centuries, the development of the Christian countries of Europe came to a virtual standstill; all available human and economic resources were being poured into the Crusades. The Holy Wars were waged not just to reclaim Jerusalem but also to expel the Moors from Spain and, in so doing, gain control over the spice trade.

In 1236, the Catholic forces of Europe finally succeeded. Islam was pushed out of Europe. To their credit, the victors refrained from vandalizing symbols of Moorish heritage. Nonetheless, revenge toward Islam continued to burn—as did the passion to drive Muslim forces from any country they reached.

The first place to fall was Ceuta in Morocco on Africa's north coast, which, along with Gibraltar, has always served as the

gateway to the Mediterranean. With this, the Europeans had established an important toehold in wresting control of the spice trade. The problem was, they had little idea where spices actually came from.

Spain and Portugal, Europe's two great seafaring nations of the time, set out to find the answer. To preserve order among Catholic countries, a line of demarcation was drawn (later made official by Pope Alexander VI in 1493), giving Spain the right to conquer all non-Christian lands to the west of the Cape Verde Islands, and Portugal the authority to take pagan countries to the east of the islands and as far as the 125th meridian (which falls near the Philippines). It was for this reason that Columbus, helmsman for the Spanish fleet, sailed west and found a continent instead of the source of spices. Portugal, on the other hand, sent its ships eastward to Africa, from which they returned laden with gold, ostrich eggs, and slaves—but no spices.

In early 1498, Vasco da Gama reached the island of Madagascar, off the coast of east Africa. There he found a guide to lead him across the Indian Ocean to the port of Calicut in southwestern India. Arriving on May 20, da Gama "discovered" India. Unfortunately for the weary sailor, he also found that of the spices he sought, only cinnamon was in abundance. To reach the true source of spices, he would have to sail thousands of miles southeast to what is now known as Indonesia and then on to the Moluccas (located, incidentally, in Spain's half of the world). Over the next century, the Portuguese forged their way southeast, consolidating Muslim-held trade routes and converting souls along the way. By the time da Gama's ships made it to the Moluccas in the middle of the sixteenth century, much of Africa and Malaya had been

subjugated in the name of both trade and Christ.

Other travelers had visited the region before—including Marco Polo—but it was the Portuguese who established the first permanent foreign presence. With the help of handheld firearms, Portugal quickly spread its power across the archipelago. In no time, the country controlled the spice route from beginning to end.

There was a problem, though. Portugal lacked the population required to support a maritime force capable of controlling half of the non-Catholic world. As a result, it was forced to hire sailors from Germany, France, and especially the Netherlands. This weakness would eventually spell the downfall of its monopoly in the spice trade.

One Dutch sailor in the Portuguese fleet, Jan Huygen van Linschoten, made extensive notes during his six years of travel throughout the archipelago. He paid particular attention to the weaknesses of his employers. Portugal, not surprisingly, had done its best to mask its vulnerabilities, but all these were exposed in 1596, when van Linschoten returned home and published *A Journey, or Sailing to Portugal India or East India*. The book—a virtual travel guide to the region—was quickly translated into French, English, German, and Latin.

Two years after van Linschoten's work was published, the Netherlands, through a consortium of Dutch companies, sent its own fleet to Indonesia. The Dutch fleet's first attempt failed, but gradually, wave after wave of Dutch ships reached the islands, driving out the Portuguese and bringing untold wealth to the Netherlands. Lacking not only manpower but also the diplomatic stature to protect its interests, the Portuguese were unable even to put up a fight.

In part, the success of the Dutch can be attributed to their

good working relationship with Java's powerful feudal lords and to their professionalism. Initially at least, they had come to trade, not to conquer, and on that basis created what was then the largest maritime emporium in the world at their seat in Batavia (now Jakarta).

Over time, however, the Dutch shippers needed military force to safeguard their monopoly. To keep international market prices high, they also limited spice production. For this reason, almost the entire populace of the Banda Islands, which was the source of nutmeg, was exterminated in the early seventeenth century. The island was then stocked with European employees of the Dutch East India company. For field workers they brought in slaves and prisoners of war.

Also for the purpose of controlling spice production, people from the Moluccas were forcibly conscripted, placed in an armada of traditional Moluccan boats, and sent off to destroy competitors' nutmeg and clove estates. Buru Island, where I was a political prisoner from 1969 to 1979, was turned from an island of agricultural estates into a vast savanna.

Let us now fast-forward to the mid-nineteenth century. As a result of the Napoleonic and Java wars, the Netherlands and the East Indies had entered an economic downturn. Sugar, coffee, tea, and indigo had replaced spices as the archipelago's cash crops, but with increased domestic production and limited purchasing power abroad, they were becoming unprofitable for the Dutch consortium. To replenish profits, Governor-General Johannes van den Bosch decided that the government must be able to guarantee long-term property rights for investors and that a fixed supply of crops should be exported every year.

To that end, van den Bosch put into effect on Java a system

of forced cultivation, known as cultuurstelsel in which farmers were obliged to surrender a portion of production from their land to the colonial government. Through this plan, the government was able to reverse the Netherlands' economic decline in just three years. Java, however, was turned into an agricultural sweatshop. In addition to surrendering land for government-designated production and paying high taxes to the Dutch and "tithes" to local overlords, peasants were forbidden by law to move away from their hometowns. When famine hit or crops failed, there was literally no way out. As a result, tens of thousands of peasants died of hunger. Meanwhile, Dutch authorities and feudal lords grew richer by the day.

On October 13, 1859, in Brussels, Eduard Douwes Dekker, a former employee of the Dutch Indies government, finished *Max Havelaar*. Concern for the impact of the colonial policies on the Indonesian people had marked the career of Dekker, who originally studied to be a minister. When he was posted in North Sumatra, he defended a village chief who had been tortured, and unwittingly found himself on the opposite side of a courtroom from his superior. As a result, he was transferred to West Sumatra, where he protested the government's efforts to incite ethnic rivalry. Before long, he was called back to Batavia. Only his writing skills saved him from getting the sack entirely. After a few more bumpy stops, Dekker wound up in West Java. It was there, when Dekker was twenty-nine, that his disillusionment came to a head and he resigned. Judging from his autobiographical novel, we can assume he wrote the governor-general something like this: "Your Excellency has *sanctioned* THE SYSTEM OF ABUSE OF AUTHORITY, OF ROBBERY AND MURDER, THAT WEIGHS SO

HEAVILY ON THE POOR JAVANESE, and *that* is my grievance. . . . Blood clings to the coins you have saved from the salary you have earned *thus*, Your Excellency!" He returned to Europe—not to the Netherlands but to Belgium, where he poured his experiences into *Max Havelaar*.

Dekker's style is far from refined. In depicting the *cultuurstelsel* he writes:

The government obliges the farmer to grow particular crops on his own land on pain of punishment if he sells the yield to anyone other than the government, while it is up to the government to decide how much he will be paid. The cost of transport to Europe, carried out by privileged trading companies, is high. The money given to the chiefs as encouragement further inflates the purchasing price, and . . . since the business as a whole must necessarily make a profit, the only solution is to pay the Javanese farmer just enough to keep him from starving. . . .

Famine? In the rich, fertile, blessed land of Java—famine? Indeed, reader. Only a few years ago entire districts died of starvation. Mothers offered their children for sale to obtain food. Mothers even ate their own children . . .

The publication of *Max Havelaar* in 1859 was nothing less than earthshaking. Just as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* gave ammunition to the American abolitionist movement, *Max Havelaar* became the weapon for a growing liberal movement in the Netherlands, which fought to bring about reform in Indonesia. Helped by *Max Havelaar*, the energized liberal movement was able to shame the Dutch government into creating a new policy known as the ethical policy, the major

goals of which were to promote irrigation, interisland migration, and education in the Dutch Indies.

The impact of the reforms was modest at first. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, a small number of Indonesians, primarily the children of traditional rulers, were beginning to feel their effects. One of them was Agus Salim, the man with the clove cigarette, whose reading of Max Havelaar in school proved an awakening. He, along with other Indonesians educated in Dutch, fostered a movement for emancipation and freedom, which eventually led, in the 1940s, to full-scale revolution.

The Indonesian revolution not only gave birth to a new country; it also sparked the call for revolution in Africa, which in turn awakened ever more of the world's colonized peoples and signaled the end of European colonial domination. Perhaps, in a sense, it could be no other way. After all, wasn't the world colonized by Europe because of Indonesia's Spice Islands? One could say that it was Indonesia's destiny to initiate the decolonization process.

To Multatuli—Eduard Douwes Dekker—whose work sparked this process, this world owes a great debt.

—PRAMOEDYA ANANTA TOER
Translated by John H. McGlynn
1999

MAX HAVELAAR

*To the much-revered memory of
Everdine Huberte, Baroness Van Wynbergen
faithful wife
heroic, loving mother
noble lady*

I have often heard words of pity for the poet's wife, and there is no doubt that, to fill that demanding post in life with dignity, a woman cannot possess too many good qualities. The most exceptional range of merits is the least of her requirements, and not even always sufficient for common happiness. Having the Muse as a third party to the most private conversations, embracing and giving succor to the poet you have for a husband when he returns to you sickened by the frustrations of his task, or seeing him go chasing after some chimera—such is the daily routine of a poet's wife. Yes, but there are also compensations, the honors of laurels earned by the sweat of his genius, which are humbly laid at the feet of the lawful beloved wife, in the lap of the Antigone who guides the "errant blind man" through this world.

For make no mistake: nearly all Homer's grandsons are more or less blind, in their own way. They see what we fail to see, their gaze pierces higher and deeper than ours, but they can't see the ordinary little path right in front of them and might easily stumble and fall over the merest pebble if they had no support in traveling the valleys of prose where life resides.

—HENRY DE PÈNE

OFFICER OF THE COURT: My lord, here is the man who murdered Little Barbara.

JUDGE: That man must hang. How did he go about it?

OFFICER OF THE COURT: He cut her to bits and pickled her.

JUDGE: That was very wrong of him. He must hang.

LOTHARIO: My lord, I did not murder Little Barbara! I fed her and clothed her and cared for her. There are witnesses who will testify that I am a good man, and not a murderer.

JUDGE: Now, look here, my man, you must hang! Your conceit only aggravates your crime. It's unseemly for a person who has, er, been accused of something to claim to be a good man.

LOTHARIO: But my lord, there are witnesses who will confirm it.
And since I'm accused of murder—

JUDGE: You must hang! You cut Little Barbara to pieces, pickled her, and are pleased with yourself . . . three capital offenses!
Who are you, young lady?

YOUNG LADY: I am Little Barbara.

LOTHARIO: Thank God! My lord, you can see I didn't murder her!

JUDGE: Hmm . . . yes . . . well, well! But what about the pickling?

LITTLE BARBARA: No, my lord, he didn't pickle me. On the contrary, he's been very good to me. He has a noble heart!

LOTHARIO: There you have it, my lord. She says I'm a good man.

JUDGE: Hmm . . . so the *third* charge remains. Officer, take this man away; he must hang. He is guilty of conceit. Clerk, cite Lessing's patriarch as case law in the grounds.

(*Unpublished play*)

FIRST CHAPTER¹

→ *Max Havelaar narrator?*

I AM A coffee broker and live in a canal-side house at N° 37 Lauriergracht. It is not my habit to write novels or suchlike, so it was some time before I could bring myself to order a few extra reams of paper and commence the work that you, dear reader, have just taken up, which you must read if you're a coffee broker, or if you're anything else. Not only have I never written anything resembling a novel, but I don't even care to read the things, because I am a man of business. For years I've wondered what could be the use of such stuff, and I'm amazed at the shamelessness with which poets or novelists will dare to tell you some tale that never happened, and in most cases never could. In *my* line of work—I am a coffee broker and live in a canal-side house at N° 37 Lauriergracht—I could never furnish my principal—a principal is a person who sells coffee—with a statement containing even the smallest fraction of the untruths that make up the body of poems and novels: he'd go over to Busselinck & Waterman quick as a wink. They're coffee brokers too, but you don't need to know *their* address. So I've always taken care not to write novels, or supply any other false statements. It has always been my observation that people who go in for such things tend to come to a bad end. I'm forty-three years old and have frequented the Exchange for twenty years, so if it's the voice of experience you seek, I'm your man. I've seen more than a few houses fall! And usually, when I looked into the underlying causes, it seemed to me that the people involved had been led astray in their childhood.

Truth and common sense, I say, and I'll stick to it. For Scripture I make an exception, of course. The error begins in

the very first line of Van Alphen's nursery rhymes: "sweet babes." What on earth could have led that elderly gentleman to play the doting admirer of my little sister Trudy, who had pink eye, or of my brother Gerrit, who was forever fiddling with his nose? And yet he makes excuses for his verse, claiming that "each word thereof / was inspired by *love*." As a child, I often thought, "I wish I could meet you someday, and if you refused to give me the marbles I'd ask you for, or my whole name—*Batavus*—spelled out in pastry letters, then I'd declare you a liar." But I never met Van Alphen. He was already dead, I believe, by the time we learned from his rhymes that my father was my best friend—I preferred Pauweltje Winser, who lived next door to us on Batavierstraat—and that my little dog was so grateful. We didn't have dogs, because they're filthy creatures.

Nothing but lies! That's how children are reared. Your new baby sister came from the vegetable woman in a big cabbage. All Dutchmen are brave and generous of heart. The Romans were grateful to the Batavians for sparing their lives. The Bey of Tunis was seized with colic when he heard the fluttering of the Dutch flag. The Duke of Alva was a monster. Low tide lasted a bit longer than usual—in 1672, I think it was—for the sole purpose of protecting the Netherlands. Lies! The Netherlands has stayed *the Netherlands* because our forefathers took care of business, and because they had the true faith. That's all there is to it!

And later there are more lies. Little girls are angels. Whoever made that discovery never had sisters. Love is sheer bliss. Lovers flee, for some purpose or other, to the ends of the earth. But the earth has no ends, and besides, love is folly. No one can claim that my wife and I don't live well—she's the

daughter of Burden & C^o, coffee brokers—and no one can find any fault with our marriage. I am a member of the Artis Society, her shawl cost ninety-two guilders, and as for the kind of crazy love that makes you want to live at the ends of the earth, we have never felt any such thing. After our wedding, we took a jaunt to The Hague—she bought flannel there; I still wear the undershirts today—and beyond that, love has never driven us out into the world. In short, all foolishness and lies!

Is it possible that *I* am less happily married than the people whose love makes them waste away or tear out their hair? Do you think my household would be any better off if, seventeen years ago, I had told my girl in *verse* that I wanted to marry her? Balderdash! I could have done it just as well as the next man; writing verses is a craft, certainly not as hard as turning ivory. Why else would those lozenges with rhymes on their wrappers cost next to nothing? (Frits calls them “pastilles”—don’t ask me why.) You should look into the price of billiard balls!

I have nothing against rhymes as such. If you want to regiment your words, fine! But don’t say things that aren’t true. “A cold wind blew, at half past two.” Fine by me, as long it really was windy and half past two. But if it was quarter to three, then I, who don’t regiment my words, can say, “A cold wind blew at a quarter to three.” Just because the wind in the first line *blew*, the rhymer must make sure the second line ends with *two*. It has to be *half past two*, or *ten to two*, or what have you, or else he has to stop the wind from blowing. *Quarter to two* is forbidden by the meter. So he makes a hash of things! Either the weather has to change, or the time does. That makes one of the two a lie.

And those rhymes aren’t the only things that lure our

very literal

children into untruthfulness. Just go to the theater sometime and hear the lies they tell. The play's hero is saved from drowning by a man on the verge of bankruptcy. Then he gives his savior half his fortune. That can't be right. When I was walking along Prinsengracht the other day my hat fell into the canal, and a man dove in—Frits says "dived"—to retrieve it, for which I gave him a few stivers, and he was satisfied. I know I'd be expected to give him a little more if he had fished *me* out of the water instead of my hat, but certainly not half my fortune. If that were the rule, falling into the water just twice would leave you penniless. The worst thing about those theatrical spectacles: the audience is so accustomed to all the untruths that they cheer and clap and enjoy them. I once found myself wishing I could throw all the pit seats into the water, to discover whose cheers had been sincere. I, who love the truth, warn you all that I will not pay such a high salvage fee for my person. If you won't be satisfied with less, just leave me there. Only on Sundays would I give a little more, because that's when I wear my braided gold watch chain and a different coat.

Yes, the stage has brought many people to ruin, even more than novels. It's all so vivid! A little gold paint and some lace cut from folded-up paper—it looks so enticing. To children, I mean, and to those who are not in business. Even when those theater people play at poverty, their plays are always full of lies. A girl whose father has gone bankrupt works to support the family. Very good. There she sits, sewing, knitting, or embroidering. But just try counting how many stitches she makes in the course of the whole act. She talks, she sighs, she goes to the window, but she does not work. To live on her earnings, her family must have modest needs. And of course, this girl is the heroine. She throws a few suitors down the

stairs, all the while crying out, "Oh, Mother, oh, Mother!" so she must be a model of virtue. What kind of virtue takes a whole year to knit one pair of woolen stockings? Doesn't all this paint a false picture of virtue, and of "working for a living"? Foolishness and lies, all of it!

Then her first love—once a clerk with a copybook, but now as rich as Croesus—turns up again all of a sudden, and marries her. Once again, lies. A man of means does not marry a girl from a bankrupt house. But even if you think an exception can be made for the stage, my objection stands—namely, that the common people's sense of truth is corrupted, that the exception is taken for the rule, and that public morality is undermined by the custom of cheering for something on *stage* that any respectable broker or trader would regard as ridiculous madness out in the *world*. When I was married, there were thirteen of us working at the offices of my father-in-law—Burden & C°—and business was booming!

And there are still more lies in the theater. When the hero goes off, with his stiff playhouse stride, to save his oppressed homeland, why do the double doors always swing open on their own? And on top of that, how can one person speaking in verse predict what the next one is going to say, and make the rhyme easy for him? When the General says to the princess, "Too late, Your Highness, they have shut the gates," how does he know she's going to say, "Unsheathe your blade, then. Victory awaits!" What if, after hearing that the gates were shut, she replied that she'd wait for someone to open them, or that she'd come back another day? Where would that leave rhyme and meter? So isn't it a pure fabrication that the General turns to the princess to inquire what she might like to do after the

gates are shut? And anyway, what if the woman had been more interested in a good night's sleep than in unsheathing anything? All lies!

And then there's virtue's reward! Dear, dear, dear! I've been a coffee broker for seventeen years—N° 37 Lauriergracht—so I've witnessed a thing or two, but it always shocks me to the marrow to see the good, sweet truth so twisted. Virtue, rewarded? Doesn't that turn virtue into a commodity? That's *not* the way of the world, and it's a *good* thing, too. For what merit would virtue have if it were rewarded? So what's the point of all those infamous lies?

Take, for example, Lukas, our warehouseman, who used to work for Burden & C^o's father—it was the firm of Burden & Meyer back then, but the Meyers left a long time ago—now, *he* was a virtuous man. Not a single bean went missing, he never missed a Sunday service, and he didn't drink. Whenever my father-in-law was out in the country, he looked after the house, and the cash box, and everything else. The bank once gave him seventeen guilders too much, and he brought it back. He's old and gouty nowadays, and no longer of any use. Now he has nothing, because business is brisk for us, and we need young blood. So you see, I consider old Lukas remarkably virtuous, but has he been rewarded? Has a prince come along to give him diamonds, or a fairy to butter his bread? Decidedly not! Poor he is, and poor he'll stay—that's how it was meant to be. I can't help him—we need young people, with business brisk as it is right now—but even if I were able to help, what would become of Lukas's merit if he could lead an easy life in his old age? If that were possible, all ware-housemen would become virtuous, and so would everybody else, and that can't be what God intended, because

virtuous

then there'd be no special reward left for the righteous in the hereafter. But on stage they twist the facts . . . all lies!

I, too, am virtuous, but do I seek reward? When business is going well—and it is . . . when my wife and child are healthy and I don't have any fuss with doctors and apothecaries . . . when I can put aside a little money, year after year, for my old age . . . when I see Frits growing into a fine young man who can fill in for me, later, when I retire . . . why, then I'm well contented. But all this is the natural consequence of the circumstances, and because I take care of business. In return for my virtue, I demand nothing.

Yet the fact that *I am* virtuous is clear from my love of the truth. That's my foremost quality, after religious devotion. And I hope you're convinced of that, reader, because it's my excuse for writing this book.

A second trait, which has just as strong a hold on me as the love of truth, is my passion for my trade. You see, I'm a coffee broker, N° 37 Lauriergracht. So there you have it, reader: it's thanks to my unimpeachable love of the truth and my nose for business that these pages were written. I'll tell you how it all came about. As I must now leave you for the moment—I'm wanted at the Exchange—I invite you to join me again shortly for the second chapter. See you soon!

Hang on, I've got something for you . . . won't take a moment . . . may come in handy . . . ah, see, here it is: my business card! "C°," that's me, ever since the Meyers left . . . old Burden is my father-in-law.

BURDEN & C°
COFFEE BROKERS

Nº 37 Lauriergracht

SECOND CHAPTER

BUSINESS has been slack at the Exchange, but the spring auction will doubtless put things right. Don't imagine we're at a standstill, though. At Busselinck & Waterman things are even slacker. A strange world! But nothing new to anyone with some twenty years' experience at the Exchange. Just imagine, Busselinck & Waterman were plotting to poach Ludwig Stern from me. I don't know how familiar you are with the Exchange, but suffice it to say that Stern is a leading coffee company in Hamburg that has always been served by Burden & C^o. It was by sheer chance that I found out . . . about Busselinck & Waterman's underhanded behavior, I mean. They were prepared to drop the brokerage fee by a quarter of a percent—undercutters, that's what they are, nothing more, nothing less—and here's what I did to scupper their plans. Anybody else in my position might well have written to Ludwig Stern saying that he too could offer a reduction, and that he hoped they wouldn't forget their long-standing association with Burden & C^o. . . . I've calculated that our company has made four hundred thousand guilders off Stern in the past fifty years. The connection dates from the days of the Continental System, when we smuggled colonial goods in by way of Helgoland. Well, who knows what somebody else might have written. But no, an undercutter I am not. I went to Café Polen,² asked for a pen and paper, and wrote to him, saying:

That the considerable growth of our business, thanks largely to the numerous esteemed orders from Northern Germany . . .

It's the truth, pure and simple!

. . . that the aforementioned growth has necessitated employing additional staff.

It's the truth! Only last night the bookkeeper was at the office until past eleven, hunting for his spectacles.

That above all the need has arisen for respectable, well-brought-up young men to conduct our German correspondence. That there are, admittedly, plenty of German youths in Amsterdam who possess the required skills, but that a self-respecting company . . .

It's the truth, pure and simple!

. . . mindful of the rise in frivolity and immorality among the young, and the number of fortune hunters growing by the day, and with a view to the need for proper conduct, hand in hand with proper execution of orders . . .

It's the truth, the honest truth!

. . . that such a company—I was referring to Burden & C°, coffee brokers, N° 37 Lauriergracht—cannot be too careful in the matter of engaging staff—

All this is the honest truth, reader! Do you realize that the young German fellow next to pillar 17 at the Exchange has run off with Busselinck & Waterman's daughter? Come to think of it, our Marie will be thirteen next September . . .

. . . that I had the honor of hearing from Mr. Saffeler—Saffeler travels for Stern—that the estimable director of the company, Mr. Ludwig Stern, has a son, Mr. Ernest Stern, who is seeking a spell of employment in a Dutch establishment for the purpose of broadening his commercial knowledge. That I, mindful of this . . .

Here I repeated the stuff about immorality, and told him about the elopement of Busselinck & Waterman's daughter. Not to pour scorn, oh no, far be it from me to stoop to defamation! Still . . . no harm in him being aware, it seems to me.

. . . that for this reason I would like nothing better than to have Mr. Ernest Stern take charge of our company's German correspondence.

Out of delicacy, I refrained from alluding to any kind of fee or salary. But I did add:

That, should it suit Mr. Ernest Stern, he is welcome to stay at our house³—N° 37 Lauriergracht. My wife has declared herself willing to care for him as a mother, and to see to the mending of his linen.

This is the honest truth, because Marie is a sweet darning and mender. And finally:

That in my house we serve the Lord.

That'll make him sit up and take notice, because the Sterns are Lutheran. And I sent that letter. Obviously, old Stern can't very well switch to Busselinck & Waterman while his boy is employed in our office. I am very curious as to his reply.

Now, to return to my book. I was walking down Kalverstraat the other evening when I stopped to look in the shop of a grocer who was busy sorting a batch of java middling quality, a good yellow, Cheribon type, slightly broken, with sweepings. My interest was immediately aroused, for I'm always on the alert. Suddenly I became aware of a man standing in front of the bookshop next door. He looked familiar, and seemed to

recognize me, too, because our eyes kept meeting. I have to say I was too engrossed in the sweepings to notice his clothing, which, as I discovered later, was rather shabby. Otherwise I'd have left it at that. But it flashed across my mind that he might be a traveler for a German company who was casting around for a dependable broker. There was certainly something German about him, something of the traveler, too. His hair was very fair, he had blue eyes, and his bearing and dress betrayed a certain foreignness. Instead of a proper overcoat he wore a shawl of some sort over his shoulder, as if he'd just returned from a trip abroad. Thinking he might be a client, I gave him my card: BURDEN & C^o, COFFEE BROKERS, N^o 37 LAURIERGRACHT. He held it up to the gas lamp, and said: "Thank you very much, but I seem to have made a mistake. I thought I had the pleasure of seeing an old schoolmate of mine, but . . . Burden? That wasn't his name."

"I beg your pardon," I said—I'm always polite—"I am Mr. Drystubble, Batavus Drystubble. Burden & C^o is the name of the company, coffee brokers on Lauriergracht."

"Well then, Drystubble, don't you remember me? Take another look."

The longer I looked the more familiar he seemed. Strangely, though, his face made me think of exotic fragrances. Don't laugh, reader, for all will be revealed soon enough. I'm sure he hadn't a drop of perfume on him, yet I could smell something pleasant, something strong, something that reminded me of . . . ah, that was it!

"Is it *you*?" I exclaimed. "You're the one who rescued me from the Greek, aren't you?"

"Certainly," he said. "That's me. And how are *you*?"

I told him there were thirteen of us at the office, and that

business was brisk. Then I asked him how he was, which I soon regretted, because it turned out he was suffering financial difficulties, and I have no liking for the poor. More often than not it's their own fault: our Lord wouldn't forsake a man who's been a faithful servant. Had I simply said, "There are thirteen of us, and . . . I wish you a good evening!" that would have been the end of it. But with all the questions and answers it became more and more difficult—Frits says *increasingly* difficult, but not I—*more and more* difficult, then, to get rid of him. On the other hand I must admit that if I'd sent him packing you wouldn't now be reading this book, as it resulted from that encounter. I prefer to look on the bright side, and people who don't are malcontents, and I have no time for them.

Yes, of course, he was the boy who rescued me from the Greek! No, I hadn't been captured by pirates, nor had I got into trouble in the Levant. I've already mentioned that my wife and I went to The Hague when we got married, and that we saw the Mauritshuis there, and bought some flannel in Veenestraat. That's the only outing my work has ever permitted, business is that brisk. It was actually in Amsterdam that he gave the Greek a bloody nose—for my sake. He was always interfering in other people's affairs.

It was in '33 or '34, I believe, and in September, the month of the fair. As my parents had high hopes for me as a clergyman, I was learning Latin. I often asked myself why you needed to know Latin to say "God is good" in Dutch. But enough of that. As I said, I was a pupil at the Latin school—they call it a grammar school nowadays—and there was a fair at Westermarkt . . . in Amsterdam I mean. The square was filled with stalls, and if you're an Amsterdammer, reader, and

roughly my age, you'll remember one stall that stood out from the rest thanks to the dark eyes and long braids of a girl in a Greek costume. Her father was Greek, too—he looked Greek, anyway. They sold scents and toiletries.

I was just of an age to notice the girl's beauty, without, however, having the nerve to address her. Not that it would have done me any good, because girls of eighteen take a boy of sixteen for a child. And right they are, too. Nevertheless, the boys in our class made for the Westermarkt every night just to see that girl.

It was on one of those evenings that the fellow standing before me now with his shawl over his shoulder joined our group, despite being a few years younger and therefore too childish to take an interest in the Greek girl. But he was at the top of our class. He was brainy, I must admit, and liked rough games, horseplay, and fighting. That was why he'd joined us. There we were—about ten of us—eyeing the Greek girl from some distance and discussing ways of getting to know her, when we finally decided to club together to buy something at the stall. However, we couldn't agree on which one of us should speak to the girl. All of us wanted to, but nobody dared. We drew lots, and the lot fell on me. Well, I must admit I'm not much of a risk taker. I am a husband and father, and as far as I'm concerned anyone who courts danger is a fool, whatever the Bible says. Indeed, I'm pleased to see that my views on danger and the like have remained constant, because I feel exactly the same about such things as I did that evening at the fair, standing there clutching the twelve coins we'd collected between us. But in my misguided shame I didn't dare say that I didn't dare. Besides, I had no choice, as my friends pushed me forward until I was right in front of the

stall.

I didn't see the girl: I saw nothing! All went green and yellow before my eyes, and I stammered the Aoristus Primus of some verb or other.

"*Plaît-il?*" she said.

I recovered myself somewhat, and continued:

"*Meenin aeide thea*, and . . . Egypt was a gift from the Nile."

I don't doubt I'd have made friends with her if one of my boisterous companions hadn't given me such a violent shove that I flew headlong into the waist-high display at the front of the stall. I felt a hand grab my neck . . . and another lower down . . . I hovered briefly in midair . . . and before I knew it I was inside the stall with the Greek, who said, in passable French, that I was a gamin and that he'd call the police. Now I was close to the girl, but in no position to enjoy it. I wept in terror and begged for mercy, all to no avail. The Greek gripped me by the arm and kicked me. I looked around for my friends —only that morning we'd learned all about Scaevela, who thrust his hand in the fire and whose bravery we'd all praised in our Latin compositions—oh yes! But not one of them had stayed around to thrust his hand in the fire on *my* account.

Or so I thought, when lo, all of a sudden my Shawlman burst into the stall from the rear. He was neither tall nor strong, and only about thirteen, but he was agile and plucky. I can still see the glint in his eyes—which were otherwise dull—as he dealt the Greek a blow with his fist, and I was saved. Later I was given to understand that he'd received a sound beating from the Greek, but as it's a firm principle of mine to mind my own business I ran off straightaway, and didn't get to see it.

So much, then, for the reason why his features reminded me so strongly of perfume, and of how you can come to blows

Nice; after the guy saves him away

with a Greek in Amsterdam. From then on, whenever that man turned up at the fair with his stall, I gave him a wide berth.

As I'm very partial to philosophical reflection, reader, allow me to comment on the wondrous way the affairs of this world hang together. Had that girl's eyes been less dark, had her braids not been quite so long, or had I not been shoved into that stall at the fair, you wouldn't be reading this book. So you can be grateful things went as they did. Believe me, all's well with the world just as it is, and those malcontents who never stop complaining are no friends of mine. Take Busselinck & Waterman, for instance . . . but I must move on, because I want my book to be finished before the spring auction.

To put it bluntly—for I love the truth—my reacquaintance with that schoolfellow was no pleasure to me. I could tell at a glance that he wasn't reliable. He was very pale, and when I asked him what time it was, he couldn't tell me. It's details like these that you can't help noticing if you've spent twenty years on the Exchange and gained such a wealth of experience. I've seen more than a few firms collapse!

I had the impression he would be turning right, so I said I was turning left. But there you are, he turned left as well, making it impossible to avoid a conversation. I kept thinking about him not knowing the time, and then I noticed that he had his jacket buttoned up to the chin—a very bad sign—so I made sure to maintain a noncommittal tone. He told me that he'd been in the Indies, that he was married, and that he had children. Which was all very well, but I couldn't see what it had to do with me. As we came to Kapelsteeg—an alley I would otherwise never go down, as it's unseemly for a respectable man to do so—I decided that today I'd make an exception. I waited until we were almost past the alley so as to be quite

sure that his direction was straight ahead, before saying, very politely—I'm always polite, as you never know when someone might come in handy:

"It was a great pleasure to see you again, Mister . . . er . . . er! And . . . and . . . and . . . my compliments to you. I have to turn down here."

He gave me a very strange look, and sighed. Then he suddenly grabbed hold of a button on my coat . . .

"My dear Drystubble," he said, "there's something I'd like to ask you."

I shuddered. The man didn't know the time, and now he wanted to ask me something! Naturally, I said I was in a hurry to get to the Exchange, even though it was evening. But when you've been going to the Exchange for some twenty-odd years . . . and someone wants to ask you something, a man who doesn't know the time . . .

I freed my button from his grasp, saluted most politely—I'm always polite—and turned into the alley, which I never do otherwise because it's not respectable, and I prize respectability above all else. I hope nobody saw me.

THIRD CHAPTER

ON MY RETURN from the Exchange the following day, Frits said someone had called to see me. From his description I gathered it was the man with the shawl. How he had found me? Well, my business card, of course. This made me consider removing the children from school, because it's simply too tiresome being pursued thirty or forty years on by a schoolmate who wears a shawl instead of a coat and doesn't know the time of day. And while I was about it, I forbade Frits from going to the Westermarkt when it's filled with stalls.

The next day I received a letter with a large parcel. I will show you the letter:

Dear Drystubble!

I think he'd have done better to say: *Dear sir.* After all, I am a broker.

I called yesterday to ask a favor. I believe you are in comfortable circumstances . . .

True enough: there are thirteen of us at the office.

. . . and I wished to solicit your assistance in bringing about something of great importance to me.

Why, anyone would think he wanted to place an order at the spring auction, or something of that nature.

For sundry reasons I am currently somewhat short of funds.

Somewhat? He had no shirt on his back. And he calls that *somewhat short!*

I am unable to provide my dear wife with all that is required to make life agreeable, and also the education of my children is not as I would wish, for pecuniary reasons.

Make life agreeable? Education of the children? Do you suppose he was thinking of renting a box at the opera for his wife, and sending his children to school in Geneva? It was autumn, and rather cold . . . well, it turned out he was living in a garret without a hearth. I wasn't aware of that when I received his letter, but I went to see him later, and even now the ridiculous tone of his missive grates on my ears. Hang it all, if a man is poor let him come out and say so! There have to be poor people, society requires it, and it's the will of God. So long as he doesn't ask for handouts or go around pestering people I have not the slightest objection to his being poor. It's the highfalutin style that is uncalled for. Listen on:

Since it is my duty to provide for the needs of my family, I have decided to take recourse to a talent which has, I believe, been bestowed on me. I am a poet . . .

Pooh! You know, reader, how I—and all right-thinking people—feel about them

... and a writer. Since early childhood I have expressed my

He is a want to be novelist though

He is thoughtful
interesting
theology

emotions in verse, and as I grew older I began to keep a journal of what went on in my soul. It is my belief that among all these writings there are some of more than personal value, and I aim to publish them. And that is where the difficulty lies. The public does not know me, and publishers are more inclined to judge a work by the reputation of its author than by the contents.

Just as we judge coffee by the name of the brand. Oh yes we do! How else?

Assuming that my work is not entirely without merit, therefore, such merit would transpire only after publication, and publishers demand advance payment for printing expenses and so forth . . .

As well they might.

. . . an impossibility under my present circumstances. However, convinced as I am that the proceeds of my work would cover the costs—I would confidently pledge my word on that—I have come to the conclusion, encouraged by our meeting the day before yesterday . . .

He calls that encouragement!

. . . that I should appeal to you to guarantee payment to a publisher for the cost of a first edition, for which even a slender volume would suffice. I leave the choice of this first specimen entirely up to you. In the accompanying parcel

you will find many manuscripts, which will show you how much I have thought, worked, and witnessed . . .

I never heard of him being in business.

. . . and if I do not entirely lack the gift of eloquence, no paucity of material will stand in the way of my success.

In anticipation of a favorable reply, I sign myself your old school friend . . .

And his name was written underneath. But I won't reveal it, because I am not one, and never have been one, to besmirch a man's reputation.

Dear reader, you'll understand how astonished I was to find myself suddenly raised to the status of a broker in verse. I'm pretty sure Shawlman—I might as well continue to call him thus—wouldn't have thought of addressing such a request to me had he seen me by day. Respectability and standing are impossible to disguise. But it was evening, so I was prepared to excuse the oversight.

Needless to say, I wanted nothing to do with his harebrained scheme. I'd have told Frits to return the parcel, but I didn't have an address, and I heard nothing more from him. I thought he was ill, or dead, or whatever.

Last week we had another gathering at the home of the Rosemeyers, who are in sugar. Frits came along with us for the first time. He's sixteen years old, and I'm in favor of youngsters of that age going out into the world. Otherwise he'll only hang around on the Westermarkt and suchlike. The girls played the piano and sang songs, and during dessert

they began to tease one another about something that had happened in the front room while we were having a game of whist in the back. Something to do with Frits, apparently. "Yes you were, Louise," Betsy Rosemeyer exclaimed. "You were crying! Papa, Frits made Louise cry."

At that my wife declared that this was the last time she would allow Frits to join us. She thought he had pinched Louise or misbehaved in some other way, and just as I was about to give him an earful Louise said:

"No, no! Frits was very nice! I wish he'd do it again!"

Do what again? It turned out he hadn't pinched her at all, but recited something.

A lady of the house is, naturally, in favor of some diversion during dessert. It fills a void—the diversion, I mean. So it occurred to Mrs. Rosemeyer—the Rosemeyers insist on formality of address, because they're in sugar and have shares in a ship—that what had moved Louise to tears might keep the rest of us entertained as well, and she asked for an encore from Frits, whose face had turned turkey red. I couldn't think what he had regaled them with, as his repertoire was quite familiar to me: *The Wedding of the Gods*, *The Books of the Old Testament in Verse*, and a passage from *Camacho's Wedding*, a favorite among boys because there's a reference to a privy seat. What there could be in any of this to cry about was beyond me. But it's true, girls are quick to burst into tears.

"Go on, Frits! Oh yes, Frits, do go on!" That's how it went until Frits gave in. As I dislike all those tricks to keep readers on tenterhooks, I might as well tell you straightaway that Frits and Marie had inspected Shawlman's parcel at home, and had picked up from it a sauciness and a sentimentality that were to cause me no end of bother later on. Yet I must confess,

reader, that the novel you are reading now also derives from that parcel. I shall render proper account of this circumstance in due course, for I cherish my reputation as a man of truth with a good head for business. (And our business is Burden & C°, coffee brokers, N° 37 Lauriergracht).

Then Frits recited something that was nonsense from start to finish. On second thought, it had neither start nor finish. A young man writes to his mother telling her that he'd fallen in love, and that the girl had married somebody else—good for her, I thought—but that he, in spite of everything, had never stopped loving his mother. Are these last three lines clear or not? Does the subject require a lot of fuss and feathers, would you say? Well, I had eaten a cheese sandwich, peeled two pears, and was halfway through consuming the third by the time Frits reached the end of his recital. But Louise was in tears again, and the ladies said it was splendid. Then Frits, who I'm sure thought he'd performed quite a feat, told us he had found the thing in the parcel from the man with the shawl, whereupon I explained how the parcel came to be in my possession. But I didn't mention the Greek girl, because Frits was present, nor did I say anything about going down that alley. Everyone agreed that I had been quite right to wash my hands of the fellow. In due course you will find that the parcel also contained material of a more serious nature, some of which will be included in this book, on account of its bearing on the *Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*. Because my life is my work.

Afterwards the publisher asked me to insert what Frits had recited. I don't mind, as long as it's clear that I don't normally concern myself with matters of this sort.⁴ Lies and tomfoolery! I will refrain from offering my own comments, or my book will

Truth, but?

be too long. All I will say here is that the poem was apparently composed in 1843 or thereabouts, in the region of Padang, and Padang is not premium grade. The coffee, I mean.

O Mother, 'tis so far away—
The country where my life began,
The country where my first tears ran,
Where I grew taller day by day,
Where you, with your maternal hand,
Stood by me as a loving guide,
Patiently watching by my side,
And, when I fell, helped me to stand.
Now fate has torn me from your hands,
Cutting the ties twixt you and me,
And now I walk on foreign sands,
With only God for company . . .
Yet, mother, howsoe'er I grieve,
Whate'er my share of joys or pains,
Still, mother dear, you must believe,
That all my love for you remains!

Not many years ago—but four—
I last stood on that distant shore,
Staring in silence at the sea,
And wond'ring what life held for me.
When I imagined all the glories
That future years would surely bring
The present seemed a dismal thing
Beside those magic fairy-stories,
And so, despite th' adversity
I knew I'd find ahead of me,

My heart pressed on through all of this,
Made fearless by its dream of bliss.

But since our last farewells were made,
Time—though it flees us like a colt,
Elusive as a lightning bolt,
And weightless as a fleeting shade—
Has left a bitter mark behind,
A face that's deeply, deeply lined!
I've tasted joy and sorrow in one;
I've thought profoundly, braved the fray,
I've raised a cheer and knelt to pray—
Centuries, it seems, have come and gone!
A happy life—that was my plan.
My happiness was won and lost,
And I, a callow youth, was tossed
Through years of grief in one hour's span!

And yet, dear mother, do believe me—
I swear to heaven it is true—
Mother! Won't you please believe me—
Your boy has not forgotten you!

I loved a girl. Love made my life
A thing of beauty in my eyes.
I saw her as a shining prize,
The great reward for years of strife,
Ordained by God to be my wife.
Delighted with this flawless treasure
Bestowed upon me by His grace,
A gift beyond all mortal measure,

I thanked Him with a tearstained face.
Love and religion were as one;
My spirit rose up to the sky
In joyful thanks to God on high,
In thanks and prayer for her alone!

Yet passion weighed me down with care.
My soul was wracked with agony;
The pangs of grief that tore at me
Were hard for my weak heart to bear.
Suffering and fear awaited there
Where ecstasy was what I'd sought;
The happiness for which I'd fought
Held only venom and despair . . .

My silent suffering brought me pleasure!
Hopeful and staunch, I stood before her.
Those trials made love a greater treasure;
How glad I was to suffer for her!
And heedless of catastrophe
I wrested joy from grief again,
Resigned to suffer any pain,
As long as fate left *her* with me!

I thought her image was the best
The world could offer, and I wore it
Where I could faithfully adore it—
A priceless jewel within my breast.
And yet her charms, however winning,
To me were always *foreign* sights
And even if my love holds fast

Until my final breath unites
Us in a better place at last . . .
My love for her had a *beginning*!

And what is love that had a *start*
Compared to love that God first stirred
Within a babe's unsullied heart
Before he spoke a single word?
The love that child imbibed, when first—
Still newly wrenched from Mother's womb—
He drank her milk to quench his thirst
And in her eyes saw brightness bloom?

No other bond can quite so surely
Connect two hearts and make them one
As that which God has forged securely
Between a mother and her son!

And could my heart, that had the power
To cling to beauty's transient spark—
A thornbush in a wintry park,
Which never bore a single flower—
I ask you, could that heart do less
For a mother's love, which never dies?
Or for the one who heard my cries
And came to me in my distress
With gentle murmurs, low and mild?
The one who soothed my boyish fears,
The one who kissed away my tears,
And gave her blood to feed her child?

Mother dear, do not believe it!
I swear to heaven, it's not true.
Mother dear, do not believe it!
Your child has not forgotten you!

Far from the sweet and lovely things
Which life across the ocean brings,
I never feel the young man's gladness
That poets of all ages praise.
Here no such mirth can fill my days:
A lonely heart knows only sadness.
Yes, steep and thorny is my road
And all the trouble fate has sent
Weighs down on me, a heavy load;
My heart aches, and my back is bent . . .
Oh, may the tears that I have shed
Alone bear witness to the hours
I pass among the trees and flowers
In anguish, bowing down my head . . .

So often, when despair drew near,
I nearly turned to heaven and said,
"Father! Grant me, among the dead
What life would never grant me here!
Father! Grant me, beyond the grave,
When death's sweet lips my lips have pressed,
Father! Grant me, beyond the grave,
What I have never tasted . . . Rest!"

But those words never reached the air;
No, God's ears never heard those pleas,

Instead I fell upon my knees
And offered up a different prayer:
*"Not yet, O Lord! I'll face the worst,
But give me back my Mother first!"*

FOURTH CHAPTER

BEFORE going on, I should inform you that young Stern has arrived. A likeable lad. He seems quick and capable, but I have the impression he's the sentimental type. And Marie is thirteen years old . . . He's very neatly turned out. I've set him to work on the copybook so he can practice a correct Dutch style. I'm curious as to when we'll start getting orders from Ludwig Stern. Marie is going to embroider a pair of slippers for him . . . for young Stern, I mean. Busselinck & Waterman have missed the boat. No respectable broker undercuts, that's what I say!

The day after our gathering at the Rosemeyers, who are in sugar, I summoned Frits and told him to bring me that parcel of Shawlman's. Please note, reader, that I always insist on godliness and good morals in my house. Now then, the previous evening, just as I finished peeling my first pear, I could tell by the expression on one of the girls' faces that there was something amiss with the poem. I hadn't bothered to listen myself, but I did notice that Betsy was crumbling her bread roll, which said enough. It will be clear to you, reader, that you're dealing with a man who's familiar with the ways of the world. So I got Frits to show me the fancy poem he'd recited, and very soon I found the line that caused Betsy to crumble her roll. There was mention of a woman nursing her child, which is just barely acceptable, but then came: "still newly wrenched from Mother's womb," which I disapprove of —to speak of such matters, I mean—as does my wife. Marie is only thirteen. Not that there's any talk of cabbages or storks at our house, but to be quite so down-to-earth about such

matters is offensive to me, given the importance I attach to moral rectitude. I made Frits, who knew the thing "out of his head," as Stern puts it, promise never to recite it again, or anyway, not until he's a member of the Doctrina student club —no girls allowed there—and I put it away in my desk. But I needed to know if there was anything else in the parcel that might cause offense. So I began riffling through the contents. I couldn't read everything as there were some papers in languages I couldn't make out, but then my eye fell on a manuscript entitled "Report on Coffee Growing in the Manado Residency."

My heart leaped, seeing as I'm a coffee broker—*N° 37*

Lauriergracht—and Manado is good quality. So that Shawlman fellow, as well as writing immoral verse, had also been in coffee. I now examined the parcel with entirely different eyes, and came across writings which, though I didn't understand all of them, displayed genuine knowledge of the field. There were lists, statements, and calculations with figures I could make neither head nor tail of, all set out with such care and precision that, in truth—for I hold with the truth—it occurred to me that, should the third clerk drop out—which could happen, as he's getting old and doddery—Shawlman might make a fine replacement. Needless to say, I'd start by making inquiries as to his honesty, religion, and respectability, as I never take anybody on at the office unless I'm assured of those particular qualities. This is a firm principle of mine, as you can tell by my letter to Ludwig Stern.

I didn't want Frits to notice that I had any interest in the contents of the parcel, so I sent him away. My mind reeled as I took up one pile of papers after another and read the headings. There were numerous poems, admittedly, but I also

came across much that was useful, and was amazed at the diversity of topics. I confess—I'm a man of truth—that I, having been in coffee all my life, am not in a position to judge the merits of it all, but even so, the list of headings was intriguing. As I've already given an account of the incident with the Greek, you already know that I became somewhat Latinized in my youth, and although I refrain from giving quotations in my correspondence—and they have no place in a broker's office either—the thought entering my mind at the sight of it all was: *multa, non multum, or: de omnibus aliquid, de toto nihil.* In other words: quantity, not quality.

This, however, had more to do with a sense of frustration, and a desire to counter all that learnedness with my own knowledge of Latin, than with expressing my honest opinion. Each time I looked at something in more detail, I had to admit that the author appeared to be equal to his task, and even displayed considerable soundness of reasoning.

I encountered the following essays and articles:

“On Sanskrit as the Mother of the Germanic Languages.”

“On the Penalties for Infanticide.”

“On the Origins of the Aristocracy.”

“On the Difference between the Notions of Endless Time and Eternity.”

“On the Theory of Probability.”

“On the Book of Job.” (I came across Job several more times, but that was in verse.)

“On Protein in the Atmosphere.”

“On the Russian State System.”

“On Vowels.”

“On Cellular Prisons.”

"On the Old Theories concerning the *Horror Vacui*."

"On the Advantages of Abolishing Penalties for Slander."

"On the Causes of the Dutch Revolt against Spain, Which Did Not Include Religious or Political Liberty."

"On the *Perpetuum Mobile*, the Squaring of the Circle, and the Square Roots of Surds."

"On the Weight of Light."

"On the Decline of Civilization since the Emergence of Christianity." (What?)

"On Icelandic Mythology."

"On *Emile* by Rousseau."

"On Civil Procedure in Matters of Commercial Acquisition."

"On Sirius as the Center of a Solar System."

"On Import Duties Being Ineffectual, Distasteful, Unjust, and Immoral." (I have never heard any such thing.)

"On Verse as the Oldest Language." (I don't believe this.)

"On White Ants."

"On the Unnaturalness of Educational Institutions."

"On Prostitution within Marriage." (This is a scandalous article.)

"On Hydraulic Matters Relating to Rice Cultivation."

"On the Ostensible Superiority of Western Civilization."

"On Cadastral Surveying, Registration, and Stamp Duty."

"On Books for Children, Fables, and Fairy Tales." (I am curious about this, because he insists on truthfulness.)

"On Middlemen in Commerce." (I don't like this one bit. I believe he wants to do away with brokers. But I have put it to one side anyway, because there are one or two things in it I can use for my book.)

"On Inheritance Tax, One of the Best Taxes."

"On the Invention of Chastity." (I do not understand this.)

"On Multiplication." (This title sounds simple enough, but there is a lot in there that had never occurred to me.)

"On a Certain Kind of French Wit, Resulting from the Poverty of Their Language." (I'll take his word for it. Wit and poverty—he ought to know.)

"On the Connection between the Novels of Auguste Lafontaine* and Consumption." (I want to read this, because we have some books by Lafontaine lying in the attic. But he says the influence does not reveal itself until the second generation. My grandfather did not read.)

"On the Power of the British outside Europe."

"On Trial by Ordeal in the Middle Ages and Today."

"On the Arithmetic of the Romans."

"On the Lack of Poetry among Composers."

"On Pietism, Mesmerism, and Table-Turning."

"On Contagious Diseases."

"On the Moorish Style of Architecture."

"On the Force of Prejudice, as Evinced by Diseases Attributed to Draft." (Didn't I say the list was remarkable?)

"On German Unity."

"On Longitude at Sea." (I don't see why things at sea should be any longer than on land.)

"On the Duties of the Government with Regard to Public Entertainments."

"On the Similarities between the Scottish and Frisian Languages."

"On Prosody."

"On the Beauty of the Women of Nîmes and Arles, with an Inquiry into Phoenician Colonization."

"On Agricultural Contracts in Java."

“On the Suction Capacity of a New Kind of Pump.”

“On the Legitimacy of Dynasties.”

“On Folk Literature in Javanese Rhapsodies.”

“On the New Method of Reefing.”

“On Percussion, as Applied to Grenades.” (This was written in 1847, i.e., before Orsini.)

“On the Understanding of Honor.”

“On the Apocrypha.”

“On the Laws of Solon, Lycurgus, Zoroaster, and Confucius.”

“On Parental Authority.”

“On Shakespeare as a Historian.”

“On Slavery in Europe.” (I don't understand this—well, it isn't the only thing I don't understand.)

“On Screw-Watermills.”

“On the Sovereign Prerogative of Pardon.”

“On the Chemical Components of Ceylon Cinnamon.”

“On Discipline aboard Merchant Ships.”

“On Opium Licensing in Java.”

“On Conditions Regarding the Sale of Poison.”

“On Digging a Channel through the Isthmus of Suez, and Its Consequences.”

“On Payment of Land Tax in Kind.”

“On Growing Coffee in Manado.” (I have already mentioned this.)

“On the Rupture of the Roman Empire.”

“On German *Gemütlichkeit*.”

“On the Scandinavian Edda.”

“On the Duty of France to Create a Counterforce to the English in the Indies Archipelago.” (This was in French, I don't know why.)

"On Making Vinegar."

"On the Veneration of Schiller and Goethe by the German Middle Classes."

"On Man's Claim to Happiness."

~~+~~ "On the Right to Rebel against Oppression." (This was in the language of Java; I didn't discover what the title meant until afterwards.)

"On Ministerial Responsibility."

"On Certain Points of Criminal Law."

~~+~~ "On the Right of a People to Demand That the Taxes Paid by Them Be Used for Their Benefit." (In Javanese, again.)

"On the double A and the Greek ETA."

"On the Existence of an Impersonal God in the Hearts of Men."

(An infamous lie!)

"On Style."

"On a Constitution for the Realm of Insulindia." (I have never heard of that realm.)

"On the Lack of Ephelcystics in Our Rules of Grammar."

"On Pedantry." (I think this piece was written with considerable expertise.)

"On What Europe Owes to the Portuguese."

"On the Sounds of the Forest."

"On the Flammability of Water." (I think he means firewater.)

"On Milky Seas." (I have never heard of them; apparently they're somewhere around Banda.)

"On Seers and Prophets."

"On Electricity as a Motive Force, without Soft-Iron."

"On the Ebb and Flow of Civilization."

"On Epidemic Degradation in National Economies."

"On Chartered Trading Companies." (This contains various

things I need for my book.)

“On Etymology as a Resource for Ethnological Studies.”

“On the Birds’ Nest Cliffs on the South Coast of Java. ”

“On the Place Where a New Day Begins.” (I don’t understand this.)

“On Personal Understanding as Standard of Responsibility in the Moral Domain.” (Ridiculous! He’s saying that every man must be his own judge. Whatever next?)

“On Gallantry.”

“On Hebrew Versification.”

“On the Century of Inventions Compiled by the 2nd Marquis of Worcester.”

“On the Frugal Eating Habits of the Islanders of Roti near Timor.” (Life must be cheap there.)

“On the Man-Eating Batak, and Head-Hunting among the Alfuros.”

“On the Distrust of Public Morality.” (I think he wants to abolish locksmiths. I am against that.)

“On ‘Law’ as Opposed to ‘Rights.’ ”

“On Béranger as a Philosopher.” (Again something I don’t understand.)

“On the Malayans’ Dislike of the Javanese.”

“On the Worthless Instruction at So-Called Universities.”

“On the Loveless Spirit of Our Forebears, as Shown by Their Notions of God.” (Yet another ungodly piece!)

“On the Interrelation of the Senses.” (True enough: when I saw him I smelt attar of roses.)

“On the Taproot of the Coffee Tree.” (I have put this to one side for my book.)

“On Sentiment, Sensibility, *Empfindelei*, Etc.”

~~On Confounding Mythology and Religion.~~

~~On Palm Wine in the Moluccas.~~

~~On the Future of Dutch Trade." (It was this piece that inspired me to write my book. He says the big coffee auctions are on their way out, and I live for my trade.)~~

~~"On Genesis." (An infamous piece!)~~

~~"On the Secret Societies of the Chinese."~~

~~"On Drawing as a Natural Form of Writing." (He says newborn infants can draw!)~~

~~"On Truth in Poetry." (Of course!)~~

~~"On the Unpopularity of Rice Mills in Java."~~

~~"On the Link between Poetry and Mathematics."~~

~~"On Chinese Shadow Plays."~~

~~"On the Price of Java Coffee." (I have put this to one side.)~~

~~"On a European Currency."~~

~~"On the Irrigation of Common Lands."~~

~~"On the Influence of Racial Mixing on the Mind."~~

~~"On the Balance of Trade." (Here he discusses premiums on bills of exchange; I have put it to one side for my book.)~~

~~"On the Continuity of Asian Customs." (He maintains that Jesus wore a turban.)~~

~~"On the Ideas of Malthus Regarding the Relationship between Population and Means of Subsistence."~~

~~"On the Original Inhabitants of the Americas."~~

~~"On the Piers and Breakwaters of Batavia, Semarang, and Surabaya."~~

~~"On Architecture as the Expression of Ideas."~~

~~"On the Relationship between European Officials and the Regents of Java." (Part of this will be going into in my book.)~~

~~"On Living in Cellars in Amsterdam."~~

“On the Power of Delusion.”

“On the Unemployment of a Supreme Being in the Case of Natural Laws Being Perfect.”

“On the Salt Monopoly in Java.”

“On Worms in the Sago Palm.” (People eat them, he says . . . ugh!)

“On Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, and the Javanese Pantun Verses.”

“On the *Jus Primi Occupantis.*”

“On the Poverty of the Art of Painting.”

“On the Immorality of Angling.” (Whoever heard of such a thing?)

* “On the Crimes of Europeans outside Europe.”

“On the Defenses of the Weaker Animal Species.”

“On the *Jus Talionis.*” (Yet another infamy! With a poem in it that would have horrified me had I read it to the end.)⁵

And this was not all! I also found—aside from the poems, which came in various languages—several batches without headings, romances in Malay,⁶ battle songs in Javanese, and so forth. I also found letters, many of them in languages unknown to me. Some were addressed to him, others written by him, or rather, they were copies he had made, for they bore the signatures of other parties certifying that they were *identical to the original.*⁷ I came across excerpts of journals, notes, and random jottings . . . some of them very random indeed.

I have already mentioned that I had put a few batches to one side, thinking they might come in handy for my business, and my business is my life. But I have to admit that I was in a

quandary as to what to do with all the rest. I couldn't send the parcel back because I didn't know where he lived. Besides, it had been opened. I couldn't pretend I hadn't taken a look inside, nor would I have wished to, for I care about the truth. Nor did I manage to rewrap the parcel so you couldn't tell it had been tampered with. And I can't deny it: there were some writings devoted to coffee that interested me, and I wanted to make use of them. I read a couple of pages at random every day, and became more and more—Frits says "the more," but not I—more and more convinced, I say, that it takes a coffee broker to make such a pertinent discovery about what goes on in the world. I am sure the Rosemeyers, who are in sugar, have never laid eyes on anything like this.

I began to dread that Shawlman fellow suddenly turning up again and demanding to speak to me. I regretted having turned right into that alley the other evening, and realized yet again how wrong it is to stray from the path of respectability. He would have asked for money, of course, and mentioned his parcel. I might even have given him some, and if he had sent me that mass of writing the following day it would have been legally mine.⁸ Then I could have separated the wheat from the chaff, keeping what I needed for my book and burning the rest, or throwing it in the wastepaper basket, which I couldn't do under the circumstances. Because if he did return I would have been obliged to hand back the parcel, and then he, noticing my interest in certain of his papers, would surely have asked too high a price. There's no greater advantage to the seller than knowledge of the buyer's need for his wares. That is precisely the state of affairs every buyer worth his salt is at pains to avoid.

Another thing that occurred to me—I've mentioned it before

*Happy with
his work until
he needs to give someone
a job.*

—which shows how spending time at the Exchange can make a man more alert, was the following. Of late, Bastiaans—he's the third clerk and getting old and doddery—has been coming into the office scarcely twenty-five days out of thirty, and when he does turn up his work is often poor. As an honest man I owe it to the firm—Burden & C°, now that the Meyers have left —to ensure that everyone does his job properly, and not to squander company funds out of misguided pity or sentimentality. That is my principle. I'd rather give Bastiaans three guilders out of my own pocket than go on paying him an annual wage of seven hundred guilders he no longer deserves. I've calculated that over the last thirty-four years the fellow has received—from Burden & C°, and previously from Burden & Meyer, but the Meyers have left now—an income of nearly fifteen thousand guilders. Not at all bad for a common man—few of his peers can boast the same, so he has nothing to complain about. It was Shawlman's piece about multiplication that motivated me to make this calculation.

*In full of
himself*

That fellow Shawlman's handwriting is pretty good, I thought to myself. Besides, he looked down-at-heel, and didn't know the time of day . . . what if I gave him Bastiaans's position? In that case I'd tell him to address me as Mr. Drystubble—he probably wouldn't need to be told, as an employee can hardly be expected to address his boss by just his surname—and he could be settled for life. He could start with four or five hundred guilders—it took our Bastiaans a good many years to get up to seven hundred—and that would be doing him a favor. Even three hundred guilders would be enough to start with, as he hasn't been in business before and could therefore regard the first years as an apprenticeship—that would be quite reasonable, given that he can't consider

himself equal to people with several years of experience at the job. Indeed, I daresay he'd be content with two hundred guilders. But I wasn't too sure about his attitude . . . what with that shawl he was wearing. And besides, I didn't know where he lived.

A few days later young Stern and Frits went to a book sale.⁹ I had forbidden Frits to buy anything, but Stern, who has plenty of pocket money, came home with a few trifles. That's his affair. But then Frits said he'd seen Shawlman at the sale, and that he appeared to be employed there, taking books from the cases and sliding them down the long table towards the auctioneer. Frits said he looked very pale, and that someone who appeared to be in charge had reprimanded him for dropping some bound volumes of the *Aglaia* magazine—which was very clumsy of him in my opinion, considering that those volumes contained the finest ladies' handiwork patterns. Marie shares a copy with the Rosemeyers, who are in sugar. She uses it—the *Aglaia* I mean—for her tatting. But in the course of the reprimand Frits overheard that he was earning fifteen stivers a day. "Don't think I'm going to waste fifteen stivers a day on you!" the man had said. I reckoned that a daily wage of fifteen stivers—I assume Sundays and holidays don't count, or he'd have mentioned a monthly or annual wage—amounts to two hundred and twenty-five guilders a year. I made a quick decision—when you've been in business as long as I have you always know what to do in a flash—and early next morning I went to see Leecher, the bookseller holding the sale. I asked about the man who'd dropped the *Aglaia*.

"He's been sacked," Leecher said. "He was lazy, sickly, and pedantic."

I bought a box of paper seals and resolved there and then

not to be too hard on Bastiaans. I couldn't bring myself to turn the old man out into the street just like that. It has always been a principle of mine to be strict, but lenient where possible. I never miss an opportunity to garner information that might be of use to my business, which was why I asked Leecher where that fellow Shawlman lived. He told me the address, and I wrote it down.

My book was uppermost in my mind, but loving the truth as I do I must confess I was at a loss how to go about writing it. One thing was clear: the primary materials I had encountered in Shawlman's parcel were of importance to coffee brokers. The only question was how to sort and rearrange those materials in a suitable way. Every coffee broker knows how important it is for the batches to be properly sorted.

But writing—aside from business correspondence—is not my strong suit, and yet I felt it my duty to write, as the future of the profession might depend on it. The nature of the information contained in Shawlman's papers was such that Burden & C° couldn't rightfully keep it to itself. Otherwise, as everyone will understand, I wouldn't take the trouble of publishing a book that would also be read by Busselinck & Waterman, because only a fool would do anything to help a competitor. That's a firm principle of mine. No, it dawned on me that the entire coffee market is under threat, a threat that can only be averted by the concerted efforts of all brokers, and that it's even possible that those efforts won't be enough, so that the sugar-bakers—Frits says refiners, but I say sugar-bakers, as do the Rosemeyers, and they should know as they're in sugar themselves, and besides, we say bad ideas are half-baked, not half-refined—that the sugar-bakers, then, as well as the indigo traders, will have to do their bit.

*He has no
idea*

Reflecting on this as I write, it seems to me that even shipping will be affected to some extent, as well as the merchant navy . . . indeed, I'm quite certain of it! And sailmakers too, and the minister of finance, and the governors of the almshouses, and the other bigwigs, and pastry cooks, and haberdashers, and women, and shipwrights, and wholesalers, and retailers, and caretakers, and gardeners too.

And—how curious, the way thoughts arise as one writes—my book will also concern millers, and churchmen, and sellers of Holloway's pills, and distillers, and tile makers, and people who live off government bonds, and pump makers, and rope makers, and weavers, and butchers, and the clerks in the brokers' offices, and the shareholders of the Dutch Trading Company, and, all things considered, everybody else as well.

And the King too . . . yes, especially the King!

My book must go out into the world. No two ways about it! Never mind if Busselinck & Waterman get to read it too . . . I'm not one to bear grudges. Still, they're cheats, they're undercutters, and so say I! I told young Stern as much today, when I introduced him at Artis. He's welcome to write and tell his father so, too.

Until a few days ago I was in a proper fix over my book, but then Frits helped me out. I didn't tell him, because I don't believe in letting on when one is beholden to anyone—a principle of mine—but it was true nonetheless. He said Stern was a very clever fellow, that he was making rapid progress in our language, and that he'd translated several of Shawlman's German poems into Dutch. As you see, it's an upside-down world in my house: a Hollander writing things in German, and a German translating them into Dutch. If each had kept to his own language it would have saved a whole lot of trouble. Then

*Desirous. Thinks his book
is going to save the world!*

I thought, what if I can get Stern to write my book? If I have anything to add to it I can write a chapter myself from time to time. Frits can help too. He has a list of words that are hard to spell, and Marie can make a fair copy—of the book, I mean. That will safeguard the reader against all immorality. For as I'm sure you understand, no respectable broker would confront his daughter with anything at odds with good morals and decency.

I told the two boys about my plan, and they agreed. But Stern, who like many Germans has literary leanings, seemed to want to have a say in the manner of execution. I was a little put out by that, but as the spring auction is near and I still haven't had any orders from Ludwig Stern, I didn't want to oppose him too openly. He said: "When my chest glows with feeling for truth and beauty, nothing on earth can stop me sounding the notes that match such feelings, and I prefer to remain silent than see my words degraded by the shackles of the common"—Frits says "commonplace," but I don't: too long. I thought this most peculiar of Stern, but my profession always comes first with me, and his old man runs a fine business. So we settled on the following:

1. That he would supply a few chapters for my book each week.
2. That I would change nothing in his writing.
3. That Frits would correct the grammar.
4. That I would write a chapter now and then, to make the book look more substantial.
5. That the title would be *The Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*.
6. That Marie would make a fair copy for the printer, but that we would bear with her when the laundry needed sorting.

7. That the finished chapters would be read out at our weekly gatherings.

8. That all immorality would be avoided.

9. That my name would not appear on the title page, because I am a broker.

10. That Stern would be allowed to publish German, French, and English translations of my book, because (so he claimed) such works are better understood abroad than at home.

11. That I would send Shawlman a ream of paper, a gross of pens, and a large bottle of ink. (*Stern was very insistent on this point.*)

I agreed to everything, as my book was very urgent. Stern produced his first chapter the next day, and lo, reader, the answer to the question of how a coffee broker—Burden & C°, N° 37 Lauriergracht—comes to write a book that resembles a novel.

However, hardly had Stern set to work than he ran into difficulties. Aside from the problem of selecting and rearranging items from such an abundance of material, he kept coming across words and expressions he didn't understand, and neither did I. They were mostly in Javanese or Malay. And here and there abbreviations had been used, which were hard to make sense of. I could see that we were going to need Shawlman, and as I believe a young man should be shielded from undesirable contacts, I didn't want to send either Stern or Frits. I took some sweets left over from last week's gathering—I am ever prepared—and went to call on him. His home was by no means lavish, but then the notion of equality for all men, up to and including their living conditions, is an illusion. He said so himself in his essay on the right to happiness. Anyway, I don't like malcontents.

It was a back room in Lange-leidsche-dwarsstraat. The cellar was occupied by a trader in used goods, who sold all kinds of things: cups, saucers, furniture, old books, glassware, portraits of our national hero Van Speyk, and so forth. I was very anxious not to break anything, as in such cases people always ask for more money than the object is worth. A little girl was sitting on the doorstep, dressing her doll. I asked her if Mr. Shawlman lived there. She ran inside, and then her mother came to the door.

"Yes sir, he lives here. Just go up the stairs to the first landing, and then up the stairs to the second landing, and then up some more stairs and you're there, easy as pie. Run along, child, go and tell him there's a gentleman to see him. And what name can she say, sir?"

I said I was Mr. Drystubble, coffee broker at Lauriergracht, but that I'd announce myself. I climbed as far as she had said, and on the third landing I heard a child singing: "Daddy's coming home soon, sweet Daddy." I knocked, and the door was opened by a woman or lady—I wasn't sure which. She looked very pale. Her features showed signs of fatigue, which reminded me of my wife when she's done the laundry. She wore a loose white blouse or shirt reaching down to her knees and fastened in front with a black pin. Under that, instead of a dress or skirt, she wore what appeared to be a length of dark flowered fabric wound round her body several times, and quite tight around the hips and knees. There was no trace of the pleats, width, or amplitude proper for a lady. I was glad I hadn't sent Frits, for her attire struck me as very unseemly, and what made it even more peculiar was her self-possessed air as she moved about, as though she weren't in the least embarrassed. The woman didn't seem aware of how unusual

her appearance was. Nor did she seem at all abashed by my unannounced arrival. She didn't hide anything under the table, didn't shift any chairs, she did none of the things people usually do when a dignified-looking stranger turns up on their doorstep.

Her hair was pulled back, Chinese fashion, and tied in a sort of knot or bun at the nape. Afterwards I discovered that she was wearing some kind of East Indian costume, which they call *sarong* and *kebaya* out there, but I found it very ugly.

"Are you Juffrouw Shawlman?" I asked.[†]

"With whom do I have the honor?" she said, in a tone as though she had expected to be addressed more respectfully.

Now, I'm not much in favor of deference. It's not the same with a principal, of course, and I've been in business for too long not to know my way around. But to my mind there was no call for exchanging civilities on a third-floor landing. So I merely said I was Mr. Drystubble, coffee broker at N° 37 Lauriergracht, and that I wished to speak to her husband. After all, why beat about the bush . . .

She motioned me to a wicker chair, and drew onto her lap a little girl who'd been playing on the floor. The lad I'd heard singing kept looking me up and down. He didn't seem in the least shy either! He was about six years old, and likewise strangely dressed. His wide trousers reached only halfway down his thighs, and his legs were bare from there to the ankles. Very improper, I thought. "Have you come to speak to my pa?" he asked abruptly, by which I could tell at once that the child's education left much to be desired, otherwise he'd have spoken to me more politely, but as I was somewhat nonplussed by this, and disposed to talk, I replied:

"Yes, my little man, I have come to speak to your papa. Do

you think he will be back soon?"

"I don't know. He's out, looking for money to buy me a paint box." (Frits says "watercolor set," but I don't. Paint is paint.)

"Hush, dear," the woman said. "Go and look at your picture book, or you can play the Chinese music box."

"But that gentleman who came here yesterday took everything away."

So he was disrespectful to his mother, too, and there had been "a gentleman" who'd "taken everything away". . . a charming visit that must have been! The woman didn't seem happy either, for she dabbed her eye furtively as she led the little girl to her brother. "There now," she said, "go and play with Nonni." An odd name. The boy did as he was told.

"Well, Juffrouw," I began, "do you expect your husband back soon?"

"I can't say for certain," she replied.

The little boy stopped playing rowboats with his sister and turned to me, saying:

"Sir, why do you call my mama 'Juffrouw'?"

"What else should I call her, my boy?"

"Well . . . same as other people do! The Juffrouw lives downstairs, she sells saucers and ~~whipping tops~~."

Now I am a coffee broker—Burden & C°, N° 37 Lauriergracht—thirteen of us at the office, fourteen counting Stern, who doesn't get paid. And even *my* wife is addressed as Juffrouw, and I was supposed to call that woman Meyrouw? Absolutely not! People shouldn't give themselves airs above their station, and, what's more, the place had been cleaned out by bailiffs the day before. So I thought Juffrouw was quite good enough for her, and I stuck to it.

I asked her why her husband hadn't come round to collect his parcel. She seemed to know what I was referring to, and said they'd been in Brussels, where he worked for the *Indépendance*, but that he'd been obliged to leave, because his articles often caused the paper to be confiscated at the French borders, and they'd returned to Amsterdam a few days ago, because Shawlman had found a position . . .

"With Leecher, I presume," I said.

Yes, that was right, she said, but there had been a problem. I knew more about this than she did: he'd dropped the *Aglaia*, and was lazy, sickly, and a prig . . . no wonder he'd been sacked.

And, she went on, he'd be sure to call on me one of these days. In fact, he might be on his way at that very moment to inquire after my response to his request.

I said Shawlman should call without delay, but that he was not to ring the doorbell, as it's tiresome for the maid. He could wait a while, I said, until the door opened for someone to leave the house. And then I departed, taking my confectionery with me, because, to be frank, I didn't like being there. I felt ill at ease. A broker is not the same as a delivery boy, and I maintain that I dress respectably enough. I was wearing my fur-trimmed coat, and yet she was quite unperturbed, talking calmly to her children as if I wasn't even there. Besides, she looked as if she'd been crying, and I can't stand malcontents.
And it was chilly there, and not at all inviting—because their things had been taken away, I suppose—and I'm all for coziness in the home. On my way back I made up my mind to give Bastiaans another chance, because I dislike turning a man out into the street.

Stern's first weekly installment has arrived. Needless to say,

↗ Self-interest ↗ Lack of sympathy

there's a lot in there that I'm not keen on. But I have to abide by clause 2, and anyway it's been approved by the Rosemeyers. I think they're currying favor with Stern because of his uncle in Hamburg who's in sugar.

Shawlman had indeed called. He'd spoken with Stern, and explained the meaning of certain words and affairs that had escaped him—escaped Stern, I mean. At this point I must ask my reader to wade through the following chapters, after which I promise you something of more substance by me, Batavus Drystubble, coffee broker, Burden & C°, N° 37

Lauriergracht.

*Auguste Lafontaine (1754–1831) was a prolific German author of greatly popular sentimental, didactic novels. The suggested link between Lafontaine's novels and tuberculosis is unclear.

†Unlike “Miss,” “Ms.,” and “Mrs.” in contemporary English, nineteenth-century Dutch titles for women—*Vrouw*, *Juffrouw*, and *Mevrouw*—did not mainly reflect their marital status, but their social class. A middle-class woman, whether an unmarried shopkeeper or a coffee broker's wife, would normally be called *Juffrouw*. In contrast, Mrs. Shawlman, with her aristocratic background, was presumably accustomed to being addressed as *Mevrouw*.

in Hawthorne's landscape? is Hawley a character even?

FIFTH CHAPTER → Stern's chapter?

AROUND ten o'clock in the morning there was an unusual commotion on the high road linking the regencies of Pandeglang and Lebak.¹⁰ "High road" is perhaps rather too grand a description of the wide footpath which, out of courtesy and for want of a better word, was called "the road." But if you set out with a four-horse carriage from Serang, the capital of Banten, with the intention of going to Rangkasbitung, the new center of Lebak, you were bound to arrive there in the end. So it was a road. Still, you kept getting stuck in the mud, which in the Banten lowlands is heavy, clayey, and viscous, and you kept having to seek help from the inhabitants of nearby villages—not that they were very nearby, for there are few villages in those parts—but once you managed to drum up twenty or so local farmers it was usually not very long before the horses and carriages were back on track. The coachman cracked his whip, and the runners—who, I believe, would be called grooms in Europe, or rather, there is no European equivalent—those incomparable runners, then, with their short, thick whips, fell to trotting alongside the four-in-hand as before, uttering ear-shattering cries and prodding the horses under the belly to urge them on. Then you jolted along again until the dreaded moment that the carriage sank axle deep into the mud once more, and the shouting for help started all over again. You waited patiently for such assistance to arrive, and . . . jolted onwards again.

Often, when taking that road, I fancied I would come across a carriage with passengers from the last century, stuck in the mud and forgotten. But this never happened. So I assume that

↳ Max Hawley?
Hawthorne?

everyone who ever traveled this road reached their destination eventually.

It would be a great mistake to judge the entire high road across Java by the standards of the road through Lebak. The high road proper, with its many branches, built by order of Marshal Daendels at considerable sacrifice of life,¹¹ is indeed a splendid piece of work, and one can only marvel at the determination of the man who, in the face of opposition from jealous rivals in Holland as well as an unwilling population and discontented chiefs, succeeded in creating something that still draws admiration, and rightly so, from every visitor today.

There is no horse-post service in Europe, nor in England, Russia, or Hungary for that matter, that can match that of Java. Over high mountain ridges, skirting vertiginous depths, the heavily laden mail coach hurtles onward at a constant gallop. The coachman sits as if nailed to the box for hours, yes, for days at a stretch, swinging the heavy whip with an arm of iron. He can calculate exactly where and how much to rein the horses as they careen down the mountainside, when there, round the bend . . .

"My God, the road . . . it's gone! We're falling down a ravine," shrieks the inexperienced traveler. "There is no road . . . only depth!"

Indeed, so it appears. The road curves, and just as one more gallop ahead would send the front horses flying over the edge, they turn and swing the coach round the bend. They charge up a steep slope you hadn't seen a moment ago, and . . . the depths lie behind you. There are, on such occasions, moments when the carriage rests solely on the wheels on the outside of the curve it describes, the centrifugal force having raised the inside wheels off the ground. You need to be cold-

*Seems to be a direct statement towards
Dystopias*

blooded not to shut your eyes, and everyone new to traveling in Java writes home to Europe telling of the mortal perils sustained. But the old hands just laugh at their fears.

It is not my intention, especially at the outset of my story, to occupy my reader for too long with descriptions of places, landscapes, or buildings. I'd hate to put him off with what appears to be long-windedness. Not until later, once I feel I've won him over, when I can tell by his look and demeanor that he cares about the heroine leaping from a fourth-floor balcony —only then shall I, in brazen defiance of the laws of gravity, leave her suspended between heaven and earth while I pour my heart out in a detailed account of the beauties of the landscape, or of a building apparently set in that landscape purely as a pretext for page after page of pontificating on medieval architecture. All those castles look the same. The style is invariably eclectic. The keep always dates from a few reigns earlier than the surrounds, which were added by some or other later king. The towers are crumbling . . .

Dear reader, there are no towers. A tower is a figment, a dream, an ideal, an invention, an unspeakable bluff! There are only half-towers, and . . . turrets. The fanaticism behind the wish to erect towers on top of buildings dedicated to this or that saint did not last long enough for the towers to be finished, and the spire supposedly directing the faithful to heaven usually rests, several flights too low, on the massive base, recalling the thighless man at a freak show. Only turrets, and small spires on village churches, reach completion.

It is truly unflattering to Western civilization that the ambition to create great works so often dwindles away before they can be finished. I am not referring to structures that must be completed in order to recover the investment. Anyone

"untruth" compared
with Dystopias literature

wanting to know exactly what I mean can go and see the cathedral of Cologne. Let him contemplate the grandiose conception of that edifice in the soul of the architect Gerhard von Riehl . . . the heartfelt faith of the people, which enabled him to lay the foundations and build on them . . . the beliefs requiring such a colossus to serve as a visible representation of invisible religious feeling . . . and let him compare that overarching ambition to the sentiments that, a few centuries later, gave birth to the moment when work was abandoned . . .

The gap between Erwin von Steinbach and our architects of today is huge! I'm aware that attempts have been made to bridge this gap in recent years. In Cologne, work on the cathedral has been resumed. But will they be able to join the broken thread? Will they be able to regain *in our time* that which *formerly* made up the power of prelates and patrons? I don't believe so. The money will doubtless be found, and money buys bricks and mortar. The artist can be paid for drawing up a plan, and so can the mason for laying the bricks. But money can't buy the long-lost yet worthy cast of mind that made it possible for a building to be perceived as a poem, a poem in granite that spoke loudly to the people, a poem in marble, standing its ground in motionless, perpetual prayer.

One morning, then, on the border between Lebak and Pandeglang, there was an unusual commotion. Hundreds of saddled horses filled the road, and at least a thousand people—a lot for that place—were bustling about. Among them were the village headmen and the District Chiefs of Lebak, all with their retinues. A handsome, richly caparisoned Arabian crossbreed, champing at its silver bit, intimated the presence of a higher-ranking chief. This was in fact the case. Despite his

advanced age, the Regent of Lebak, Raden Adipati Karta Natta Negara,¹² had left Rangkasbitung with a large following to journey the twelve- to fourteen-mile distance to the border with Pandeglang.

A new Assistant Resident was expected, and custom, which has force of law in the Indies more than anywhere else, dictates that the official responsible for governing a regency should receive a festive welcome on arrival. Also present was the Controleur, a man of middle age who, as the next in rank, had taken charge for some months following the decease of the former Assistant Resident.

Once the date of the new Assistant Resident's arrival had become known, a *pendopo* was hastily erected and furnished with a table and some chairs. Refreshments were placed at the ready. It was in this pendopo that the Regent of Lebak and the Controleur awaited the arrival of their new superior.

Aside from a broad-brimmed hat, an umbrella, or a hollow tree, there is no simpler representation of the idea of a roof than the pendopo. Think of four or six bamboo posts driven into the ground, connected at the top by further bamboos, and covered by a lid made of the long leaves of the water palm, called *atap* in those parts, and you can imagine what such a pendopo looks like. It is, as you see, as simple as can be, and served in this case merely as a base for the European and native officials come to welcome their new lord and master at the border.

I have not expressed myself quite accurately in referring to the Assistant Resident as the Regent's superior. For a proper understanding of what follows, a digression on the workings of governance in these regions is called for.¹³

The so-called Dutch East Indies—the adjective *Dutch* strikes

me as somewhat inaccurate, for all that it has been officially adopted¹⁴—may, in terms of the relationship between the Motherland and the population, be divided into two very different parts. One part consists of tribes whose princes and princelings have acknowledged the suzerainty of the Netherlands, but where direct rule still remains to a greater or lesser degree in the hands of the native chiefs. The other part, to which the whole of Java belongs, with one very small and perhaps only putative exception, is directly subject to administration from the *Netherlands*. There is no question here of tribute, or levy, or alliance. The Javanese are Dutch subjects. The King of the Netherlands is their king. The descendants of their former lords and masters are Dutch officials. They are appointed, transferred, and promoted by the Governor-General, who rules in the king's name. Criminals are judged and convicted under a law decreed in *The Hague*. The taxes paid by the Javanese flow into the coffers of the *Netherlands*.

It is to the Dutch possessions thus constituting part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands that the following pages will, in the main, be devoted.

The Governor-General is assisted by a council, which, however, has no power to overrule his decisions. The various branches of governance in Batavia are classified as "departments," headed by directors, who form the link between the supreme authority of the Governor-General and the residents throughout the land. In cases of a *political nature*, however, the latter will appeal directly to the Governor-General.

The title "Resident" dates from the time when the population was only *indirectly* ruled by the Netherlands, as overlord, for

diminut

which purpose Residents were appointed to represent Dutch interests at the courts of the native princes, who were then still on their thrones. Those princes no longer exist, and the Residents of today, as regional rulers, have become the actual administrators of Dutch rule. Their circumstances have changed, but the name has remained.

It is these Residents who represent Dutch power in the eyes of the Javanese. The people don't know who the Governor-General is, nor the members of the Council of the Indies, nor the directors in Batavia. They only know the Resident and the lower-ranking officials ruling over them.

A typical "residency"—some count up to a million souls—is partitioned into three, four, or five regencies, each headed by its own Assistant Resident, in whose name administration is carried out by controleurs, inspectors, and numerous other officials necessary for tax collection, supervision of agriculture, public works, policing, and justice.

Each regency has its native chief of high rank, titled "regent," to stand by the Assistant Resident. Despite a regent's status and function as a *salaried official* of the government, he invariably belongs to the highest local nobility, and is often related to the princely family that used to rule supreme in that area. Their age-old feudal influence—of great importance in Asia as a whole, and for some peoples an affair of religion—is shrewdly turned to political advantage, for when engaged as officials these chiefs form a hierarchy with at its pinnacle the Governor-General as the personification of Dutch authority.

There is nothing new under the sun. Were not the "land-graves," "mar-graves," "gau-graves," and "burg-graves" of the Holy Roman Empire similarly appointed by the emperor, and customarily chosen from among the barons? Without going

into the origins of nobility, which reside entirely in Nature, I would like to point out how, in our part of the world just as in the distant Indies, the same causes had the same effects. In the case of a country that has to be ruled from afar, officials are needed to represent the central authority. Under the system of military autocracy, the Romans chose for this purpose *prefects*, most of whom would have been in command of the conquering legions. Such conquered territories became *provinces*, that is, territories to be exploited for gain. But when, later on, the Holy Roman Empire sought to secure the allegiance of distant peoples by other means than military force alone, the need arose—as soon as a far-flung region was considered an integral part of the empire through similarity in origin, language, and customs—for administrators who were not only native to the region but also of a higher rank than their fellows, so that obedience to the emperor would be eased by the people's natural inclination to defer to the individuals charged with enforcing the emperor's orders. Besides, the cost of a standing army could thus be partially or wholly avoided, and with it a burden on the central treasury, or, as was usually the case, on the regions requiring such an army to guard them. The early graves, or counts, were therefore chosen from among the local barons, and the term "grave" was not, strictly speaking, a title of nobility, but merely a designation of the holder of a particular office. Indeed I believe that while it was customary in the Middle Ages for the Holy Roman Emperor to appoint counts, i.e., provincial governors, and dukes, i.e., army leaders, the barons for their part claimed to be equal to the emperor by birth, and to serve God alone as their master, with the exception of their duty to the emperor, provided he was chosen with their approval and

from their midst. A count filled an office to which he was called by the emperor. A baron considered himself a baron "by the grace of God." The counts were the emperor's representatives, and as such bore the imperial banner. A baron rallied men under his own banner, as a knight-banneret.

Since the counts and dukes were mainly chosen from among the ranks of barons, the importance of their function was enhanced by their high birth, and it seems that this was what led to these other titles eventually gaining precedence—especially when the functions became hereditary. Even today there are baronial families without an imperial or royal patent—in other words, families whose noble lineage goes back to the birth of the country, families who have always been noble by definition, i.e., *autochthonous*—who would decline elevation to the rank of count as demeaning. Such cases are known to exist.

Of course, the men charged with ruling counties were eager for the emperor's support in getting their sons—or, failing that, other blood relations—to succeed them in office. This duly became normal practice, although I do not believe the right of succession was ever *legally* acknowledged, at least not with respect to these officials in the *Netherlands*, such as the counts of Holland, Zeeland, Henegouwen, or Flanders, the dukes of Brabant, Gelderland, and so forth. First a favor, then a custom, and finally a necessity, this hereditary concession never became law.

The same applies—regarding the choice of individuals, that is, not their duties, although those are somewhat similar—in a Javanese regency headed by a native official who combines his autochthonous influence with the rank accorded to him by the government, thereby smoothing the path of the European

functionary representing Dutch authority. Hereditary succession has likewise become the norm, without being established by law. The matter is usually settled in the Regent's lifetime, the assurance that he will be succeeded by his son being regarded as a reward for diligence and loyalty.

Only the gravest of circumstances result in deviation from this rule, and even in that case the successor is likely to be chosen from the same family.

The relation between European officials and ranking Javanese grandees is of a highly delicate nature. The Assistant Resident is the person in charge. He receives instructions, and is taken to be the head of the regency. This, however, does not detract from a regent's far superior status, which derives from his familiarity with local affairs, his high birth, his sway over the people, his financial resources, and the attendant lifestyle.

Moreover, a regent, as the representative of the *Javanese* element of a region and the presumed mouthpiece of the hundred thousand or more souls in his domain, is far more important in the eyes of the government than the common *European* civil servant, whose displeasure need not be feared, as plenty of other men can be found to take his place, whereas the annoyance of a regent might breed unrest or rebellion.

All this gives rise to the curious situation where, in effect, the inferior commands the superior. An Assistant Resident charges the Regent with reporting on developments. He charges him with providing men to work on bridges and roads. He charges him with levying taxes. He summons him to take a seat in the council over which he, as Assistant Resident, presides. He reprimands him if he neglects his duty. This highly unusual relationship can be maintained only through a great formality of etiquette, which, however, excludes neither

Regent is lower than Assistant Resident on paper, but seems to have more power in voice

cordiality nor, on occasion, severity, and I believe that the tone that should prevail in these dealings is quite properly indicated in the Assistant Resident's official brief: the *European* civil servant shall treat the *native* officer assisting him as his *younger brother*.

But he should not forget that this younger brother is much loved—or feared—by his parents, and that, in the event of disagreement, his own seniority would be held against him for not treating his younger brother with more leniency or tact.

However, the innate courtesy of the Javanese grandee—even the Javanese peasant is far more polite than his European counterpart—does much to smooth this ostensibly troublesome relationship.

If the European official is well bred and discreet, if he behaves in a dignified, friendly manner, he can be sure the Regent will facilitate his administration. Directives phrased as requests rather than offensive commands will be strictly complied with. The difference in rank, birth, and wealth is effaced by the Regent in person, who raises the European representing the King of the Netherlands to his own level. In due course, then, a relationship that is, on the face of it, contentious can often become a source of agreeable association.

I have said that such regents also had precedence over the European civil servant by virtue of their greater wealth, which is only natural. The European called upon to govern an area many times larger than the average dukedom in Germany is generally middle-aged, married, and a father. He holds an office for his living. His income is barely sufficient to provide for his family, and often not even that. For the Regent, who may be a *tumenggung*, an *adipati*, or even a *pangéran*, i.e., a

Javanese prince, it is not merely a question of living well but of living in such a way as the people have come to expect of their aristocracy. Whereas the European official lives in a house, the Regent's residence is often a *kraton*, with many houses and villages contained within it. Whereas the European has one wife and three or four children, the native chief has several wives, with all that entails. Whereas the European rides out with a handful of officials, no more than necessary for providing information during his tour of inspection, the Regent goes forth with a retinue of several hundred, and the people regard this as inseparable from his high rank. The European official leads a bourgeois existence; the native chief lives—or is assumed to live—like royalty.

But all this has to be paid for, as the Dutch government, having founded itself on the power of the regents, is well aware. Consequently, nothing could be more evident than that it should raise the regents' incomes to a level which might appear exaggerated in the eyes of the non-East Indian, but which nonetheless frequently proves insufficient to cover the expenses attendant on the native chief's lifestyle. It is not unusual for regents enjoying an annual income of two or even three hundred thousand guilders to be manifestly short of funds. This is to a large extent due to their regal indifference to squandering money, to their failure to keep their underlings under control, to their mania for worldly possessions, and *above all* to the exploitation of these tendencies by Europeans.

The Javanese chief's income may be seen as deriving from four sources. Firstly, there is his fixed monthly salary; secondly, a fixed indemnity for certain rights that have passed to the Dutch administration; thirdly, a reward in proportion to his regency's yield of goods such as coffee, sugar, indigo,

cinnamon, and so forth. And lastly, there is the native chief's arbitrary disposal of the labor and property of his subjects.

The latter two sources of income require some explanation. The Javanese is by nature a farmer, as the land of his birth promises much for little labor. He is dedicated heart and soul to the cultivation of his rice fields, at which he is most adept. He grows up among his *sawahs*, *gogos*, and *tipars*,¹⁵ and accompanies his father from a very early age to help with the plow and the spade, and to work on the dams and ditches for irrigation. He counts his years by harvests, reckons time by the color of his standing rice-crop, feels at home among his fellow paddy-cutters,¹⁶ looks for a wife among the *désa* girls singing cheerful songs in the evening as they pound the rice to remove the husk,¹⁷ aims to own a couple of buffalo to plow his field—in short, the paddy-field is to the Javanese what the vineyard is to the wine growers in the Rhineland and southern France.

But then strangers came from the West, taking possession of the land. Seeking to benefit from the fertile soil, they ordered the inhabitants to devote a portion of their time and effort to growing other crops, which would yield more profit on the European market. It took no more than a very simple policy to implement this order. The common man obeys his chief, so once the chiefs were won over with promises of a share in the profits . . . the rest took care of itself.

The massive quantities of Javanese goods being sold in Dutch auctions provide ample proof that this policy is effective, though hardly noble. Should anyone ask whether the farmer's recompense is commensurate with these figures, the answer must be a definite no. The government obliges the farmer to grow particular crops on his own land on pain of

dehumanizing

punishment if he sells the yield to anyone other than the government, while it is up to the government to decide how much he will be paid. The cost of transport to Europe, carried out by privileged trading companies, is high. The money given to the chiefs as encouragement further inflates the purchasing price, and . . . since the business as a whole must necessarily make a profit, the only solution is to pay the Javanese farmer just enough to keep him from starving and thereby reducing the nation's potential yield.

Even the European officials receive a reward in proportion to the yields.¹⁸

The fact is that the poor Javanese farmer must serve two masters; the fact is that he is frequently forced to abandon his rice fields, a measure which often results in famine. And yet . . . the Dutch flag is happily flown in Batavia, Semarang, Surabaya, Pasuruan, Besuki, Probolinggo, Pacita, Cilacap, and aboard all those ships laden with the harvests that make the Netherlands rich.

 *Famine?* In the rich, fertile, blessed land of Java—famine? Indeed, reader. Only a few years ago entire districts died of starvation.¹⁹ Mothers offered their children for sale to obtain food. Mothers even ate their own children . . .

But then the Motherland stepped in. Objections were raised in Parliament, whereupon the Governor-General was instructed to ensure that the expansion of so-called *European market production* was not pursued to the point of famine . . .

I grew bitter in the Indies. Can you imagine anyone capable of making the foregoing statements doing so *without* bitterness?

All that remains for me to discuss is the last and primary source of the native chiefs' revenue: their arbitrary disposal of

their subjects and their subjects' properties.

Throughout most of Asia, the common man, with everything he owns, is regarded as belonging to the ruling prince. The same goes for Java, and the descendants or relatives of the former princes make ready use of the ignorance of the population, who fail to realize that their tumenggung or adipati or pangéran has now become a salaried official, having sold his own rights and theirs in exchange for a fixed income. Poorly paid labor on a coffee or sugar plantation has therefore come to replace the taxes formerly levied by the lords of the land. So there is nothing unusual about hundreds of families being summoned from afar to work, *without payment*, in fields belonging to a regent. Supplying food to a regent's court, without pay, has become the norm. And if the horse, the buffalo, the daughter, or the wife of the common man happens to catch a regent's fancy, refusal to give up the prize promptly is unheard-of.

There are regents who make only moderate use of such arbitrary powers, and don't exact more from the lowly than the minimum required for maintaining their rank. Others go a step further, but nowhere are these unlawful dealings completely absent. It is very difficult, impossible even, to eradicate such abuse entirely, as it is so deeply rooted in the nature of the people, despite their suffering. The Javanese are generous, especially when proving allegiance to their chief, the descendant of the family obeyed by their ancestors. Entering a kraton without gifts would make a Javanese visitor feel deficient in the respect he owes to his hereditary lord. These gifts tend to be so trifling in value that their refusal would humiliate the giver, so that the custom resembles that of the child giving its father a small gift as a token of affection,

rather than a compulsory tribute to a tyrannical despot.

But still . . . in this way a charming custom becomes an obstacle to putting a stop to abuse.

If the *alun-alun* in front of a regent's home is in a state of neglect,²⁰ it brings shame on the locals, and it would take considerable authority to actually stop them from clearing the space of weeds and bringing it up to a standard worthy of the Regent's rank. Any payment for this labor would be considered an insult. But adjoining that large open square, or further off, are the rice fields waiting for the plow, or for a channel to bring water, often from miles away . . . and these sawahs belong to the Regent. In order to till and irrigate *his* fields he conscripts the population of entire villages, whose own sawahs are no less in need of work . . . and therein lies the abuse.

The government is aware of this, and anyone taking the trouble to read the official gazette containing the laws, instructions, and recommendations for civil servants will rejoice at the ostensibly humanitarian spirit underlying them. The European with authority in the interior is reminded throughout of his duty to protect the population against its own servility and the greed of the chiefs—indeed, that is one of his prime responsibilities. And, as if it weren't enough to prescribe this duty as a *general principle*, the Assistant Resident, upon assuming office, is required to take a *special oath* regarding this obligation to take paternal care of the population.

Truly, it is a noble calling. To stand for justice, to protect the lowly against the highly placed and the weak against the strong, to demand the return of the poor man's lamb from the princely robber's stables . . . is not the mere thought of being

called to such a glorious task enough to swell the heart with pride? Any Assistant Resident disgruntled with his pay or with his posting to the interior of Java should consider the loftiness of the duty assigned to him and the profound satisfaction that fulfilling this particular duty can bring, and he will desire no other reward.

But . . . this duty is not easy. First of all it is necessary to establish at which point *use* ceases and *abuse* begins. And . . . where abuse is found to exist, or where misappropriation or unfair treatment has occurred, the victim is often accomplice to this out of excessive obsequiousness or fear, or because he lacks confidence in the will or power of the person supposed to protect him. Everyone knows that a European official may be called away at any moment to fill another post, and that the mighty regent stays put. And there are so many ways of appropriating the possessions of a poor, ignorant man! If an overseer tells him a regent wants his horse, the animal soon finds its way into the royal stables, but this doesn't mean to say that the Regent concerned has no intention of paying a good price for it . . . someday! If a chief has hundreds of people working his fields without payment, it doesn't automatically follow that it is for his *own* benefit. Surely it could be his intention to grant the harvest to them, for the charitable reason of his land being better situated, more fertile than theirs, and therefore more rewarding for their toil?

Moreover, where would the European official find witnesses brave enough to testify against their lord, a much-feared regent? And if he dared to make an accusation *without the means to prove it*, how would that reflect on his role as the *elder brother*, who would thus have needlessly offended his *younger brother*? Where does that leave him in the eyes of the

government, which provides him with bread for his service but can withhold that bread and dismiss him as incompetent should he cast aspersions too lightly against a high-ranking chief such as a tumenggung, an adipati, or a pangéran?

No indeed, their duty is by no means easy! This is amply demonstrated by the fact that the propensity among native chiefs to make unlawful demands on their subjects' labor and possessions is openly acknowledged everywhere . . . that all Assistant Residents take the oath to combat such criminal practices . . . and that it is nevertheless very rare for a regent to be charged with despotism or abuse of power.

In sum, keeping the oath "to protect the native population against extortion and enslavement" is well-nigh impossible.

SIXTH CHAPTER

*New Assistant
Resident?*

CONTROLEUR Verbrugge was a good man. Sitting there in his dress suit of blue broadcloth with embroidered oak and orange branches on the collar and cuffs, he could hardly be mistaken for anyone but the type of Hollander common in the Indies—a type that, as it happens, is very different from the Hollanders in Holland. Indolent as long as there was nothing to do and quite free from the meddlesome habits that pass for diligence in Europe, but diligent when action was required . . . unassuming but cordial with those around him . . . forthcoming, helpful, and hospitable . . . well mannered but not stiff . . . open to good impressions . . . honest and sincere, but without any desire to become a martyr to these qualities . . . in short, he was the kind of man who would fit in anywhere. No one would think of naming the century after him, but then that was not what he was after.

He was seated in the center of the pendopo, by the table spread with a white cloth and laden with refreshments. He was growing impatient, and kept turning to the overseer—who is head of the police and office staff in the regency—to inquire, in the words of Bluebeard's wife's sister, whether he could see anyone approaching. He rose to his feet, tried in vain to rattle his spurs by stamping on the earthen floor of the pendopo, lit his cigar for the twentieth time, and sat down again, as though disappointed. He spoke little.

And yet he could have spoken, for he was not alone. I am not referring to his company of twenty or thirty Javanese servants, *mantris*, and other officials squatting in and around the pendopo, nor to all the people constantly coming and

going, nor to the numerous natives of various ranks pacing to and fro on horseback or standing about holding their mounts —no, seated facing him was the Regent of Lebak in person, Raden Adipati Karta Natta Negara.

Waiting is always tiresome. Fifteen minutes last an hour, an hour lasts a half day, and so on. And the Controleur might have been a little more forthcoming. The Regent of Lebak was a dignified old man who could converse on many topics with intelligence and discernment. One look at him sufficed to show that the majority of Europeans coming into contact with him could learn more from him than vice versa. The fire in his dark eyes belied his worn features and gray hair. He seldom spoke without premeditation—a peculiarity common among cultured Orientals—and in conversation with him you couldn't help feeling his pronouncements were like epistles, drafts of which he kept in his files for reference just in case. While this may sound disconcerting to anyone unaccustomed to communicating with Javanese grandees, in reality it's quite easy to avoid alluding to anything that might cause offense as they never change the subject abruptly, since doing so would, by oriental standards, be bad form. So anyone with reason to skirt a particular issue can simply ramble on about trifles, safe in the knowledge that no Javanese chief will spring any surprises by steering the conversation in undesirable directions.

However, opinions differ as to the best way of engaging with a regent. To me it seems that simple forthrightness is to be preferred, without aiming at diplomatic caution.²¹

Be that as it may, Controleur Verbrugge began with a trivial comment on the weather and the rain.

"Yes, Mr. Controleur, it is the southwest monsoon."

This was not news to Verbrugge, as it was January,²² but neither had *his* remark about the rain been news to the Adipati. More silence ensued. Then, with an almost imperceptible nod of his head, the Adipati summoned one of the pages squatting by the entrance to the pendopo: a small boy charmingly attired in a blue velvet tunic and white trousers, with a golden waistband securing his lavish sarong around the hips and an attractive printed headcloth, beneath which glinted a pair of mischievous dark eyes. The young page came forward on his haunches, bearing the gold box with the ingredients of the betel quid—tobacco, lime, *sirih*, *pinang*, and gambier—which he placed at the Adipati's feet. He made the *selamat*, touching both hands to his deeply bowed forehead in greeting, and proceeded to offer his lord the precious box.²³

"The road will be difficult after so much rain," said the Adipati, by way of explanation for the long wait. He took a betel leaf and began to spread it with lime.

"The road through Pandeglang isn't all that bad," replied Verbrugge. This was a little careless of him, at least if he wished to avoid touching upon delicate matters, as he should have known that no Regent of Lebak would like to hear anything remotely in favor of the roads in Pandeglang, even if they were in fact better than those in Lebak.

The Adipati didn't make the mistake of an overhasty response. The page retreated, still facing his master and still on his haunches, to join the others at the pendopo entrance. By the time the Adipati opened his mouth to reply his lips and few remaining teeth were already stained with betel juice:

"Yes, there are many people in Pandeglang."

To anyone already acquainted with any regent and controleur, and who had any knowledge of the situation in

Lebak, it would have been obvious that the conversation had already taken a combative turn, given that any allusion to the superior condition of the roads in the neighboring regency was likely to be taken as hinting at the neglect of the roads in Lebak. But the Adipati had a point: there were indeed many people in Pandeglang, which was densely populated, especially in relation to its size, so that roadwork there was easier to undertake than in the much larger regency of Lebak with only seventy thousand inhabitants.

"That's true," Verbrugge said. "We do have fewer people here. However . . ."

The Adipati glared, as though expecting an attack. He knew that whatever came after that "however" was likely to displease him, he who had served as Regent of Lebak for the past thirty years. But Verbrugge didn't seem inclined to press the point for the moment. At any rate, he broke off the conversation, and asked the overseer yet again whether he could see anyone coming.

"No sign of anything from the Pandeglang side, Mr. Controleur, but over there, on the other side, there's someone on horseback. Ah, it's the commander."

"So it is, Dongso," Verbrugge said, peering outside. "The commander! He hunts in these parts and set out early this morning. I say, Duclari! Duclari!"

"He heard you, sir, he's coming this way. His boy is riding close behind, with a deer slung over the back of his saddle."²⁴

"Go and hold Commander Duclari's horse," Verbrugge ordered one of the servants sitting outside. "Good day, Duclari! Did you get wet? What did you shoot? Do step in!"

The man stepping into the pendopo was of strong build, aged thirty, and had a military air, although he wasn't in any

kind of uniform. He was First Lieutenant Duclari, commander of the small garrison of Rangkasbitung. He and Verbrugge were friends, the more so for Duclari being quartered in Verbrugge's house until the new fort was completed. He shook Verbrugge's hand, greeted the Adipati with courtesy, and sat down, asking: "Well, what's on offer?"

"Fancy a cup of tea, Duclari?"

"No thanks, I'm feeling hot enough as it is. D'you have any coconut milk?²⁵ It's more refreshing."

"I'd rather not serve you that. Coconut milk is very bad for you when you're hot, I believe. It makes you stiff and gouty. Think of those coolies carrying their heavy loads over the mountains: they keep fit and agile by drinking hot water, or *kopi dahun*. But ginger tea's even better."²⁶

"Kopi dahun? What does that mean, tea from coffee leaves? Never heard of it."

"That's because you never served in Sumatra. It's quite common over there."

"Well, I'll have tea then . . . but not made from coffee leaves, please, and not from ginger either. Yes, you were in Sumatra, and so was our new Assistant Resident, I gather."

This conversation was conducted in Dutch, a language the Adipati didn't understand. Then Duclari, perhaps feeling it was a touch impolite to exclude him, switched abruptly to Malay to ask him a question.

"Did you know, Mr. Adipati, that our Controleur here, Mr. Verbrugge, is acquainted with the new Assistant Resident?"

"Oh, I didn't say that! I don't know him," exclaimed Verbrugge, likewise in Malay. "I've never set eyes on him. He served in Sumatra a few years before me. I said I'd heard a lot about him while I was there, that's all!"

"Well, it amounts to the same thing. You don't need to see a person to know him. What are your views on this, Mr. Adipati?"

Just then the Adipati felt the need to summon a servant, so it took him a while to say he agreed with Commander Duclari, but did believe it was often necessary to see a person before forming an opinion of him.

"Generally speaking, that may be true," Duclari said, reverting to Dutch—either because he felt more at home in that language and had made enough effort to be polite, or because he didn't want the Adipati to understand what he was saying. "But as far as Havelaar is concerned there's no need for personal acquaintance . . . the man is a fool!"

"I never said that, Duclari!"

→ Havelaar

"No, you didn't, but I'm saying so, after everything you told me about him. I call a man a fool if he dives in the water to rescue a dog from sharks."

"Well, it's hardly a sensible thing to do, but still . . ."

"And then that rhyme about General Vandamme . . . it was most inappropriate!"

"It was funny."

"Of course it was! But young men aren't supposed to be funny at the expense of generals."

"Don't forget he was very young at the time, it was fourteen years ago. He was only twenty-two."

"And then he stole that turkey!"

"That was just him playing a joke on General Vandamme."

"Exactly! A young man has no business playing jokes on an army general who was the *civil governor* besides being his boss. I quite liked the other rhyme, but . . . all those duels!"

"Most of which were fought on behalf of other people. He

↳ Havelaar defends others

always stood up for the weaker party."

"Well, let every man fight his own duels, if he must! Personally I think there's rarely any need for a duel. When impossible to avoid, I'd take up the challenge, and might even throw down the gauntlet myself under certain circumstances, but to make a habit of that sort of thing . . . no thanks! Let's hope he's changed in that respect."

"Oh yes, there's no doubt he's changed! He's so much older now, been married for years, and Assistant Resident to boot. Besides, I've always heard that his heart was in the right place, and that he had a warm sense of justice."

"Then that'll stand him in good stead in Lebak! Something happened this morning, and . . . Can the Adipati follow what we're saying?"

"I don't think so. But why don't you show me something from your game bag, then he'll think we're talking about that."

Duclari reached for his bag and drew out a couple of wood pigeons. Handling the birds as though discussing his trophies, he told Verbrugge that while he was out hunting he was accosted by a Javanese man, asking if anything could be done to ease the burden weighing on the population.²⁷

"And," he continued, "this is quite remarkable, Verbrugge! Not that I was surprised by what he said. I've been in Banten long enough to know what goes on here, but that a lowly Javanese, who's normally so cautious and reticent with regard to his chiefs, should put such a question to someone who has nothing to do with the matter, that's what amazes me!"

"What did you tell him, Duclari?"

"Well, that it was nothing to do with me. That he should go to you, or else to the new Assistant Resident in Rangkasbitung and make his complaint there."

"There they are!" cried Dongso, the overseer. "I can see somebody waving his hat."²⁸

Everyone stood up. Duclari jumped into the saddle and rode off, as he didn't want his presence in the pendopo being taken to mean that he'd come all the way for the express purpose of welcoming the new Assistant Resident, who, though of higher rank, was not his boss and moreover a fool.

The Adipati and Controleur Verbrugge posted themselves at the entrance to the pendopo and watched the mud-spattered coach-and-four grind to a halt in front of them.

It was hard to tell what or who was inside that coach until Dongso, assisted by various servants from the Adipati's retinue, finished untying all the straps and knots on the black leather blinds, as the entire vehicle was covered up in a way recalling the secrecy surrounding the arrival of caged lions and tigers in the old days, when zoological gardens were still itinerant animal shows. There were neither lions nor tigers in the coach. The covers had been put on because it was the southwest monsoon, and they had to be prepared for rain. Alighting from a coach after being shaken about for too long isn't as easy as the inexperienced traveler would imagine. Much as the poor old dinosaurs were fated to become part of the very earth they once trod, passengers packed closely together in a vehicle for any length of time undergo a process I propose to call assimilation. In the end you can't tell where the leather padding ends and the self begins—in fact I can quite imagine the occupants of a coach being unable to distinguish between uncomfortable upholstery and a bout of toothache or cramps.

There are few circumstances in the material world that don't give a thinking man cause to use his brain, and I've often

wondered, for instance, whether all the unfairness we accept as law and all the "crookedness" we consider "straight" could be attributable to spending too much time with the same people in the same vehicle. The leg you have to poke sideways between the hatbox and the basket of cherries . . . the knee you keep jammed against the door in case the lady opposite suspects you of planning an assault on crinoline or virtue . . . the foot with corns that shrinks from the heels of the traveling salesman beside you . . . the neck you must crane to the left on account of the drips . . . and you always end up as a twist of knees, neck, feet, and all. Hence my recommendation to change vehicles, seats, and traveling companions from time to time. Then at least you can hold your neck at a different angle and shift your knee now and then, and you might even find yourself sitting next to a young lady in dancing shoes, or a little lad whose legs don't reach the floor. And it improves your chances of thinking straight and walking straight once your feet hit terra firma.

Whether the coach stopping in front of the pendopo contained any obstruction to the so-called "dissolution of continuity" I don't know, but it was certainly a long time before anyone got out. A contest of civilities appeared to be in progress, with cries of "If you please, dear lady!" "oh, Mr. Resident!" and the like. Emerging at last was a gentleman whose posture and appearance had something that recalled the aforementioned dinosaurs. As we'll be meeting him again, I may as well tell you right away that his impassive demeanor was not due simply to his assimilation with the coach, for even when there was no vehicle in sight for miles he still emanated the kind of stolid, imperturbable watchfulness that would have put a dinosaur to shame, but which to many people signifies

breeding, self-confidence, and wisdom. He was, like most Europeans in the Indies, very pale, although that doesn't count as a sign of ill health in those parts, and his finely drawn features were those of a man of some intellectual development. But there was a coldness to his gaze, something recalling a logarithm table, and although his overall appearance was not in the least disagreeable or repellent, you couldn't help wondering whether his rather large, thin nose wasn't bored stiff with his expressionless countenance . . .

He courteously offered his hand to the lady emerging from the coach, to whom someone inside the vehicle passed a flaxen-haired toddler, after which they stepped into the pendopo. The child's father followed suit, but not before—and this is remarkable to anyone familiar with Java—waiting to help an elderly Javanese *babu* to descend.²⁹ In the meantime three servants had extricated themselves from the leather box clinging to the back of the coach like a young oyster to the back of its mama.

The gentleman who had been the first to alight turned to the Adipati and Controleur Verbrugge, extending his hand, which they shook respectfully. They were clearly somewhat in awe of their visitor. He was the Resident of Banten, the large territory within which Lebak constitutes a regency, or, as it is officially known, an assistant-residency.

With regard to works of fiction I have often been irked by the author's low opinion of the taste of his readers, and never more so than when his intention is to produce something supposedly droll or farcical, not to say humorous, a quality too often confused with comical. Characters turn up who don't understand the language, or who mispronounce words, such as a Frenchman saying "Zees eez much bigger zan zat." Failing

a Frenchman, they take someone with a stammer, or they "create" a figure who keeps repeating the same phrase. I've known the most inane vaudeville show to carry the day thanks to an actor saying "My name is Meyer" over and over. I find that kind of angling for laughs rather too facile, and to be honest I'd hold it against you if you thought it amusing.

But now I myself have something of that nature to offer you. Now and then I'm obliged to introduce a character (though I'll avoid it if possible) who did in fact speak in a way that sounds rather like an unsuccessful attempt on my part to make you laugh. So I must assure you most emphatically that it's not my fault if the illustrious Resident of Banten (it is to him that I'm referring) spoke in such a curious way that I can hardly reproduce it here without appearing to do so for comical effect. For he had what you might call a *tic*. He spoke as though each word were followed by a period, or a long dash. I can't think of a better comparison to the intervals between his words than the hush after the "amen" to a long prayer in church, which, as everybody knows, signals an opportunity to shift in your seat, cough, or blow your nose. What he said was for the most part well considered, and would have sounded quite reasonable, at least from a rhetorical point of view, if he'd been able to avoid those awkward pauses. But all that disjointedness, the halting, stumbling delivery, made him decidedly hard to follow, which often gave rise to complications. Because if you began to reply, thinking he'd reached the end of his sentence or was leaving the rest for you to infer, the missing words would come up anyway after a time, like the stragglers of a defeated army, which made you feel you'd been impolite by interrupting him. In Serang, the capital of the regency, his diction was held to be "slimy" by all

Who is the
narrator?

—unless they were in the colonial service, which tends to be somewhat inhibiting. The adjective is not in very good taste, in my opinion, but I must admit it qualifies the locution of Mr. Slymering, the Resident, rather well.

I have said nothing as yet of Max Havelaar and his wife—they were the two passengers who alighted after Resident Slymering, along with their little boy and the nursemaid. As for their appearance and character, I could probably leave the description thereof to the course of events or to the reader's imagination, but now that I'm in an expressive mood I'll say that Mrs. Havelaar was not beautiful. Still, there was a marked sweetness to her glance and tone, and her easy manner was an unmistakable sign of worldliness and of belonging to the upper classes of society. There was none of that stiffness and strain so typical of the genteel middle classes, who persist in embarrassing themselves and others with fussy manners simply to pass as "distinguished," for she, unlike many women, set little store by social graces. In her dress, too, she was a model of simplicity. Her traveling costume consisted of a white muslin tunic and a blue wrap, which I believe would be called a peignoir in Europe, and at her throat she wore a silk cord with two small lockets that were largely hidden from view in the folds of her clothing; her hair was smoothed back in the Chinese manner, with a circlet of jasmine round the chignon.

I mentioned that she wasn't beautiful, but I wouldn't want you to think she was the opposite. I trust you'll appreciate her beauty as soon as I have the opportunity to portray her ablaze with indignation over what she called the "misunderstood genius" of her beloved Max, or whenever her child's well-being was at stake. The human face has been called the mirror of the soul too often for anyone still to prize a blank expression,

which has nothing to mirror because there's no soul in it. Well then, her soul was beautiful, and you had to be blind not to see the beauty of her face when it mirrored her soul.

Havelaar was a man of thirty-five. He was slim, and nimble in his movements. Aside from his short, mobile upper lip and his large, pale blue eyes, which had a dreamy look when he was calm but shot fire when seized with a great idea, there was nothing unusual about his appearance. His fair hair lay flat along his temples, and I can well understand that few people would be inclined to think at first sight that they were in the presence of a man whose heart and mind were both exceptional. He was a veritable "bundle of contradictions." Sharp as a knife and gentle as a girl, he was always the first to feel the hurt inflicted by his harsh words, and suffered more than the victim. Sharp-witted, he was quick to grasp the loftiest, most complex matters, and took pleasure in finding answers to difficult questions, no matter how much exertion, study, or commitment was required . . . and yet he was often baffled by the simplest things a child could have explained to him. Devoted to truth and justice, he often neglected his most immediate duties purely for the sake of redressing a wrong lying higher or further or deeper, which seemed to hold more attraction on account of the greater effort involved. He was chivalrous and brave, but, like the original Don Quixote, he often wasted his valor tilting at windmills. He burned with an insatiable ambition, which made him dismissive of all the normal distinctions in society, yet he regarded a life of calm, secluded domesticity as his greatest happiness. A poet in the highest sense of the word, he could, from a mere spark, dream up an entire solar system peopled with creatures of his own invention, and fancy himself the lord of a world he

*I think
this is hawkman*

"Bundle of contradictions"

himself had called into existence . . . and yet, on the instant, he could switch to a down-to-earth discussion of the price of rice, the rules of grammar, or the economic advantages of an Egyptian poultry farm. There was no branch of knowledge entirely foreign to him. He inferred what he didn't know, and had a talent for using what little he did know—no one knows a great deal, and he, though perhaps knowing more than the average man, was no exception to this rule—as a means of compounding his knowledge. He was precise and orderly, and also extremely patient, but that was only because precision, order, and patience didn't come easily to him, for he had a wayward spirit. He was unhurried and circumspect in his judgments, although this wasn't apparent from his briskness in stating his conclusions. His views were too whimsical for people to believe in their durability, and yet he was frequently able to prove them durable. He was drawn to all that was great and uplifting, and at the same time could be as ignorant and naive as a child. He was honest, particularly where honesty leans towards generosity, leaving unpaid a debt of hundreds simply because he'd given thousands away. Witty and entertaining when he felt himself among kindred spirits, he was otherwise aloof and withdrawn. Warmhearted to his friends, he was ready—sometimes too ready—to befriend the needy. He was sensitive to love and affection . . . true to his word . . . weak in small things, but resolute to the point of obstinacy when he considered it expedient to show character . . . modest and amenable to those who acknowledged his intellectual superiority, but disagreeable to those who challenged it . . . frank out of pride, and reticent only when he feared that his candor would be mistaken for naivety . . . susceptible to the sensual and the spiritual in equal measure

. . . timid and halting when he thought he was not understood, but eloquent when he felt that his words were falling on fertile soil . . . slow when not spurred on by his own soul, but otherwise hardworking, ardent, and determined . . . furthermore, he was friendly, well mannered, and of irreproachable conduct: such, more or less, was Havelaar!

I said: more or less. Giving definitions is difficult enough as it is, and rarely more so than when describing a person who deviates greatly from the everyday mold. That is probably why novelists tend to present their heroes as either devils or angels. Black and white are easy to paint; more difficult to achieve is the correct rendering of the gradations in between, in particular when you're bound by veracity and must therefore avoid making the portrait too dark or too light. The sketch I have attempted to give of Havelaar is, I fear, sorely deficient. So diverse are the raw materials at my disposal that judgment is hindered by an embarrassment of riches; to paint the full picture I may have to revisit them in the course of telling my story. One thing is certain: he was an unusual man, and worthy of observation. I notice I have failed to mention one of his main traits: that he was just as quick to see the ludicrous as the serious side of things, and that this added a touch of humor to his conversation, which, without his knowing it, left his listeners in doubt as to whether they were moved by the strength of feeling in his words or amused by an abrupt flash of wit subverting the earnestness of what he had just said.

It was remarkable that his appearance, and even his sentiments, bore so few traces of the life he'd led. Vaunting one's experience has become a risible commonplace. There are those who drift along on the same stream—they claim to

be swimming—for fifty or sixty years, yet have little to say about all those years other than that they moved from Canal A to Street B. There's nothing more common than hearing people boast about what they went through, particularly if they came by their gray hairs lightly. Others claim wide experience on the grounds of some fate that has befallen them, without that fateful event having left the faintest mark on the soul. Indeed I can quite imagine that witnessing a major upheaval, or even being a party to it, has little or no effect on the state of mind of people who lack the ability to absorb impressions and learn from them. Anyone who doubts this should ask himself whether it is fair to attribute wide experience to every French citizen between forty and fifty years old in 1815, all of whom had not only seen the great drama unfold in 1789, but had also played some major or minor role in it.

And conversely: think of all those people who experience a whole range of sentiments without any external circumstances appearing to warrant them. Think of the Crusoe novels, of Silvio Pellico's imprisonment, of Saintine's adorable *Picciola*,* of the turmoil in the breast of an "old maid" with a lifelong passion for a man yet never breathing a word to anyone about her heartache, think of the friend of humanity who, without any personal motive, takes a fiery interest in the welfare of his fellow citizens or fellow men. Think how he hopes and fears by turns, observing every change, how passionately he professes a noble idea and how he burns with indignation when that idea is pushed aside by other notions whose gravitas, for a moment at least, outweighs that of his own. Think of the philosopher in his cell, trying to teach the meaning of truth and finding his voice drowned out by

sanctimonious hypocrites or money-grubbing charlatans. Imagine Socrates—not drinking the cup of poison, for I'm referring to the experience of inner emotion, and not of outward events—and think how bitterly his soul must have grieved when he who sought after rightness and truth found himself accused of "corrupting the young and despising the gods."

Or better still: think of Jesus gazing towards Jerusalem, and lamenting that the people "would not" take heed. Such a grievous cry—in advance of the poisoned cup or the wooden cross—doesn't arise from an unaffected heart. It speaks of suffering, much suffering, it speaks of experience!

This tirade has escaped me . . . now that it is written, let it stand. Havelaar was a man of wide experience. Would you care for something more spectacular than moving from Canal A to Street B? Well, he had been shipwrecked—more than once, for that matter. His diary was strewn with fires, uproar, assassinations, war, duels, wealth, poverty, famine, cholera, love, and "loves." He had traveled widely and had mixed with people of all races, ranks, customs, prejudices, creeds, and complexions.

The circumstances of his life, then, had put him in a position to gain much experience. And gain it he did, for his quick mind and open heart ensured that he didn't go through life without absorbing the abundance of impressions that it offered him.

What surprised everyone who knew or could guess how much he had seen and endured was that so little of it could be read in his face. True, there was a certain weariness in his features, but this was more suggestive of careworn youth than of the approach of old age. And yet he was approaching old age, for in the Indies a man of thirty-five is no longer young.

As I mentioned before, his sentiments, too, had remained youthful. He would happily play with a child, and showed the petulance of a child himself at times, as when he complained about "little Max" not being old enough to fly kites whereas he, "big Max," took such pleasure in it. He was happy to leapfrog with boys and to draw embroidering patterns for girls. He would even take the needle from them and work some threads himself for the fun of it, although he often said that surely they had better things to do than "mechanically counting stitches." In the company of eighteen-year-olds he was a just another young student joining them in songs like "Patriam canimus" or "Gaudeamus igitur". . . I've heard it said that only a short while ago, while on leave in Amsterdam, he tore down a tobacconist's shop sign, out of displeasure at the picture of a Negro in chains at the feet of a European smoking a long pipe, captioned, unsurprisingly, as: "The Young Merchant Smoker."

The babu he helped down from the coach was no different from any other domestic in the Indies, for they're all alike when old. If you're familiar with this type of servant I needn't describe what she looked like. But if you aren't, never mind. The only difference between her and all the other nursemaids in the Indies was that she had very little work to do: Mrs. Havelaar took exemplary care of her child, and whatever had to be done with or for little Max she did herself, much to the surprise of the other ladies, who were inclined to disapprove of a mother being "a slave to her children."

*What Defoe's hero Robinson Crusoe (1719), the Italian poet

Silvio Pellico (1789– 1854), and the French writer Saintine (pen name of Joseph-Xavier Boniface, 1795– 1865) have in common is the striking contrast between a man's imposed isolation and the attendant raising of his moral and religious awareness.

SEVENTH CHAPTER

RESIDENT Slymering of Banten introduced the Adipati and Controleur Verbrugge to Havelaar, who, as the new Assistant Resident, greeted both officials courteously, and spoke a few kindly words to Verbrugge—meeting a new superior is always a little intimidating—as though wishing to establish right off the sort of amicable relationship that would facilitate their future dealings. Havelaar's conduct was properly attuned to making the acquaintance of a man who is not only entitled to using the gilded *payung*, or sunshade,³⁰ but is also meant to be his “younger brother.” With an air of dignified indulgence he chided the Adipati for his exaggerated effort in coming such a very long way to meet him, considering the weather conditions. For there was, strictly speaking, no need for him to do so according to the rules of etiquette.

“Truly, Mr. Adipati, I'm rather cross with you for having gone to so much trouble on my behalf! I didn't expect to see you until I got to Rangkasbitung.”

“I wished to meet you at the earliest opportunity, so that we might become friends,” the Adipati replied.

“Indeed, indeed, I'm greatly honored. But it pains me to see someone of your rank and age exerting himself unduly. You even came on horseback!”

“Oh yes, Mr. Havelaar! When duty calls, I am still quick and strong.”

“But you ask too much of yourself! Don't you agree, Mr. Slymering?”

“The. Adipati. Is. Most.”

“True, but there are limits.”

"Dutiful," Resident Slymering said, belatedly.

"True, but there are limits," Havelaar repeated, almost as though to swallow his previous words. "If you have no objection, Mr. Slymering, we could make room in the coach. The babu can stay behind, we'll send a sedan chair for her from Rangkasbitung. My wife will take young Max on her knee, won't you, Tina? That way we can all fit in."

"All. Right. With."

"Verbrugge, you can come along too. I don't see why . . ."

"Me!" concluded the Resident.

"I don't see why you should go splashing through the mud on horseback, there's room enough for us all. We can get to know each other. What d'you say, Tina, we can fit everybody in, can't we? Come here, Max . . . well, Verbrugge, isn't this little fellow charming? This is my son, this is Max!"

Meanwhile, the Resident and the Adipati had seated themselves in the pendopo. Havelaar beckoned Verbrugge and asked who the owner of the white horse with the red saddlecloth was. Then, as Verbrugge started towards the entrance of the pendopo to check which white horse was meant, Havelaar laid a hand on his shoulder, asking:

"Is the Adipati always so dutiful?"

"He's a strong man for his age, Mr. Havelaar, and he wants to make a good impression, as you can imagine."

"Yes, I realize that. I've heard much in his favor. He's quite civilized, I gather?"

"Oh yes . . ."

"And does he have an extended family?"

Verbrugge gave Havelaar a questioning look, for he didn't see the connection. In fact many people experienced this

difficulty when meeting Havelaar for the first time. The speed of his thinking caused him to leap ahead in the course of a conversation, and no matter how gradual the transition in his own mind, you could hardly blame interlocutors with less mental agility for staring at him with the unspoken question on their lips: are you mad . . . or, what's the matter with you?

That was roughly the expression on Verbrugge's face, and Havelaar had to repeat his question before getting an answer.

"Yes, he has a very extended family."

"And are they building any *masjids* in the regency?" Havelaar went on, again in a tone hinting at some kind of connection between mosques and the number of the Adipati's relatives.

Verbrugge replied that the construction of mosques was well underway.

"Ah yes, I knew that already!" Havelaar exclaimed. "Now tell me, are there bad arrears in payment of land tax?"

"Well, things could be better . . ."

"Indeed they could, especially around Parangkujang," Havelaar said, as if he thought he might as well answer his question himself. "What is the levy for this year?" he continued, and, noting Verbrugge's hesitation as he tried to formulate a reply, cut him short by continuing in the same breath:

"All right, all right, I know . . . Eighty-six thousand and a few hundred . . . fifteen thousand up from last year . . . but only six thousand up from '45. Since '43 we've only gone up by eight thousand . . . and the population, too, is very sparse . . . Malthus, don't you know! In twelve years we've seen a rise of only 11 percent, if that, because the census figures used to be very inaccurate . . . and still are!³¹ From '50 to '51 there was even a decline. No improvement in livestock either . . . not a

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good sign. Why, Verbrugge! Just look at that horse rearing up, I think it's got the staggers . . . Come here, Max, take a look!"

Verbrugge could see that there was little the new Assistant Resident would be learning from him, and that his own "local seniority" was not going to make any difference—not that the good fellow was bothered about that.

"But it's only natural," Havelaar continued, taking Max on his arm. "In Cikande and Bolang they're very glad of it . . . and so are the rebels in the Lampungs.³² I'd be most grateful for your cooperation, Controleur Verbrugge! The Adipati is getting on in years, and so . . . By the way, is his son-in-law still the district chief? All things considered, I think he's someone we should make allowances for . . . the Adipati, I mean. It's a great pleasure to be in such a backward and poverty-stricken place, and . . . and I hope to remain here for a long time."

At this he shook hands with Verbrugge. As the two men made their way back to the table where Resident Slymering, the Adipati, and Mrs. Havelaar were seated, Verbrugge became aware, more keenly than five minutes earlier, that this Havelaar fellow was far less of a fool than Commander Duclari made him out to be. Verbrugge was by no means lacking in intelligence, and, knowing the Lebak regency as well any one man can know an area of that size without a printing press, it began to dawn on him that Havelaar's apparent non sequiturs made good sense after all, and also that the new Assistant Resident knew quite a lot about his new posting even though he'd never been there before. He was still puzzled by Havelaar's enthusiastic remark about the poverty of Lebak, but told himself he must have got it wrong. Afterwards, however, when Havelaar said the same thing again on several occasions, Verbrugge came to realize how magnanimous and

noble the new Assistant Resident's enthusiasm was.

Havelaar and Verbrugge took their seats at the table and drank tea, engaging in small talk until Dongso appeared, informing Resident Slymering that a fresh team of horses had been harnessed. They all squeezed into the coach as best they could, and off they went. All the jolting and shaking made conversation difficult. Little Max was kept quiet with a *pisang*,³³ and his mother, holding him on her lap, refused outright to admit she was tired when Havelaar offered to relieve her of the heavy child. During a delay in a mudhole Verbrugge asked the Resident whether he had already discussed Mrs. Slotering with the new Assistant Resident.

"Mr. Havelaar. Said . . ."

"By all means, Verbrugge, why not? The lady can stay with us. I would never . . ."

"It. Is. All. Right," the Resident drawled, with considerable effort.

"Never would I turn away a lady in her circumstances. That goes without saying, doesn't it, Tina?"

Tina agreed that it went without saying.

"You have two houses in Rangkasbitung," Verbrugge said. "There's plenty of room for two families."

"But even if there weren't . . ."

"I. Did. Not. Dare . . ."

"Oh, Resident Slymering," cried Mrs. Havelaar, "there's no doubt about it!"

"Promise. It. To Her. Because. It. Is."

"Even if there were ten of them, as long as they take us as we are."

"A. Great. Inconvenience. And. She. Is."

"But she's in no condition to travel, Resident Slymering!"

The violent jolt as the coach was pulled free from the mud served as an exclamation mark to Tina's assertion that traveling was impossible for Mrs. Slotering. Everyone heaved a deep sigh, which is customary following a jolt of that kind, while little Max retrieved the fruit that had fallen from his hand into his mother's lap, and they were well on their way to the next mudhole before the Resident could bring himself to finish his sentence by adding:

"A. Native. Woman."

"Oh, that makes no difference," Mrs. Havelaar said, struggling to make herself heard. The Resident nodded, as though pleased with himself for having settled the matter. Conversation being so effortful, they all fell silent.

This Mrs. Slotering was the widow of Havelaar's predecessor, the Assistant Resident who had died two months previously. Verbrugge had been appointed as his temporary replacement, in which capacity he was entitled to occupy the large house which, in Rangkasbitung as elsewhere, was provided by the government for the head of the regional administration. However, he hadn't moved into the large house, partly to avoid having to move out again soon after, and partly so that the widow and her children wouldn't be obliged to vacate the premises. Not that that would have been necessary, because there was, within the grounds of the spacious official residence, another building, which had formerly served the same purpose and which, though somewhat rundown, was still perfectly habitable.

Mrs. Slotering had asked Resident Slymering to speak to her husband's successor on her behalf, so that she might stay in the official residence until after her confinement, which would

take place a few months later. It was this request that Havelaar and his wife had so readily granted, for it was in their nature to be hospitable and helpful in the highest degree.

We have heard the Resident mention that Mrs. Slotering was a "native woman." Some explanation is called for here for the benefit of the non-East Indian reader, who might otherwise jump to the conclusion that she was a full-blooded Javanese.

European society in the Dutch Indies may be divided into two quite separate groups: the true Europeans on the one hand, and on the other those who—although legally enjoying the same rights—were not born in Europe and have some native blood in their veins. In fairness to the notions of humanity prevailing in the Indies, I hasten to add that, however sharply the line is drawn between the two types of individuals, both regarded as Hollanders by the native population,³⁴ the divide in no way resembles the barbarian practices of segregation seen in America. I don't deny there is still much in these social relations that is hateful and unfair, and that the term *liplap* has often grated on my ears as proof of how far removed the non-liplap, the white man himself, is from being civilized. True, the liplap is seldom admitted to social gatherings, and is mostly looked down on, but you seldom hear anybody advocating such exclusion or disparagement *on principle*. Everyone is, of course, free to choose his own environment and company, and you can't really blame the ~~true~~ European for preferring to consort with his peers rather than with people who—regardless of their moral and intellectual merit—don't share his way of thinking, or—and this seems to be what supposed differences in civilization often amount to—*whose prejudices have taken a different direction* from his own.³⁵

A lilap—a more polite term would be “so-called native,” but please allow me to use the vernacular expression that appears to be born of alliteration, without wishing to cause any offense, and besides, what does the word actually mean? In any case, there’s much to be said for the lilap. For the European, too. There’s also much to be said against both, and in this too they’re alike. But they differ too much in both their good and their bad parts to take pleasure, generally speaking, in each other’s company. Moreover—and this is largely the government’s fault—the lilap is often poorly educated. The question is not what the European would be like if he’d been similarly hindered in his development; be that as it may, there’s no doubt that it is in most cases the lilap’s schooling that bars him from achieving equality, for all that he, as an individual, may be seen as deserving precedence over certain Europeans in terms of civilization, science, or art.

Again, there’s nothing new here. It was, for instance, William the Conqueror’s policy to raise the status of the lowliest Norman above that of the most civilized Saxon, so that every Norman could, by appealing to the superiority of the Normans *in general*, assert himself in areas where he would have been ignored *but for* the dominant influence of his clan.

Such a state of affairs inevitably puts a certain strain on social intercourse, which could be alleviated only by philosophical, broad-minded attitudes and measures on the part of the government.³⁶

Needless to say, the European, having the upper hand in these relationships, is quick to embrace his artificial superiority. But it is often hilarious to hear a man whose culture and language were largely acquired in the backstreets of Rotterdam making fun of a lilap for his or her mistakes in

Dutch grammar.

A lilap may be civilized, well educated, even learned—yes, they exist! But when a European upstart who jumps ship by feigning illness to avoid washing dishes and whose speech is of the commonest kind rises to become head of the trading company that made such huge profits on indigo in 1800—no, long before he even started his *toko* dealing in hams and hunting rifles—when such a European notices that the most well-bred lilap has difficulty telling certain Dutch gutturals apart, his reaction is to laugh at the stupidity of not knowing the difference between a *g* and an *h*.

But he wouldn't have laughed had he known that in Arabic and Malay both sounds are written the same way, that *Hieronymus* passed via *Geronimo* into *Jérôme*, that we have turned *huano* into *guano*, that a hostel employs ostlers, and that for *Guild Heaume* the Dutch say *Huillem* or *Willem*. That would be too much erudition to expect from a man who makes his fortune in indigo and owes his betterment to luck in playing dice . . . or worse!

So a European of that ilk can hardly be expected to consort with a mere lilap!

I can see how *William* derives from *Guillaume*, and I must say I've met many lilaps, especially in the Moluccas, who astonished me with the extent of their knowledge, and who gave me the idea that we Europeans, notwithstanding all our resources, are often far behind those unfortunate pariahs who from the very cradle must contend with artificial, unfair discrimination and the absurd prejudice against the color of their skin. Mrs. Slotering, however, was in no danger of making mistakes in Dutch, for she always spoke Malay. We will meet her in the next chapter having tea with Havelaar, Tina,

and little Max on the porch of their home in Rangkasbitung, where our travelers arrived safely at last, much jostled by their long journey.

Resident Slymering, who had come along only to install the new Assistant Resident in his office, announced that he wanted to return to Serang on the same day.

"Because. I," he managed to drag out, at which Havelaar declared that he was all in favor of expedience.

"Am. Very. Busy," spoke the Resident, haltingly.

They then agreed to meet in a half hour on the Adipati's spacious front veranda. Verbrugge was prepared for this, and had, several days in advance, issued summons to all the district chiefs, the *patih*, the *kliwon*, the *jaksa*,³⁷ the tax collector, several overseers, and any other native officials whose presence was required at the ceremony, to assemble in the regional capital.

The Adipati said goodbye and rode off to his house. Mrs. Havelaar took a look around her new abode; she was greatly pleased, especially with the sizable garden, which meant plenty of fresh air for little Max. The Resident and Havelaar went to their quarters to change into the official attire required for the ceremony. Milling around the house were hundreds of people who had either escorted the Resident's coach on horseback, or were in the retinues of the assembled chiefs, while heads of police and office staff hurried to and fro. In short, the tedium of that forgotten corner of west Java was temporarily dispelled by bustle and ado.

It was not long before the handsome carriage sent by the Adipati entered the forecourt. The Resident and Havelaar, glittering with gold and silver but in danger of tripping over their sabers, boarded the vehicle, which was met with gongs

and gamelan music at the Adipati's home.³⁸ Controleur Verbrugge had already arrived, having changed out of his muddy clothes earlier. The lesser chiefs sat, oriental-fashion, in a large circle on the mat-covered floor, while the chairs around a table at the far end of the long veranda were occupied by Resident Slymering, the Adipati, the new Assistant Resident, Verbrugge, and half a dozen chiefs. Tea and cake were served, and the simple ceremony began.

Resident Slymering stood up and proceeded to intone the Governor-General's order appointing Max Havelaar as Assistant Resident in the regency of South Banten, or Banten Kidul, as Lebak is called by the natives. He then read out the usual oath of office printed in the Government Gazette, which included the statement "that with a view to his appointment or promotion to the office of ***** he must not have made any gifts or promises to anyone; that he will bear true faith to His Majesty the King of the Netherlands and obey His Majesty's representative in the East Indies; that he will strictly uphold and cause to be upheld the laws and regulations applicable now and in the future, and that in all matters he will conduct himself as befits a good *****" (in this instance: a good Assistant Resident). This was, of course, followed by the sacramental "So help me God Almighty."

Havelaar repeated the phrases as they were read out. The oath should by rights be taken to imply the promise to protect the native population against extortion and oppression. For when swearing to abide by the existing laws and regulations, one had only to glance at the numerous provisions thereof to see that a separate oath wasn't really necessary. But the legislator apparently deemed that one cannot have too much of a good thing, because an additional oath is indeed required

of an Assistant Resident to reiterate his duty towards the common man. So Havelaar had once more to call upon "God Almighty" to witness his promise to "protect the native people against oppression, ill treatment, and extortion."

The attentive listener would have been interested to note the disparity in attitude and tone of Resident Slymering and Havelaar on this occasion. Both men had attended such ceremonies before. So the disparity I am referring to did not lie in their responses to the novelty or anomaly of the occasion; rather, it was caused exclusively by the difference in character and outlook of the two men. Although the Resident spoke a little less haltingly than usual, as he was merely required to read out the order of appointment and the oaths, which saved him the trouble of having to grope for words to finish his sentences, he conducted the whole ceremony with such solemn dignity as to impress the superficial onlooker with his sincerity. Havelaar, by contrast, raising his finger as he repeated the oath, expressed in his face, tone, and bearing something like: "All that stuff goes without saying—I would do it anyway, even *without God Almighty*," so that anyone with an understanding of human nature would have had more confidence in his ease of manner and apparent aloofness than in the Resident's gravity. After all, surely it's absurd to assume that the man called upon to do justice, the man whose task is to watch over the welfare of thousands, should feel honor bound by uttering a few syllables if he didn't already feel bound by his own conscience? We believe that Havelaar would have protected the poor and downtrodden wherever he went, even if he had sworn by "God Almighty" to do the opposite.

Then followed the Resident's speech addressed to the chiefs, in which he introduced the new Assistant Resident as

the head of the regency, enjoining them to obey him and fulfill their obligations with rigor, and so forth. The chiefs were subsequently presented one by one to Havelaar. He shook hands with each of them in turn, and the "installation" was over.

The midday meal was served indoors at the Adipati's home, where Commander Duclari was among the guests. The Resident took his leave immediately afterwards, as he wanted to be back in Serang that evening: "Because. I. Am. So. Extremely. Busy."

Once the Resident's coach departed, Rangkasbitung subsided into tranquility once more, as may be expected of a government station in the interior of Java that is neither home to many Europeans nor situated on a main road.

It was not long before Duclari and Havelaar felt at ease with each other; meanwhile, the Adipati showed signs of being pleased with his new "elder brother," and Verbrugge reported afterwards that the Resident, whom he had escorted part of the way back to Serang, had spoken most favorably of the Havelaars, who had stayed at his house for a few days on their way to Lebak. He also said that Havelaar, given his good reputation with the government, would most likely be promoted to higher office in the near future, or at least transferred to a more "advantageous" post.

Max Havelaar and "his Tina" had only just returned from Europe, and were tired of "living out of a suitcase," as I once heard it curiously described. So it was a relief to them, after all their travels, to find themselves in a place they could call home. Before their European visit Havelaar had served as Assistant Resident in Ambon, where he had faced considerable difficulties, because the islanders were in a state of ferment

and rebellion as a result of all the injudicious measures recently taken there. He had managed to quell the spirit of revolt, not least thanks to his resilience, but he was pained by the scant assistance accorded to him in this affair by the authorities, and annoyed at the miserable government that, for centuries, has been causing the depopulation and spoilage of those lovely Moluccan islands . . .

The interested reader is advised to consult what was written on this subject as long ago as 1825 by Baron Van der Capellen, the humanitarian whose articles were published in that year's *East Indies Gazette*. The situation has not improved since!

As it was, Havelaar had done all he could within his remit in Ambon, but his exasperation at the lack of cooperation from those whose first duty was to support his efforts had made him ill, whereupon he decided to go to Europe on furlough.³⁹ On his reposting he had, strictly speaking, been entitled to a better place than the poor, by no means thriving regency of Lebak, as his position in Ambon had been of more consequence. He had had sole authority there, without a Resident senior to him. Besides, even before his appointment in Ambon there had been talk of a promotion, and there was some surprise when he was sent to a regency that yielded so little in the way of plantation bonuses, since a post was usually valued by the income attached to it. Havelaar himself raised no objections, having no ambition to grovel for a higher rank or income.⁴⁰

He had spent what little money he'd saved over the past years on his travels in Europe, and had even run into debt there; he was, in a word, poor. But he had never thought of his office in terms of financial gain, and on his appointment to Lebak he told himself he'd make up his arrears by thrift, in

which resolve his wife, having such modest tastes and needs, would be happy to support him.

But thrift didn't come easily to Havelaar. Personally, he was able to restrict his expenses to the basic necessities. In fact he had no difficulty at all on that score; it was when other people were in need that he felt compelled to give and to help. He was conscious of this being a weakness, for common sense told him how unreasonable it was to support others while his own need was greater . . . and all the more unreasonable when "his Tina" and his beloved little boy suffered on account of his generosity. He blamed himself for letting his heart rule his mind; it was a failing, it was vanity, it was posturing as a prince in disguise . . . He vowed to mend his ways, and yet every time someone came to him with a tale of misfortune he forgot his resolve in his eagerness to help, in spite of the bitter consequences to himself of this virtue turned vice. A week before little Max was born he couldn't even afford to buy the ironwork cradle for his darling to sleep in, and yet only a few days before he'd sacrificed what little jewelry his wife possessed just to help someone who was undoubtedly better off than he was.

But all this lay far behind them when they arrived in Lebak. They moved into their new home, where they truly hoped to remain "for some time," with confidence and good cheer, and had taken particular delight in ordering furniture from Batavia that would make their surroundings comfortable and snug. They pointed out to each other where they'd have their breakfast, where little Max would play, where they'd have the library, where they'd sit in the evening so he could read to her what he'd written in the day, for he was forever working out his ideas on paper . . . and "one day they'll be printed," Tina

said, "then people will know who my Max is!" But a certain diffidence verging on prudishness had prevented him from committing to print the thoughts going through his mind. He himself, at any rate, had no better way of describing his reluctance than by countering any suggestion to seek publication with: "Would you send your daughter out into the street with no clothes on?"

It was this kind of repartee that made people think "That man Havelaar is rather a queer fish," and I'm not saying they were wrong. But if you took the trouble to interpret his unusual way of expressing himself, you'd find that the odd question about a girl's state of dress amounted to a treatise on the temperance of mind that shrinks from the gaze of the vulgar passerby and withdraws into a shell of chaste modesty.

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Yes indeed, Havelaar and his Tina were bound to be happy in Rangkasbitung! The only cares weighing on them were the debts they had left behind in Europe, compounded by their as yet unpaid passage back to the Indies and the expense of furnishing their new home. Nothing desperate. After all, they could get by on half or even a third of his income, couldn't they? Besides, there was the chance, or rather the likelihood, of his being promoted soon, in which case everything would be put to rights in no time . . .

"I would be very sorry to leave Lebak, Tina, because there's such a lot of work to be done here. You must be very frugal, my dear, then we might be able to get everything settled even if I don't get my promotion . . . Once we've managed that, I hope to stay here for a long, long time!"

There was no need for him to remind Tina of the need for thrift. It wasn't her fault that they had to scrimp, but her

Remarks about
Jenna

identification with her Max was so complete that she didn't take the reminder as a reproach. Nor was it intended as such, for Havelaar was well aware that the fault lay with him alone for being overgenerous, and that her fault—if she had one at all—was that she approved of everything he did out of sheer love.

No indeed, *she* hadn't protested when, confronted by a pair of penniless women in Nieuwstraat who had never left Amsterdam and had never been on an outing, he offered them a tour of the fair in Haarlem, under the curious pretext that he had received royal orders to provide "entertainment for old ladies of irreproachable conduct." *She* didn't mind when he treated the inmates of all the orphanages in Amsterdam to cake and almond milk, besides showering them with toys. *She* was in full agreement with his decision to settle the innkeeper's bill for a poverty-stricken family of singers wishing to return to their homeland but unwilling to part with their harp, violin, and double bass, the tools of their languishing trade. *She* didn't protest when he brought home a girl who had accosted him in the street . . . and gave her food and a bed for the night . . . and didn't tell her to "go, and sin no more!" until he had provided the lass with the means to do so.

She thought it very kind of her Max to provide a piano for the man who told him how devastated he was that his daughters were deprived of music by his bankruptcy. *She* understood perfectly well why her Max purchased the freedom of a brokenhearted family of slaves forced to mount the auctioneer's block in Manado. *She* thought it natural that Max should provide new horses for the Alfuros in the Minahasa when theirs had been ridden to death by the officers of the Bayonnais. *She* didn't object when he went out of his way at

Manado and Ambon to help the stranded American whalers and felt too grand to ask the American government to reimburse him for their upkeep.⁴² She took it for granted that the naval officers of almost every visiting warship stayed with them, and that Max's house was their favorite home away from home.

He was *her* Max, wasn't he? Wouldn't it have been too petty, too small-minded, too unfair to subject a man of such majestic conscience to the rules of domestic economy that apply to others? Besides, even if there was some disproportion between income and expenditure at times, wasn't Max, her very own Max, destined for a brilliant career? Wouldn't circumstances soon permit him to be as generous as he pleased without exceeding his income? Wasn't it obvious that one day Max would rise to the very highest office in their beloved Indies, or even become . . . a king? Wasn't it strange that he wasn't a king already?

If any fault could be found in her, it was her infatuation with Max, and if ever it was true to say of a wife that her sins were forgiven for she loved much, it was true in her case!

But there was nothing to forgive. Regardless of the exaggerated notions she had of her Max, it is fair to assume that his career prospects were good, so that once these realistic expectations were met he would soon be relieved of the disagreeable consequences of his generosity. But there was another circumstance of an entirely different nature that excused her and Havelaar's apparent carelessness.

She had lost both parents at a very young age and was brought up by relatives. Upon her marriage she was told that she had come into a modest fortune, which was paid out to her, but then Havelaar came across some old letters and notes

in a casket given to her by her mother, and discovered that her family had been very wealthy on both her father's and her mother's side, without it being clear where, how, or when all that money had gone. Tina herself had never cared about finances, and could therefore tell him little or nothing when pressed for details about her family's former possessions. Her grandfather, Baron Van W., had followed William V, Prince of Orange, to England, and had served as a captain in the Duke of York's cavalry. He appeared to have led a life of leisure with the likewise exiled stadholder's family, and it was this that had presumably caused his financial ruin. He eventually fell in battle at Waterloo, during a charge of the Boreel Hussars. Her father, then a young lieutenant aged eighteen, had been in the same charge and suffered a saber cut to the head, leading to insanity and death eight years later, and it was affecting to read the letters he wrote to his mother describing how he had searched the battlefield in vain for his father's body.⁴³

As for her mother's side of the family, she had memories of her grandfather living on a grand scale, and there were papers indicating that he had owned the postal service in Switzerland, in much the same way as such revenues belong to the appanage of the Princes of Thurn and Taxis in large sections of Germany and Italy today.⁴⁴ This suggested a considerable fortune, but for unknown reasons none of that wealth, or at any rate very little, had been passed on to the next generation.

It was not until he was married that Havelaar received what little information there was to be had on this matter, and when he decided to look into it further was taken aback to discover that the aforementioned casket—which had been kept out of filial piety, without any inkling that it might contain documents of financial importance—had unaccountably gone

missing. However unselfish his motives, he came to the conclusion, in view of this and many other circumstances, that there had to be some romantic story at the bottom of it all, and it's hardly surprising that a man of his extravagant generosity dearly wished that story to have a happy ending. Whether or not there was the stuff of a novel hidden away, and whether or not there had been any spoliation, what is certain is that something you might call a "dream of millions" took root in Havelaar's imagination.⁴⁵

But again, the strange thing was that a man who was only too eager to ferret out and defend the rights of others—however deeply buried in dusty documents and cobwebby chicaneries—could be so careless where his own interests were concerned as to let pass the moment when it might have been possible to tackle the issue more successfully. It was as if he felt there was something shameful about fighting his own cause, and I firmly believe that had "his Tina" been married to someone else, and if that man had asked Havelaar to unpick the tangled web surrounding her ancestors' fortune, he'd have restored to the "interesting orphan" the wealth that was rightfully hers. But the fact was that the interesting orphan was married to *him* and her fortune was *his*, so he felt it a touch tradesman-like, a touch degrading to say, in her name: "You owe me, you know!"

And yet he was unable to shake off his dream of millions, if only because it came in handy as an excuse when he fell prey to fits of self-reproach over spending too much money.

It was not until shortly before his return to Java, when he was racked with financial woes and had to bow his proud head under the Caudine yoke of many a creditor, that he was able to overcome his lassitude or embarrassment to take up the

case of the millions he believed were his due. In reply he received an old account book . . . an argument that is impossible to gainsay, as everyone knows.

But oh, they would keep such a tight rein on their purse in Lebak! And why wouldn't they? In such uncivilized domains there are no girls roaming the streets at night with a little honor to sell for a little food.⁴⁶ There are no homeless singers about with problematic means of livelihood, no families facing ruin from one day to the next because of some mishap—while such, after all, were the rocks on which Havelaar's good intentions tended to founder. The number of Europeans in the regency was negligible, and the Javanese of Lebak were too poor to attract much attention for any worsening of their penury, regardless of its cause. Tina didn't concern herself with these things, for her love of Max prevented her from acknowledging the reasons for their straitened circumstances. However, their new surroundings had a tranquil air, free from all those heartrending temptations that Havelaar had been so disinclined to resist, saying, "Well, I can't very well turn a blind eye to *this*, can I, Tina?" To which her unfailing reply would be, "Of course not, Max, you're absolutely right!"

We shall see, in due course, how the simple, apparently untroubled regency of Lebak came to cost Havelaar more than all his heart's previous extravagances combined. But they didn't know that yet! They faced the future with confidence, happy in their love for each other and their child . . .

"Have you seen all those roses in the garden," cried Tina. "And the pandan bushes, and the magnolia tree over there, and all the jasmine. And just look at those gorgeous lilies . . ."

Like a pair of children, they reveled in their new home. And when Duclari and Verbrugge returned to their shared quarters

after calling on Havelaar that evening, they talked at length about the childlike gaiety of the newcomers.

Havelaar went to his office and stayed there all night, until the following morning.

EIGHTH CHAPTER

HAVELAAR had told Controleur Verbrugge to invite all the chiefs gathered in Rangkasbitung to stay an extra day and attend the *sebah* he planned to convene. Such meetings were usually held once a month, but he had fixed the next sebah for the following morning, either to save the chiefs who lived far away the extra journey to the capital—for the Lebak regency is very large—or because he wished to address them officially at the earliest opportunity.

In front of his house, to the left but on the same grounds and facing the house occupied by Mrs. Slotering, stood a building containing the offices, which included the treasury, as well as a fairly spacious veranda well suited to meetings of this kind. It was there that the chiefs were duly assembled at an early hour. Havelaar entered, greeted them all, and sat down. He was presented with the monthly reports on agriculture, livestock, police, and the courts, which he laid to one side for later perusal.

After this everyone expected a speech similar to the one given by Resident Slymering the previous day, and it is quite likely that Havelaar was not planning to say anything different, but you had to have heard and seen him on such occasions to realize how very excited he could become, and how his unusual style of oratory tinged the most familiar subjects with new shades of meaning, how he would draw himself up, eyes blazing, his tone going from soft and genial to razor sharp while the figures of speech poured from his lips as though he were scattering gems at no cost to himself, and how, when he ceased, everyone stared at him openmouthed, as if to say:

"Heavens above! What sort of man are you?"

Yet although on such occasions he spoke like an apostle, like a seer, he was afterwards often unable to recall everything he'd said, and indeed his eloquence was more likely to astonish and stir emotion than to persuade with keen argument. He could have roused the Athenian fighting spirit to a frenzy when war was declared against Philip of Macedon, but would have been less successful in convincing them through rational argument. His address to the Chiefs of Lebak was in Malay, of course, which gave it an extra dimension, for the simplicity of oriental languages gives many expressions a poignancy our idioms have lost through literary artifice, while conversely the melodious aspect of Malay is hard to reproduce in any other language. It should also be borne in mind that his listeners were mostly simple but by no means unintelligent men, and that they were Orientals, whose emotions are very different from ours.

Havelaar must have spoken something like this:

•

"My dear Mr. Adipati, Regent of South Banten, and you, Radens Demang, who are district chiefs here, and you, Raden Jaksa, who are administrator of justice, and you, Raden Kliwon, who exercise authority over the capital, and all you radens, mantris, and chiefs in the regency of South Banten, I salute you!"⁴⁷

"And I say to you that I feel joy in my heart, now that I see you all gathered here, heeding the words from my mouth.

"I know there are those among you whose knowledge and virtue are outstanding, and my hope is to increase my

knowledge through yours, for my own understanding is not as great as I might wish. And much as I value virtue, I often find in my own heart errors of sentiment that overshadow it and stunt its growth . . . you all know how the large tree overarches the sapling and stifles it. So I will listen carefully to those of you who excel in virtue, to try to become a better man.

“My sincere greetings to you all.

“When the Governor-General directed me to serve as your Assistant Resident here, my heart rejoiced. You may be aware that I had never been to South Banten before. So I sent for documents concerning your regency, and saw that South Banten has much that is good. Your people have rice fields in the valleys, and there are rice fields on the mountainsides. And you wish to live in peace, and you have no desire to live in lands inhabited by others. Yes indeed, I know there is much that is good in South Banten!

“But that was not the only reason why my heart rejoiced. For I would have found much that is good in other places as well.

I also discovered that your people suffer poverty, and this warmed me to the depths of my soul. For I know that Allah loves the poor, and that He bestows riches on those whom He wishes to put to the test. But to the poor He sends those who speak His word, that they may stand tall amid their misfortunes.

“Doesn’t He bring rain to the ear wilting on its stalk, and a dewdrop to the cup of the thirsty flower?

“And isn’t there beauty in being sent to seek out those who, exhausted by their labors, sink to the ground at the roadside because their legs are too weak to carry them to collect their wages? Wouldn’t I be glad of the chance to reach out a helping hand to the man fallen into a ditch, and to offer a staff to the

mountain climber? Wouldn't my heart leap up to be chosen among many to turn complaint into prayer and lamentation into thanksgiving?

"Indeed, I am overjoyed to have been called to South Banten!

"I said to the woman who shares my troubles and magnifies my happiness: Rejoice, for I see that Allah heaps blessings on the head of our child! He has sent me to a place where there is still work to be done, and He deemed me worthy of being here before the time of harvest. For the joy lies not simply in cutting the paddy, it lies in cutting the paddy one has planted oneself. And the human soul thrives not on wages, but on the work done to deserve those wages. And I said to her: Allah has given us a child who one day will say: 'Do you know that I am his son?' And there will be those in the land who salute him with love, and who will lay their hand on his head and say: 'Sit down at our table, and dwell in our house, and take your share of what we have, for I knew your father.'

"Chiefs of Lebak, there is much work to be done in your regency!

"Tell me, is not the peasant poor? Doesn't your paddy often ripen to feed others than those who planted it? Aren't there many wrongs in your land? Aren't your children few in number?

"Don't you feel shame in your souls when asked by a visitor from Bandung,⁴⁸ over in the northeast, 'Where are the villages, and where the tillers of the soil? Why don't I hear the gamelan proclaiming gladness with its mouth of brass, nor the sound of paddy being pounded by your daughters?'

"Doesn't it sadden you to journey from here all the way to the south coast and see mountain slopes without water, and

plains where no buffalo ever drew a plow?

"Yes, I say unto you that your soul and mine are saddened by these things! And it is for that very reason that we are grateful to Allah for enabling us to work here.

"For in this land there are fields for many, while the people are few. And it isn't rain that is lacking, for the mountaintops draw the clouds down from heaven to earth. And it's not everywhere that the ground is too stony for plants to take root, for in many places the soil is soft and fertile, crying out for the seed that will be returned as a grain-laden stalk. And there's no war in the land to trample the paddy while it's still green, nor disease that renders the hoe useless. Nor are the sun's rays hotter than necessary to ripen the grain to feed you and your children, and there are no floods to make you wail, 'Oh, where is the place where I have sown?'⁴⁹

"Where Allah sends torrents that wash away the fields . . . where He makes the soil as hard as stone . . . where He makes the sun scorch the land, where He sends war to devastate the fields . . . where He strikes with diseases that leave the hands limp, or with drought that kills the ripening ear . . . there, Chiefs of Lebak, we humbly bow our heads and say: 'His will be done!'

"But it is not so in South Banten!

"I was sent here to be your friend, your elder brother. Wouldn't you warn your younger brother if you saw a tiger in his path?

 "Chiefs of Lebak, we have often been at fault, and our land is poor as a result of our faults.

"For there are many people who have gone away, even though they were born here, in places like Cikande and Bolang, or in the Karawang region, or around Batavia.⁵⁰

"Why do they look for work far from the earth where they buried their fathers? Why do they abandon the villages where they were circumcised? Why do they prefer the cool shade of the tree that grows yonder to the shade of our own forests?

"And over in the northwest, across the sea, there are many who should by rights be our sons, but who have left Lebak to roam strange shores, armed with *kris* and *keléwang* and shotgun. And they die a miserable death, for the government there has the power to crush rebellion.⁵¹

"I ask you, Chiefs of South Banten, why have so many people left, to be buried where they weren't born? Why does the tree ask: 'Where is the man who was once the child playing at my foot?'"

•

At this point Havelaar paused. You would have had to hear and see him to understand how his speech affected his listeners. When speaking of his child his voice grew gentle and indescribably tender, inviting the question: "Where oh where is the little one? Let me kiss the child who moves his father to speak in this way!" But when, shortly afterwards, he turned rather abruptly to the question of why Lebak was so poor and why so many people went away, there was an edge to his tone that recalled a gimlet boring a hole into a plank of hard wood. Yet he didn't speak loudly, nor did he emphasize particular words. There was even a sort of monotony to his voice, and whether it was acquired or natural, it was this monotony that made his words all the more affecting to an audience so keenly receptive to such rhetoric.

His figures of speech, always taken from life, served to

clarify his meaning, rather than as flourishes such as orators tend to indulge in without shedding any light whatsoever on the issue they profess to be elucidating. We are nowadays accustomed to the rather outlandish expression “as strong as a lion,” but the first European to use it didn’t draw it from a deep-seated sense of poetry, which offers images by way of argument and *cannot* speak otherwise: he simply copied the hackneyed phrase from some book or other featuring a lion, possibly the Bible. Given that none of his European listeners had any personal experience of a lion’s strength, it would have been far more appropriate to draw a comparison with some beast of great strength that they were familiar with.

Havelaar was undeniably a true poet. When he told of the rice fields on the mountain slopes as he gazed into the distance through the open side of the assembly hall, it was clear to everyone that he could actually see those fields in his mind’s eye. And when he spoke of the tree and the child who once played at its foot, the tree appeared before them, truly looking about for the departed inhabitants of Lebak. Moreover, he invented nothing: he could hear the tree speak, and was merely passing on what he, in poetic mood, had so distinctly heard.

If any of my readers were to argue that Havelaar’s mode of expression wasn’t all that original, recalling as it did the style of the Old Testament prophets, I’d remind them of my earlier observation that, when he got carried away, he actually sounded rather like a seer. Nourished as he was by impressions gained from living in forests and mountains and the poetry-laden atmosphere of the East, and drawing from a source like that of the prophets of old, to whom he was sometimes compared, he would probably not have spoken

otherwise even if he'd never read the melodious verses of the Old Testament. For even in his juvenile poetry we find lines such as the following, written on Mount Salak—one of the giants, but not the tallest, of the Priangan peaks—where he starts out with tender emotion before suddenly turning to the thunder he hears down below:

Loud praise to God seems sweeter here to me:
O'er hills and mountainsides our prayers resound.
The heart takes wing so much more easily,
And Heav'n is closer on this higher ground!
Here He made His own temple, His own altar;
No human foot has spoiled their sanctity.
The raging storm sings from the Lord's own psalter . . .
Its rolling thunder cries, "Your Majesty!"

The reader senses, surely, that in writing those closing lines he truly believed it was God's thunder reverberating through the mountains that dictated the words to him.

But he was not partial to verse. He dismissed it as "a stifling strait-jacket," and when persuaded to read out something he had "indulged in," as he put it, he'd take pleasure in spoiling his own work, either by reciting it in a jocular tone or by breaking off to throw in a joke, preferably in the middle of a highly serious passage. This would pain his listeners, whereas to him it was merely a biting satire on the discrepancy between the straitjacket and his stifled soul.

Few of the chiefs touched the refreshments that were brought in following a nod from Havelaar: trays went round with the customary fare of tea and sweetmeats.⁵² His timing seemed deliberate, so that the interlude would follow his last sentence. And for good reason. He wanted the chiefs to ask

themselves, "How does he know about all those people who have left our regency with bitterness in their hearts? He already knows how many families have fled to neighboring lands to escape poverty. He even knows that there are many Bantenese among those hoisting the flag of revolt against Dutch governance in the Lampungs. What does he want? What does he mean? To whom do his questions apply?"

And there were some in the audience who stared at Raden Wira Kusuma, the Chief of Parangkujang. But the majority lowered their eyes.⁵³

"Come here, Max!" Havelaar called, catching sight of his son playing in the yard, and the Adipati drew the child onto his lap. But little Max was too high-spirited to stay there long and jumped up to run around the large circle, amusing the chiefs with his patter and fingering the hilts of their krisses. Then, attracted by an exceptionally lavish costume,⁵⁴ he approached the Jaksa, who appeared to notice something unusual on the top of the child's head, which he pointed out to the Kliwon beside him with a whispered comment. The Kliwon seemed to agree.

"Off you go now, Max," Havelaar said. "Papa has something to tell these gentlemen."

And the child trotted off, blowing kisses.

After this, Havelaar resumed his speech:

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"Chiefs of Lebak! We are all in the service of the King of the Netherlands. But the King, who is righteous, and who wishes us to do our duty, is far away. Thirty times a thousand thousand souls, yes, even more than that number, are bound

to obey his orders, but he can't be near to all who depend on his will.

"Likewise, the Great Lord in Buitenzorg is righteous, and wishes every man to do his duty. But neither can he—mighty though he is, and in command of all those with authority in the towns and all the village elders, as well as having an army at his disposal and ships at sea⁵⁵—neither can he see where Injustice is done, for it is far away from him.

"And Resident Slymering at Serang, who is lord over Banten with its population of five times a hundred thousand, wishes justice to be done and righteousness to reign in his lands. But he resides far from where Injustice takes place. And whoever does wrong hides from his sight, for fear of punishment.

"And the honorable Adipati, Regent of South Banten, wishes all people of good conduct to live in peace, and that no shame shall come upon the lands of his regency. And I, who yesterday called upon God Almighty to witness that I shall be righteous and merciful, that I shall administer justice without fear or hatred, and that I shall be 'a good Assistant Resident'. . . I too wish to do my duty.

"Chiefs of Lebak! We all wish this!

~~* * *~~
"But if there should happen to be in our midst some who neglect their duties for gain, who sell justice for money, who seize the poor man's buffalo, and the fruits that belong to the hungry . . . who is to punish them?"

"If any of you heard of such wrongdoing, you would prevent it. Nor would any regent allow it within his regency. And I too shall prevent it wherever I can. But if neither you, nor the Adipati, nor I are ever told about such things . . .

"Chiefs of Lebak! Then who will do justice in South Banten?

"Listen to me, and I will tell you how justice will be done.

"The day will come that our women and children weep as they prepare our shroud, and the passerby will say: 'A man has died in that house.' And a traveler to the villages will bring tidings of death, and those who offer him lodging will ask: 'Who was the man who died?'

"And the answer will be: 'He was good and righteous. He passed judgment and turned no claimant from his door. He listened with patience to those who appealed to him, and restored what had been taken from them. And he would go out and help search for the buffalo stolen from the stable of a man, who was therefore unable to plow the soil, and when a daughter was abducted from her mother's house he'd seek out the culprit and bring the girl back. Where labor was done he didn't withhold payment, nor did he take the fruits from those who planted the trees. He didn't clothe himself with fabric intended for clothing others, nor did he eat the food that belonged to the poor.'

"Then the villagers will say, 'Allah is great, Allah has taken him unto Himself. His will be done . . . a good man has died.'

"But another time the passerby will stop at a house and ask, 'What is this, that the gamelan is silent, why are there no girls singing?' And again the answer will be: 'A man has died.'

"And he who journeys to the villages will sit with his host at dusk, surrounded by the sons and daughters of the house and the children of the village, and he will say, 'A man has died who vowed to be just, but he sold justice to those who gave him money. He manured his fields with the sweat of the workmen he summoned from their own fields. He denied the workmen their wages, and ate the food of the poor. He grew rich from the poverty of others. He possessed gold and silver and precious stones aplenty, yet the peasant couldn't still the

man -

good man

Concerned
about reputation

hunger of his child. He smiled with happiness, but there was gnashing of teeth from the claimants seeking justice. There was contentment on his face, but no milk in the nursing mothers' breasts.'

"And the villagers will say, 'Allah is great . . . we curse no one!'

"Chiefs of Lebak, death comes to us all one day!

"Then what will they say in the villages under our authority? What will they say at our funeral? And what will be our answer, when a voice speaks to our soul after death, asking, 'Why is there weeping in the fields, and why are the young men hiding? Who took the harvest from the barns, and who seized the buffalo needed for plowing? What have you done to the brother I entrusted to your care? Why does the poor man grieve and curse his wife's fertility? '

Here Havelaar paused again. After some moments he continued in the blandest of tones, as though what he'd just been saying was of no consequence whatsoever.

"As it's my sincere wish to live in good fellowship with you, I ask you to look upon me as your friend. Anyone who has made mistakes can count on leniency from me. Since I myself have often been mistaken, I won't be harsh . . . that is, not in cases of ordinary malfeasance or negligence. Only where neglect of duty is habitual will I take action. I'm not referring to serious crimes, such as extortion and oppression. Nothing of that kind goes on here, does it, Mr. Adipati?"

"Oh no, Mr. Assistant Resident, nothing of that kind goes on in Lebak."

"Well then, gentlemen, Chiefs of South Banten, let us give thanks for the poverty and backwardness of our regency. We have noble work to do. If Allah spares us, we'll make sure that

prosperity comes. The soil is fertile enough, and the people are willing. If everybody is left in peace to enjoy the fruits of their labor, there's no doubt the population will soon grow in number as well as in property and civilization, for these usually go together. Once more I ask you to look upon me as a friend who will help wherever he can, especially where Injustice must be fought. And in this I will be most grateful for your support.

"The reports I have received on farming, livestock, police, and the courts will be returned to you along with my decisions.

"Chiefs of South Banten! I have spoken. You may return, each to his own home. My warmest greetings to you all!"⁵⁶

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He bowed, offered his arm to the old Adipati and escorted him across the grounds to his house, where Tina stood waiting on the front veranda.

"Come now, Verbrugge, don't go home just yet! How about a glass of Madeira? And . . . oh yes, there's something I'm curious to know . . . Raden Jaksa, could you spare me a moment?"

Havelaar said this as all the chiefs, after much bowing and scraping, prepared to return home. Verbrugge too was on the point of leaving, but he now turned back with the Jaksa in tow.

"Tina, I'd like a glass of Madeira, and so would Verbrugge. Now, Raden Jaksa, please tell me what you were saying to the Kliwon about my little boy?"

"Pardon me, I was looking at the top of his head, because of

what you said in your speech."

"What the deuce has his head got to do with it? I've already clean forgotten what I said."

"Sir, I said to the Kliwon . . ."

Tina leaned in: it was her little Max they were discussing, after all.

"Sir, I said to the Kliwon that the *sinyo* was a royal child."⁵⁷

Tina was delighted: quite so, she thought!

The Adipati in turn proceeded to inspect the child's head, and, sure enough, he too noticed the twin whorls of hair, which, according to Javanese superstition, are destined to wear a royal crown.

Since etiquette didn't allow for a jaksa to be offered a seat in the Regent's presence, the Jaksa took his leave. For some time the conversation continued without touching upon anything relating to the "ceremony." Then suddenly—and hence contrary to the highly courteous nature of the Javanese—the Adipati inquired whether certain sums of money that were due to the tax collector could be paid out forthwith.

"Oh no, Mr. Adipati," Verbrugge exclaimed, "you know it can't be done before the accounts have been verified."

Havelaar was playing with little Max, but that didn't stop him from registering the Adipati's frown of displeasure at Verbrugge's reply.

"Come now, Verbrugge, let's not be difficult," he said, and sent for a clerk from the office. "We may as well pay out now . . . Those accounts are bound to be approved."

As soon as the Adipati had left, Verbrugge, who revered the statute books, said: "But Mr. Havelaar, it's not allowed! The collector's accounts are still in Serang, awaiting inspection . . .

what if there's a shortfall?"

"Then I'll make up for it," Havelaar said.

Verbrugge was perplexed by this extraordinary show of leniency towards the tax collector. The clerk soon reappeared with some papers, which Havelaar signed, saying that payment should be made without delay.

"Listen, Verbrugge, I'll tell you why I'm doing this! The Adipati is penniless, his secretary told me so himself, and besides . . . the urgency of his request! The situation is clear. He needs the money for *himself*, and the collector has promised him an advance. I'd rather take the responsibility for breaking a rule than see a man of his age and status humiliated. Besides, Verbrugge, gross abuse of authority is endemic in Lebak. You should know that. Do you?"

Verbrugge didn't reply. He knew.⁵⁸

"Because I do know," Havelaar went on, "I know all about it! Mr. Slotering died last November, didn't he? Well, the very next day the Adipati summoned a labor force to work in his sawahs . . . without payment! You should have been aware of that, Verbrugge. Were you?"

Verbrugge was not.

"It was your duty as *controleur* to know about it! I knew. Look, here are the monthly returns," Havelaar went on, pointing to the bundle of reports he had received at the meeting. "As you can see, I haven't opened them yet. Among them are the figures for the workers sent to the capital for statute labor. Well, are those figures correct?"

"I haven't seen them yet . . ."

"Nor have I! But I'm asking you anyway. Are they correct? Were last month's reports correct?"

Verbrugge kept silent.

"Take it from me: they were *false*. The number of men called up for work was three times greater than allowed by the regulations for statute labor, and of course they didn't dare put *that* in the returns. Is it true what I'm saying?"

Verbrugge said nothing.

"The returns I received today are false, too," Havelaar continued. "The Adipati is poor. The regents of Bogor and Cianjur belong to the same family of which our Regent is the head. He has the rank of adipati, whereas the Regent of Cianjur is only a tumenggung, and yet, because Lebak isn't suitable for coffee and consequently yields him no profits, he can't afford to compete in pomp and ceremony with a modest demang in the Priangan uplands, who'd normally hold the stirrup for his cousins to mount their horses. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"He has only his salary, minus the advance payment he got from the government when he—you do know about that, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"—when he wanted to build a new mosque, which cost a fair amount of money. Besides, he's got a whole lot of relatives—you do know that, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"—he's got a lot of relatives, who don't really belong in Lebak, so they're not much liked by the people, and these relatives crowd around him like a gang of thieves, squeezing him for money. True or not?"

"True," said Verbrugge.

"And when his purse is empty, which is often the case, they

take what they like from the people, in his name. Am I right?"

"Yes, you are."

"So my information is accurate, but more about that later. The Adipati is getting old, and his fear of death is making him bestow gifts on the clergy, in hope of gaining merit. He gives a lot of money for the travel expenses of pilgrims to Mecca, who bring him back all sorts of shoddy relics, talismans, and *jimats*.⁵⁹ True?"

"Yes, it's true."

"Well, all this explains why he's so poor. The Demang of Parangkujang is his son-in-law. Insofar as his pride prevents him from helping himself to other people's property, it's this demang—though not he alone—who curries favor with him by extorting money and goods from the poor, and by forcing people to abandon their own rice fields and work on those of the Regent. And he . . . well, I'd like to think he'd prefer to do otherwise, but necessity obliges him to stoop to this level. All this is true, isn't it, Verbrugge?"

"Yes, it's true," said Verbrugge, becoming increasingly impressed by Havelaar's eagle eye.

"I could tell he had no money when he raised the subject of the collector's accounts. As you heard me say this morning, I intend to do my duty. Injustice I will not tolerate. By God, I will not have it!"

And Havelaar sprang to his feet, having spoken in a very different tone to that of the previous day, when he swore the official oath.

"However," he went on, "although I must do my duty, I mean to be forbearing. I don't need to know exactly what happened in the past. But whatever happens *from now on* is my responsibility, and I will answer for it! I hope to remain here

for a long time. As for you, Verbrugge, you do realize the greatness of our calling, don't you? So you must realize that it should have been *you* telling me all those things I told you a moment ago. I know just as much about you as about the *garam gelap* smugglers on the south coast.⁶⁰ You're a good sort . . . I'm aware of that. But why didn't you tell me there was so much amiss? You were the acting Assistant Resident for two months, and you've been a controleur for very much longer, so you must have known. Did you?"

"Mr. Havelaar, I've never served under anyone like you before. Forgive me for saying so, but there's something most remarkable about you."

"Not at all! I know I'm different from other people, but what has that got to do with it?"

"What I mean is that your opinions and ideas are so completely new."

"No they're not! It's just that they've become obfuscated by the accursed jargon of officialdom with all those 'I am honored' and the substitution of 'the government's great satisfaction' for one's personal conscience. No, Verbrugge, don't slander yourself! You have nothing to learn from me. For instance, was anything I said during the sebah this morning news to you?"

"No, not news, but you did speak differently from other people."

"Ah, that's because . . . my education wasn't quite up to scratch. I say whatever comes into my head. But you were going to tell me why you resigned yourself so completely to all this misconduct in Lebak."

"I never really thought in terms of taking initiative. Besides, it's always been that way around here."

*Seems primarily concerned
with the injustice of regents, not colonialisn. itself*

Such an exp trip

"Yes, of course, I realize that! Not every man can be a prophet or an apostle . . . or we'd run out of wood to crucify them on! But you will help me put things right, I trust? I'm sure you want to do your duty."

"Certainly! Towards you, especially. But not everyone takes such a strict attitude, or is even in favor of it, and so the next thing you know, you're said to be tilting at windmills."

"No! So the people who embrace Injustice—because they live off the proceeds—claim that no wrong has been done, for the sheer satisfaction of calling you and me Don Quixotes while keeping their own windmills turning. But still, Verbrugge, you needn't have waited for me to arrive before doing your duty! Mr. Slotering was an able and honest man. He knew what went on, he disapproved of it and opposed it . . . Look!"

Havelaar took two sheets of paper from a folder and showed them to Verbrugge.

"Whose handwriting is this?" he asked.

"It's Mr. Slotering's handwriting."

"Exactly! Well, these are rough notes, apparently on the topics he wanted to discuss with the Resident. It says here, '1. On rice cultivation. 2. On the dwellings of village chiefs. 3. On the collection of land taxes, etc.!!' This last is followed by two exclamation marks. What did Mr. Slotering mean by that?"

"How should I know?" Verbrugge burst out.

"Well, I do know! He means that far more money is raised through land taxes than ever finds its way into the treasury. But let me show you something we both know, because it's written in words, not figures. Listen to this: '12. On the abuse of the population by regents and lesser chiefs. (On running several households at the people's expense, etc.)' See? You can

*By whom?
The Regent*

tell that Mr. Slotering was a man who did show initiative. So you could have joined forces with him. Listen on: '15. That many family members and servants of native chiefs are on the payrolls whereas they don't take any part in cultivation, so that the yields fall to them, at the expense of those doing all the work. They also lay claim illegally to rice fields that by rights belong to those who cultivate them.'

"Here's another note, in pencil this time. Once again, clear as day: 'The depopulation of Parangkujang is due entirely to the OUTRAGEOUS maltreatment of its people.'"

"Well, what do you say? You can see that it's not all that eccentric of me to strive for justice, can't you? I'm not the first to do so, either."⁶¹

"That's true," said Verbrugge. "Mr. Slotering often discussed these things with Resident Slymering."

"And what was the result?"

"The Adipati would be called, and they'd *confer.*"

"Right! And then?"

~~(Scribble)~~
"The Adipati generally denied everything. Then witnesses had to be called . . . but no one ever dares to testify against a regent . . . Oh, Mr. Havelaar, these things are so very complicated!"

Reader, by the end of my book it will be as clear to you as it was to Controleur Verbrugge why things were so complicated.

"Mr. Slotering was very annoyed," Verbrugge continued. "He sent sharply worded letters to the chiefs."

"I read them last night," Havelaar said.⁶²

"And I often heard him say that if nothing changed and if the Resident didn't put his foot down, he'd appeal directly to the Governor-General. He told the chiefs as much at the last

sebah he presided over."

"That would have been very wrong of him. The Resident was his superior, and should on no account be passed over. And why would he do such a thing, anyway? Surely it's fair to assume that the Resident of Banten would never condone Injustice and arbitrariness?"

"Not condone, no! But nobody's waiting to lodge a complaint with the government against a chief."

"I'd rather not bring charges against anyone at all, but if I must, then against a chief just as soon as anyone else. But there's no question yet of bringing charges, thank goodness! I intend to call on the Adipati tomorrow. I'll draw his attention to the wrongs of unlawful exercise of authority, especially with regard to the properties of the poor. But in the meantime I'll help him as best I can in his difficult circumstances. So now you can see why I ordered the collector to release the money right away, can't you? And I also intend to ask the government to forget about the advance paid to the Regent.⁶³ And as for you, Verbrugge, I propose that you and I do our duty together, and with firmness. Gentle as long as we can be, but unflinching when we *must* be. You're an honest man, I know, but you're too reserved. From now on you must speak your mind with confidence, come what may! Shake off that diffidence of yours, my good man . . . and now, please join us for lunch. We have canned cauliflower from Holland, but it's all plain fare, as I have to be very frugal. I'm badly behind in my finances—my trip to Europe, you know? Come here, Max . . . Goodness me, lad, how heavy you're getting!"

Then, with Max riding on his shoulder, he stepped inside, followed by Verbrugge. Tina was waiting for them at the table laid for lunch, which, as Havelaar said, was exceedingly plain

fare. Duclari, who had come to ask whether Verbrugge would be home for the midday meal, was invited to join them as well, and if you, reader, fancy a little variety in this story, please proceed to the following chapter, in which I relate what they talked about at lunch.

NINTH CHAPTER

who? *Sturm sprechend*
for unpredictable
But also stands
for man Havelaar.

I WOULD give a lot, reader, to know exactly how long I could afford to leave a heroine suspended in midair while I go on to describe some castle or other, without you putting my book aside in exasperation before the poor woman hits the ground. If my tale called for any such leap, I'd take the precaution of having her jump from a first-story window, and would pick a castle about which there is little to say. But for now you can rest assured: Havelaar's house had no stories, and my heroine—good heavens! dear, loyal, unassuming Tina, a *heroine*?—never jumped out of a window.

By ending the previous chapter with the prospect of some variation in the next, I was using an oratorical trick intended not so much as a serious proposal to include a chapter with nothing but "a little variety," but rather as a satisfying close. A writer is as vain as . . . as the next man. Speak ill of his mother or the color of his hair, tell him he has an Amsterdam accent—something no Amsterdamer will ever admit—and he might yet forgive you. But don't dare comment on even the slightest detail of anything remotely connected to his writing . . . because that he will never forgive! So if you don't like my book, and our paths happen to cross, just pretend we're perfect strangers to each other.

Indeed, through the magnifying glass of my authorial vanity, even a chapter purely for the sake of variety seems to me of prime importance, not to say indispensable, and if you skipped it and weren't properly appreciative of my book afterwards, I wouldn't hesitate to disqualify your opinion on the grounds that you had failed to read the most essential

part. For I—as a writer and a man—hold to be essential any chapter the unforgivably careless reader might prefer to skip.

I can just imagine your wife asking: “Is it any good, that book you’re reading?” and you saying—*horribile auditu* to me—with the eloquence so typical of the married man:

“Ahem . . . well . . . I don’t know yet.”

Well then, barbarian, read on! The most important part is just a step away. Here I am, my lips atremble as I try to gauge how many pages you’ve already turned and scan your features for the reflected glow of that splendid chapter . . .

No, I can see you haven’t reached it yet. Presently you’ll spring to your feet in high emotion, you’ll throw out your arms . . . to your wife perhaps . . .

But you don’t—you read on. I think you must have read past the splendid chapter by now, although I didn’t see you spring to your feet, nor throw out your arms . . .

As the pages under your right thumb dwindle in number, my hopes of that embrace dwindle . . . oh, I had even reckoned on a tear being shed!

And so you read on to the end of the novel, where they fall into each other’s arms, and you say with a yawn—yet another form of marital eloquence, “Well, well . . . Ahem, it’s a book that, ahem . . . Oh, the stuff they write nowadays!”

But don’t you see, monster that you are, tiger, *European*, reader, don’t you see that for the past hour you’ve been chewing on my spirit as if it were a toothpick? Gnawing the flesh and bones of your own kind, you cannibal! It was *my* soul you were munching like grass! It was *my* heart in that tasty morsel you swallowed! Because I poured my heart and soul into that book, I wept over the manuscript, I felt the blood draining from my veins as I wrote, I gave you all that, which

you bought for a song . . . and all you can say is: *Ahem!*

But my reader will understand that it is not my own book
that I am referring to here.

All I wish to say, then, to quote Abraham Blankaart . . .

• 
↓
Sara Burgerhart

"Who's Abraham Blankaart?" asked Louise Rosemeyer, and Frits explained that he was a character in a novel,* which was just as well, as it gave me the opportunity to get up and put a stop to the reading, at least for the duration of the evening. You are aware that I'm a coffee broker—at Nº 37 Lauriergracht—and that my business means everything to me, so you can see why I'm not at all satisfied with what Stern has written so far. I was hoping for coffee, but what he's come up with is . . . goodness knows what!

He's been wasting our time with his writings at three of our weekly gatherings in a row, and, to make matters worse, the Rosemeiers think they're good. So they say, at any rate. Whenever I venture to comment, he appeals to Louise, saying her approval means more to him than all the coffee in the world, and besides: When the heart glows, etc. (see his tirade on page such-and-such, or rather, don't bother). So here I am, at a loss! That parcel of Shawlman's is a proper Trojan horse. It's having a bad influence on Frits, too. He's been helping Stern, I notice; the allusion to Abraham Blankaart is far too Dutch for a German.⁶⁴ They're such prigs, the pair of them. This whole business is getting on my nerves. Worst of all, my agreement with Leecher is for the publication of a book about *coffee auctions*—something the entire country is waiting for—and now Stern has gone off on a tangent! Yesterday he said:

"Don't worry, all roads lead to Rome. Wait till you hear the end of the introduction." So all this is only the *introduction*? "I promise you"—actually he said "I forespeak you," in his German way—"that it all comes down to coffee in the end, nothing but coffee. Remember Horace." he went on, "omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit . . . in other words, praise be to a mix of ingredients—like taking your coffee with milk and sugar, it's that simple."

And then I have to keep my mouth shut. Not because he's right, but because I owe it to Burden & C° to make sure old Stern doesn't switch to Busselinck & Waterman, who'd only treat him badly anyway, because they're cheats.

It is to you, reader, that I pour my heart out, and I insist on proving my innocence, so that once you've read Stern's scribblings—did you really read them?—you won't pour scorn on the head of an innocent—for, I ask you, who would take it into his head to use a broker who calls him a cannibal? As it is, I can hardly pull young Stern off my book project now that things have got to the stage where Louise Rosemeyer, on leaving church—the boys always wait around for her, apparently—begs him to come to our gathering in good time so he can read us "a nice long piece" about Max and Tina.

But as you bought the book—or borrowed it—on the strength of its promising title, I acknowledge your claim to your money's worth, which is why I'll be writing a couple of chapters myself for a change. You, reader, not being a member of the Rosemeyeys' Sunday gathering, are more fortunate than I am, for I'm obliged to listen to the whole thing. So feel free to skip the chapters that reek of German histrionics and read only the parts written by me, a coffee broker and man of standing.

*my guess is Stern will fall in love with
you instead of his daughter*

Drys tickle not understanding
coffee at all; Relier on Protestant
world ethic

Drys tickle is the real prig.

I was surprised to learn from Stern's writings—he showed me the evidence in Shawlman's papers—that coffee is not grown in the Lebak regency. This is a grave omission, and I'll consider my efforts amply rewarded if my book prompts the government to take note of it. Shawlman's papers suggest
that the soil over there is unsuited to growing coffee. But that's no excuse, and I maintain that we have here a case of unpardonable dereliction of duty towards the Netherlands in general and coffee brokers in particular, indeed towards the Javanese themselves, in that they have failed either to replace the soil—it's not as if they have anything better to do—or, if this is deemed unfeasible, to send the local population off to other places with the right kind of soil for coffee.

I never say anything off the top of my head, and I do believe I speak with authority, because I've pondered this question at length, particularly after hearing Pastor Waffler preach on the subject of converting heathens.

That was last Wednesday evening. I want you to know, reader, that I take my fatherly duties seriously, and set great store by the moral instruction of my children. And I don't like the way Frits's tone and attitude have changed lately—it's all the fault of that dratted parcel!—so I decided to give him a firm talking-to. I said:

"Frits, I'm not at all pleased with you! I've always set a good example, and yet you stray from the path of righteousness. You're a prig and a pest, you write poetry, and you kissed
Betsy Rosemeyer. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, so don't go kissing the Rosemeyer girls, and don't be such a prig. Immorality brings perdition, my boy. Read the Scriptures, and mark that Shawlman fellow. He has strayed from the Lord's path, and now he's penniless, living in a garret . . .

behold the wages of sin and misbehavior! He wrote improper articles in the *Indépendance*, and he dropped the *Aglaiā* magazine on the floor. Just shows how pride comes before a fall. He doesn't even have a watch, and his young son goes about in half a pair of trousers. Remember, your body's a temple of the Holy Spirit, and your father has always worked hard for a living—it's the truth—so lift your gaze heavenward and try to grow up to be a respectable broker by the time I retire to Driebergen. And do take note of all those people who ignore sound advice and trample on religion and morality, and let them be a warning to you. And don't think you're on a level with Stern, whose father is rich and who'll never run out of money even if he refuses to become a broker and even if he does make the occasional blunder. Think how all wickedness is punished, think of Shawlman, who doesn't own an overcoat and looks like a showman. Do pay attention in church, and don't squirm about in the pew as if you were bored, boy, because . . . what is God supposed to think? The church is His sanctuary, you know. Don't wait around for the girls after the service either, because that only undoes all the good you've just learnt. And don't make Marie laugh when I'm reading from the Scriptures at breakfast. There's no place for any of that in a respectable household. And you doodled on Bastiaans's blotter when he didn't turn up at the office—because of his gout, yet again—that sort of tomfoolery only keeps the others from their work, and besides, it leads to perdition, according to the word of God. That fellow Shawlman was already getting into trouble as a boy—he punched a Greek stallholder on Westermarkt . . . and look at him now: idle, pedantic, and sickly. Do stop joking around with Stern, my boy: *his* father's rich, and don't you forget it. Take no notice

→ Protecting you!

→ prudely

when he pulls faces at the bookkeeper. And when he's scratching away at his poems after office hours, you can tell him from me that he'd do better to write and tell his father how well he's being treated in our house, and that Marie has embroidered a pair of slippers for him with real floss silk. Why don't you ask him—just in passing, you know—if he thinks his father's thinking of switching to Busselinck & Waterman, and tell him they're cheats. It's the least we can do—steer him in the right direction, I mean—and . . . all that poetry is nonsense. Do try to behave yourself, Frits, and do as you're told, and don't put me to shame by pulling the maid's skirt at the office when she brings the tea, because she'll only drop everything, and Saint Paul says a son must never cause grief to his father. I've been going to the Exchange for twenty years, and I think it's fair to say I'm respected in my niche beside the pillar. So take this warning to heart, Frits, and behave yourself now, get your hat, put your coat on, and come along with me to the prayer meeting, it'll do you good!"

That is what I said, and I'm confident he was duly impressed, especially as Pastor Waffler had chosen as the subject of his sermon *the Love of God, as shown by His rage against unbelievers*, with reference to Samuel's rebuke of Saul, see I Samuel 15:33.

As I listened to the sermon, I kept thinking what a world of difference there is between human and divine wisdom. I have already mentioned that Shawlman's parcel contained, along with much rubbish, a few things that stood out for their soundness of reasoning. But ah, what trifles they are compared to what someone like Pastor Waffler has to say! Not that all the credit is due to the pastor—I know Waffler, and he's no high-flyer, believe me—no, his inspiration comes from

above. The contrast was all the more marked because he touched upon certain matters also dealt with by Shawlman—whose parcel, as you've seen, contained much material on the Javanese and other heathens. Frits says the Javanese aren't heathen, but as far as I'm concerned a heathen is anyone with the wrong faith. And I stick with Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, and I have no doubt every respectable reader will do likewise.

As it was Waffler's sermon that opened my eyes to the error of not growing coffee in Lebak, more about which later, and as I, as an honest man, would hate to deprive the reader of his money's worth, I'll quote some passages from the sermon that struck me as particularly apt.

He began with a brief explanation of the love of God as attested in the book of Samuel, and very soon passed on to the main point: the conversion of Javanese and Malayers, or whatever names all those people go by. This is what he said:

"Such, dearly beloved, was the glorious mission of Israel"—he meant the slaughter of the Canaanites—"and such is the mission of the Netherlands! No, it shall not be said that the light that shines on us is hidden under a bushel, nor that we are miserly in sharing with others the bread of eternal life. Cast your gaze upon the islands of the Indian Ocean, inhabited by millions upon millions of children of the rejected son—the rightly rejected son—of the noble, God-given Noah! They writhe in the nauseating snake pits of heathen ignorance, where they bow their black frizzy-haired heads under the yoke of self-serving priests! They worship God by invoking a false prophet, who is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord! And, dearly beloved, as though following a false prophet were not enough, there are even those among them

who worship another God, nay, who worship multiple gods, gods of wood or stone that they carve in their own image: black, horrible, flat-nosed, and devilish! Indeed, dearly beloved, I can barely continue speaking on account of the tears in my eyes, for there is yet more depravity than this among the descendants of Ham! There are among them those who know no God at all, by whatever name! Who think it enough to obey the laws of civil society! Who consider a harvest song of joy over the success of their labor to be appropriate thanks to the Supreme Being who enabled their crops to ripen! Lost souls live there, my dearly beloved—if such a loathsome existence may be called living! There are those who claim that merely because they love their wife and children, and do not seize from their neighbors what is not theirs, they may enjoy a hard-earned peace of mind when they lie down to sleep at night! Does this not make you shudder? Does it not pierce your heart to think of the fate that will befall all those benighted creatures when the trumpets sound, raising the dead to divide the just from the unjust? Do you not hear—yes you do, for our reading from the Bible has shown your God to be a mighty God, and a God of righteous retribution—yes, you can hear the snapping of bones and the crackling of flames in the everlasting Gehenna where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! There, they burn and perish not, for their punishment is everlasting! There, unquenchable tongues of flame lick the howling victims of unbelief! There, the worm gnawing at their hearts will not die, but gnaws on and on without consuming them, so that he who forsakes God will feel the heart in his breast being gnawed forever! See, how they peel the black skin off the unbaptized infant, the infant that, scarcely born, was hurled from its mother's breast into

really? See previous page

the pool of eternal damnation . . . ”

At that point a woman fainted.

“But, dearly beloved,” Pastor Waffler continued, “God is a God of love! He does not wish the sinner to be lost, but that he shall be redeemed with mercy, through faith, in Christ’s name! And that is why Holland has been chosen to save what may be saved of those miserable souls! That is why God, in His infinite wisdom, has granted power to a land that is small in size but great and strong through knowledge of Him—yes, power over the people of those regions, that they may be saved from hellfire by the matchless power of the Holy Gospel. Dutch vessels sail the great seas and bring civilization, religion, and Christianity to the wayward Javanese! No, we in our happy land do not seek redemption for ourselves alone: we intend to share it with the wretches on those distant shores, who are bound in fetters of unbelief, superstition, and immorality! It is to our duties in this regard that I shall devote the seventh part of my homily.”

What had gone before was the *sixth* part, you see. Among our duties towards those poor heathens were the following:

1. Making ample donations in cash to the Missionary Society.
2. Supporting the Bible Societies, to enable them to distribute Bibles in Java.
3. Promoting prayer meetings in Harderwyk for the benefit of the colonial army recruitment center there.
4. Composing sermons and religious songs, suitable for our soldiers and sailors to read and sing to the Javanese.

5. Founding a society of influential men whose task would be to persuade our gracious King that:

a) the appointment of governors, officers, and officials should be restricted to such men as may be considered steadfast in the true faith;

b) the Javanese may be granted permission to visit the barracks, and likewise the navy and merchant vessels calling at the ports, so that through interaction with Dutch soldiers and sailors they may be prepared for the kingdom of God;

c) the use of Bibles or religious tracts as payment for drink in taverns should be prohibited;

d) among the requirements for granting opium licenses in Java should be that every opium den is furnished with a stock of Bibles in proportion to the expected number of visitors to the establishment, and that the landlord undertakes not to sell opium unless the client buys a religious tract as well;

e) orders should be issued that the Javanese be brought to God by labor.

6. Making ample donations to the Missionary Societies.

Yes, I know I already mentioned the last item under No. 1, but he repeated it, and in the heat of his rhetoric this redundancy strikes me as quite understandable.⁶⁵

Well now, reader, did you take note of proposal 5e? Because that was what put me in mind of the coffee auctions, and of the supposed unsuitability of the soil in Lebak. It won't come as a surprise to you that the latter point in particular has not been out of my thoughts for a moment since Wednesday evening. Pastor Waffler has read the missionaries' accounts,

so he clearly knows what he's talking about. Well now, if he, with those reports before him and with a view to God, maintains that hard work will facilitate the conquest of the Javanese soul for the kingdom of God, then I believe it fair to say that I myself am not altogether wide of the mark in drawing the conclusion that there is no good reason not to grow coffee in Lebak. It is even conceivable that the Almighty made the soil there unsuitable for coffee for no other reason than that the effort required to replace the unsuitable soil with good soil from elsewhere will make the local population fit for redemption.

I do hope my book will be seen by the King and that bigger auctions will soon prove how closely the knowledge of God is linked to the interests of all respectable people. Just look how the simple, humble Waffler, without insight in human nature—the man has never set foot in the Exchange—but with the Gospel to light his path, has given me, a coffee broker, a tip which may not only benefit the Netherlands as a whole but may also enable me, if Frits takes good care—he sat fairly still in church—to retire five years earlier than expected. Yes indeed, work, work, work, that is my motto! Work for the Javanese, that is my principle! And my principles are sacred to me.

Is not the Gospel the greatest good? Is there anything higher than redemption? Is it not our duty, therefore, to bring redemption to all men? And if, as a means to this end, labor is required—I myself have been on the Exchange for twenty years—can we deny the Javanese peasant the work so urgently needed by his soul to avoid being consumed by flames? It would be selfish, horribly selfish, if we didn't seize every opportunity to safeguard those poor misguided souls

Passion

from the dreadful future so eloquently evoked by Pastor Waffler. It was when he mentioned the black child that the woman fainted—perhaps she had a young lad who had turned out rather dark skinned. Women are like that.

our
his own?

And why wouldn't I advocate hard work, I who am occupied with business from morning till night? Isn't this very book—which Stern is making such an ordeal for me—proof of how eager I am for our country's prosperity? And if I, who was christened—in the Amstel church—must toil day in, day out, is it not reasonable to demand that the Javanese roll up their sleeves and work for their salvation?

If that society—the one set out above in 5e, I mean—comes to pass, I'll join it. And I'll try to get the Rosemeyers to join as well, because the interests of the sugar-bakers are equally at stake here, although they don't seem to me to be very sound in their principles—the Rosemeyers, I mean—they have a papist maid, after all.

In any case, I will do my duty. That is what I vowed upon returning home from the prayer meeting with Frits. The Lord will be served in my house, I'll see to that, and with a vengeance, as I'm becoming more and more aware of how wisely everything is organized, and how lovingly we are led by God's hand, and how dearly He wishes to preserve us for the next life—as well as for this one, because the soil of Lebak can be made perfectly suitable for growing coffee.

*Abraham Blankaart, a character in the popular eighteenth-century Dutch epistolary novel *Historie van mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart*, was known for his quips and humorous turns of

phrase.

TENTH CHAPTER

WHERE principles are concerned, I spare no one, but I can see I'll have to take a different tack with Stern than with Frits. And, as it seems likely that my name—the firm is Burden & C°, but I am Drystubble, Batavus Drystubble—will be associated with a book containing matters that pose a threat to the respect that every decent man and broker owes to himself, I consider it my duty to inform you of my efforts to keep Stern on the straight and narrow.

I didn't speak to him of the Lord—he's a Lutheran—but I did appeal to his sentiments and sense of honor. Here's how I went about it, and please note how convenient it is to have some knowledge of human nature. I'd heard him say "*auf Ehrenwort*," and asked him what he meant by that.

"Well," he said, "it means that I stake my honor on the truth of what I say."

"That's no small claim," I replied. "Are you so sure you always tell the truth?"

"Yes I am," he declared. "I am truthful without exception. When my breast glows . . ."

The reader can fill in the rest.

"That's very fine indeed," I said warmly, playing the innocent.

This was part of a cunning trap I had set for him, my purpose being—without running the risk of Old Stern falling into Busselinck & Waterman's hands—to take that youngster down a peg or two, make him realize what a world of difference there is between him as a beginner—even if his father is a successful businessman—and a broker who's been on the Exchange for twenty years. I knew he'd learnt all sorts

of unsuitable poems by heart, and since all poetry contains lies, I was sure I'd soon catch him telling one. And it wasn't long before I did. I was in the side room and he was in the suite . . . yes, we have a suite. Marie was knitting, and he said he wanted to recite something to her. I listened carefully, and when he finished I asked if he had the book containing the thing he'd just recited. He said yes and went to fetch it. It was a slim volume by someone called Heine. The next morning I handed him—Stern, I mean—the following:

Notes on the love of truth on the part of someone who recites the following rubbish by Heine to a young girl sitting in the suite with her knitting.

On wings of song—ah, lightly,
Heart's dearest, I bear thee away:

Heart's dearest? Marie, your heart's dearest? Do your parents know about this, and Louise Rosemeyer? Is it right to say such a thing to a child, who might easily disobey her mother and take it into her head that she's all grown up simply because someone calls her "my heart's dearest"? What does it mean, anyway, to be borne away on wings of song? You don't have wings, and neither does your poem. But even if you did have wings, would that justify making this kind of proposition to a girl who hasn't done her confirmation yet? And even if she had, what do you mean by flying away together? Shame on you!

A nook is beckoning brightly
Where Ganges' waters play.

Well then, go there on your own, and find yourself a place to stay, but don't take a girl who's needed at home to help her

mother with housekeeping! But you aren't being serious! Firstly, you've never seen the Ganges, so you don't know what it's like over there. *I'll* tell you what, shall I? It's all a bunch of lies, and you're only telling them because all this versification has turned you into a slave of rhythm and rhyme. If the first line had ended in *jester*, *home*, or *minor*, you'd have asked her to go with you to *Chester*, *Rome*, or *China*, and so on. So you can see that the itinerary you propose can't be taken seriously, and all this is no more than silly doggerel without sense or consequence. What if that ridiculous journey actually appealed to Marie? Not to mention the uncomfortable mode of travel you suggest! Thank heaven she has too much sense to long for a country where, according to you:

A blooming red garden is lying
In moonlight calm and clear,
The lotus flowers are sighing
For thee, their sister dear.
The violets banter and slyly
They peep at the star-rays pale,
The roses are whispering shyly
Some fragrant fairy tale.

What were you thinking of doing with Marie in that garden by moonlight, Stern? Would it be moral, respectable, decent? Do you want to make me into a laughingstock, like Busselinck & Waterman, with whom no respectable firm wants to do business because their daughter has run off and because they're cheats? What am I supposed to say if someone at the Exchange asks me what my daughter's up to in that red garden? Because, as I'm sure you'll understand, nobody would believe me if I said she needed to pay a visit to those lotus

flowers that, you claim, have been waiting for her all this time. And every person with any sense would laugh in my face if I were stupid enough to say: Marie is there in that red garden—why red, why not yellow or purple?—to listen to the violets gurgling and giggling, or to the roses whispering fairy-tale secrets in each other's ears. Even if such a thing were possible, what good would it do Marie if they're whispering so shyly that she wouldn't understand a thing anyway? It's just lies, silly lies. And not pretty, either, just take a pencil and draw a rose with an ear and see what you think. And what does it mean, anyway, about those fairy tales being fragrant? Shall I tell you in good, round Dutch? It means there's something fishy about those witless fairy tales! That's what it means!

The pious gazelles come leaping,

And hearken what we say;

The sacred river is sweeping

And murmuring far away.

Beloved, let us be sinking

Under the shady palm,

The blissful quiet drinking

And dreaming dreams of balm *

Can't you go to Artis instead—you told your father about me being a member, didn't you? Why can't you go to the zoo if you're so keen on seeing outlandish creatures? Does it have to be gazelles along the Ganges? They'd be far easier to observe in a neat enclosure of tarred railings than in the wild. Why call those animals pious? I grant you, they don't go in for silly versification—but pious? What do you mean? Aren't you misusing a hallowed word that should be reserved for those of true faith? And what about that sacred river? Should you be

hu ha

telling Marie things that could turn her into a heathen? Should you be shaking her conviction that there's no holy water except that of baptism, and no sacred river but the Jordan? Honestly, aren't you undermining morality, virtue, religion, Christendom, and respectability?

*Doing everything
possible to get into business
with Stern*

Think about it, Stern! Your father runs a reputable firm, and I'm sure he'd approve of my appealing to your better nature, and that he prefers doing business with a man who stands up for virtue and religion. Yes, principles are sacred to me, and I have no qualms about saying what I think. So there's no need to make a secret of my advice. You can write and tell your father that you're living with a respectable family, and that I encourage good behavior. And have you ever asked yourself what would have become of you if you'd fallen into the clutches of Busselinck & Waterman? You'd have recited the same verses there, but no one would have appealed to your better nature, because they're such cheats. You can write and tell your father so, too, because where principles are concerned I spare no one. The girls there would have taken you up on your invitation to the Ganges, and you'd be lying under that tree in the soggy grass, whereas now, thanks to my fatherly warnings, you're staying here with us in a respectable house. Write and tell all this to your father, and tell him how grateful you are to be here with us, and that I look after you very well, and that Busselinck & Waterman's daughter has run off, and give him my kind regards, and tell him I'll lower my brokerage fee to one-sixteenth of a percent under what they're offering, because I can't stand cheats who steal the bread from a competitor's mouth by offering more favorable conditions.

And do me a favor, next time you read us something from

Shawlman's parcel please make sure it has more substance to it. I noticed the parcel also contains reports on coffee yields all over Java for the last twenty years—now *that* would be worthwhile! It would give the Rosemeyers, who are in sugar, a chance to hear what really goes on in the world. And you mustn't treat the girls and the rest of us like cannibals who have devoured bits of you—it isn't respectable, my dear boy. Do take it from a man who knows the ways of the world! I was already serving your father before you were born—his firm, I mean, no . . . our firm: Burden & Co—it used to be Burden & Meyer, but the Meyers left ages ago—so you can see I have your best interests at heart. And do encourage Frits to behave himself, and don't teach him how to write poetry, or pretend not to notice when he does things like pull faces at the bookkeeper. Set him a good example, because you're so much older, and do try to impress upon him the need to be well mannered and sedate, since he'll have to become a broker.

Yours sincerely, your fatherly friend,
Batavus Drystubble.

(*Burden & C°, coffee brokers, N° 37 Lauriergracht*)

*Heinrich Heine, "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges," translated as "On Wings of Song" by Margarete Munsterberg in *A Harvest of German Verse* (1917). This very popular poem influenced the work of many young poets and was set to music by Mendelssohn. Several minor errors in Multatuli's version suggest that he had learned it by heart and was reproducing it from memory.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER

ALL I WISH to say, then—to quote Abraham Blankaart—is that I consider this chapter “essential,” because I believe it will give the reader a better understanding of Havelaar—the man, who, after all, is to be the hero of our story.

“Tina, what sort of *ketimun* is that? Dear girl, you should never add vegetable acid to fruit! Cucumbers go best with salt, just like pineapple, or grapefruit, or anything else that grows in the ground. Vinegar is for fish and meat—there’s something in Liebig about that.”

“My dear Max,” Tina said with a smile. “How long do you reckon we’ve been here? That *ketimun* was provided by Mrs. Slotering.”

Havelaar was hard put to realize they had arrived only yesterday, and that Tina couldn’t, with the best will in the world, have had enough time to get her house and kitchen properly organized. He already felt as if he’d been in Rangkasbitung for ages! Hadn’t he been up all night reading the files, and hadn’t he come across so much disturbing information about Lebak that he could hardly be expected to remember he’d only been there since yesterday? Tina understood the source of his confusion, she always could!

“Ah, yes, you’re quite right,” he said. “Still, you really should take a look at Liebig some time. I say, Verbrugge, you have read much by Liebig?”

“Who’s he?” asked Verbrugge.

“A man who’s written a lot about pickled gherkins. He’s also discovered how grass can be turned into wool . . . do you follow?”

"No," Verbrugge and Duclari said in chorus.

"Well, the main thing about it has always been common knowledge: send sheep out to graze . . . and there you are! But he's found out how this transformation takes place. Not that all the experts agree with him, though. Now there's talk of finding ways to ~~cut~~⁷ out the sheep altogether . . . Oh, those clever scientists!⁶⁶ Molière knew all about them . . . I'm very partial to Molière.⁶⁷ We could do a course of reading together, if you like, a few evenings a week. Tina can join us, once Max has been put to bed."

Duclari and Verbrugge thought it a very good idea. Havelaar said he didn't have many books, but he did have some by Schiller, Goethe, Heine, Vondel, Lamartine, Thiers, Say, Malthus, Scialoja, Smith, Shakespeare, Byron . . .

Verbrugge said he didn't read English.

"Good grief, and you a man over thirty! What have you been doing all these years? It must have been quite hard for you in Padang, where so much English is spoken. Did you ever meet a Miss Mata-api?"

"No, never heard of her."

"It wasn't her real name. We just called her that, back in 1843, because of the sparkle in her eyes. She'll be married by now, it's all such a long time ago! I never saw her equal, except in Arles . . . now *that's* where you should go! On all my travels I never saw such beauty as I did there. If you ask me, there's nothing that makes a more profound impression of *truth*, of ethereal *purity*, than a beautiful woman. Believe me, go to Arles and Nîmes . . ."

Duclari, Verbrugge, and—yes, I must admit!—even Tina couldn't help laughing out loud at the idea of rushing from the west corner of Java all the way to Arles or Nîmes in the south

of France. Havelaar, no doubt picturing himself on top of the tower built by the Saracens overlooking the amphitheater at Arles, had to think for a moment before he understood why they were laughing, but then he continued:

"Yes, well . . . if you happen to be in that part of the world, I mean. It was utterly amazing. I was used to being disappointed by all the sights people praise so highly. Those waterfalls they go on and on about, for instance. I for my part felt little or nothing in Tondano, Maros, Schaffhausen, or Niagara. You need to check your guidebook to know just how impressed you're meant to be by 'a drop of x number of feet' or 'so many cubic feet of water per minute,' and if those figures are large enough you're supposed to say 'Wow!' No more waterfalls for me, not if I have to go out of my way to see them. They leave me cold. Buildings have so much more to say, especially if they represent pages of history. But their appeal is completely different: they evoke the past, and the shades of history pass before your eyes. Some of these are horrific, and so, important as it may be, contemplating architecture doesn't always satisfy your sense of beauty . . . or rather, it's always with mixed feelings! Aside from history, there's much beauty to behold in some buildings, although the effect is more often than not ruined by guides—whether of paper or flesh and blood, no difference there—droning on and on about this or that chapel built by the bishop of Munster in 1423, with pillars sixty-three feet tall resting on . . . whatever; I don't know and I don't care. It's such a bore, because you know you're supposed to have sixty-three feet of admiration at the ready, or people will take you for a Vandal or traveling salesman . . . Now, they're a race apart!"

"The Vandals?"

"No, the others. Of course you can keep your guide in your pocket, if it's a printed one that is, or else tell him to wait outside or to keep his mouth shut. On the other hand, you often need a certain amount of information before you can form a sound opinion. But even if you could dispense with the guide, you wouldn't find anything in a building to satisfy your sense of beauty for longer than a very brief moment, simply because it doesn't *move*. The same applies, I believe, to sculpture and painting. Nature equals motion. Growth, hunger, thinking, feeling, all are motion. Death is motionless! Without motion there's no pain, no pleasure, no emotion! Try sitting perfectly still for a while and before you know it you'll be making a ghostly impression on everyone, including yourself. Even the finest *tableau vivant* soon makes you long for the next entertainment, no matter how dazzling the first impression. As our thirst for beauty isn't slaked by just one look at a beautiful object, but requires a series of looks at *beauty in motion*, we tend to feel let down when beholding art of the static class. And that's why I say that a beautiful woman—not in a static pose—comes closest to the ideal of the divine. How great the need for motion is may be inferred from the nauseating sight of a dancer pretending to be an Elssler or a Taglioni* as she balances on one leg and smirks at the audience in conclusion of her performance."

"That doesn't count," Verbrugge said, "because it's utterly hideous."

"I agree. Yet the dancer presents it as a moment of beauty, as a climax to all that has gone before, which may well have included many beautiful moments. She presents it as the *point* of the epigram, as the rallying cry of the anthem she's been singing with her feet, as the whisper of willows on the grave of

the lover she's just danced to death. Oh, it's enough to make you sick! And since audiences are wont to base their taste on custom and imitation—we all are, more or less—they consider that particular moment to be the most touching. You can tell by the burst of applause just at that moment, as if to say, 'It was all quite splendid before, but now I simply can't contain my admiration!' You were saying that the final pose was ugly in the extreme—I agree!—but why do we think so? Because the dancer has stopped *moving*, and consequently stopped telling a story. Believe me, inertia is death!"

"But," Duclari broke in, "you also say waterfalls don't count as expressions of beauty. And you can't say waterfalls don't move!"

"Indeed, but there's no narrative there. They're in motion, but they don't move from one place to another. They're like a rocking horse, staying put. You can hear them, but they don't speak. They go whoosh, whoosh, whoosh—it's always the same! Try saying whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, for the next six thousand years . . . and see how many friends you have left to listen to what you have to say."

"I'd rather not risk it," Duclari said. "But I beg to disagree regarding the absolute necessity of motion. I grant you the waterfalls, but a good painting, I think, can have a lot of expressive force."

"Of course, but only very briefly. Let me try to explain what I mean by giving you an example. Today is the 18th of February, 15 . . ."

"No, it's not," Verbrugge said. "It's still January."

"No, no, today is the 18th of February, 1587, and you're a prisoner at Fotheringhay Castle."⁶⁸

"Me?" Duclari asked, thinking he'd misheard.

"Yes, you. You're bored, and you want some distraction. You notice a hole in the wall, but it's too high up for you to look through it, and you're curious. So you push your table beneath it, and on top of the table you put a chair with three legs, one of which is rather rickety. You once saw an acrobat at a fair piling up seven chairs and then doing a headstand on the top one. Vanity and boredom inspire you to do something similar. You clamber unsteadily onto the chair . . . reach your goal . . . peer through the hole and cry, 'Oh my God!' And you lose your balance and fall! Can you tell me now why you said 'Oh my God' and why you fell?"

"The third leg of the chair must have broken," Verbrugge said.

"Well, yes, the leg may have broken, but that wasn't why you fell. That leg broke *because* you fell. If you'd been looking through any other hole you could have remained standing there for a whole year, but in this case you simply *had* to fall, even if the chair had been fitted with thirteen legs, certainly, even if you'd been standing on the floor!"

"I can see you've set your mind on making me fall, regardless," Duclari said. "So there I am, sprawled on the floor . . . and I really have no idea why!"

"Well, it's perfectly simple. You caught sight of a woman kneeling before a block, her head bowed, her neck silver-white against the black velvet of her dress. And there was a man raising a great sword as he stared at that pale neck, and he gauged the arc the sword would describe before it struck, there . . . there, between the vertebrae, with precision and force . . . and that's when you fell, Duclari. You lost your balance because you saw it all happening, and that's why you cried 'Oh my God!' It wasn't because the chair had only three

legs, certainly not. And long after you were released from Fotheringhay—thanks to your cousin's intervention, I imagine, or because people got tired of keeping you fed like a canary in a cage—long afterwards, yes, until this very day you have waking dreams of that woman, and even in your sleep you sit bolt upright, only to fall back on your bed because you're trying to grab the executioner's arm . . . Am I right?"

"If you say so, but I can't be sure, as I've never peered through a hole in a wall at Fotheringhay."

"All right then, nor have I. But now let's take a picture of Mary Stuart's beheading. Let's assume the scene is perfectly painted. There she is, hanging in a gilt frame, or from a red cord if you prefer . . . oh, I know what you're thinking! No, no, you don't see the frame, you forget leaving your walking stick at the gallery entrance, you forget your name, your child, the newfangled constable cap, you forget everything, so it's no longer a painting you're looking at but Mary Stuart herself, *exactly* as she was at Fotheringhay. The executioner stands at the ready, just as he must have stood in reality, yes, I'll even go so far as to say that you're flailing your arm to ward off the blow! I'll go so far to say that you're shouting, 'Let the woman live, she may still mend her ways!' You see, I'll give it to you that it's painted as skillfully as you please."

"Yes, but then what? Isn't the impression just as sensational as seeing the real thing going on at Fotheringhay?"

"No, not at all—because in this case there's no need to get up on a three-legged chair. You take a chair—with four legs this time, and preferably an armchair—you sit yourself down in front of the painting to enjoy it at leisure—because we do enjoy a bit of horror—and what kind of impression does the painting make on you, d'you suppose?"

"Well, shock, terror, compassion, distress . . . same as when I peered through the hole in the wall. You said the scene was perfectly portrayed, so the painting should make the same impression on me as the real thing."

"No! Within two minutes your right arm will be aching out of sympathy with the executioner, for having to raise that hefty steel blade for so long without moving."

"Sympathy for the executioner?"

"Yes. Shared suffering, shared feeling, you know! Sympathy also for the woman having to prostrate herself at length in that uncomfortable pose, and no doubt in an uncomfortable state of mind, too. You still feel sorry for her, but this time not because her head is to be chopped off, but because she has to wait so long for it to happen. And, if at this juncture there was anything you'd say or cry out—assuming you felt an urge to intervene—it would simply be, 'For goodness' sake, man, bring down that ax, the woman's waiting!' And then, each time you saw the picture again the first thing you'd think was, 'Not over and done with yet? Is he *still* standing there over the kneeling victim?'"

"So, what sort of motion is there in the beauty of the women in Arles?" Verbrugge asked.

"Oh, that's completely different! Those women tell a story with their features. Carthage blossoms and builds ships on their brow . . . hark unto Hannibal's oath against Rome . . . here they plait bowstrings . . . there the city burns . . ."

"Max, Max, I do believe you lost your heart in Arles," Tina said teasingly.

"So I did, temporarily . . . but I found it again, as you shall hear. Imagine . . . I'm not saying I saw a woman there who was beautiful in this or that way, no, they were all beautiful, and so

it was impossible for me to fall in love, because each woman I set eyes on was lovelier than the last, and I honestly thought of that story about Caligula—or was it Tiberius—who wished the entire human race had only one head. In fact, I couldn't help wishing that all the women of—”

“Had only one head between them?”

“Yes.”

“To chop off?”

“Of course not! To . . . kiss on the brow, I was going to say, but that isn't it either! No, to gaze at, to dream of, and to feel good about!”

Duclarri and Verbrugge must have felt that this anecdote, like the others, had a most peculiar conclusion. But Max was oblivious to their puzzlement, and continued:

“So noble were her features that I almost felt ashamed to be a mere human and not a spark . . . a ray—no, even that would be too material—an idea! But then, all of a sudden there'd be a brother or a father beside those women, and . . . God help me, I actually saw one of them blowing her nose!”

“There, I knew you'd go and ruin it all again . . .” Tina said sadly.

“That's not my fault, though, is it? Personally, I'd rather have seen them drop dead. Is it right for a girl to behave in such a vulgar fashion?”

“But Mr. Havelaar,” Verbrugge said, “what if she happens to have a cold?”

“Well, it was wrong of her to catch cold with a nose like hers!”

“Yes, but . . .”

Just then, as bad luck would have it, Tina had to sneeze, and

Strange : . . . next thing she knew she'd blown her nose!

"Dear Max, please don't be cross," she pleaded, suppressing a giggle.

He didn't answer. And, however odd it may seem or be, he really was cross! And, what also sounds strange, Tina didn't mind in the least that he was cross and that he expected more of her than of the Phocaean women in Arles,⁶⁹ for all that she had no reason to be proud of her nose.

If Duclari still considered the new Assistant Resident to be "a fool," he could hardly be blamed for feeling vindicated by his superior's irritated reaction to Tina blowing her nose. But Havelaar had already returned from Carthage, and reading the faces of his guests—which he could do at lightning speed as long as his thoughts didn't wander—saw that they were drawing the following conclusions:

1. He who won't have his wife blowing her nose is a fool.
2. He who believes that a beautiful nose shouldn't be blown would be wrong to apply this belief to Mrs. Havelaar, whose nose is a touch potato-ish.

Havelaar could live with the first conclusion, but not with the second!

"Oh!" he exclaimed, as if obliged to respond even though his guests had been too polite to voice their thoughts, "Let me explain. Tina is . . ."

"Max, dear!" she implored.

It was her way of saying: "Please don't tell these gentlemen why you think I should be above catching colds!"

Havelaar seemed to understand what Tina meant, because he replied:

"Very well, my dear! But, gentlemen, I hope you realize how

mistaken one can be about a person's supposed right to physical imperfection."

I'm sure the guests had never heard of any such right.

"I met a girl in Sumatra once," he went on. "She was the daughter of a *datu* . . . well now, I say *she* had no right to such imperfection. And yet I saw her falling in the water during a shipwreck . . . just as anyone else would. It took me, a mere mortal, to help her reach dry land."

"Are you saying she should've flown like a seagull, then?"

"That's right, or . . . no, she shouldn't have had a body at all,
Shall I tell you how I made her acquaintance? It was in '42, when I was serving as *controleur* in Natal . . . have you ever been there, Verbrugge?"

"Yes I have."

"Well then, you know they grow pepper there. The pepper plantations are on the coast, around Taloh-Baleh to the north of the town. I had to inspect them, and as I knew nothing about pepper I took a *datu* with me in the proa to give me information. He was accompanied by his thirteen-year-old daughter. Sailing along the coast was rather boring . . ."

"And then you were shipwrecked?"

"Not at all, the weather was fine, just fine. The shipwreck took place much later; otherwise I wouldn't have been so bored. Anyway, we were sailing along the coast in the sweltering heat. A proa doesn't offer much in the way of diversion, and besides, I was feeling gloomy for a number of reasons. Firstly, I had a love affair that had gone wrong, secondly, another unhappy love affair . . . and thirdly . . . well, some more of the same, and so on. That's just par for the course, you know. But I was also midway between two bouts of ambition. I'd crowned myself king and been dethroned. I'd

See women as
something no longer
even human

climbed a tower and had fallen to the ground . . . I'll spare you the details! Anyway, there I was sitting in that boat with a long face, being generally insufferable. For one thing, I considered it beneath my dignity to have to go round inspecting pepper gardens while I deserved to be appointed governor of a solar system. For another, it struck me as moral murder to confine a man of my intellect to a proa with only that simpleton of a datu and his daughter for company.

"I have to say that I was, on the whole, quite taken with the Malay chiefs, and we got along well. They even have many qualities that make me prefer them to their Javanese counterparts. Oh I know you don't agree with me on that score, Verbrugge, very few people do, but we won't go into that now.⁷⁰

"If I'd gone on that excursion on another day—with fewer mares' nests in my head, I mean—I'd probably have been chatting with that datu from the start, and I might well have found his company worth my while. I might also have engaged the girl in conversation, which might have kept me entertained, as children usually have some originality about them . . . although I must say I was still too much of a child myself at the time to take an interest in originality. I've changed since then. Nowadays every thirteen-year-old girl I set eyes on makes me think of a fresh manuscript with few or no corrections, so that the author is caught in a state of undress, as it were, which is often charming.

"The child was threading beads on a string with utmost concentration. Three red beads, one black . . . three red, one black: very pretty!

"Her name was Si Upi Keteh, which in Sumatra means something like 'little milady.' You, Verbrugge, know that, of

course, but Duclari doesn't, as he's always served in Java.⁷¹ So her name was Si Upi Keteh, but in my mind I called her 'poor mite' or something like that, because I felt infinitely superior. The hours went by . . . towards evening the beads were put away. The coastline slid by slowly, and Mount Ophir dwindled down behind us.⁷² To our left was the wide, wide sea westwards all the way to Madagascar, and Africa beyond. The sun was setting, its rays dancing over the waves at an increasingly obtuse angle until it dipped into the refreshing coolness of the sea. How the devil did that thing go, again?"

"What thing? The sun?"

"No, of course not. I used to write verse in those days. Oh, what fun it was! Listen to this:

"You wonder why the Ocean waves
That crash on Natal's shore
On other sands are meek and mild
But here on Natal's docks grow wild,
With ceaseless rush and roar?

↓
traveler is
such a
showoff

"As soon as the poor fisher boy
Grasps what you mean to say,
He turns and casts his dusky eye
Beyond th' immeasurable sky
Out West—far, far away.

"He turns that dark eye's gaze out West
And in that one slight motion
He shows you, as you look around,
That only Ocean can be found,
And nothing else but Ocean!"

"And that is why the crashing waves
Tear at the Natal shore,
For farther than the eye can reach
And out to Madagascar's beach
Is water—nothing more!"

"And many an offering is made
To rein the Ocean in!
And many a cry must disappear
In depths where only God can hear—

"Not wife, nor child, nor kin!"

"And many a hand, stretched one last time,
Has risen from the deep
And searched and groped and splashed about
But found no purchase, no way out,
And sunk to endless sleep!"

"And . . .

"And then, then . . . I can't remember the rest!"

"You could find out by writing to Krygsman, your clerk at Natal. He has it," said Verbrugge.

"Where on earth did he get it from?" Max asked.

"Perhaps from your wastepaper basket. But he's definitely got it! Doesn't it go on to relate the legend of the primal sin that caused the island that used to shelter the roadstead at Natal to sink beneath the waves? The tale of Jiwa and her two brothers?"

"Indeed so. That legend . . . was no legend. It was a parable I made up, which may turn into a legend a few centuries from

now if Krygsman recites it often enough. That's how all mythologies begin. *Jiwa* means soul, as you know, soul, spirit, or the like. I made it into a woman, the indispensable, mischievous Eve . . ."

"So, Max, where does that leave the young lady with her beads?" Tina asked.

"The beads were put away. It was six o'clock, and there by the equator—Natal is a few degrees north of it, and whenever I went to Aia-Bangih over land I'd make my horse step clean over the line . . . quite a stumbling block, believe me!—there by the equator six o'clock is the time for evening meditations. A man's always in a bit better shape in the evening, I find, or rather, less prone to mischief than in the morning, which is perfectly natural. In the morning he pulls himself together . . . he's a bailiff, or a controleur, or . . . no, that'll do for now! A bailiff pulls himself together for a day of doing his duty with a vengeance . . . good God, what a duty! And what does it do to his heart to be pulled together like that? A controleur—I don't mean you, Verbrugge!—a controleur rubs his eyes and dreads meeting a new Assistant Resident, who puts on airs simply because he has a few more years of service behind him and about whom he heard such strange stories . . . back in Sumatra. Or else he faces a day of counting fields and battling with his conscience—you wouldn't know this, Duclar, being a soldier, but honest controleurs do exist!—for he wavers between wanting to do the right thing and fearing that some chief or other will demand the return of the dapple horse he finds so useful for counting the fields. Or else he'll have to give a firm yes or no in reply to the umpteenth missive. In short, when you wake up in the morning the whole world comes crashing down on you, and that's a blow to any heart, however

robust. But with evening comes respite. There are ten full hours between then and being confronted with your uniform again. Ten hours: thirty-six thousand seconds in which to be yourself! A pleasing prospect, to be sure. It is during those hours that I hope to die, so as to arrive yonder in an unofficial capacity. It's at such times that your wife sees in your face a flash of what she was smitten by when she gave you that handkerchief embroidered with a crowned *E* in the corner . . ."

"And when she wasn't yet entitled to catch cold," Tina said.

"Now, don't tease! All I mean to say is that people mellow towards evening. And so, as I was saying, while the sun was sinking slowly, I became a better man. The first sign of my betterment was that I turned to the little milady and said:

"It will soon be a bit cooler."

"Yes, *tuan!*" she replied.

"But I stooped even further and struck up a conversation with the 'poor mite.' My merit was the greater for her saying very little in reply. She agreed with everything I said . . . and that gets boring, however arrogant you may be. 'Would you like to join me again, next time I go to Taloh-Baleh?' I asked, to which she replied, 'Whatever the tuan commodore wishes.'⁷³ 'No, I'm asking you whether you enjoy going on excursions.' 'If that is my father's wish,' she said.

"I ask you, my friends, surely that's enough to drive a man mad? Well, I didn't go mad. The sun had set, and I felt mellow enough not to be put off by her witless answers. In fact, I believe I began to enjoy the sound of my own voice—there are few among us who dislike hearing themselves—and now that I'd broken the silence I'd kept all day, I felt I deserved something better than the inanities offered by Si Upi Keteh.

"I'll tell her a story, I thought, then at least I'll hear it myself,

wow

and won't be needing any answers from her. As you well know, when unloading a ship, the last batch of sugar to be put in will be the first to come out, and it's the same with people: we normally start by unloading the last idea or tale to have entered our minds. I had just read a story titled 'The Japanese Stonecutter' in the *Netherlands Indies Magazine*. The author was one Jeronimus, who wrote several charming tales! Have you read his 'Auction in a House of Mourning'? Or his 'Graves'? Or, best of all, the '*Pedati*'? I'll give it to you.⁷⁴

"I had read the story about the Japanese stonecutter a short while before. Ah, it's just come back to me . . . where I got lost during that song in which I had the fisher lad 'cast his dusky eye out West' where it probably fell into the waves . . . most peculiar! It was a string of associations. My bad temper that day had to do with the dangers of the roadstead at Natal . . . as you know, Verbrugge, no warship is allowed to enter it, especially in July . . . yes, Duclari, the southwest monsoon is at its peak there in July, whereas here it's the contrary.⁷⁵ Anyway, in my mind the perils of that roadstead became associated with my thwarted ambition, and that ambition in turn has to do with that little song about Jiwa. I had suggested to the Resident on several occasions that a breakwater be constructed at Natal, or at any rate an artificial harbor at the river mouth. That would be good for bringing trade to the regency of Natal, which forms the link between the all-important Batak lands and the sea. One and a half million people were stuck with their goods in the interior owing to the notoriety—deservedly so!—of the Natal roadstead. My suggestions were not taken up by the Resident, or rather, he said they'd be rejected by the government, and you realize that no self-respecting Resident bothers to make any proposal

unless he reckons it'll be approved by the government. Constructing a harbor at Natal ran counter to the closed-door policy, and far from encouraging ships to anchor there, the roadstead was even off bounds to square-riggers, unless in an emergency. And if a ship came anyway—usually American whalers or French ships laden with pepper from the small independent regions at the northern tip of Sumatra⁷⁶—I always insisted the captain gave me a written request for permission to take on drinking water. It was my annoyance at failing in my attempts to do something for the advancement of Natal, or rather my wounded vanity—wasn't it hard for me, to count for so little that I couldn't even get a harbor built where I wanted?—that had put me in such a bad temper . . . that, and my thwarted ambition to rule a solar system! Once the sunset had cured me a little—bad temper's a sickness—it was in fact that sickness that reminded me of the Japanese stonemason, and perhaps that was why I raked up the story, pretending I was doing so to amuse the child, while secretly taking the last drop of the medicine I felt I needed. But she, the child, cured me—for a day or so—better than my story, which went more or less like this:

•

"Upi, there was a man who hewed stones out of rock. His labor was very hard and he labored much, but his wages were poor, and he was not content. He sighed because his labor was hard. And he cried: Oh, if only I were rich, to rest on a bamboo couch under a mosquito net of red silk.

"Then an angel came down from heaven, saying: It shall be as you say. And he became rich. And he rested on a bamboo

couch with a red silk mosquito net. And the King of the country came past, with horsemen preceding his carriage. Following behind were more horsemen, and a golden payung was held over the King's head. And when the rich man saw this, he was sorry there was no golden sunshade being held over his own head. And he was not content. He sighed, and said: I wish I were a king.

"And an angel came down from heaven, saying: It shall be as you say. And he became king! There were many horsemen in front of his carriage and more horsemen behind, and the golden payung was held over his head. And the sun shone down with searing rays, scorching the earth and making the grass shrivel. And the King complained about the sun burning his face and having power over him. And he was not content. He sighed, and said: I wish I were the sun.

"And an angel came from heaven, saying: It shall be as you say. And he *was* the sun. He sent his beams upwards, and downwards, to the right and to the left, all around. He scorched the grass on the earth, and the faces of the rulers of the land. And between him and the earth came a cloud, which blocked his rays. And he grew angry about his might being challenged, and complained that the cloud had power over him. And he was not content. He wanted to be the cloud, which was so powerful.

"And an angel came down from heaven, saying: It shall be as you say. And he became a cloud. He placed himself between the sun and the earth, and caught the rays, so that the grass grew green.

"And the cloud rained great drops upon the earth and made the rivers swell, and the herds were washed away by floods.

And he destroyed the fields with a surfeit of water.

And he fell upon a rock, which refused to give way. He sent down great torrents, but the rock did not give way. And he grew angry because the rock refused to give way, and because the force of his torrents was in vain. And he was not content. He cried: That rock has been given more power than me. I want to be that rock.

"And an angel came down from heaven, saying: You shall be as you say. And he became a rock, and didn't give way when the sun shone, nor when it rained. And then came a man with a pickax, a pointed chisel, and a heavy hammer, who hewed stones from the rock. And the rock said: What is this? A man with more power than me, hewing stones from my lap? And he was not content. He cried: I'm weaker than he is, I want to be that man.

"And an angel came down from heaven, saying: You shall be as you say. And he was a stonemason. He hewed stones from the rock, with hard labor, and he labored much for a poor wage, and he was content."

"Very nice!" Duclari exclaimed, "but we're still waiting for proof of that little Upi being ethereal."

"No, I never promised you that! I only wanted to tell you how I met her. When I reached the end of my tale, I said: 'What about you, Upi, what would your wish be if an angel came down from heaven, asking what you wanted?' And she said, 'Oh, sir, I'd pray to be taken up to heaven.'"

"Now isn't that adorable?" Tina said, turning to her visitors, who may well have found it most peculiar . . .

Havelaar stood up and mopped his brow.

*The Austrian dancer Fanny Elssler (1810–84) and her rival the Swedish Marie Taglioni (1804–84) were internationally renowned theatrical ballerinas.

TWELFTH CHAPTER

"MY DEAR MAX," Tina said, "our dessert's so very skimpy, couldn't you . . . you know what I mean . . . Madame Geoffrin?"⁷⁷

". . . tell you some more, as a substitute for cake? I'm devilish hoarse. It's Verbrugge's turn."

"Yes, Mr. Verbrugge! Do take over from Max for a bit," pleaded Mrs. Havelaar.

Verbrugge reflected a moment and began:

"There was once a man who stole a turkey."

"You rascal!" Havelaar exclaimed. "You got that story from Padang! And how does it go on?"

"That's all there is. Does anyone know the rest of it?"

"Well, I do! I ate the turkey, shared it . . . somebody else. D'you know why I was suspended at Padang?"

"They said your cash was short at Natal," Verbrugge said.

"That wasn't entirely untrue, but neither was it true. For a variety of reasons I'd been very careless with my accounts at Natal, so they weren't quite up to standard. But that wasn't at all unusual those days! The north of Sumatra was in such turmoil after the occupation of Barus, Tapus, and Singkil, and things were so unsettled that a young man with a preference for riding horses rather than counting money could hardly be blamed for failing to have his affairs as shipshape as those of an Amsterdam bookkeeper with nothing else to do. The Batak lands were in uproar and, as you are well aware, Verbrugge, anything that goes on there has repercussions in Natal. I used to sleep in my clothes in case I was urgently needed, which was quite often. They were dangerous times—shortly before

my arrival there was a plot to murder my predecessor and start a revolt—and danger has a certain appeal, especially if you're only twenty-two. This appeal can make a man unfit for office work, or for the meticulousness required for proper accounting. And besides, my head was brimming with crazy ideas . . .”

“There's no need!” Mrs. Havelaar called to a servant.

“No need for what?”

“I'd told them to prepare an extra dish in the kitchen . . . an omelet or something.”

“Oh, so there's no need, now that I've started on my crazy ideas? You naughty thing, Tina! It's fine by me, but these gentlemen also have a say in the matter. Verbrugge, which will you have, your share of an omelet or the story?”

“An awkward question for a man of good manners,” Verbrugge said.

“And I'd rather not choose either,” Duclari chimed in, “because it's a matter between Mr. and Mrs. Havelaar and, as the French say, never poke your finger between the bark and the tree.”

“I'll help you out, gentlemen, the omelet is . . .”

“Madam,” said Duclari, polite as ever, “the omelet is bound to be just as good as . . .”

“. . . as the story? If it's any good, certainly! However, there's a little problem . . .”

“I wouldn't be surprised if there isn't any sugar yet, in the kitchen,” said Verbrugge. “Oh, do feel free to send for whatever you need from my house!”

“Oh, we have sugar, all right . . . from Mrs. Slotering. No, that's not it. If the omelet turned out well, there wouldn't be a

Stern throwing coffee

problem, but . . ."

"What? Has it fallen in the fire?"

"I wish that were true! No, it can't have fallen in the fire. It is . . ."

"Why, Tina!" Havelaar exclaimed. "What's the matter with it?"

"It's ethereal, Max, just like those ladies of yours in Arles! I have no omelet . . . I've run out of everything!"

"Well then, for goodness' sake let's have the story!" Duclari sighed with comical despair.

"But we do have coffee!" Tina said.

"Good! Coffee on the front veranda, and let's invite Mrs. Slotering and the girls to join us," Havelaar said, whereupon the small gathering trooped outside.

"My guess is that she'll decline, Max! You know she'd rather not have her meals with us either, and I can't blame her."

"She'll have heard about my storytelling," Havelaar said, "and that will have put her off."

"Nonsense, Max, that wouldn't bother her, she doesn't understand Dutch. No, she told me she wants to go on running her own household, and I can understand that perfectly well. Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home . . . Anyway, she strikes me as rather shy. Can you imagine, she gets the watchmen to shoo away any stranger setting foot on the premises . . ."

"I'd like to have either the story or the omelet," Duclari said.

"So would I!" rejoined Verbrugge. "No more shilly-shallying. We're entitled to a square meal, so I demand to hear the story about the turkey."

"I've told it already," Havelaar said. "I stole the fowl from General Vandamme, and then I . . . ate it with someone else."

"Before that 'someone' went to heaven," Tina said coyly.

"No, that's cheating!" protested Duclari. "We need to know why you . . . seized that turkey."

"Well, I was hungry, and General Vandamme was to blame for that, because he'd suspended me."

"If that's all you're going to tell us, I'll bring my own omelet next time," grumbled Verbrugge.

"Believe me, that was all there was to it. He had a great many turkeys, and I had nothing. They used to drive the creatures past my door . . . I took one of them, and said to the fellow supposedly keeping an eye on them, 'You can tell the General from me that I, Max Havelaar, am taking this turkey because I want something to eat.'"

"And what about the epigram?"

"Did Verbrugge mention that to you?"

"He did."

"It had nothing to do with the turkey. I only wrote that thing because he'd suspended so many officials. There were at least seven or eight at Padang who'd been barred for various reasons, several of whom were far less remiss than I was. The Assistant Resident there had been suspended, and for an entirely different reason, I believe, from the one given officially. I don't mind telling you this, although I can't guarantee I've got all the details straight, I'm just repeating what was stated as fact in the Chinese church at Padang,⁷⁸ and what may very well in fact be the truth—particularly in view of the General's reputation. You see, he'd married his wife to win a bet, and with it a cask of wine. He often went out in the evening . . . for a stroll, let's say. One night, apparently, in the alley near the girls' orphanage, a supernumerary police officer by the name of Valkenaar was so convinced by the General's

incognito that he took him for an ordinary vagrant and beat him up. Not far from there lived a Miss X. Rumor had it that this Miss had given birth to a child, which . . . had vanished. It was the duty of the Assistant Resident, in his capacity as chief of police, to look into the matter, and he apparently mentioned this at a whist party hosted by Vandamme. Well, the following day he promptly received instructions to pay a visit to a certain regency where the local Controleur had been suspended for real or alleged dishonesty; the Assistant Resident was to investigate certain details on site and 'submit a report.' He was naturally somewhat surprised to be charged with a task that had nothing to do with his regency, but the assignment could, at a stretch, be considered an honor, and as he and the General were on very friendly terms he had no reason to think of a trap. So off he went . . . I prefer to forget where to, to carry out his orders. He returned after a time, and presented a report that was not unfavorable for the Controleur concerned. In the meantime, however, the idea had taken hold among the public—i.e., everyone and no one—that the only motive for suspending that Controleur had been to get the Assistant Resident away from Padang so as to prevent his inquiry into the child's disappearance, or at least to postpone it so that facts would be harder to establish. Again, I can't vouch for the truth of this, but from what I gathered later about General Vandamme, I'm inclined to believe it. No one in Padang put it past him to do such a thing—given the depths to which his morals had sunk. Most people saw him as having only one virtue: that of courage in times of danger, and if I, having seen him face danger, believed he was at bottom a brave man, I wouldn't be telling you all this. True, he'd put many men 'to the sword' in Sumatra, but people who

witnessed certain events at close quarters were not impressed by his bravery,⁷⁹ and, strange as it may seem, I believe he owed his fame as a warrior mainly to something we all have in common, to some extent: a liking for contrast. People are always saying: it's true that Peter or Paul is *this* or *that*, but . . . you have to admit he's also *the other*, and it's *the other* that makes all the difference. And the surest means of garnering praise is to have a blatant shortcoming. Take you, Verbrugge, getting drunk every day . . ."

"Me?" gasped Verbrugge, whose moderation was exemplary.

"Yes, you. It's me making you drunk now, every day! Getting you in such a state that Duclari trips over you on the veranda in the dark. He won't like that, but his next thought will be that he's also seen a good side of you which he hadn't noticed much before. And then when I come along and find you in such a . . . *horizontal* position, you'll give me a pat on the arm and say: 'Oh, but he's such a fine, good lad really, believe me!'"

"That's what I always say about Verbrugge anyway," Duclari said, "even when he's *vertical*."

"But with less ardor and less conviction! Just think how often people say: 'Oh, if only so-and-so took better care of his affairs, he'd be quite somebody!' But . . . then you get the tale of how he does *not* take care of his affairs and how that makes him a *nobody*. I think I know why that is. It's like speaking of the dead: you always hear about their good qualities, which no one ever noticed before, and that's because the dead don't get in anybody's way anymore. All men are rivals, to some extent. We all like to feel ourselves above everybody else in every respect. But saying so would be bad form, and also against our own interests, as nobody would believe us even if we were

telling the truth. So we have to find a roundabout way of showing superiority, and this is how we go about it. If you, Duclari, say: 'Lieutenant Puttee's a fine soldier, he truly is, I can't tell you often enough what a fine soldier he is . . . but a *strategist* he is not . . .' Does that sound at all familiar, Duclari?"

"I've never met a Lieutenant Puttee, never heard of him either."

"Well then, invent him, and say it."

"All right, I've invented him, and that's what I said about him."

"Do you realize what you just said? You said that you, Duclari, are an expert on strategy! I'm no better myself. Believe me, there's no point in berating a fellow for being very bad, since the good ones among us are hardly any better! If we take perfection to be equal to zero degrees and badness to a hundred, who are we—vacillating between ninety-eight and ninety-nine as we are—to condemn someone scoring a hundred and one! Even so, I believe lots of people fall short of the hundred degrees only because of their lack of good qualities, such as the courage to be their own man."

"How many degrees am I at, Max?"

"I'd need a magnifying glass to count them, Tina."

"I protest!" cried Verbrugge. "Oh no, dear lady, I'm not protesting against your proximity to zero, not by any means! The thing is, we have officials being suspended, a child gone missing, a governor-general standing accused . . . Now for the rest of the drama, please!"

"Tina, do see to it that our larder is better stocked next time! No, Verbrugge, you won't get the drama, not until I've done some more of my hobby-horsing about contrasts. I said that we all see our fellow men as rivals of some sort. We can't

always be criticizing—that would be too noticeable—so we shower praise on a good quality only to draw attention to the bad, which is all we care about, without appearing to be biased. If a man takes offense at my comment that his daughter is very pretty but that he is a thief, my answer will be: 'What's wrong? I said your daughter's charming, didn't I?' Double winnings for me, you see? We're shopkeepers, grocers, the pair of us. I poach his customers, who won't buy raisins from a thief, and at the same time I count as a good fellow for praising my rival's daughter."

"No, it's not that bad," Duclari said. "You're exaggerating!"

"So it appears to you, because the comparison I made was rather brief and blunt. That comment about being a thief needs some glossing over. But the gist of the parable remains valid. When we can't deny the existence of certain qualities in a person, qualities that elicit respect, reverence, or awe, it's a relief to discover some other qualities that exempt us wholly or partially from paying the tribute. I'd bow my head before such a great poet, but . . . he beats his wife!⁸⁰ See how ready we are to use the wife's bruises as an excuse to condemn the husband? We're even glad he's a wife beater, which we would despise him for otherwise. If we have no choice but to admit that a man has the kind of qualities that warrant a pedestal, if we can't claim the opposite without sounding ignorant, insensitive, or jealous, we end up saying, 'All right then, put him on a pedestal!' But even as he is being hoisted up, still believing us to be in awe of his excellence, we're readying the rope that will topple him at the first opportunity. The quicker the turnover in occupants of pedestals, the more chance others have to take their place, and this is so true that we—much like the hunter shooting crows and discarding them—

have made a habit of pulling down statues regardless of whether we could ever occupy the pedestals ourselves. Kappelman, who lives on sauerkraut and small beer, prides himself on his condescending remark that 'Alexander wasn't great . . . he was immoderate,' even though he hasn't the least chance of ever competing with Alexander in conquering the world.

"Whatever the case may be, I'm sure a lot of people wouldn't have taken it into their heads to consider General Vandamme to be a brave man if his bravery hadn't offered them the contrasting phrase: 'Ah, but his morals!' And by the same token, his morality wouldn't have been such an issue for all those who weren't above criticism themselves, if it hadn't come in so handy in mitigation of the man's supposed bravery, which gave certain people sleepless nights. There was one quality he possessed to a truly high degree: willpower. Every decision he made was final, and was usually carried out. On the other hand—see? I have the contrast to hand, as usual—on the other hand, he was inclined to . . . take liberties with the means he employed to impose his will, and, as Van der Palm said of Napoleon—unjustly in my opinion—'obstacles of morality never stood in his way!' In that case, of course, it's far easier to achieve one's goal than if one feels bound by morality.

"The Assistant Resident in Padang, then, had written a report that was favorable to the suspended Controleur, whose suspension thus gained a shade of unfairness. The gossip mongering at Padang continued: the missing child was still the talk of the town. The Assistant Resident felt obliged to reopen the case, but before he had a chance to come up with anything, he received word of his own suspension by the

governor of the west coast of Sumatra, General Vandamme, 'for fraudulence in the execution of office.' He was alleged to have given a distorted account of events, out of friendship or pity for the Controleur in question, and against his better judgment.

"I have not read the documents relating to this case, but I do know that the Assistant Resident had no ties whatsoever with that Controleur—after all, why else would he have been picked to conduct the investigation? I also know that he was an honorable man, and the government thought so too, as you could tell by the fact that the suspension was quashed after the case was investigated elsewhere. The Controleur, too, was entirely rehabilitated in the end. It was the suspension of these two men that inspired me to write my epigram. I arranged for it to be placed on the General's breakfast table by a man in his service who had previously been in mine, and this is how it went:

"The ambulant suspender who rules us by suspension,
Governor John Suspend-All, the werewolf of our day,
Would gladly have suspended his moral apprehension . . .
But long ago he sacked it, and sent it far away."

"Forgive me for saying so, Mr. Havelaar, but I think you were out of order there," Duclari said.

"So do I . . . but I had to do *something*! Just think, I had no money and no income, and I was afraid of dying of starvation, which I very nearly did. I had practically no connections at all in Padang, and besides, I'd written to General Vandamme telling him it would be his fault if I died in misery, and that I'd accept help from no one. There were people in the interior who'd heard about my plight and invited me to stay with them,

but the General wouldn't allow me to be issued a pass. Nor was I permitted to travel to Java. I would have been fine anywhere else, and even in Padang, if it hadn't been for the General scaring the daylights out of everybody. Apparently, his plan was for me to starve. This went on for nine whole months!"

"So how did you survive all that time? Or did General Vandamme have a lot of turkeys?"

"He did, not that it made any difference . . . you can only do a thing like that once, obviously. You wonder what I did in the meantime? Well, I wrote poetry, comedies, and things like that."

"Could you buy rice with those things in Padang?"

"No, but I didn't try, either. I'd rather not say how I managed to stay alive."⁸¹

Tina touched his hand—she knew the story.

"I've read some lines of yours which you supposedly wrote on the back of a bill," Verbrugge said.

"I know what you mean. Those lines show my position. Back then there was a magazine called *The Copyist*; I was a subscriber. It was under patronage of the government—the editor was a high official⁸²—so the subscription fees were paid into the treasury. I was presented with a bill for twenty guilders. The fees were dealt with at the governor's office, and this bill, if unpaid, had to pass through that office prior to being returned to Batavia, so I took the opportunity to complain about my poverty on the back of that sheet of paper:

"A fortune—twenty guilders! Literature, farewell!
Farewell, my *Copyist*! Fate deals me a cruel blow.
I starve, I freeze, I die of boredom and of woe:

With twenty guilders, for two months I could eat well!
For twenty guilders, think how well shod I could be,
Well housed, well fed—oh yes, how sumptuously I'd dine . . .
What matters is to go on living, rain or shine,
Crime is the shameful thing, and not mere poverty!

"Afterwards, when I went to the editor of *The Copyist* with my twenty guilders, it turned out I owed him nothing. Apparently the General himself had paid that money on my behalf, just so he wouldn't have to send that embellished bill back to Batavia."

"But what did he do when his turkey . . . er . . . disappeared? Considering it was a case of theft . . . no two ways about it! And after that epigram?"

"He punished me terribly! If he'd made me stand trial as guilty of disrespect to the governor of West Sumatra, which could, if you will, be explained as an 'attempt to undermine the Dutch authority and foment revolt' or 'theft on the public road,' he'd have shown himself to be a good-natured man. But no, his punishment was crueler! He gave orders for the man in charge of his turkeys to take a different road. As for my epigram, well, that was even worse. He said nothing and did nothing. Now *that* is heartless! He begrudged me the faintest martyrdom, there was to be no prosecution to make me in the least interesting, no suffering for my superlative wit! Oh, Duclari . . . oh, Verbrugge . . . it was enough to turn me against epigrams and turkeys once and for all. Such a dearth of encouragement snuffs the flame of genius to the last . . . indeed: I never did it again!"

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

"AND NOW will you tell us the true reason you were suspended?" Duclari asked.

"Oh, yes, with pleasure! And since I attest to the truth of everything I have to tell you, and can even prove some of it, you'll see I had my reasons for refusing to dismiss those rumors about the missing child in Padang as sheer nonsense. You'll find them very plausible, once you've heard more about the estimable General Vandamme's conduct in my own affairs. Anyway, it so happened that my cash accounts in Natal contained inaccuracies and omissions. As you know, every inaccuracy has its cost; carelessness has never yet saved money. The head of accounting in Padang—who was anything but a close friend—claimed I was thousands short. But I must point out that nobody drew my attention to this as long as I was in Natal. All at once, I was transferred to the Padang highlands. I don't have to tell you, Verbrugge, that in Sumatra a post in the highlands is regarded as more desirable and agreeable than one in the north. Since the governor had paid me a visit just a few months earlier—you will presently learn why and how—and since during his stay in Natal, and in fact in my home, I believed I had demonstrated my strength of character, I took the transfer as a mark of favor and set out from Natal for Padang. I took a French ship, the *Baobab* of Marseilles, which had loaded pepper in Aceh and, of course, was short of drinking water by the time it reached Natal.

"As soon as I arrived in Padang, expecting to travel on to the interior without delay, I went to see the governor, as custom and duty require, but he sent word that he couldn't receive

me, and that I was to postpone my departure for my new station until further orders. As you may imagine, I was astonished to hear this, especially since his mood when we parted in Natal had left me with the impression that he thought rather highly of me.

"I had few acquaintances in Padang but heard from the few I had—or rather, I could tell by their manner—that Vandamme was very displeased with me. I say 'could tell' because, in an outpost such as Padang was then, people's attitude towards you is a fairly reliable gauge of whether you're in the boss's good graces. I sensed a storm coming, but didn't know which way the wind would blow. Since I needed money, I asked around for assistance, and was truly surprised when everyone refused. In Padang, and indeed throughout the Indies, credit is normally extended only too easily. In any other case, there would have been many people who were happy to advance a few hundred guilders to a controleur in transit who'd been unexpectedly detained. Yet I was refused all forms of assistance. I sometimes demanded an explanation for this distrust, and bit by bit I pieced together the answer: in my financial accounts in Natal, errors and omissions had been discovered in my bookkeeping that raised suspicions of 'disloyalty.' The news of errors in my bookkeeping didn't surprise me in the least. I would have been astonished if it were otherwise. But I did think it strange that the governor, who had witnessed for himself my ongoing struggle, far from my office, with a discontented, rebellious population—that he, who had praised me for what he called 'firm resolve,' could interpret those errors as evidence of disloyalty or dishonesty. Surely he knew as well as anyone that such situations are invariably a question of force majeure.

"Yet even if force majeure had been denied, even if I had been held responsible for errors committed while I—often at the risk of my life!—was obliged to venture far from the cash box, with no choice but to entrust its management to others, and even if one were to insist that, while performing one duty, I should not have neglected the other, even *then* I wouldn't have been guilty of anything more than a carelessness that has nothing to do with 'disloyalty.' Furthermore, there were, especially in those days, numerous cases in which the difficulties facing officials in Sumatra were recognized by the authorities, and the accepted practice seemed to be not to scrutinize the accounts too closely. The officials in question were simply expected to make up the deficiency, and conclusive evidence was required before the word 'disloyalty' was spoken or even thought. This had become such a fundamental rule that I had told the governor himself, in Natal, that I feared I would owe a large sum after my accounts were examined at the offices in Padang, whereupon he shrugged and said, 'Ah, well . . . those money matters!' as if to say that such trifles shouldn't distract from more serious matters.

"I do acknowledge the importance of money matters. But however important they are, they were in this case subordinate to other areas of responsibility and activity. If my accounts were a few thousand short through carelessness or oversight, I wouldn't call that a trivial matter per se. But those thousands were missing due to my successful efforts to quell an uprising that not only threatened to set the Mandailing region ablaze but also to bring the Acehnese back to the very places we had just driven them out of at great expense of blood and treasure! The significance of such a deficit pales by

comparison, and so it could even be regarded as somewhat unfair to expect a man to make up the difference when he had prevented infinitely greater losses. Nevertheless, I was happy to repay the money. For without that requirement, the door would be wide open to dishonesty.

"After many days of waiting—you can imagine my state of mind!—I received an official letter informing me that I was suspected of disloyalty and ordering me to respond to scores of criticisms of my administration. A few of these could be put to rest immediately. In other cases I needed to review the documents, and above all, it was important for me to investigate these matters in Natal and track down the sources of the discrepancies with the help of my staff. Once I was *there*, I'd probably have been able to clear up everything. Those unfortunate errors could, for instance, have arisen from an omitted entry for funds sent to Mandailing—as you know, Verbrugge, the troops in the interior are paid from Natal—or from some such thing I'd be bound to notice right away if I'd been allowed to investigate on the spot. But I couldn't get permission to go to Natal. This refusal drew my attention to the strange manner in which the charge of disloyalty had been brought against me. Why had I suddenly been transferred away from Natal while under suspicion of disloyalty? Why had I been told nothing about this disgraceful suspicion until I was far from the place where I'd have the opportunity to clear my name? And above all, why had these matters immediately been put in the worst possible light, contrary to custom and fair practice?

"Before I could respond to all those criticisms as well as possible without recourse to my records or any chance to talk to my staff, I learned through indirect channels that I had

incurred General Vandamme's displeasure by having 'so rudely crossed him in Natal,' which had been 'a great mistake.'

"That put the situation in a new light. Yes, I had crossed him, but in the naive assumption that he would respect me for it! I had crossed him, but when he left, I had seen not the slightest hint of his displeasure! Foolishly, I had taken the welcome transfer to Padang as a sign of Vandamme's approval. You see how little I understood him then.

"But once I knew that *this* was why my accounts had been judged so harshly, I was at peace with myself. I responded to each point as well as I could and concluded my letter—I still have the first draft—with these words:

I have responded to the criticisms of my administration as well as I could without records or local investigations. I request that Your Excellency make no generous allowances for me. I am young, and insignificant in comparison to the prevailing views that my principles compel me to oppose, but nonetheless, I remain proud of my moral independence, proud of my honor.

"The next day, I was suspended for 'disloyal administration.' The public prosecutor was instructed to indict me, in accordance with his 'office and duty.'

"So there I was in Padang, barely twenty-three years old, staring into a future that would bring disgrace! I was advised to ask for leniency because of my tender age—I had been a legal minor when the alleged misdeeds had taken place—but I refused to do that. Because I'd already done too much thinking, too much suffering, and—I venture to say—too much work to hide behind my youth. The closing words of my letter, quoted above, show that I didn't want to be treated as a

child, I who had done my duty in Natal towards General Vandamme, the governor, as a man. The letter also shows how unfounded the accusations against me were. A base criminal would never write in that style!

"I was not taken prisoner, as I ought to have been had the criminal charges been in earnest. Yet perhaps there were reasons for this apparent negligence. Prisoners are entitled to food and shelter, after all. Since I couldn't leave Padang, I was a prisoner nonetheless, but one without a roof and without bread. I wrote several letters to the General, but always in vain, arguing that he had no right to prevent me from leaving Padang, because even if I had committed the foulest deeds imaginable, no crime is punishable by starvation.

"After the court, which apparently saw the case as something of an embarrassment, had conveniently found that it lacked jurisdiction, since crimes committed by an official in the line of duty may be prosecuted only on the authority of the government in Batavia, I was kept in Padang for nine months by the General, as I mentioned before. He was finally ordered by his superiors to let me go to Batavia.

"A few years later, when I had a little money—thanks to you, my dear Tina!—I paid a few thousand guilders to settle the Natal cash accounts for 1842 and 1843, and somebody who could be seen as representing the East Indies government said to me, 'In your place, I wouldn't have paid until doomsday.'⁸³ Such is the way of the world!"

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Havelaar was about to launch into the story his guests expected from him, which would explain why and how he had

"rudely crossed" General Vandamme in Natal, when Mrs. Slotering came out onto her veranda and beckoned the police officer assigned to Havelaar, who was sitting on a bench next to the house. After going over and speaking to her, the officer called out something to a man who had just entered the grounds and was probably headed for the kitchen behind the house. Our gathering would most likely have taken no notice of this, if Tina hadn't made a remark during the midday meal about Mrs. Slotering having a nervous disposition, and that she seemed to check everyone entering the grounds. The man to whom the police officer had called out went over to her, and she appeared to put him through an interrogation that didn't end well for him. In any case, he turned around and left.

"It's too bad," Tina said. "He may have been selling chickens, or vegetables. And there's no food in the house yet."

"Well, then, send someone out to buy some," Havelaar replied. "You know how native ladies love to exercise authority. Her husband was once in charge here, and however insignificant an Assistant Resident may be in reality, in his regency he's like a king. She hasn't adjusted to the loss of the throne yet. Let's not deprive the poor woman of this small pleasure. Just pretend you didn't notice."

That was not hard for Tina; *she* did not care for authority.

Here a digression is called for, and in fact I would like to digress about digressions. It is not always easy for a writer to steer between the two cliffs of too much and too little, and it is all the more complicated with descriptions that are meant to transport the reader to unfamiliar terrain. There is too close a connection between places and events to leave out all description of the setting, and it is doubly difficult to avoid the two cliffs when the setting is the Indies. Whereas a writer

describing events in Europe can assume many things to be understood, anyone setting his scene in the Indies must constantly ask himself whether readers unfamiliar with the region will interpret the situation correctly. A European reader who imagines Mrs. Slotering to be "lodging with the Havelaars," as she might in Europe, is bound to be mystified why she was not taking coffee on the veranda with the others. I have already mentioned that she lived in a separate house, but for the proper understanding of this and later episodes, I must briefly acquaint the reader with Havelaar's house and grounds.

The accusation so often leveled against the great master who wrote *Waverley*, namely that he often tries his readers' patience by devoting too many pages to describing the setting, strikes me as unfounded, and I believe that to ascertain the justice of such a charge, it's enough simply to ask whether a particular description was necessary for conveying the writer's intended impression. If so, then he can hardly be blamed for expecting you to take the trouble of *reading* what he went to the trouble of *writing*. If not, then you should fling the book away. A writer empty-headed enough to give a topography for his ideas *for no good reason* is rarely worth the trouble of reading, even after his scenic description finally comes to an end. But let's not forget that, quite often, the reader is not in a position to judge the need for a digression, because it's only after the cataclysm that he can tell what is and what is not required for the gradual unfolding of events. And if he takes up the book again afterwards—I'm not speaking of books that are read only once—and still believes that certain digressions could have been left out without detriment to the story as a whole, the question still remains

whether he'd have received exactly the same impression if the author had not, artfully or otherwise, guided him to that cataclysmic point, precisely through the digressions that the nonchalant reader deems unnecessary.

Do you think Amy Robsart's death would be half so moving if you were a stranger to Kenilworth's halls? And do you believe there is no connection—connection through contrast—between the lavish attire in which the unworthy Leicester presented himself to her, and the darkness of his soul? Can't you see that Leicester—this is obvious to anyone who knows him from sources other than the novel alone—was infinitely viler than his portrait in *Kenilworth*? But the great novelist, who would rather fascinate his readers through the artful arrangement of colors than through gaudiness, considered it beneath him to dip his brush in all the blood and filth that clung to Elizabeth's unworthy favorite. He simply wanted to point out one speck in that cesspool, but he had mastered the art of making that speck stand out through the hues he placed beside it in his immortal writings. By dismissing such adjoining passages as superfluous, one completely loses sight of the fact that, in order to create the desired effect, an author would have to join the school that has flourished in France since 1830, though I must add, to that country's credit, that the gravest offenders against good taste are most popular not in France itself, but abroad. That school—which I hope and trust is finally past its peak—liked to dip an entire hand into pools of blood and thrust great splotches onto the canvas, so that the blood could be seen from a distance! And it's certainly easier to paint coarse swathes of red and black than to render the delicate features of a lily's petals. That is why the authors in question are inclined to take kings as the heroes of their

stories, preferably from the days when their subjects had not yet gained a voice. You see, the sorrow of a king can be translated, on paper, into wailing masses . . . *his* wrath permits the author to slay thousands on the battlefield . . . *his* errors are an opportunity to depict famine and pestilence . . . all suitable tasks for coarse brushes! If you aren't racked by the mute horror of that corpse on the ground, there's room in my tale for another victim, still flailing and shrieking! If you didn't weep for the mother searching in vain for her child, why, I'll show you a second mother, having to watch as her child is quartered! If one man's martyrdom leaves you cold, I'll multiply your emotion a hundredfold by having ninety-nine other men martyred with him! If you're so jaded that no shiver runs down your spine when a soldier in a besieged fort, crazed with hunger, devours his own left arm . . .

Epicurean! I suggest you give these marching orders: "Right and left, form a circle! All of you, eat the left arm of the man on your right . . . proceed!"

Yes, thus does artistic horror descend into absurdity . . . as I wished to point out in passing.⁸⁴

And *that* would be the error in rushing to condemn a writer who has tried to pave the way gradually for his denouement, without resorting to garish colors.

Yet the danger on the other side is still greater. You may despise the sallies of unrefined writers who suppose they can storm the ramparts of your sensibility with such crude weapons, but . . . if the author veers to the other extreme, if his vice is too much digression from the main point, too much affectation in his brushwork, then your wrath burns yet more fiercely, and rightly so—because he has bored you, and that is unforgivable.

If we go out for a walk together, and you keep veering off the road and calling me into the fields for the sole purpose of prolonging the walk, I won't like it and will resolve to go out on my own in future. But if you can point out a plant I've never seen before, or some fresh detail that has always escaped my attention . . . if from time to time you show me a flower, which I will happily pick and wear in my buttonhole, then I'll forgive you for straying from the road—yes, I will thank you for it.

Indeed, aside from a flower or plant, if you call me to your side to point out, through the trees, the footpath that we will soon follow, still far ahead of us down in the valley, a barely perceptible line winding through the fields . . . then too, I won't hold the digression against you. For once we have walked the whole way I'll know how our path twisted around the mountains . . . why the sun, which was over there just a moment ago, is now on our left . . . why that hill is now behind us, the one whose crest we saw ahead of us earlier . . . in short, your digression will have made it easy for me to *understand* my walk, and to understand is to enjoy.

In my story, reader, I have often steered you down the main road, for all that I was tempted to lead you into the fields. I was afraid to bore you, as I didn't know whether you'd appreciate the flowers or plants I wanted to point out. But as I now believe it will give you pleasure to have had a glimpse beforehand of the path we will be taking, I feel I ought to tell you a few things about Havelaar's house.

It would be wrong to picture a house in the Indies in European terms, as a mass of bricks with rooms and closets stacked one on top of the other, with the street out in front, and neighbors to the left and right whose household gods are back to back with yours, and a little garden behind it with

three currant bushes. In the Indies, with few exceptions, the houses are only one story high. That will strike the European reader as odd, because civilization—or what passes for it—tends to see anything natural as odd.

Houses in the Indies are very unlike our own, but there is nothing odd about them; *our* houses are the odd ones. The first man wealthy enough not to sleep in the same room as his cows built his second room not *on top of* the first, but *next to* it, because building at ground level is simpler, and single-story houses are more convenient. Our tall houses were born of a shortage of space; we seek in the sky what we lack on the ground. Every housemaid who shuts the window of her garret bedroom in the evening is a living protest against overpopulation . . . even if that's the last thing on her mind, as I believe to be the case.

So in countries where civilization and overpopulation have yet to pack mankind together at ground level and squeeze it upward, the houses have only one floor, and Havelaar's was not one of the few exceptions to this rule. On entering . . . but no, I wish to prove that I relinquish any claim to be picturesque. *Given* a narrow rectangle, to be divided into twenty-one squares, seven down, three across, we number the squares, beginning in the upper left corner and moving right, so that *four* is below *one*, *five* below *two*, and so on.

The first three numbers jointly form the outer gallery, or veranda, open on three sides, with a roof supported by columns at the front. From there, one passes through double doors into the inner gallery, represented by the next three squares. Squares 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, and 18 are rooms, most of which are connected by doors to the adjacent ones. The three highest numbers form the open back gallery, and

what I left out is a kind of exposed inner gallery, corridor, or walkway. I am truly proud of this description.

It is difficult to find a phrase that would give readers in the Netherlands a clear idea of what I am calling the *grounds* of a house in the Indies. Out there, the grounds are not a garden, or park, or field, or jungle, but are *either* a little like one of those things, *or* something like all of them, *or* nothing like any. They are all the land that belongs with the house and is not covered by it; the expression “garden and grounds” would be considered a pleonasm. There are few, if any, houses there without grounds. Sometimes, the grounds include woods and gardens and pastures and are reminiscent of parks. Others are flower gardens. In still other cases, the grounds consist of a single large field of grass. And finally, there are grounds that have been completely surfaced with tarmac. The resulting yard may be less pleasing to the eye, but it promotes hygiene in the houses, because grass and trees attract many types of insects.

I	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12
13	14	15
16	17	18
19	20	21

Havelaar's grounds were very extensive and, strange as it may sound, could even be described as infinite on one side, since they bordered a ravine that ran all the way to the banks of the Ciujung River, which holds Rangkasbitung in one of its many bends. It was difficult to say where the Assistant Resident's grounds ended and where communal land began, since the boundaries shifted continually as the mighty waters of the Ciujung rose and fell, sometimes receding as far as the eye could see, and sometimes filling the ravine, coming very close to the house.

This ravine had always been a thorn in Mrs. Slotering's side, and understandably so. Plant growth, which is abundant throughout the Indies, was especially lush there because the river kept depositing fresh mud—so lush, in fact, that even when the water had risen with enough force to uproot the undergrowth and carry it away, in almost no time the ground would be covered again with the rampant vegetation that made it so difficult to keep the grounds tidy, even very close to the house. And this caused no little distress, even to a woman without a child to raise. For apart from the many insects buzzing around the lamp in the evening, making it impossible to read or write—a nuisance encountered in many parts of the Indies—the undergrowth also sheltered masses of snakes and other creatures, which didn't confine themselves to the ravine but were often found in the garden and behind the house, or in the grass of the forecourt.

The veranda looked out directly onto this forecourt. To the left was the building with the offices, the countinghouse, and the assembly hall where Havelaar had addressed the chiefs that morning, and behind it lay the ravine, stretching all the way to the Ciujung before it dwindled out of sight. Directly

opposite the offices was the former Assistant Resident's house, for the time being still occupied by his widow, Mrs. Slotering, and as the grounds were connected to the main road by two drives running along either side of the lawn, it naturally follows that anyone who entered the grounds on the way to the kitchen or stables behind the main building had to pass either the offices or Mrs. Slotering's dwelling. Behind the main building and off to one side was the large garden Tina was so pleased with, because of the abundance of flowers, and above all because little Max would be able to play there.

Havelaar had sent his apologies to Mrs. Slotering for not having called on her yet. He intended to go the very next day, but Tina had already been, and introduced herself. We have learned that this lady was what is known as a "native girl," speaking no language but Malay. She had made it clear that she wished to continue running her own household, and Tina had happily agreed—not for any lack of hospitality, but mainly for fear that having just arrived in Lebak and not having yet had time to "settle in," she wouldn't be able to accommodate Mrs. Slotering as well as one might wish, considering that lady's special circumstances. Not speaking Dutch, she would, as Tina had put it, not be "*offended*" by Max's stories, but Tina understood that more was required than not *offending* the Slotering family, and considering her poorly stocked kitchen, as well as her resolution to live frugally, she saw a great deal of wisdom in Mrs. Slotering's decision. But even if circumstances had been otherwise, it remains doubtful whether an association with somebody who spoke only one language, in which there were no printed books that might edify the mind, would have proceeded to their mutual satisfaction. Tina would have kept Mrs. Slotering company as

well as she could, and talked with her at length about culinary matters, about *sambal-sambal*,⁸⁵ about how to pickle *acar timun*—without cookbooks, ye gods!—but that sort of thing is always a sacrifice, so it was thought to be very much for the best that Mrs. Slotering’s self-imposed solitude would leave both parties in perfect liberty. It was peculiar, however, that Mrs. Slotering had not only declined to dine at their table, but wouldn’t even accept Tina’s invitation to have her meals prepared in the Havelaars’ kitchen. Tina called this “taking modesty a little too far,” since the kitchen was large enough.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

"As you know," Havelaar began, "the Dutch possessions on Sumatra's west coast border on the independent kingdoms at the northern end, first among which is Aceh. It is said that a secret article in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 requires us not to go beyond the Singkil River. General Vandamme, our would-be Napoleon, who was itching to expand his rule as far as possible, thus ran into an insuperable obstacle in that direction. I must believe in the existence of that secret article, for otherwise I'd be at a loss to explain why the rajas of Trumon and Analabu, whose princedoms play no small role in the pepper trade, were not brought under Dutch sovereignty long ago. You know how easily pretexts can be found for waging war on petty states like those and then seizing control of them. Stealing a country will always be easier than stealing a mill. I believe General Vandamme could even have made off with a mill if he'd felt so inclined, so I can't understand why he spared those northern lands, unless he had firmer grounds than justice and equity.⁸⁶

"Be that as it may, he turned his conquering gaze not to the north, but to the east. The regions of Mandailing and Angkola—which lent their names to the regency formed in the recently pacified Batak lands—might not yet have been purged of Acehnese influence, for once fanaticism takes root it is difficult to eradicate, but at least the Acehnese were no longer present there. Yet this was not good enough for the General. He extended his authority to the east coast, and Dutch officials and Dutch garrisons were sent to Bila and Pertibi, although these stations—as you know, Verbrugge—

were later evacuated.

"A government commissioner arrived in Sumatra who considered this expansion to be senseless, especially as it ran counter to the desperate belt-tightening so urgently demanded by the mother country; he voiced his disapproval,⁸⁷ whereupon Vandamme argued that the expansion would not weigh on the budget, because the new garrisons would consist of troops for which funds had already been allocated, and that he had thus brought a vast territory under Dutch administration without any added expenses. As for the consideration that this would leave other places vulnerable to attack, particularly around Mandailing, he had such confidence in the loyalty and allegiance of the Yang di-Pertuan, the Supreme Chief of the Batak lands, that he saw no danger.

"The commissioner reluctantly gave in, but only after General Vandamme's reiterated assurances that he would *personally* guarantee the loyalty of the Yang di-Pertuan.

"Now, my predecessor as controleur in the Natal regency was the son-in-law of the then Assistant Resident of the Batak lands, who was at loggerheads with the Yang di-Pertuan. I later heard of many complaints against that Assistant Resident, but one had to be skeptical of such accusations, because most of them came from the Yang di-Pertuan at a time when he himself was being accused of much graver offenses. He may have felt compelled to seek his defense in his accuser's misdemeanors . . . a common enough tactic. Be that as it may, the Controleur in Natal sided with his father-in-law and against the Yang di-Pertuan, perhaps all the more ardently because he, the Controleur, was on friendly terms with Sutan Salim, a chief in Natal who was also the Yang di-

Pertuan's bitter enemy. The families of the two chiefs had been feuding for many years. Marriage proposals had been rejected, they were jealous of each other's influence, the Yang di-Pertuan flaunted his superior lineage . . . in short, a host of circumstances conspired to keep Natal and Mandailing at odds.

"All at once, there came a rumor that a plot had been uncovered in Mandailing, in which the Yang di-Pertuan was said to be implicated, and which was aimed at raising the sacred banner of revolt and murdering all the Europeans. The first news of this plot came from Natal, as is only natural: people in neighboring provinces are always better informed than the locals. Those who refrain, at home, from saying what they know to be true, for fear of one of the chiefs involved, are less inhibited as soon as they enter a territory where that chief has no influence.

"By the way, Verbrugge, this is also why I am not unaware of events in Lebak, and why I was in fact reasonably well informed even before I had any notion of receiving this post. In 1846 I was in the Karawang area and spent a good deal of time roaming the Priangan regencies, where I had met refugees from Lebak back in 1840. I'm also acquainted with some owners of private plantations in the countryside around Buitenzorg and Batavia, and I know how pleased those landowners have always been with the poor conditions in Lebak, thanks to which the labor force on their estates continued to be well manned.⁸⁸

"The conspiracy in Natal was presumably discovered in the same way and—if it existed, which I don't know—showed the Yang di-Pertuan to be a traitor. According to witness statements taken by the Controleur of Natal, he and his

brother had called together the Batak chiefs in a sacred forest, where they swore never to rest until the regime of the 'Christian dogs' in Mandailing had been annihilated. It goes without saying that this plan was divinely inspired. Such plans always are, you know.⁸⁹

"Whether the Yang di-Pertuan truly had such intentions, I can't say for certain. I have read the witness statements but can't give them full credence, for reasons that you will learn shortly. What I do know for certain is that his Muslim fanaticism was extreme enough to make him capable of such a thing. Like the whole population of the Batak lands, he had only recently been converted to the true religion by the Padris, and recent converts tend to be fanatics.⁹⁰

"The result of this discovery, real or supposed, was that the Yang di-Pertuan was arrested by the Assistant Resident of Mandailing and sent to Natal, where the Controleur locked him up in the fort until he could be sent off to Padang on the first available ship, and from there on to Batavia. Of course, the governor was presented with all the documents containing the incriminating testimony. These were meant to justify the severity of the measures taken. The Yang di-Pertuan had left Mandailing as a *prisoner*. In Natal, he was *imprisoned*. Aboard the warship that transported him, he of course remained a *prisoner*. He therefore—guilty or not guilty has no bearing on the matter, since the charge of high treason came from the competent authority in accordance with the law—expected to arrive in Padang as a *prisoner*. How astonished he must have been, then, to learn when he disembarked not only that he was *free*, but that General Vandamme, whose carriage awaited him when he went ashore, would be honored to receive him in his home and offer him his hospitality. I'm

certain no one accused of high treason has ever received a more pleasant surprise.

"Shortly afterwards, the Assistant Resident of Mandailing was suspended from office for all sorts of offenses on which I won't comment just now. The Yang di-Pertuan, however, after passing some time as a guest of Vandamme, who treated him with the greatest esteem, returned by way of Natal to Mandailing, not with the self-respect of a man found innocent, but with the pride of a man so highly placed that he requires no finding of innocence. For you see, the case had not been so much as investigated! Even supposing that the accusations against him were generally believed to be false, the appropriate response would have been an investigation for the purpose of punishing the false witnesses and, in particular, those who had induced them to lie. General Vandamme apparently had his reasons not to allow such an investigation. The charges against the Yang di-Pertuan were deemed null and void, and I'm sure the documents referring to them never reached the eyes of the authorities in Batavia.

"Soon after the Yang di-Pertuan's return, I arrived in Natal to take over the administration. Naturally, my predecessor told me of the recent events in Mandailing and apprised me of the political relationship between that region and Natal. I can't blame him for railing against what he saw as the unjust treatment of his father-in-law, and against General Vandamme's incomprehensible protection of the Yang di-Pertuan. Neither he nor I knew at the time that sending the Yang di-Pertuan to Batavia must have been a slap in the face for Vandamme, who, having personally guaranteed the Chief's loyalty, had compelling reasons to protect him, at any cost, from accusations of high treason—all the more so because the

aforementioned commissioner had by this time been appointed governor-general, and would in all likelihood have recalled Vandamme in outrage at his baseless confidence in the Yang di-Pertuan and his subsequent stubborn opposition to withdrawing from the east coast.

“And yet,’ my predecessor said to me, ‘whatever may have motivated General Vandamme to take all the accusations against my father-inlaw at face value, and to regard the much more serious grievances against the Yang di-Pertuan as not even worthy of investigation, the case is not closed! And if, as I suspect, the witness statements were destroyed in Padang, *here* is something that *cannot* be destroyed.’

“And he showed me a judgment of the Rappat Council in Natal,⁹¹ over which he presided, sentencing one Si Pamaga to the lash, to branding, and—if memory serves—to twenty years’ hard labor, for the attempted murder of the Tuanku of Natal.

“Just you read the court record,’ my predecessor said, ‘and then judge whether my father-in-law won’t be believed in Batavia if he accuses the Yang di-Pertuan of high treason *there!*’

“I read the documents. According to witness statements and the so-called confession of the accused, Si Pamaga had been bribed to go to Natal and assassinate the Tuanku, the Tuanku’s foster father, Sutan Salim, and the local Controleur. He went to the home of the Tuanku to carry out this plan and struck up a conversation about a *séwah* with the servants sitting on the steps of the inside veranda,⁹² intending to play for time until the Tuanku appeared, which he soon did, accompanied by relatives and servants. Pamaga then fell upon the Tuanku with his *séwah*, but, for unknown reasons, failed to

carry out his homicidal plan. The Tuanku, in alarm, leapt out of a window, and Pamaga fled. He hid in the jungle and was caught a few days later by the Natal police.

"The defendant, upon being asked what had motivated this attack and the planned murder of Sutan Salim and the Controleur of Natal, replied that he had been bribed to do these deeds by Sutan Adam, acting on behalf of his brother, the Yang di-Pertuan of Mandailing.

"Is this clear or not?" my predecessor asked. 'Once the sentence was confirmed by the highest authority, it was carried out—or at any rate the lashes and the branding—and Si Pamaga is now on his way to Padang, to be sent on to Java in a chain gang. The trial documents will arrive in Batavia with him, and then the authorities *there* will see who this man is, whose accusations led to my father-in-law's suspension! General Vandamme can't annul that judgment, much as he may wish to.'

"I took over the administration of the Natal regency, and my predecessor departed. After some time, I received word that Vandamme was planning a trip to the north in a warship, which would call at Natal. He came striding to my house with a large retinue and demanded to be shown the original documents regarding the trial of 'that poor man' who had been 'so cruelly mistreated,' adding that 'it was they themselves who deserved to be lashed and branded!'

"I was utterly bewildered. You see, the reasons underlying the conflict over the Yang di-Pertuan were unknown to me at that time, nor could I imagine that my predecessor would have deliberately imposed such a harsh sentence upon an innocent man, or that General Vandamme would shield a criminal from a just conviction. I was ordered to have Sutan

Salim and the Tuanku taken prisoner. Since the young Tuanku was much loved by the people and our fort had only a small garrison, I asked for permission to leave him at liberty, which was granted. But for Sutan Salim, archenemy of the Yang di-Pertuan, there was no mercy. This caused great unrest among the locals. The people of Natal suspected the General of lowering himself to act as the tool of Mandailing hatred. It was these circumstances that occasionally enabled me to show what the General called 'firm resolve,' especially as he declined to offer me the protection of the few men who could be spared from the fort or his own detachment of marines, which I needed when traveling to places where there were angry mobs. I noticed then that General Vandamme made very careful provisions for his own safety, so I can't confirm his reputation for bravery until I have seen more examples of it, or different ones.

"In great haste he formed a council of his own, which I might fairly call ad hoc. The members were a few adjutants, other officers, the public prosecutor he had brought with him from Padang, and myself. This council was instructed to investigate my predecessor's conduct in the trial of Si Pamaga. I was ordered to summon all the witnesses whose testimony was considered essential. The General—presiding, of course—handled the questioning. The official reports were written by the public prosecutor, but since he had little grasp of Malay—and none at all of the Malay of northern Sumatra—it was often necessary to translate the witnesses' answers for him, a task the General usually took upon himself. This council's records seem to provide incontrovertible proof that Si Pamaga had never intended to murder anyone, that he had never seen or known Sutan Adam or the Yang di-Pertuan, that he had never

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pounced upon the Tuanku of Natal, that the latter had not fled through the window . . . and so forth! Furthermore: that the verdict against the hapless Si Pamaga had been given under pressure from the presiding judge—my predecessor—and council member Sutan Salim, who had fabricated Si Pamaga's purported crime to give the suspended Assistant Resident of Mandailing a weapon in his own defense, and to vent their hatred of the Yang di-Pertuan.

"General Vandamme's manner in examining the witnesses on that occasion reminded me of the game of whist played by the Emperor of Morocco, who told his partner, 'Play hearts, or I'll cut your throat.' His translations, which he dictated to the public prosecutor, also left much to be desired.


"I don't know whether Sutan Salim and my predecessor put pressure on the judicial council in Natal to convict Si Pamaga. But I do know that the General put pressure on witnesses to testify to his innocence. Even though at that stage I didn't understand the General's motives, I did object to his . . . inaccuracy, which went so far that I had to refuse to sign some of the official reports. That was how I 'so rudely crossed' him. Now you understand what I meant, in my response to the criticisms of my financial management, when I concluded by asking that no generous allowances be made for me."

"That was certainly a very strong statement for a young man like you," Duclari said.⁹³

"I thought it only natural. Still, General Vandamme was clearly not accustomed to that sort of thing. So I suffered a good deal from the repercussions of that incident. Oh, no, Verbrugge, I know what you're going to say, but I never felt any *remorse*. In fact, I'd have gone further than protesting against the way the General examined the witnesses and

refusing to sign a few reports if only I'd known then what I discovered later—namely that the whole thing was a premeditated scheme to incriminate my predecessor. I had the impression that the General was so convinced of Si Pamaga's innocence that he was swayed by the commendable wish to rescue a blameless victim from a miscarriage of justice, insofar as that was still possible after the lashes and the branding. This impression didn't stop me from objecting to falsehoods, but I wasn't nearly as outraged as I would have been had I known that the General's intent was not by any means to save an innocent man, but to destroy evidence that would have harmed his political career, at the expense of my predecessor's honor and welfare."

"And what happened to your predecessor after that?" Verbrugge asked.

"Fortunately for him, he had left for Java by the time the General arrived back in Padang. He defended his actions successfully before the government in Batavia, it seems; at any rate, he remained in the civil service. The Resident of Ayer Bangies, who had given the judgment his fiat, was—"

"Suspended?"

"Of course! So you see, I wasn't that far off the mark when I wrote in my epigram that the governor ruled us by suspension."

"And what became of all those suspended officials?"

"Oh, there were many others! All of them were reinstated sooner or later. A few eventually rose to very high office." ⁹⁴

"And Sutan Salim?"

"The General took him to Padang as his prisoner, and from there he was exiled to Java. Even now he remains in Cianjur, in the Priangan regencies. I visited him when I was there in 1846.

Can you remember why I went to Cianjur, Tina?"

"No, Max, it has slipped my mind completely."

"Well, nobody's memory is perfect. Gentlemen, I was married there!"

"But now that you're telling us all this," Duclari said, "may I ask whether it's true that you fought so many duels in Padang?"

"Yes, very many indeed, and I had my reasons. As I said earlier, in an outpost like that, the governor's graces often determine how well other people treat you. So most people were unfriendly to me, to the point of rudeness. For my part, I was very thin-skinned. An unanswered greeting, a quip about the 'lunacy of picking a fight with General Vandamme,' a remark about my poverty, or my empty stomach, or the meager nourishment provided by moral independence . . . all this embittered me, as you may imagine. Many people there, especially officers, knew that the General appreciated a good duel, especially with someone so much in disgrace as I. So perhaps they took deliberate advantage of my quick temper. I also fought a few duels on behalf of others I believed had been wronged. In any case, duels were a daily occurrence there at that time, and it happened a few times that I had two appointments on the same morning. Oh, there's something very appealing about dueling, especially with sabers—dueling sabers, I mean, which of course are completely different from military sabers . . . Obviously I'd never do such a thing nowadays, even if the provocation were as great as it was then . . . Come over here, Max—no, stop chasing that thing—come here! Listen, you mustn't go chasing butterflies. That poor creature used to be a caterpillar, crawling around on a tree day after day—what sort of life is that? Now it has just grown

wings and wants to flit about a little, and enjoy itself, and search for food in the flowers, without hurting a soul . . . Look, isn't it ever so much nicer to see it fluttering around like that?"

So the conversation turned from dueling to butterflies, and then to the righteous who show mercy to their beasts, to cruelty to animals, to the *loi Grammont*,* to the National Assembly that passed the law, to the French Republic, and what have you!

Finally, Havelaar got up and excused himself, saying he had business to attend to. The next day, when the Controleur went to Havelaar's office, he was surprised to learn that after their conversation on the veranda the day before, the new Assistant Resident had ridden out to Parangkujang, the district of the "*outrageous* abuses," and had not returned until early that morning.

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I beg the reader to take it from me that Havelaar was too well mannered to have talked at such length at his own table as I have suggested in these past few chapters, which make it seem as if he monopolized the conversation, neglecting his duty as host to allow, or give, his guests the opportunity to "shine." From the mass of material at my disposal I have taken only a few examples, and could have had the table talk go on for much longer, with less trouble than it took me to cut it short. I trust, however, that the foregoing examples will go some way towards justifying my earlier description of Havelaar's character and qualities, and that the reader's interest will therefore be sufficiently aroused to hear how he and his family fared in Rangkasbitung.

The little family led a quiet life. Havelaar was usually out during the day and would spend half the night at his desk. He had a very cordial relationship with the commander of the small garrison, and his everyday dealings with the Controleur showed none of the insistence on rank that so often made social intercourse in the Indies stiff and awkward. Furthermore, Havelaar's compulsion to be of all possible assistance often served the purposes of the Regent Adipati, who was therefore very pleased with his "elder brother." And finally, Mrs. Havelaar's sweet nature greatly contributed to pleasant relations with the few Europeans living there as well as the native chiefs. Havelaar's official correspondence with the Resident in Serang bespoke their mutual goodwill, and the Resident's orders, phrased courteously, were carried out promptly.

Tina's household was soon in order. After a long wait, the furniture had arrived from Batavia, the acar timun had been pickled, and when Max launched into a story at the table, it was no longer for lack of eggs for the omelet, though it was plain to see from his little family's way of life that they were strictly adhering to their resolution to live frugally.

Mrs. Slotering rarely left her house and took tea with the Havelaars on their veranda only a few times. She rarely spoke and kept a watchful eye on anyone who came near her house or Havelaar's. But having grown used to what they called her "monomania," they very soon gave no more thought to it.

Everything seemed bathed in a kind of serenity. You see, for Max and Tina, it was a relative trifle to adjust to the inevitable hardships of an outpost far from the main road. Since no bread was baked there, they ate no bread. They could have had it brought in from Serang, but the costs of delivery were

too high. Max knew as well as anybody else that there were many ways of having bread delivered to Rangkasbitung *without* paying for it, but he abhorred *unpaid labor*, that plague of the Indies. In Lebak, many things could be had free of charge through the exercise of authority, but were not for sale at a reasonable price, and faced with this fact, Havelaar and his Tina were happy to do without. They had endured hardships of a different order! Had that poor woman not spent months aboard an Arab vessel, with no place to lay her head but the deck, and no shelter from the heat of the sun or the southwest monsoons, other than a small table to crouch under? Had she not had to make do, on that ship, with a small ration of dry rice and stale water? And had she not always been contented, under those circumstances and many others, as long as she and her Max could be together?

Yet there was *one* circumstance in Lebak that grieved her: little Max couldn't play in the garden, because it was full of snakes. When she noticed this and complained of it to Havelaar, he offered the servants a reward for each snake they caught, but in the first few days alone he had to pay so many bounties that he withdrew his promise. Even under ordinary circumstances, without the pressing need to economize, the costs would quickly have overrun his means. So they decided that from then on little Max was to not leave the house, and that for fresh air he could play on the veranda. Despite this precaution, Tina was always nervous, especially after dark, since snakes are well known for creeping into houses and hiding in bedrooms in search of warmth.

While snakes and similar pests can be found throughout the Indies, they are, of course, rarer in large towns, which are more densely populated than wilder places such as

Rangkasbitung. If Havelaar could have his property cleared of all the weeds, right up to the edge of the ravine, his garden would still have been visited by snakes from time to time, but not in such large numbers. By nature, snakes prefer darkness and concealment to open, well-lit places, so if Havelaar's grounds had been well kept, the snakes wouldn't have lost their way, as it were, and strayed from the overgrown ravine. But Havelaar's grounds were not well kept, and I wish to explore the reason they were not, because it will shed more light on the abuses that prevail almost everywhere in the Dutch East Indies.

The houses of senior officials in the interior are built on land belonging to the local community, if one can speak of community property in a country where the government lays claim to everything. Suffice it to say that the land does not belong to the official who lives there. If it did, he'd make sure not to buy or rent a parcel he couldn't maintain. If the grounds of the house assigned to him are too large to be properly maintained, the rampant tropical vegetation soon transforms them into a wilderness. And yet the grounds of such houses are rarely seen in poor condition. In fact, travelers are often amazed by the beautiful parks surrounding the homes of officials. There is not one official in the interior with the income to pay a decent wage for the work required, and since the home of the highest authority must nonetheless present a stately aspect—so that the natives, who set great store by appearances, won't despise him for his slovenliness—the question is how to achieve that goal. In most places, these officials have a chain gang at their disposal—made up of convicts from other regions—but such laborers were unavailable in Banten for political reasons, valid or otherwise.

And even in places where convict laborers are available, there are rarely enough of them to maintain a large plot of land. Other ways must therefore be found, the most obvious one being to summon workers for corvée labor. Any regent or demang who receives such a summons will hasten to comply, because he knows very well that an official who abuses his authority will find it difficult to punish a native chief for doing likewise. So one man's offense becomes another's carte blanche.

It seems to me, however, that *in some cases* the official in question shouldn't be punished too severely, and certainly not by European standards. The natives themselves would think it very strange—perhaps because they're unaccustomed to such behavior—if an official *always* and *in every case* strictly followed the rules on the number of corvée laborers available for his property. After all, circumstances may arise that the rule makers did not anticipate. But once the limit of the strictly lawful has been exceeded, it becomes difficult to determine at what point such excesses amount to criminal misconduct. Great circumspection is thus called for, especially considering that the chiefs are on the lookout for any bad example, so that they may take it a step further to their own advantage. There is a legend of a king who insisted that when he passed through a region at the head of his army every grain of salt in his humble repast should be paid for—because, so he claimed, anything short of that would set off a chain of Injustice that would ultimately topple his entire kingdom. Whether his name was Tamerlane, Nur al-Din, or Genghis Khan, the fable—or if it is no fable, the anecdote—is certainly of Asiatic origin. And just as the sight of a seawall suggests the possibility of floods, it's reasonable to assume a tendency towards such misconduct in

a country where such lessons are taught.

The few workers who, by law, were at Havelaar's disposal could keep no more than a tiny part of his property right next to the house free of weeds and undergrowth. Within a few weeks, the rest would be a complete wilderness. Havelaar wrote to his superior, asking him to find additional resources for this purpose—either by sending funds, or by proposing to the government that chain gangs be put to work in Banten just as they were elsewhere. This request was denied, with the comment that Havelaar was entitled to have people work on his grounds whom he had sentenced in police court to "labor on the public roads." He knew that already, or at least he was well aware that using convicts in that way was a thoroughly accepted practice, but he had never—not in Rangkasbitung, nor in Ambon, nor in Manado, nor in Natal—wished to avail himself of that so-called right. It was offensive to him to have his garden tended as a penalty for some misdemeanor, and he had often wondered how the government could allow such provisions to remain in existence when they tempted officials to punish small, forgivable errors in proportion not to the offense, but to the condition or extent of their grounds. Even if the punishment was fair, the convict might imagine that self-interest was at work, and whenever Havelaar had to pass sentence, that thought alone made him prefer imprisonment—which is otherwise abhorrent.⁹⁵

And that was why little Max was not allowed to play in the garden, and why Tina didn't take as much pleasure in the flowers as she had anticipated on the day of her arrival in Rangkasbitung.

It goes without saying that such petty annoyances as these had no effect on the mood of a small family with so many

ingredients for a happy home life. Such trifles were not the cause of the frown on Havelaar's brow upon his return from some of his excursions, or after meeting with one petitioner after another. We heard in his address to the chiefs that he intended to do his duty, that he intended to fight Injustice and I hope the conversations reported here have introduced him to the reader as a man capable of discovering and bringing to light things concealed from public view or shrouded in darkness. It may therefore be assumed that not much of what went on in Lebak escaped his attention. We have also seen that he had taken an interest in Lebak many years earlier and was thus already well informed about his new station on that first day, when Verbrugge went to meet him in the pendopo where my story began. Now that he could investigate there in person, he found much to confirm his earlier suspicions, and in particular, he learned from the archives that the region entrusted to his care really was in a most deplorable condition.

He saw that his predecessor in Lebak, Assistant Resident Slotering, had made these same observations in his notes and letters. Reading the correspondence with the chiefs, he found reproach after reproach, threat after threat, and understood very well why Slotering had finally said he'd go directly to the government unless this state of affairs was brought to an end.

When he'd first heard about this from Controleur Verbrugge, Havelaar had replied that it would have been wrong of Mr. Slotering to do so, since an Assistant Resident in Lebak was under no circumstances permitted to go over the head of a Resident in Banten, and he had added that nothing could justify any exception to this rule, since it was unthinkable that any Resident would endorse extortion and

exploitation.

And such endorsement *was* in fact inconceivable—at least, in the sense meant by Havelaar—since it was not as if the Resident in question stood to benefit in any way from such offenses. Nevertheless, the Resident had a motive for not giving due consideration—except very reluctantly—to Slotering's complaints. We have seen how the said predecessor spoke to his superior several times about the prevalent abuses—they had *conferred*, as Verbrugge put it—and how little good this did. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate why such a high-ranking official, who as the head of the entire residency was every bit as responsible for seeing justice done as the Assistant Resident—nay, even more so—more often than not actually saw fit to *impede* the course of justice.⁹⁶

During Havelaar's stay at the Resident's home in Serang, he had broached the subject of the abuses in Lebak and been told that "such things happen everywhere, to some degree or other." Well, that much Havelaar could not deny. Who would claim to have seen a country where no wrong was ever done? But he held that this was no reason to allow known abuses to persist, especially not when one was explicitly obliged to prevent them, and also that, judging by all he had learned about Lebak, these things were not happening "to some degree or other," but to a *very high degree*. The Resident responded by saying, among other things, that conditions were even worse in the regency of Cirebon—which was also part of Banten.

Now if we assume, as we may, that a Resident derives no direct benefit from extortion and the lawless exploitation of the natives, the question remains why he allows such abuses

to continue, despite his oath and his duty, and without informing the authorities. It is very strange indeed, when you think about it, that the existence of such abuses should be coolly acknowledged by a Resident, as if they lay beyond his power and authority. I will try to unravel how this comes about.

It is almost always unpleasant to bring bad tidings, and it seems that some trace of the unpleasantness of such tidings always clings to the man whose unhappy task it is to deliver them. While this alone might lead some people, against their better judgment, to deny the existence of some inopportune fact, how much greater the temptation when you run the risk not merely of incurring the disfavor that is the messenger's inevitable fate, but of actually being regarded as the *cause* of the unfortunate situation you are duty bound to disclose.

The government of the Dutch East Indies prefers to inform its masters in the mother country that everything is going according to plan. So that is what Residents prefer to report to their superiors. The Assistant Residents, who receive almost nothing but good news from their controleurs, likewise prefer not to send disagreeable tidings to the Residents. The result is an artificial optimism in the official record of events, in contradiction not only to the truth but also to the personal opinions of the optimists themselves, whenever the same subjects arise in conversation, and—stranger still!—in contradiction to their own written communications. I could cite many reports that extol the thriving state of a place while also including facts, and especially *figures*, that belie this description. These examples would provoke laughter and ridicule if the whole business didn't have such grave consequences, and it's amazing to see the naivety with which

the crudest lies are told and accepted as true, even though, only a few sentences on, the writer himself provides the means to undermine those lies. I will limit myself to a single illustration, to which I could add very many others. Among the documents here before me is the annual report of a certain residency. In it the Resident boasts that trade is flourishing, claiming that great prosperity and activity may be seen throughout the region. A little further on, however, in reference to the limited means at his disposal for catching smugglers, he is at pains to disabuse the authorities of the disagreeable notion that his residency loses a great deal of revenue to evasion of import duties. "No, no," he writes, "no need to concern yourself about that! Little or nothing is smuggled into my residency, because . . . so little business is done in these parts that no one would dream of risking his capital in trade."

I have seen a report of this kind that opened with the words, "In the past year, this peaceable place has remained at peace." If nothing else, such a sentence suggests a remarkable peace of mind about the government's peaceful intentions towards all who protect it from unpleasant tidings, or who, to use the accepted term, do not "embarrass" it with depressing news!

If the population fails to increase, this can be attributed to the inaccuracy of earlier censuses. If tax revenues don't increase, why, that can be presented as a virtue: the low rates have encouraged agriculture, which has just begun to flourish and will soon—preferably after the author's term of office—yield fabulous results. Any turmoil that is impossible to conceal is blamed on a small gang of malefactors who will no longer cause any trouble now that *overall* contentment prevails. If want or famine has thinned the population, it was

surely the result of crop failure, drought, rain, or something of the sort, and never of misgovernment.

I have in front of me the note in which Havelaar's predecessor attributes the "movement of the population out of the Parangkujang district" to "*outrageous abuses*." This was an *unofficial* note, and contained points about which that official wished to *speak* to his superior, the Resident of Banten. But Havelaar combed the archives in vain for any sign that his predecessor had openly and explicitly reported the matter in a *public dispatch*.

In short, the official communications from civil servants to the government—and hence the reports to the authorities in the mother country, which are based on those communications—are largely and essentially . . . untrue.

I realize that this is a serious charge, yet I stand by it and feel fully capable of supporting it with evidence. If this candid expression of my opinion disturbs you, please consider how many millions of pounds and how many human lives could have been saved by the British if someone had managed to open their eyes to the true state of affairs in India,[†] and what a deep debt of gratitude they'd have owed to the person brave enough to deliver the bad news, so that by rectifying the situation before it was too late, they could have avoided all the bloodshed.

I have said that I have evidence for my charge. Where necessary, I will prove that there have been frequent famines in regions celebrated as the very picture of prosperity, and that often when the people are described as peaceful and contented, they are on the verge of exploding with wrath. I do not intend to supply the evidence in *this* book, although I trust that by the time you lay it down, you will be convinced that

such evidence exists.

For the moment, let me give just one example of the absurd optimism I have described, an example that anyone, no matter how unfamiliar with life in the Indies, can easily understand.

Residents are obliged to submit a monthly statement of rice imports and exports in their residency, divided into two categories: those within Java and those to and from more distant places. Examining the volume of rice *exported* from one residency to another in Java, we find that it exceeds, by many thousands of piculs, the volume of rice that, according to those same statements, was *imported* from one residency to another in Java.

I will not dwell on what to think of the acumen of a government that accepts and publishes such statements. Instead I merely wish to draw the reader's attention to the *purpose* of this deception.

The percentage bonuses awarded to European and native officials for growing crops to be sold on the European market had done so much to discourage rice production that some regions were afflicted by famine, which no conjuring tricks could conceal from the public eye. I have mentioned that regulations were made at that time to prevent matters going so far wrong ever again. The many official communications required by those regulations included the aforementioned statements of rice imports and exports, which were meant to enable the government to keep a constant eye on the ebb and flow of that staple. Exports from a residency represent prosperity. Imports relative scarcity.

If we examine and compare those statements, we learn that there is such an abundance of rice throughout Java that *all the*

residencies together export more rice than is imported by all the residencies together. Let me repeat that overseas exports aren't included in these figures, but are accounted for separately. This brings us to the preposterous conclusion that *there is more rice in Java than rice in Java*. Now *that* is what I call prosperity!

As I mentioned before, the perceived need to send the government nothing but good news would be risible if the consequences were not so tragic. How can we expect all these wrongs ever to be righted, if there is a preconceived intention to twist and distort the statements sent to the administration? What, for instance, can we expect of a people who, though meek and gentle by nature, have complained of oppression for years and years, when they see one Resident after another go on leave or into retirement, or move on to a new office, without having done *anything* to redress the grievances that weigh so heavily upon them! Will a coiled spring not, sooner or later, bounce back? Will long-suppressed discontent—suppressed, so that the authorities can go on denying it!—not finally ignite into rage, despair, and riot? Will this road not lead to insurrection?

And where will those officials be then, who have come and gone in succession over the years without ever conceiving of any greater mission than being in the government's good books? A greater mission than pleasing the Governor-General? Where will they be then, the writers of vapid reports, whose untruths have blinded the administration? Will they, who lacked the courage to commit one bold word to paper, rush to arms to defend the Dutch possessions? Will they reimburse the Netherlands for the enormous costs of quelling an uprising or preventing a revolution? Will they restore life to the

thousands who have fallen through *their* negligence?

But it is not those officials, those controles and Residents, who bear the *greatest* guilt. It is the government itself which, as if struck with inexplicable blindness, encourages, incites, and rewards the submitting of favorable reports.⁹⁷ This is especially true when the population is oppressed by native chiefs.

Many people attribute the protection of the chiefs to the ignoble calculation that those native leaders, who are expected to sway the people with pomp and circumstance and thereby uphold the authority of the government, would have to be much better paid for this work than they are now if they weren't free to supplement their income by unlawful claims to the labor and property of the population. Whatever the case may be, the government never enforces the provisions meant to protect the people of Java from extortion and robbery, except as a last resort. Nebulous and often spurious reasons of state are put forward for sparing *this* regent or *that* chief, and there is a belief in the Indies—so firm that it has become a proverb—that the government would rather dismiss ten Residents than a single regent. If the political pretexts have any basis, it's usually in false reports, since every Resident has an interest in exaggerating the influence of his regents over the people, to provide himself with a cover if he is ever criticized for granting those regents excessive latitude.⁹⁸

I will not, at this time, dwell on the vile hypocrisy of the humane-sounding provisions—and oaths!—that protect the people of Java, on paper, from exploitation, and I ask the reader to recall how Havelaar, when repeating those oaths, showed signs of an emotion much like contempt. For now I will simply point out the difficult position of a man who—for

reasons utterly separate from any recited formula—considers himself bound by his duty.

And this difficulty was even greater for Havelaar than it would have been for some other men, because his nature was gentle, in utter contrast to his intellect, which as the reader has learned was decidedly sharp. So he had to contend not only with anxiety about what people might do and his concerns about career and promotion, and not only with his duties as a husband and father—no, above all, he had to defeat an enemy within his own heart. Whenever he saw suffering, he suffered, and it would lead me too far astray to give examples of how he always, even when injured and insulted, protected his opponents from themselves. He told Duclari and Verbrugge that in his youth he had been drawn to dueling with sabers, which was true . . . but he didn't mention that he nearly always wept after wounding an adversary, or that he had nursed his sworn enemies back to health like a Sister of Charity. I could tell of the time in Natal when a chained convict shot at him,⁹⁹ and he took the man into his home, spoke friendly words to him, had him fed, and granted him his freedom in preference to anyone else, because he believed he had discovered the reason for the man's bitterness: his sentence, pronounced elsewhere, had been too severe. Havelaar's tender nature was usually either denied or considered ludicrous—denied by those who confused his heart with his mind, and considered ludicrous by those who failed to see what could induce a reasonable man to bother about rescuing a fly from a spider's web. It was also denied by everybody—save Tina—who then heard him disparaging those "stupid insects" created by "stupid Mother Nature."

But there was yet another way to drag him down from the

pedestal on which those who knew him—whether or not they liked him—felt bound to place him. “Yes, he *is* witty, but . . . there’s something superficial in his wit,” or, “He *is* intelligent, but . . . he doesn’t use his intelligence properly,” or, “Yes, he *is* kindhearted, but . . . he makes a show of it!”

I will make no claims as to his wit or intelligence. But his heart? Poor struggling flies that he saved when no one was about, will you defend that heart of his against the charge of showing off?

But no, you’re off and away without a thought for Havelaar, you, who couldn’t have known he would need your testimony one day!

Was Havelaar showing off when, having seen a dog named Sappho fall into the estuary in Natal, he jumped in after her, because he feared the pup couldn’t swim well enough to dodge the sharks that swarm in those waters? Surely the showing off is less plausible than the kindness?

I call on you, the many who knew Havelaar—if you haven’t frozen to death in the winter cold like the rescued flies, or shriveled up in the heat down there, south of the equator! I call on you to testify to his heart, all of you! I call on you with confidence, because there’s no longer any need to look for ways to rope him in and drag him down from even the lowest pedestal.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, however out of place it may seem, I will leave room here for some lines by Havelaar himself, which may even render your testimony superfluous. There was a time when Max was far, far away from his wife and child, having been obliged to leave them behind in the Indies while he went to Germany. Showing the quick mind I credit him with—but wouldn’t go so far as to defend, should anyone wish to

challenge it—he mastered the language after just a few months in the country. Here are those lines, originally written in German, which also sketch the intimate bond between him and his loved ones.

—My child, the bell is tolling nine o'clock!
The night wind whispers, and the air grows cool.
Too cool for you, perhaps—your brow is burning!
You've been at play all day, out running wild.
You must be tired. Come here, your *tikar*'s ready.¹⁰¹

—Oh, mother, let me stay a moment longer!
It is so sweet to rest here . . . and inside,
when I lie on my mat I'll sleep so deep
I won't know what I'm dreaming! If I stay

Then right away I'll tell you what I dreamed
And ask you what it meant . . . But mother, listen,
What was that sound?

—A falling coconut.

—Do coconuts feel pain?
—I don't believe so,
They say that fruits, and stones, do not have feelings.

—And flowers? Don't they feel things?

—No, they don't.
I'm told they do not feel.

—But why, then, mother,
Yesterday, when I crushed the *pukul empat*,

Did you say to me, "Stop, don't hurt the flower"?¹⁰²

—My child, the pukul empat was so lovely,
I saw you tear apart its tender petals,
And I felt pity for the little flower.
Although the flower itself does not have feelings,
The flower's beauty made *me* feel its pain.

—But, mother, are you beautiful as well?

—I do not think so, child.

—But *you* have feelings?

—Yes, people do . . . some people more than others.

—And can you hurt yourself? Do you feel pain
Because my heavy head is in your lap?

—Oh no, that doesn't hurt!

—But, mother, tell me,

Do I have feelings too?

—Of course! Remember
The time you stumbled on a stone and fell?
You scraped your hands and cried. You also cried
When Saudin said that in the hills out yonder
A lamb had fallen deep in a ravine
And died. You wept and wept . . . then *you* had feelings.

—But do you mean that feelings hurt?

—Yes, often!

Well, sometimes, but not always. Think of when
Your baby sister grabs you by the hair
And with a screech she pulls your face to hers.
You laugh with joy then. That's a feeling too.

—My sister . . . say, why does she cry so much?
Is she in pain? Does she have feelings too?

—Perhaps, my dear. We cannot know for sure.
She is too small to tell us what she feels.

—But, mother . . . listen, what was that?
 —A deer

Out in the forest, running late. And now
It hurries homeward so that it may sleep
Beside the other deer it loves.

 —And, mother,
Does that deer have a baby sister too?
And does it have a mother?
 —I don't know, child.

—How sad it would be not to have a mother!
But, mother, what's that light there in the bush?
Look at it leap and dance . . . Is that a spark?

—No, that's a firefly.
 —May I try to catch it?

—You may, but fireflies are so delicate
You're sure to hurt it. At the first rough touch

It will grow sick and die, and lose its glow.

—No, that would be too bad! I'll leave it be!
Oh look, it's flying away . . . No, here it comes . . .
No, I won't catch it. There it goes again.
It must be very glad I didn't catch it!
How high it flies. Far up above . . . what's that?
Are those all fireflies up there?

—Those are stars.

—One, two, three, ten, a thousand! Do you know
How many stars there are?

—No, I do not.
I'm sure no one has ever counted them.

—But, Mother, surely *He* has counted them?

—No, dear, not even *He* has.

—Is it far
To where the stars are?
—Very, very far.

—But do those stars up there have feelings too?
And if you reached your hand up to the sky
And touched them, would it hurt, and would they lose
Their glow, just like the firefly?—There it goes!—
But tell me, could I hurt the stars?

—Oh, no,
That couldn't hurt the stars! And anyway,

Your little hand could never reach that far.

—Can *He* reach out His hand and catch the stars?

—Not even *He* can. No one can!

—How sad!

I'd love to give you one! When I grow up,
Then *I will love you so much that I can.*

The child soon fell asleep and dreamed of feelings,
And stars that he could take up in his hand.
The mother sat awake for hours! But she
Was dreaming too, of someone far away . . .

Yes, I chose to include these lines here, even knowing that they might seem out of place. I wouldn't pass up any opportunity to acquaint you with the man who plays the leading role in my story, for I wish you to take some interest in him later, when dark clouds gather over his head.

*The first French legislation regarding cruelty to animals, enacted in 1850.

†This is a reference to the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857–58, a major uprising in India against British rule through the East India Company, sometimes called the country's First War of Independence. Both sides committed atrocities. The casualties were much higher on the Indian side and included hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, at a minimum. Amaresh Misra

has argued that almost ten million rebels and civilians were killed by British forces.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

WHILE the intentions of Havelaar's predecessor had certainly been good, he had evidently felt some trepidation about the government's displeasure—for the man had many children, and limited means. So he preferred to *speak* to the Resident about what he called *outrageous* abuses, rather than naming them outright in an official document. He knew that no Resident ever welcomes a written report, because it will linger in the archives and perhaps one day serve as evidence that he was informed promptly of some inconvenient fact, whereas an oral communication presents no such risk and leaves it up to him whether or not he responds to the grievance. In the case of Lebak, such oral communications generally led to an audience with the Adipati, who of course denied everything and demanded proof. Then the people who had been so ill-behaved as to complain would be summoned, and would grovel at the Adipati's feet, begging forgiveness. "No, I didn't have to give away my buffalo for nothing; I'm sure I'll be paid double for it." "No, I wasn't ordered to abandon my own fields to go and work in those of the Adipati. I knew I could count on the Adipati generously rewarding me in due course." "I made that accusation in a fit of unwarranted resentment . . . I was out of my mind and beg to be punished for such gross disrespect!"

The Resident knew perfectly well what to think when a complaint was withdrawn in this way, but nonetheless it offered him a welcome opportunity to leave the Adipati in possession of his honor and his office, and spared him the unpleasant task of "embarrassing" the authorities with bad

news. The reckless complainants were punished by caning, the Adipati reigned triumphant, and the Resident returned to the capital with the comfortable sense that he had "finessed" the situation once again.

But what was the Assistant Resident to do when new complainants came to him the very next day? Or when, as often happened, the same complainants returned and withdrew their withdrawals? Was he supposed to mention the matter in his report yet again, so that he could have a quiet word with the Resident about it yet again, and go through the entire farce yet again, at the risk of being regarded as someone who—foolishly and maliciously, no doubt—kept bringing forward unfounded accusations, which invariably had to be dismissed? What would become of the amicable, and vital, relationship between the preeminent native chief and the highest European official if the latter were constantly investigating false charges against the former? And above all, what would become of the poor complainants when they returned to their villages and were once again under the thumb of the district or village chief they had accused of acting upon the Adipati's tyrannical wishes?

Well, what *did* become of those complainants? Those who could flee, fled. *That* was why there were so many Bantenese at large in the neighboring provinces! *That* was why there were so many people from Lebak among the rebels in the Lampung districts. *That* was why, in his address to the chiefs, Havelaar had asked, "Why is it that so many houses stand empty in the villages, and why do so many people prefer the shade of distant jungles to their own cool forests of South Banten?"

But not everyone *could* flee. The man whose corpse was

found drifting downriver the morning after he had secretly, reluctantly, fearfully, asked to speak to the Assistant Resident . . . *he* no longer had any need to flee.¹⁰³ Perhaps his death was a mercy, since it reprieved him from the short remainder of his life. He was spared the beating he'd have received when he returned to his village, as well as the caning that awaited all who supposed, even for an instant, that they were not beasts, not soulless pieces of wood or stone. That was the punishment for all who supposed, in a fit of madness, that there was justice to be had in the land, and that the Assistant Resident had the will, and the power, to see justice done . . .

Wasn't it better, in fact, to prevent this man from returning to the Assistant Resident the next day—as he had been invited to do—and to drown his complaints in the yellow waters of the Ciujung, which would carry him gently to the river mouth, accustomed as it was to bearing such brotherly offerings from the sharks upriver to the sharks in the sea?

And Havelaar knew all of this! Can the reader imagine the torment in his mind, knowing that he was called upon to do justice, while being answerable to a higher power than a government that prescribed justice in its laws but wasn't always willing to see those laws applied? Can the reader sense how he was racked by doubt, not about *what* he should do, but about *how* he should do it?¹⁰⁴

He had begun with gentleness. He had spoken to the Adipati as an elder brother would, and if you suspect that I, in my admiration for the hero of my tale, am making too much of his manner of speaking, consider this: after one such meeting, the Adipati sent his Patih to Havelaar to thank him for his sympathetic words, and long afterwards that same Patih, in conversation with Controleur Verbrugge—by which

time Max Havelaar was no longer the Assistant Resident of Lebak, and the Adipati had nothing more to hope or fear from him —recalled those words and was moved to declare, "No other gentleman has ever spoken as he did!"

Yes, Havelaar wanted to help, to guide, to save the Adipati—not to ruin him! He felt sympathy for the man—he who knew how distressing money troubles can be, especially when they lead to humiliation and slander—and tried to find excuses for the actions of the native leader, who was an old man, the head of a family living in grand style in the neighboring provinces, where a large volume of coffee was harvested and therefore large bonuses were enjoyed. What a blow to his pride, having to endure a standard of living far below that of his younger relations! To make matters worse, in his old age he had come to believe, under the influence of religious fanaticism, that he could buy his way into paradise by sponsoring pilgrimages to Mecca and paying alms to prayer-singing sluggards. Nor had the Dutch officials who had preceded Havelaar in Lebak always set a good example. And, finally, the sheer size of the Adipati's family in Lebak, whose maintenance rested squarely on his shoulders, made it hard for him to return to the right path.

So Havelaar cast about for reasons to postpone severity and, time after time, to see how much he could achieve with gentleness. In fact, he went beyond gentleness, showing a generosity of spirit that smacked of the errors that had left him poor. He was constantly lending his own money to the Adipati, so that need would not be such a pressing incentive to exploit the people, and as usual, Havelaar had so little thought for his own welfare that he was prepared to limit himself and his dear ones to a bare minimum so as to be able to use his

meager savings to assist the Adipati.

Should any further evidence be required for the gentle spirit in which Havelaar performed his demanding duties, it can be found in an oral message he passed on through Controleur Verbrugge, just as the latter was leaving for Serang: "Tell the Resident that, if he hears of the abuses taking place here, he must not think I am indifferent to them. I am not yet ready to report them officially because I feel some compassion for the Adipati and wish to protect him from excessive severity, by first attempting to remind him gently of his duties."

Havelaar was often away for days on end, and when at home he was usually in room seven on our floor plan of the house.

There he spent most of his time writing and receiving visitors who wished to speak to him. He had chosen it as his study because it was close to Tina, who was usually to be found in the next room. The bonds of affection between them were so strong that, even when he was working on something requiring concentration and effort, he felt a continual need to see or hear her. It was sometimes comical how he'd suddenly give voice to a thought that arose in his mind about the subjects that preoccupied him, and how quickly she, without knowing what he was referring to, would grasp his essential point—which he generally left unsaid, as if he took it for granted that she'd know what he meant. And frequently, when he was dissatisfied with his own work or upset by some sad news, he'd leap up and make a cutting remark to her, even though she was in no way to blame for his dissatisfaction! And yet she was always pleased when this happened, because it demonstrated yet again how closely Max identified with her. He never showed any remorse for this seeming harshness,

and she never offered forgiveness. That would have seemed as strange to them as a man begging his own pardon for slapping his forehead in exasperation.

In fact, she knew him so well that she could tell exactly when she should be there to offer him a moment's diversion, exactly when he needed her advice, and—just as exactly—when she should leave him alone.

One morning, Havelaar was at work in that room when the Controleur walked in, holding a letter he had just received.

"It's a difficult matter, Mr. Havelaar," he said as he came in.
"Very difficult!"

If I say the letter in question simply contained instructions from Havelaar to explain the reason for a change in the prices of woodwork and labor, the reader will conclude that Controleur Verbrugge was very quick to call a matter difficult. So I hasten to add that many an official would have found it just as difficult to answer that simple question.

A few years earlier, a prison had been built in Rangkasbitung. It is common knowledge that officials in the interior of Java have a knack for erecting buildings worth thousands without spending more than the same number of hundreds. This gives them a reputation for competence and diligence in their country's service. The difference between the expenditure and the value of the building consists in unpaid materials and unpaid labor. A few years ago, regulations were made that prohibit this practice. Let us not go into the question of whether the rules are followed, or whether the government itself wants them followed so strictly as to burden the budget of the public-works department. No doubt these regulations are taken in much the same spirit as many others that look equally humanitarian on paper.

Now, there were many other buildings to be erected in Rangkasbitung, and the engineers responsible for making the plans had asked for estimates of local wages and material costs. Havelaar had instructed the Controleur to look into the matter thoroughly and report the true costs, regardless of what had been done in the past. The outcome was clear: that the actual costs didn't match the statements from previous years. Havelaar had asked what the reason was for the discrepancy, and that is what Verbrugge found so difficult to explain. Havelaar, who knew perfectly well what lay behind this seemingly straightforward matter, said he would put his views on the problem in writing, and the documents here before me include a copy of the letter that apparently issued from this promise.

Should my reader feel that I'm wasting his valuable time on an irrelevant piece of correspondence about the price of woodwork, then I must ask him not to overlook the fact that something else entirely is at issue here, namely the state of the entire official financial administration of the Indies. This letter of Havelaar's not only sheds yet another ray of light on the artificial optimism of which I have spoken, but also illustrates the difficulties facing anyone who, like him, endeavored to follow his own path, straight ahead and without looking back.

Nº 114

Rangkasbitung, March 15, 1856

To the Controleur of Lebak:

When I passed on the letter to you from the Director of Public Works (Nº 271/354, dated the 16th of February of this year), I requested that you reply to the questions therein, after consulting with the Regent, and having

regard to the contents of my note of the 5th inst., N° 97.

That note contained some general indications of what may be considered fair and just in calculating the prices of materials to be supplied by native people to, and by order of, the government.

In your note of the 8th inst., N° 6, you complied with that request, and I believe you replied to the best of your knowledge. Confident in your understanding of local conditions, as well as the Regent's, I presented the information that you had gathered to the Resident.

The said Resident, in his note of the 11th inst., N° 326, then requested an explanation of the discrepancy between the prices I had submitted and those paid for the construction of a prison in 1853 and 1854.

I passed on that letter to you, of course, and gave you oral instructions to substantiate your original statement, a task I imagined would not be particularly difficult, considering that you could refer to the instructions in my letter to you of the 5th inst., which we discussed in person several times at length.

Thus far, everything had gone straightforwardly and smoothly.

But yesterday you came to my office, armed with the letter from the Resident that I had passed on to you, and began to speak of the difficulty of dealing with its contents satisfactorily. I discerned some reluctance in you to call certain things by their true name, a tendency I have pointed out to you many times before—once, recently, in the presence of the Resident—a tendency I call *halfness*, and which, in conversation between us, has been the subject of many a friendly warning.

Halfness leads nowhere. *Half* good is *no* good. *Half* true is *untrue*.

In return for one's full salary and full rank, after swearing one's oath distinctly and in *full*, one does the *full* measure of one's duty.

If one sometimes requires courage to follow through, one possesses it.

For my part, I would not have the courage to lack such courage. Aside from the dissatisfaction with oneself that results from nonperformance—or half performance—of one's duties, more trouble, and indeed more danger, results from the search for expedient detours—so as to avoid a collision at any price—and from the desire to “finesse” the situation, than one will ever encounter on the straight and narrow path.

Throughout the course of a very significant affair, which is now under consideration by the government, and in which you should have been involved in your official capacity, I have tacitly allowed you to remain neutral, as it were, and have merely alluded to the business with a smile from time to time.

For instance, when I received your recent report on the causes of famine and deprivation among the native population, and I jotted down the comment, “All this may be true, but it is not the *whole* truth, nor the *principal* truth. The root cause lies deeper,” you wholeheartedly agreed, and I did not assert my *right* to insist that you *state* that principal truth.

I had many reasons for my lenience—for one thing, I thought it unfair suddenly to demand of *you* what many others, in your place, would likewise fail to do, or to force

you, all at once, to give up the routine of concealment and faintheartedness, which is not so much *your* fault as that of the superiors to whom you reported in the past. I hoped that eventually I could lead the way, setting an example of how much simpler and easier it is to do the *whole* of one's duty than to do *half*.

Yet now, having had the privilege of serving as your superior for so much longer, and having offered you repeated opportunities to absorb the principles that, if I am not mistaken, will ultimately prevail,¹⁰⁵ I would like you to adopt them; to harness the power you do not lack, but leave unused, so that you may always, to the best of your knowledge, say frankly what must be said; and, in short, to throw off completely your unmanly reluctance to take a firm stand for a good cause.

In other words, what I now expect from you is a simple but *complete* account of what you believe is the reason for the difference between the prices *now* and those in 1853 or 1854.

I sincerely hope that you will not interpret any phrase in this letter as meant to offend you. I trust you know me well enough by now to realize that I say what I mean, no more and no less, and at the risk of repeating myself, I assure you that my remarks have less to do with *you* than with the school that trained you to be a colonial administrator.

Yet this extenuating circumstance would no longer apply if, now that you have worked with me and served the government under my authority for some time, you were to persist in the habits to which I object.

You will have noticed that I forgo the conventional form

of address *The Honorable*; it grated on me. Do the same, and let us show our “honor” at other times and, above all, in other ways than by cluttering up our letters with tiresome titles.

The Assistant Resident of Lebak

The reply to this letter contained charges against some of Havelaar’s predecessors—proof that he was not so wide of the mark when he blamed the Adipati’s misconduct in part on bad examples set in the past.

I have run ahead of events to present this letter, in order to emphasize how little support Havelaar could expect from Controleur Verbrugge as soon as entirely different and weightier matters came up that needed to be divested of euphemisms, given that it was necessary to address this official—who was, without a doubt, a decent man—in such a circuitous manner before he’d so much as give a true statement of the prices of timber, bricks, mortar, and labor. It is clear, then, that Havelaar had to contend not only with the power of those who benefited from such crimes, but also with the diffidence of those who—even though they disapproved of such crimes as much as he did—did not feel called upon, or able, to act with the necessary courage.

Having seen this letter, the reader may be rather less disdainful of the slavish docility of the Javanese complainant who, in the presence of his chief, cravenly withdraws his accusation, however well founded. For considering how much there is to fear, even for a European official—who may, after all, be regarded as somewhat less vulnerable to acts of vengeance—it is not hard to imagine the fate of the poor

villager, far from the provincial capital, who is entirely at the mercy of those he dares to accuse of mistreatment. Is it any wonder that these poor folk, terrified of the consequences of their temerity, seek to avoid or alleviate those consequences through humble submission?

And it wasn't only Controleur Verbrugge who went about his work with a timidity bordering on dereliction of duty. The Jaksa, too, preferred to come to Havelaar's house under cover of night, unaccompanied and unseen. The man responsible for preventing theft, he who was expected to catch thieves on the prowl, skulked around as if he himself were a thief in the night, in fear of capture, sneaking in through the back door, and only after making sure that Havelaar had no visitors who might later point the finger at him for performing his duties.

Was it any wonder that Havelaar had grown sad of heart, and needed Tina more than ever to come into his study and cheer him up when she saw him sitting with his head in his hands?

Yet the greatest obstacle he faced was not the faintheartedness of his staff, nor the cowardice that transformed those who had appealed to him for help into accessories to the crime. No, he would have seen justice done on his own if necessary, with or without assistance—yes; he'd stand up against them all, even if it meant standing up against the very people who needed justice! He knew he had influence over the people, and—if he called on those poor victims of oppression to repeat to the court, in a loud voice, what they had privately whispered to him in the hours of darkness—he knew how his authority could work upon their consciences, and knew that the power of his words could overcome their fear of vengeance by the district chief or regent. He was

therefore untroubled by any concern that the men who had placed themselves under his protection would abandon their own cause. But it was so painful for him to bring charges against the poor old Adipati—that was what held him back! Yet on the other hand, he couldn't very well give in to his reluctance, since the entire population, deprived of the justice that was their perfect right, had an equal claim to his compassion.

His hesitation was not inspired by any fear that he would suffer for his actions. Even though he knew how much the government disliked to see charges brought against a regent, and how much easier it is for some to deprive a European official of his bread than to punish a native chief, he had special reason to believe that at that particular time such a case would be judged on different grounds from those that would ordinarily prevail. True, even without this belief, he'd still have done his duty—all the more willingly, in fact, if he had thought the risk to himself and his loved ones was greater than ever. We have already seen that he was drawn to difficulty, and that he had a penchant for self-sacrifice. Still, he believed that the lure of such a sacrifice was not present in this case, and he feared that—if circumstances ultimately compelled him to wage a serious battle against Injustice—he'd have to forgo the chivalrous pleasure of entering battle as the weaker combatant.

Yes, this he *fear*ed. He assumed that the government was led by a governor-general who would be his ally, and—this was another of his idiosyncrasies—it was that assumption that kept him, *longer* than anything else, from taking severe measures—because he disliked the idea of taking action against injustices at a time when justice, so he thought, was

on the whole faring better than usual. I told you, didn't I, when I described his personality, that despite his keen intellect he was naive?

Let me try to explain how Havelaar had arrived at that assumption.

•

Very few European readers can form an accurate idea of the moral altitude a governor-general must attain, as a human being, if he is not to fall short of his office, and I don't believe I judge too harshly when I say that very few people, perhaps none, are equal to so exalted a task. Without going into all the necessary qualities of heart and mind, let us simply contemplate the vertiginous heights to which such a man is suddenly elevated. Yesterday he was but an ordinary citizen, today he wields power over millions of subjects. The same man who not long ago was one nameless face among many, not standing out in rank or authority, is suddenly, often without warning, raised above a multitude infinitely greater than the small circle that previously rendered him invisible, and I believe I am right in calling that height vertiginous, since it recalls the vertigo of chancing upon the edge of a gaping abyss, or the blindness that strikes when suddenly being delivered from profound darkness into glaring light. Such abrupt transitions are too much for the nerves of the eyes and brain, no matter how robust, to cope with.

If the very fact of being appointed to the highest office of all is usually enough to plant the seeds of ruin, even when the governor-general in question has an exceptional mind and conscience, what can we expect of those whose character,

even before their appointment, was already flawed in many ways? And even if we briefly imagine that the King is always well advised before he signs his royal name on a warrant, declaring his confidence in the “loyalty, diligence, and competencies” of the appointed governor—even if we imagine that the new viceroy really *is* diligent, loyal, and competent—even then the question remains: is that diligence and, above all, that *competence* present to a *degree* so far above *mediocrity* that he can rise to the challenge of his calling?

For the question cannot be whether a newly appointed governor-general, upon first leaving the King’s office in The Hague, already possesses the competence required by his new position . . . that is *impossible!* The expression of faith in his competence can be interpreted only as signifying that in a completely new place of work, at a certain stage, he will learn—in a flash of insight, as it were—what he cannot have learned in The Hague. In other words, he must be a genius, a genius capable of instantly understanding and doing what he couldn’t do or understand before. Such geniuses are rare, even among those in the King’s favor.¹⁰⁶

You will gather, from this talk of geniuses, that I have no wish to voice what could be said about so many high officials. Nor would I care to add pages to this book that would distract from my serious purpose by exposing me to the charge of scandalmongering. I won’t dwell, therefore, on the characteristics of particular individuals. Yet I see no objection to giving a typical medical history of the typical governor-general. First stage: vertigo; flattery-induced intoxication; narcissism; boundless self-confidence; contempt for others, especially for “old hands.” Second stage: exhaustion; fear; dejection; a craving for rest and sleep; overconfidence in the

Council of the Indies; reliance on the General Secretariat;
~~nostalgia for the country house in Holland.~~

The transition from the first to the second stage is marked by dysenteric abdominal complaints, which may in fact be the cause of the transition.

I trust that many people in the Indies will be grateful for this diagnosis. It turns out to be useful in practice, for it shows to a certainty that the patient, who would choke on a gnat in the hyperactive condition of the first stage, can later—after the dysentery!—swallow camels without protest. To state the point more clearly, an official who "accepts gifts, with no thought of personal gain"—for example, a bunch of bananas worth a few coppers—will be expelled in shame and ignominy in the first stage of the illness, but he who has the patience to wait for the second stage may, very calmly and without fear of retribution, take possession of the garden where the bananas grow, and the adjacent gardens as well . . . not to mention the surrounding houses . . . and their contents . . . and this and that and the other, ad libitum¹⁰⁷

May all my readers profit from the foregoing pathologicophilosophical observations, while keeping my advice under their hats, so as not to create too much competition . . .

Damn it all! Why must outrage and sorrow so often wrap themselves in the motley cloak of satire? Damn it, why is a teardrop so hard to understand, if not accompanied by a crooked grin? Or are my own limited talents to blame for my inability to find words to plumb the depths of the festering wound in our public administration, without borrowing my style from *Punch*?

Style . . . yes! The documents before me possess it! A style that bespeaks a person of integrity, a person deserving of a

helping hand! And what good did all that style do poor Havelaar? *He* didn't translate his tears into crooked grins; *he* didn't poke fun; *he* didn't try to impress with garish colors or with jokes worthy of a hawker on a fairground . . . and what good did it do him?

If I could write as he could, I'd write differently.

Style? Have you heard his address to the Chiefs of Lebak?
What good did it do him?

If I could speak as he could, I'd speak differently.

Away with friendly words, away with gentleness, sincerity, clarity, simplicity, feeling! Away with anything that smacks of Horace's "just and resolute man"! Trumpets for me, and the sharp clash of cymbals, and hiss of rockets, and scraping of untuned strings, and here and there a word of truth, smuggled in like contraband under the din of drums and fifes!

Style? *He* had style! He had too great a soul to drown his thoughts in the "I have the pleasures" and "your honorable selfs" and "respectfully offer for your considerations" that formed the chief indulgences of the little world in which he moved. What he wrote affected you as you read; you felt the storm driving those clouds across the sky, and what you heard had none of the tinny clatter of stage thunder. When he lit a fire with his ideas, you could feel the heat, unless you were a born clerk, or a governor-general, or an author of sickening reports on "peaceable peace." And what good did it do him?

So if I wish to be heard—and above all, understood!—I must write differently from Havelaar. But *how*?

You see, reader, I am searching for the answer to that *how*? Which is why my book is such a mixed bag. It's a book of samples: take your pick. Later on I'll give you yellow or blue or red, whatever you desire.

Havelaar had already detected the presence of Governors' Disease in so many leaders—and often in lesser creatures, for there are analogous diseases among residents, controleurs, and supernumeraries, which are to the first as measles are to smallpox, and besides he had suffered from such a disease himself!—as I say, he had observed the whole pattern so many times that he knew the symptoms more or less by heart. He had found the current governor-general to be less stricken by first-stage vertigo than most of the others had been, and therefore concluded that in his case the rest of the disease would also take a different course.

It was for this reason that Havelaar feared being the stronger party when, in the end, he would have to step forward and defend the rights of the people of Lebak.

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

HAVELAAR received a letter from the Regent of Cianjur, who announced that he wished to visit his uncle, the Adipati of Lebak. This news was most unwelcome to Havelaar. He knew that the chiefs of the Priangan regencies tended to make grand displays of wealth, that the Tumenggung of Cianjur wouldn't set out on such a journey without a retinue of many hundreds, and that all those men and horses would need food and accommodation. Yet as much as he would have liked to prevent the visit, he couldn't see any way to do so without offending the Adipati, whose pride would have been deeply hurt if he'd realized the visit had been canceled because of his comparative poverty. And if the visit could not be avoided, it was sure to increase the crushing burden on the population.

It is doubtful that Havelaar's speech had made a lasting impression on the chiefs. On many of them, it certainly had not, nor had he expected it would. Yet just as certainly, the news spread in the villages about the tuan in authority in Rangkasbitung wishing to do justice. So even if his words had lacked the power to dissuade from crime, they had nonetheless given the victims the courage to air their grievances, even if only hesitantly and in secret.

They would come creeping through the ravine after dark, and as Tina sat in her room she was often startled by unexpected noises, and through the open window she would see shadowy figures stealing past... Soon she no longer grew startled, because she knew what it meant when those apparitions haunted the grounds of their house, seeking protection from her Max! Then she would beckon him, and he

would get up and call the complainants into his study. Most of them came from the district of Parangkujang, where the Adipati's son-in-law was the Chief, and although that Chief never failed to claim his share of the ill-gotten gains, it was no secret that his extortion was generally on behalf and at the behest of the Adipati. It was touching to see how much faith those poor souls had in Havelaar's sense of honor, and how entirely they trusted him not to ask them, the next day, to repeat in public what they'd said in his study. For any one of them that would have meant bodily harm, and for many of them, death!

Havelaar took notes on what they told him and then instructed them to return to their villages. He promised that justice would be done if they didn't obstruct the process, or flee, as most of them intended to do. He usually went to the scene of the injustice soon afterwards—in fact, he often went there to investigate, usually by night, even before the complainant arrived back home. This took him to villages in that vast regency that were twenty hours away from Rangkasbitung, and neither the Adipati nor even Controleur Verbrugge knew that he had left the capital. His intention was to protect the complainants from the possibility of retribution and also to spare the Adipati the embarrassment of a public investigation, which under Havelaar's authority was certain not to end with the withdrawal of the charges, as it would have in the past. He still clung to the hope that the chiefs would abandon the dangerous path they had been following for so long, in which case he would gladly claim compensation on behalf of the victims, insofar as their losses could still be made good.

But whenever he spoke yet again to the Adipati, he came

away with the distinct impression that the promises of betterment were empty, and he was sorely troubled by the failure of his efforts.

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Let us leave him to his sorrows and difficult labors for a while, to tell the reader the tale of Saijah, who lived in the Javanese désa of Badur. I have taken the names of the man and the village from Havelaar's notes.¹⁰⁸ It will be a tale of extortion and robbery, and if you consider a fiction like this one—not just the details, but the main point—inadmissible as evidence, I assure you that I can provide the names of thirty-two people, in the district of Parangkujang alone, from whom thirty-six water buffalo were taken for the Adipati's use. Or more precisely, I can list the names of the thirty-two people from that district who in one month's time had the courage to state their grievances and whose grievances Havelaar investigated and judged well founded.

There are five such districts in the regency of Lebak . . .

If the reader chooses to suppose that the number of seized buffaloes was smaller in the regions that did not have the honor of being ruled over by a son-in-law of the Adipati, I'll concede the point, though the question remains: doesn't the brazenness of other chiefs rest on grounds every bit as firm as powerful relatives? For example, the District Chief of Cilangkahan on the southern coast may not have had a dreaded father-in-law, but he knew how difficult it would be for the poor locals to bring charges against him: they would have to travel *forty* to *sixty* miles before they could hide at nightfall in the ravine next to Havelaar's house. And if you also

think of the many who set off on that journey, never to reach the house . . . and the many who never left their villages, scared into silence by personal experience or because they had witnessed the fate of those who complained, then I believe it would be wrong to conclude that multiplying the number of stolen buffaloes in one district by *five* would yield too high a figure for the livestock stolen each month in *five* districts to meet the demands of the court of the Regent of Lebak, the Adipati.

And it wasn't only buffaloes that were stolen, nor was buffalo theft the most serious crime. In the Indies, where corvée labor is still mandated by law, it takes less effrontery to summon people unlawfully to work without pay than it does to confiscate their property. It is easier to make the people believe that the government needs their labor but does not see fit to pay for it than to demand that they turn over their buffaloes for nothing. And even if the timid Javanese *dared* to look into whether the unpaid service demanded of them was lawful, it would be impossible to tell, since no one ever knows how many other people are in the same position, so no one can calculate whether this number is ten—or why not fifty?—times the statutory limit. And when the more dangerous, more readily detected crime of buffalo theft is committed so brazenly, what are we to think of the abuses that are easier to perpetrate, with less risk of discovery?¹⁰⁹

I said that I would proceed to the story of Saijah, the Javanese. First, however, I must make a digression of the type that can scarcely be avoided when describing circumstances utterly foreign to the reader. This in turn will lead me to point out one of the obstacles that make it so extraordinarily difficult for people outside the Indies to gain an accurate

impression of how things work there.

I have spoken repeatedly of the Javanese, and however natural this may seem to a European reader, my use of the term will nonetheless have struck anyone familiar with Java as inappropriate. The western regions of Banten, Batavia, Priangan, Karawang, and part of Cirebon—known collectively as the Sunda lands—are seen as essentially separate from Java, and leaving aside for now the foreigners from overseas who live there, the indigenous population is certainly quite distinct from that of central Java and what is known as the Eastern Salient. Their mode of dress, character, and language differ so thoroughly from those further east that the difference between a Sundanese or *orang gunung* and a true Javanese is greater than that between Englishman and a Dutchman.¹¹⁰ It is such differences that often underlie disagreements about Indies affairs. For when you realize that Java alone is so sharply divided into two dissimilar parts, without even considering their many subparts, you can see how great the difference must be between tribes still farther removed from each other and separated by the sea. If all you know of the Dutch East Indies is Java, you can no more form an accurate image of the Malays, the Amboinese, the Bataks, the Alfuros, the Timorese, the Dayaks, the Bugis, or the Makassarese than those who have never left Europe, and to anyone who has had a chance to observe the differences between these groups it is often amusing to hear the conversations—and both entertaining and distressing to read the speeches!—of people who have picked up their knowledge of Indies affairs in Batavia or Buitenzorg. I have often been taken aback by the temerity with which an ex-governor-general, say, attempts to lend weight to his words in

Parliament by pretending to draw on local knowledge and experience. I greatly admire expertise acquired through serious study in your library, and I have often been astonished by the comprehensive knowledge of Indies affairs shown by people who have never set foot on the soil of the Indies. If ever an ex-governor-general shows that he has absorbed such knowledge in *that* way, he should be shown the respect owed to long years of painstaking and productive labor. Still greater respect would be due to such a man than to a scholar who had fewer difficulties to overcome because, remaining at a great distance *without* direct observation, he ran less risk of falling into the errors that result from *faulty* observation, as the ex-governor-general unmistakably did.

I said I was taken aback by the temerity certain people show in debates on Indies affairs. They must realize, after all, that their words reach not only those who think spending a few years in Buitenzorg is enough to know all about Indies affairs. Surely they must be aware that those words are read by the very people who witnessed their ineptitude in the Indies, and who are as astonished as I am by the effrontery with which a person who so very recently tried to bury his incompetence under the high rank conferred upon him by the King now suddenly talks as though he truly understood the matters at hand.

Time after time, one hears complaints of unqualified participation in public debate. Time after time, one school of thought or another in Colonial Administration is challenged by denying the competence of its leading advocate, and it may not be wholly without interest to conduct a serious investigation of the characteristics that qualify a person to . . . judge qualifications. Important questions are usually assessed

on the basis not of the matter at hand, but of the value ascribed to the opinions of whoever is speaking on the topic, and—since this is usually the person who passes for an expert, and preferably someone “who held a very high office in the Indies”—the outcome of any vote usually reflects the misapprehensions that seem to be acquired along with those “high offices.” If this is true even when the influence of such expertise is exerted by a mere member of Parliament, how much greater the predisposition to misjudgment must be when such influence is compounded by the trust of the King, who gave in to the pressure to place just such an expert in charge of his Ministry of Colonies.

It is a curious phenomenon—perhaps stemming from a kind of lethargic failure to take the trouble to form a personal opinion—how easily trust is invested in people who manage to project an air of superior knowledge, as long as this knowledge can only be gleaned from sources not generally accessible. This may be because one’s self-esteem is less injured by acknowledging that sort of superiority than it would be if one had access to the same resources, in which case a degree of rivalry might ensue. A member of Parliament has no trouble deferring to someone else’s views as long as the person opposing him can be presumed to have more knowledge of the question than he has, and as long as this supposedly greater knowledge can be accounted for, not by personal superiority—which would be harder to acknowledge—but entirely by the special circumstances in which the opponent in question happens to have found himself.

And without speaking of those “who held such *high offices* in the Indies,” it’s certainly strange to see how often value is attached to the opinions of people who can show absolutely

nothing to justify such value, except the “recollection of so many years spent in those parts.” This is especially odd considering that those who take this sort of argument seriously would not be so quick to accept any statements made to them about, for instance, the economy of the Dutch state, by someone claiming to have spent forty or fifty years in the Netherlands. There are people who have spent almost that much time in the Dutch East Indies without having any dealings whatsoever with either the general population or the native chiefs, and sad to say, the Council of the Indies very often consists entirely or largely of such people—in fact, the King has even been induced to sign appointments to the office of governor-general for persons who were experts of *this stamp*.¹¹¹

When I said that a belief in the *competence* of a newly appointed governor-general should be seen as entailing a belief in his *genius*, in no way did I mean to recommend the appointment of geniuses. Aside from the objection that such an important office should not be left vacant for long, there is another reason to oppose this idea. A genius would be unable to work under the authority of the Ministry of Colonies, and would therefore be unfit, as geniuses often are, to serve as governor-general.

It might be a good thing if the main pitfalls, which I have described in terms of a medical history, drew the attention of those charged with selecting new governors-general. Besides insisting, as a prerequisite, that all eligible candidates must be of sound moral character and possess intellectual faculties that will more or less enable them to learn what they must know, I also consider it essential to have at least some justified confidence in their ability to avoid the usual arrogant

presumptuousness of the beginner and, above all, to escape the usual apathetic narcolepsy in the latter years of their term in office. I have pointed out that Havelaar, in times of difficulty, believed he could rely on the Governor-General's assistance, and I added that this opinion was naive. The Governor-General was looking forward to the arrival of his successor; a quiet life in the Netherlands was just around the corner!

We shall see what impact this narcoleptic tendency had on the regency of Lebak, on Havelaar, and on Saijah the Javanese, whose monotonous tale—just one of many such tales!—I will now relate.

Yes, monotonous it will be! As monotonous as the tale of the industrious ant having to drag her contribution to the winter stores over a clod of earth—a mountain to her—that blocks the way to the storehouse. Time after time, she tumbles down with her load. Time after time, she tries anew to gain a firm foothold, at last, on that pebble at the top—the boulder on the mountain's lofty summit. But between her and that summit is a chasm she must traverse, a rift too deep for a thousand ants to fill. So she, with scarcely the strength to bear her load onward over level ground—a load many times heavier than herself—must hoist it up, and keep her footing on an unstable surface. She must maintain her balance as she stands, clutching her burden between her forelegs. She must hurl it upwards and to one side, so that it lands on the ledge jutting from the cliff. She sways, staggers, starts, stumbles . . . tries to cling to the half-uprooted tree whose crown points into the depths—a blade of grass!—but fails to find the purchase she seeks: the tree swings back—the blade slips from beneath her—and the painstaking wretch falls into the depths with her load. There she lies motionless for a moment, for a whole

second . . . a long time in the life of an ant. Is she dazed from her fall? Or has she conceded, with some regret, that all her effort was in vain? But no, she doesn't give up. Once more she hoists her load, and once more she drags it up the mountain, only to plunge again, and yet again, into the depths.

Such is the monotony of my story. But I won't speak of ants, whose joy and pain elude observation by our crude senses. I'll tell of people, beings of like passions with us. True, those who shrink from tender emotion and tiresome compassion will say that these people are yellow, or brown—many call them black—and the difference in color will be reason enough for them to avert their eyes from the misery, or at least, if they do gaze down on it, to gaze down unmoved.

So my story is addressed only to readers capable of believing that there are hearts beating under that dark skin, and that it might just be possible for those blessed with paleness—and the concomitant advantages of civilization, magnanimity, knowledge of God and commerce, virtue, etc.—to use those pale qualities in a different manner than has thus far been experienced by those not as blessed in skin color and excellence of soul.

But my confidence in your compassion for the Javanese does not go so far that, if I describe how the last buffalo was stolen from the *kendang*,¹¹² in broad daylight, without scruple, under the protection of the Dutch authorities . . . how, as the animal was driven off, its owner followed with his crying children . . . how he sat on the steps of the robber's house, speechless and listless and sunk in sorrow . . . how he was driven away with jeers and insults, with threats of caning and the block-and-chain . . . you see, I don't demand—nor do I expect, O Dutch readers!—you to be as moved as you would

be if I were describing the fate of a Dutch farmer deprived of his cow. I'm not asking for a single teardrop when I describe the tears running down those dark faces, nor for righteous anger when I speak of the victims' despair. No more do I expect you to rise up and go to the King with my book in your hand, and say, "Behold, O King, what has come to pass in *your* Realm, your glorious Realm of Insulindia!"

No, no, no, I expect none of that! All the suffering closer to home lays so much claim to your feelings that you can't spare equal emotion for people in faraway lands! Aren't your nerves stretched to their limit by the distressing need to elect a new member of Parliament? Isn't your tormented soul torn between the world-renowned accomplishments of Nonentity A and Nobody B? And don't you need your precious tears for more serious purposes than . . . but what more need I say? Wasn't it a sluggish day on the Exchange yesterday, and didn't a slight oversupply threaten to depress the coffee market?

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"For heaven's sake, don't write such silly nonsense to your father, Stern!" I said, and my tone may have been a bit harsh, because I can't abide untruth; that has always been a firm principle of mine. The very same evening, I wrote to the elder Stern to tell him to hurry up with his orders and, most of all, not to be led astray by false reports, because coffee is booming.

The reader will appreciate what I have endured while listening to these latest chapters. I found a game of peg solitaire in the playroom, and I'll bring that along to our next get-together. Well, wasn't I right when I said Shawlman's

parcel had driven them all out of their minds? Would a person ever guess that behind all of Stern's scribblings—and Frits has a hand in it too, that's for certain!—there are young men brought up in a respectable household? What are these ridiculous rants about a disease that manifests itself as the desire for a house in the country? Is that a jab at me? Am I not to retire to Driebergen when Frits becomes a broker? And what sort of person brings up abdominal complaints in the presence of ladies and young girls? It's a firm principle of mine always to maintain my composure—I consider it useful in business—but I must admit I often found it very difficult with all the balderdash Stern was reading to us. What on earth is he after? Where will this end? When will we finally come to something solid? What do I care if this Havelaar person keeps his garden tidy, or whether people come into his house the front or back way? At Busselinck & Waterman you have to go down a narrow alley next to an oil warehouse, which is always very dirty. And then that twaddle about buffaloes! Why do those blacks need buffaloes, anyway? I've never had a buffalo, and look how contented I am. There are always complainers. And as for all the swipes at forced labor, it's obvious he didn't attend Pastor Waffler's sermon. Otherwise he would know how useful that labor is in expanding God's kingdom. True, Stern *is* a Lutheran.

To be sure, if I'd guessed *how* he would go about writing this book, which is supposed to be of such importance to all coffee brokers and everybody else, I'd have preferred to do the job myself. But he has the support of the Rosemeyers, who are in sugar, and that's what makes him so bold. I told him frankly—for I speak my mind in these matters—that we could do without this story of Saijah, but Louise Rosemeyer up and

turned on me. Stern had apparently told her there would be love in it, and girls like her adore that sort of thing. Now, I wouldn't have let that stop me, but then the Rosemeyers said how eager they were to meet Stern's father. Their hope, of course, is that the father will pave their way to the uncle, who's also in sugar. If I take too strong a stand in favor of common sense and against young Stern, it will look as if I mean to cut them off from him, which is the last thing I want, because they're in sugar.

I can't begin to fathom what Stern means to accomplish with his ink slinging. There are always malcontents, and when he has so many good things to be grateful for here in Holland—this very week my wife made him chamomile tea—is it right and proper for him to mock the government? Does he hope to fuel the flames of public discontent? Does *he* wish to become governor-general? He is conceited enough . . . to have that *wish*, I mean. I asked him about it two days ago, and told him man to man that his Dutch was still very poor. "Oh, that's neither here nor there," he replied. "Apparently very few of the governor-generals ever sent out there have had any knowledge of the local language." Now, what am I supposed to do with a wiseacre like that? He doesn't have the least respect for my practical experience. Earlier this week, when I reminded him that I've been a broker for seventeen whole years and on the Exchange for twenty, he brought up Busselinck & Waterman, who've been brokers for eighteen years, "and therefore have one more year of practical experience." What could I say to that? For I must acknowledge, since I love the truth, that Busselinck & Waterman know next to nothing about business, and are cheats.

Marie is just as mixed-up. Can you imagine, earlier this week

—when it was her turn to read aloud at breakfast, and we came to the story of Lot—she suddenly stopped and refused to go on reading. My wife, who sets as much store by religion as I do, tried gently to persuade her to be obedient, for such willfulness is unbecoming in a modest young girl. All in vain! Then it was my duty as her father to give her a stern talking-to, because her willfulness was spoiling the edifying tone of our breakfast, and that always takes its toll on the rest of the day. But nothing helped; she even went so far as to say she'd rather be struck dead than go on reading. I punished her with three days' detention in her room on bread and coffee, and I hope it will do her some good. To make this punishment conducive to her moral improvement, I ordered her to copy out the chapter she'd refused to read, ten times. I was especially severe because I can see she's been getting ideas—maybe from Stern, I don't know—that pose a threat—or so I fear—to morality, by which my wife and I set so much store. For one thing, I've heard her singing a French tune—by Béranger, I believe—about the sad fate of a poor old beggar woman who sang in a theater in her youth,* and yesterday she came to breakfast without a corset—Marie did, I mean. That's not what I call decent.

I also have to admit that the prayer meeting hasn't done Frits much good. I was pretty well satisfied with how he sat still in church. He didn't move a muscle or look away from the pastor for an instant. But then I heard that Betsy Rosemeyer had been sitting right next to the pulpit. I didn't say anything because it doesn't do to be overly strict with youngsters, and the Rosemeyeers are a respectable firm. Their eldest daughter—who married Bruggeman, a druggist—carried a nice little dowry, so my opinion is that this sort of thing keeps Frits away

from the Westermarkt, which pleases me no end, because I set so much store by morality.

But all the same, it frustrates me to see Frits hardening his heart like Pharaoh, who wasn't as much to blame because he had no father to guide him so persistently in the path of righteousness—after all, the Scriptures don't say anything about Pharaoh Senior. Pastor Waffler complains that he's full of himself—Frits, I mean. The boy apparently made some smart remark in Sunday school—another thing he learned from Shawlman's parcel!—which drove kindly old Waffler into a rage. It's sad to see how that worthy man, who often takes coffee with us, keeps trying to appeal to Frits's better nature, and how time and again that insolent boy comes up with new questions that show just how hardheaded he is . . . and it all comes straight out of Shawlman's damned parcel! With tears of emotion on his cheeks, the zealous servant of the Gospel tries to persuade him to renounce the wisdom of men and be inducted into the mysteries of God's wisdom. He pleads with the boy, softly and tenderly, not to refuse the bread of eternal life and fall into the clutches of Satan, who dwells with his angels in the fire prepared for him unto all eternity. "Oh," he said yesterday—Waffler, that is—"oh, my young friend, won't you open your eyes and ears to hear and see what the Lord has ordained that you should see and hear from my lips. Hearken to the testimony of the saints who died for the true religion! See Saint Stephen as he sinks beneath the hail of stones! See how his eyes are raised to heaven, how the psalms still roll from his tongue . . ."

"I'd have thrown those stones back at them instead!" Frits replied. Reader, what am I to do with that boy?

After a moment, Waffler made a fresh start, for he is a most

zealous servant and never ceases from his labors. "Oh," he said, "my young friend, won't you open . . ." etc.—starting out as he had the last time. "But," he went on, "how can you remain so hard-hearted when you consider what will become of you once you are set among the goats on the left . . ."

At this point the cheeky fellow burst out laughing—Frits, I mean—and Marie started laughing too. I even thought I discerned something resembling a smile on the face of my wife. But then I came to Waffler's assistance, punishing Frits with a fine from his money box, to be sent to the Missionary Society.

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Oh, reader, all this pains me deeply. And in the midst of such suffering, how could I find amusement in tales of buffaloes—Frits says "buffalo"—and Javanese? What is a buffalo, compared to Frits's immortal soul? What do I care about the affairs of those faraway people, when I fear that Frits will ruin my business with his unbelief, and that he'll never make a sound broker? For as Waffler himself has said, God ordains everything so that righteousness leads to riches. "Look around you," he said, "isn't there a lot of wealth here in the Netherlands? That's thanks to the true religion. Isn't France rife with murder nowadays? That's because they're Roman Catholics. Aren't the Javanese poor? That's because they're heathens. The longer the Dutch people associate with the Javanese, the more wealth will come our way, and the more poverty theirs. That's God's will!"

I am impressed by Waffler's insight into business. For it's true that I, who am a stickler for religion, see my business flourish year in, year out, while Busselinck & Waterman, a godless firm, will remain cheats all their lives. Likewise, the Rosemeyers, who are in sugar and have a Catholic maid,

recently had to settle for 27 percent of the estate of a ruined Jew. The more I reflect, the more progress I make in finding out God's unsearchable ways. The latest figures show another thirty million netted on the sale of products supplied by the heathens, and that's not even counting my own profits, or those of the many others who make a living in this business. Isn't it just as if the Lord were saying, "Here's thirty million as a reward for your faith"? Isn't it obvious this is the hand of God, making the sinners work that the righteous may prosper? Isn't this a sign to follow the straight and narrow? To keep up full production over there and persevere in the true religion here? "Pray and work"—doesn't that mean that we must pray, and have the work done by the black folk who don't know the Lord's Prayer?

Oh, how right Waffler is to say God's yoke is easy! How light the burden is made for all who believe! I'm still in my forties, but I could hang up my hat if I wished, and retire to Driebergen, and meanwhile, just look what becomes of those who forsake the Lord. Yesterday I saw Shawlman with his wife and little boy. They looked like specters. He is pale as death, his eyes bulging and his cheeks hollow. His shoulders are stooped, even though he's younger than I am. She, too, was very shabbily dressed and seemed to have been crying again. Now, I'd figured out right away that she was a malcontent by nature, because I can read a person's character at a glance—all thanks to practical experience. She was wearing a light coat of black silk, even though it was chilly out. No sign of a hoop skirt. Her thin dress hung slack over her knees, and the hem was frayed. He didn't even have his shawl on, and seemed to be dressed for the summer. Yet he still had a kind of pride: he gave alms to a poor woman sitting on the lock—Frits says

"bridge," but if it's made of stone and isn't a drawbridge, I call it a lock—and when you have so little, it's sinful to give it away. Besides, I never hand out money in the street—it's a principle of mine—because whenever I see a poor person I say to myself, "Who knows, it may be their own fault, and I mustn't encourage wrongdoing." On Sundays I give twice: once for the poor, and once for the church. That's how it's meant to be! I don't know whether Shawlman saw me, but I hurried by, and looked up to heaven, and thought about the righteousness of God, who surely wouldn't let him roam around town without a winter coat if he'd taken better care and not been so lazy, sickly, and pedantic.

Now, as for my book, I must beg the reader's pardon for Stern's unforgivable abuse of our contract. I must admit that I dread our next get-together and that love story of Saijah. The reader is already aware of my healthful views on love . . . recall, if you will, my critique of that outing to the Ganges. I can well imagine that young girls find such things charming, but I fail to see how men of riper years can listen to such rubbish without feeling sick to their stomach. No doubt at the next get-together I'll master the three-peg variation on my game of solitaire.

I'll try to not to hear one word about that Saijah fellow, and I hope the man will get himself married fast, at least if he's the hero of the love story. It was rather good of Stern to give advance warning that the tale will be monotonous. As soon as he goes on to something else, I'll start listening again. But all the talk of the evils of the administration bores me almost as much as love stories. It's as clear as day that Stern is young and has little practical experience. To judge matters wisely, one has to see them at firsthand. When I got married I went to

The Hague myself, and my wife and I visited the Mauritshuis. I encountered all classes of society there, for I saw the Minister of Finance ride past, and we bought flannel together on Veenestraat—my wife and I, I mean—and nowhere did I see the least hint of dissatisfaction with the powers that be. The woman in the shop looked well off and contented enough, so when, back in 1848, some people tried to make us believe that not everything in The Hague was as it should be, I spoke my mind about that discontent at one of our get-togethers. And I was taken seriously, because everyone knew I was speaking from practical experience. During the trip home in the stagecoach, the conductor trumpeted that old tune “Take Joy,”[†] and I’m sure he wouldn’t have done that if so many things were going wrong. That’s how closely I’ve always paid attention to everything, so I knew right away what to think of all that grousing in 1848.

Across the street from us lives an old maid whose nephew runs a *toko* in the Orient—that’s what they call a shop out there. So if everything were going as badly as Stern makes out, she’d know about it, yet she seems very satisfied with the state of affairs, for I never hear her complain. On the contrary, she says her nephew lives on an estate out there and is a member of the consistory, and that he sent her a peacock-feather cigar case he’d made himself, out of bamboo. Surely this goes to show how baseless those complaints about misgovernment must be? It also demonstrates that for those who take care, there is still money to be made in those parts, and Mr. Shawlman must already have been lazy, sickly, and pedantic during his time there, because otherwise he wouldn’t be so poor that he goes around Amsterdam without a winter coat. And the nephew of the lady across the street isn’t the

only one who's made his fortune in the Orient. At Café Polen I see all sorts of people who've been there and now cut a very fine figure indeed. But it hardly need be said—business must be attended to, whether here or there. There are no pots of gold for the taking in Java; you have to work! And those who will not are poor, and stay poor; that's only natural.

*The French poet Pierre-Jean de Béranger (1780–1857) was popular throughout Europe for his songs, which often had political themes and a satirical tone. He is mentioned in the fourth chapter as the subject of one of Multatuli's essays. "*La pauvre femme*" was about an old, blind beggar woman who in her youth had been a celebrated singer and done great acts of charity.

†The Dutch title "*Schep vreugd'*" refers to the well-known proverb "*Schep vreugd' in 't leven*" ("Take joy in life"). This may have been a version of the German round "*Freut euch des Lebens*" by the Swiss poet J. M. Usteri.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

SAIJAH'S father had a buffalo, with which he worked his field. When this buffalo was taken from him by the Chief of the Parangkujang district, he was very sad and didn't speak a word for many days. For the plowing season was approaching, and if the rice field wasn't plowed in time it would be too late for sowing, and in the end there would be no paddy to cut and keep in storage.¹¹⁴

For readers familiar with Java but not Banten, I should explain that there is individual ownership of land in this residency, unlike elsewhere.¹¹⁵

Now, Saijah's father was very distressed. For he feared that his wife would lack rice, and so would Saijah—who was still a boy—and Saijah's little brothers and sisters. Besides, the District Chief would report Saijah's father to the Assistant Resident if he fell behind with his land tax, because that is punishable by law.

Then Saijah's father took a kris that was an heirloom from *his* father. It wasn't much to look at, but the sheath had bands of silver and was tipped with silver plate. He sold this dagger to a Chinese man who lived in the local capital and came home with twenty-four guilders, which he used to buy another buffalo.

Saijah, who was then about seven years old, soon struck up a friendship with the new buffalo. I don't use the word "friendship" lightly: it's touching to see how attached the Javanese buffalo becomes to the little boy who looks after him. The strong animal bows its head obediently to the right or the left or the ground at the slightest pressure from the finger of

the child he knows, and understands, and has grown up with.

This kind of friendship soon flourished between Saijah and their new guest, and when the boy urged on the animal in his childish voice, he seemed to lend even greater strength to its powerful shoulders as it broke up the heavy clay soil, marking its progress with deep, sharp furrows. The buffalo turned obediently when it reached the edge of the field and never missed an inch of soil when it turned to plow the next furrow, which always ran straight alongside the last, as if the sawah were a garden plot raked by a giant.

The neighboring sawahs belonged to Adinda's father, whose daughter was promised to Saijah. And when Adinda's brothers came to the boundary between the fields just as Saijah was at work there with his plow, they would call out to each other cheerfully, and each would boast of the strength and obedience of his own buffalo. But I believe Saijah's was the best, maybe because its master knew better than the others how to speak to it. A buffalo responds very well when spoken to properly.

Saijah was nine years old and Adinda six by the time this buffalo was taken from Saijah's father by the District Chief of Parangkujang.

Saijah's father, who was very poor, then sold his two silver *kelambu* hooks, an heirloom from his wife's parents, to a Chinese man for eighteen guilders. And with that money he bought a new buffalo.

But Saijah was sad, for he'd heard from Adinda's little brothers that the last buffalo had been driven off to the local capital, and he'd asked his father whether he'd seen the animal when he went into town to sell the silver curtain hooks. Saijah's father had made no reply. So Saijah feared that his

buffalo had been slaughtered, like the others that the Chief had taken from the people.

And Saijah often wept at the thought of the poor buffalo that, for two years, had been his closest friend. And for a long time he couldn't eat, because his throat would tighten when he tried to swallow.

Remember, Saijah was a child.

The new buffalo got to know Saijah and soon replaced the old one in the child's affections—too soon, actually. Unfortunately, the impressions on our heart, like marks in wax, are all too easy to smooth away and replace with new writing. Be that as it may, the new buffalo wasn't as strong as the old one, and the old yoke was too wide for its shoulders—but the poor animal was as obedient as its slaughtered predecessor, and although Saijah could no longer boast of his buffalo's strength when he ran into Adinda's little brothers at the boundary, he could still say that no other buffalo matched his own for good will. And if the furrows weren't as straight as they'd been, or if some clods of earth were left unbroken, he was happy to break them up with his own hoe as best he could. Besides, no other buffalo had any *user-useran* like his. The priest himself had said that there was good fortune in the pattern of the whorls of hair on its hindquarters.

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One day, in the field, Saijah called out in vain to his buffalo to hurry up. The animal stood stock-still. Saijah, frustrated by its serious and uncharacteristic defiance, couldn't help shouting an insult: "A*** s***!"* Anyone who has spent time in the Indies will know what I mean. And anyone who hasn't can do

without an explanation of a coarse expression.

But Saijah didn't mean any harm. He said it only because he'd so often heard other people say it when they were upset with their buffaloes. Still, he might as well never have said it, because it did no good; his buffalo would not budge. It shook its head as if to throw off the yoke; you could see its breath rising from its nostrils; it snorted, shuddered, trembled; there was fear in its blue eyes; and it drew back its upper lip, baring its gums . . .

"Flee, flee," Adinda's little brothers suddenly shouted. "Flee, Saijah! There's a tiger!"

And they all unyoked their buffaloes, vaulted onto the animals' broad backs, and galloped away across sawahs, over *galangans*, through mud, brushwood, forest, and *alang-alang*, past roads and fields. And when they arrived, panting and sweating, in the village of Badur, Saijah was not among them.

For when Saijah had unyoked his buffalo and mounted it so he could flee with the others, the animal had made an unexpected leap, throwing him off balance and sending him hurtling to the ground. The tiger was very close by . . .

Saijah's buffalo, driven by its own momentum, bounded past the place where its young master was waiting to die. But it was only its momentum, and not its will, that sent the animal further than Saijah. No sooner had it overcome the force that governs all matter, even after the original impulse has ceased, than it turned back, settling its hulking body on its hulking legs like a roof over the child and turning its horned head to the attacker. The tiger pounced . . . but would never pounce again. The buffalo caught it on its horns, losing only a little flesh that was clawed from its neck. The tiger fell to the ground, its belly torn open, and Saijah was saved. There really

was good fortune in that buffalo's user-useran!

When this buffalo was taken from Saijah's father and slaughtered . . . (I told you, reader: my story is monotonous) . . . when this buffalo was slaughtered, Saijah was twelve years old, and Adinda was weaving sarongs and batiking them with finely wrought *kepalas*. She already had thoughts of her own to express with her pot of wax, and she drew sadness on her cloth, for she'd seen Saijah looking very mournful.[†]

Saijah's father was sad, too, but his mother most of all. After all, it was she who had tended to the wounded neck of the loyal beast that had brought her child home unharmed—after Adinda's brothers had told her about Saijah being carried off by the tiger. She'd stared at that wound so often, imagining how deeply the claw that had dug into the buffalo's tough sinews would have sunk into her child's tender flesh, and every time she put a fresh poultice of herbs on the wound, she stroked the good and loyal buffalo and said a few kind words, so that it would know how grateful a mother can be! She hoped the buffalo had understood her, for then it would also have understood her tears later on, when it was led off to be slaughtered, and known that it wasn't Saijah's mother who ordered its slaughter.

Not long after that, Saijah's father fled the district. He was terrified of the punishment he would face for not paying his land tax, and he had no other heirlooms with which to buy a new buffalo, since his parents, having spent all their lives in Parangkujang, had not had much to leave him. His wife's parents, too, had always lived in that district. After losing the last buffalo, he made ends meet for a few years with hired plow animals. But that is very thankless labor, and discouraging, too, for a man who has always owned his own

buffalo. Saijah's mother died of sorrow, and then, in a fit of despair, his father left Lebak and Banten to look for work around Buitenzorg. He was caned as punishment for leaving Lebak without a pass and brought back to Badur by the police. There he was thrown in prison, because he was thought to be insane—which wouldn't have been so hard to understand—and because it was feared that in a moment of *mata gelap* he might run amok or make some other kind of trouble. But he wasn't in prison for long, as soon afterwards he died.

I don't know what became of Saijah's younger brothers and sisters. Their little house in Badur stood empty for a while, and soon collapsed, because it was made entirely of bamboo and roofed with atap. Dust and debris settled on the place of all that suffering. There are many such places in Lebak.

Saijah was already fifteen years old when his father left for Buitenzorg. He didn't go with him, because he had bigger plans. He'd been told there were many, many gentlemen in Batavia who rode about in bandies, so he might be able to find work as a handyman, a job typically given to a young man not yet fully grown, so that his weight at the back of the two-wheeled carriage won't upset the balance. He'd been assured that well-behaved young men could earn a great deal in this job. Maybe he could even save enough, in three years, to buy two buffaloes. Excited by this prospect, he went to Adinda with a spring in his step like a man with big business in the offing, and shared his plans with her.

"Just think," he said, "when I return we'll be old enough to get married, and we'll have two buffaloes!"

"Very good, Saijah! I'd love to marry you when you return. I'll spend the whole time spinning, and weaving sarongs and *slendangs*, and batiking, and doing all sorts of useful things."

"Oh, I know you will, Adinda! But . . . what if I find you married?"

"Come now, Saijah, you know I won't marry anyone else. My father promised me to your father."

"But how do you feel about it?"

"I'll marry you, you can be sure of that!"

"When I return, I'll call out from a distance . . ."

"Who will hear you, if we're pounding rice in the village?"

"That's true. But Adinda . . . Oh, yes, here's a better idea. Wait for me by the *jati* wood, under the *ketapang* tree where you gave me the jasmine flower."

"But Saijah, how will I know when to go to the *ketapang* tree to wait for you?"

Saijah thought for a moment and said, "Count the moons. I'll be away for three times twelve moons . . . not counting this one. Adinda, carve a notch in your rice block at each new moon. When you've carved three times twelve notches, I'll arrive the next day, under the *ketapang*. Do you promise to be there?"

"Yes, Saijah! I'll be waiting under the *ketapang* by the *jati* wood when you return."

So Saijah tore a strip from his threadbare blue headcloth and gave it to Adinda to keep as a pledge. And then he left her and Badur.

He walked for many days. He passed Rangkasbitung, which wasn't yet the capital of Lebak, and Warunggunung, where the Assistant Resident was living at the time, and the next day he saw Pandeglang spread out before him as if set within a garden. After another day, he arrived in Serang and was amazed by the grandeur of the place, with its many brick

houses and red-tiled roofs. Saijah had never seen anything like it. He rested there for a day, because he was weary, but in the cool of the night resumed his journey, and the next day he reached Tangerang before the shadow of his hat reached his lips, even though he was wearing the large one his father had left him.

In Tangerang he bathed in the river near the ferry landing and rested in the home of a friend of his father's, who showed him how to weave straw hats[‡] just like the ones from Manila.¹¹⁶ He stayed there for a day to learn this craft, because he thought he might be able to earn a little money with it later if he was unsuccessful in Batavia. The next day, as the cool evening approached, he thanked his host profusely and went on his way again.

As soon as it was pitch-black, so that no one could see, he took out the leaf in which he'd wrapped the jasmine flower Adinda had given him under the ketapang tree. He was sad that he wouldn't see her for such a long time. The first day, and the second, he'd been less keenly aware of how alone he was, because his entire soul was caught up in his great plan of earning the price of two buffaloes, since his father had never had more than one. Besides, he'd been too preoccupied with the thought of seeing Adinda again to leave much room for sorrow at parting with her. He'd said farewell in a state of hopeful overexcitement, his mind leaping ahead to his ultimate reunion with her under the ketapang. His heart had been so full of the prospect of that reunion that, as he left Badur and passed that tree, he'd felt cheerful in a way, as though the thirty-six moons separating him from that moment had already passed. He'd felt as if he could simply turn around, as if already coming home from his journey, and

find Adinda waiting for him under that tree.

But the further he went from Badur, and the more he was struck by the terrible length of each day, the more he began to feel the span of the thirty-six moons ahead of him. There was something in his soul that slowed his pace. He felt sorrow in his knees, and even if it wasn't despair that came over him then, it was a kind of wistfulness that's not far removed from despair. He considered going back, but what would Adinda say about such a faint heart?

So he walked on, though not as quickly as on the first day. He held the jasmine in his hand and often pressed it to his chest. He'd grown much older in those three days and couldn't imagine how he'd gone about his former life so calmly, when Adinda was so close by and he could see her whenever and for as long as he wished. He certainly couldn't be calm now, expecting to see her before him at any minute . . . nor could he imagine why, after they parted, he hadn't gone back for one last look at her. And he recalled how, not long before, he'd quarreled with her about the string she'd spun for her brothers' kite, which had snapped—due to a flaw in her handiwork, he'd believed—and which led to them losing a wager with the children of Cipurut. Now he wondered how he could possibly have been angry with Adinda about such a thing. Even if she really had made a mistake when spinning the string, and even if Badur had lost its wager with Cipurut for that reason, and not because of the shard of glass craftily thrown by mischievous little Jamin from his hiding place behind the hedge—even *then*, how could he have been so hard on her, and called her vulgar names? What if he died in Batavia without ever having asked her forgiveness for being so rude? He'd be remembered as a bad man who hurled abuse

at a girl, and when they heard of his death in a strange land, everyone in Badur would say, "Good riddance! Remember his big mouth when he quarreled with Adinda?"

In short, his thoughts took a course very different from his earlier overexcitement, involuntarily expressing themselves first in mumbled half-words, then in a soliloquy, and finally in a wistful song, translated below. At first I planned to use rhyme and meter in my version, but like Havelaar, I now think it better to avoid that straitjacket.

I do not know where I will die.

I have seen the great sea on the southern coast, when I went there with my father to make salt.

If I die at sea and my body is cast into deep waters, sharks will find it.

They will circle my corpse and ask, "Which of us shall devour that body sinking there?"

I will not hear.

I do not know where I will die.

I have seen Pa-ansu's house burning, after he set it on fire himself because he was mata gelap.

If I die in a burning house, blazing pieces of wood will fall onto my corpse.

And outside the house, there will be a great clamor of people throwing water to kill the fire.

I will not hear.

I do not know where I will die.

I have seen little Si-unah fall from a *kelapa* tree while picking a *kelapa* for his mother.

If I fall from a kelapa tree, I will lie dead at its foot, in the bushes, like Si-unah.

Then my mother will not weep, for she is dead. But others will shout, "Look, there lies Saijah!"

I will not hear.

I do not know where I will die.

I have seen the corpse of Pa-lisu, who died of extreme old age, for his hair was white.

If I die of old age, with white hair, the wailing women will crowd round my corpse.

And they will raise a clamor like the wailing women around Pa-lisu's corpse. And the grandchildren will weep too, very loudly.

I will not hear.

I do not know where I will die.

I have seen many people in Badur who had died. They were wrapped in white sheets and buried in the earth.

If I die in Badur and they bury me outside the village, beside the hill to the east where the grass is high,

Then Adinda will pass by, and whenever she does, the edge of her sarong will brush softly over the grass . . .

I will hear.

Saijah arrived in Batavia. He asked a gentleman to hire him, and the gentleman did so at once, because he had no idea what Saijah was saying. You see, in Batavia they prefer servants who don't speak Malay, as they haven't been spoiled by long exposure to European civilization. Saijah quickly learned Malay, but he remained well behaved, always fixing his mind on those two buffaloes he hoped to buy, and on

Adinda. He grew big and strong because he ate every day, which wasn't always possible in Badur. He was admired in the stable and would certainly not have been refused if he'd asked the coachman for his daughter's hand in marriage. Saijah's master, too, thought highly of him and soon promoted him to house servant. His wages were raised, and he was always receiving presents, because people were so exceptionally pleased with his work. The lady of the house had read the novel by Eugène Sue which briefly caused such a stir,^s and every time she looked at Saijah she thought of Prince Djalma. The young girls, likewise, understood better than before why the Javanese painter Raden Saleh had met with such enthusiasm in Paris.

But they thought Saijah ungrateful when, after nearly three years of service, he gave notice and asked for a testimonial of good conduct. Still, they couldn't refuse, and Saijah went on his way with a light heart.

He passed Pising, where Havelaar had once lived, long before. But Saijah didn't know that. And even if he had, there was something else entirely that occupied his soul. He counted the treasures he was taking home. He had his pass and testimonial in a bamboo roll. In a small case attached to a leather strap, there was something heavy that seemed to be constantly bumping into his shoulder, but he enjoyed the feeling—I can well imagine! It held thirty Spanish dollars, enough to buy three buffaloes. Just think what Adinda would say! And that wasn't all. Strapped to his back was a sheath with silver fittings for a kris he wore in his belt. The hilt must have been made of richly carved *kemuning*, because he'd carefully wrapped it in silk. And those weren't his only treasures. In the fold of the *kain* around his loins, he kept a chain of large silver

links with an *ikat-pending* of gold. It was a short chain, true, but then again, she had such a slender waist . . . oh, Adinda!

And suspended from a cord around his neck, under the front of his tunic, he had a small silk purse that held a few dried jasmine flowers.

Was it any wonder he stopped in Tangerang only as long as necessary to pay his respects to his father's acquaintance who wove such fine straw hats? Was it any wonder he said so little to the girls along the way, asking "Where from, where to?" the traditional greeting in those parts? Was it any wonder he no longer thought Serang so splendid, having seen Batavia? That he no longer slunk off behind the hedge, as he had for three years, when the Resident came riding by, he who had seen the much more exalted gentleman who lives in Buitenzorg and is the grandfather of the Susuhunan of Solo? Was it any wonder that he paid little attention to the stories of people who walked by his side for a while, talking of all the news in southern Banten? That he hardly listened when he was told that coffee cultivation had, after much wasted effort, been given up entirely? That the District Chief of Parangkujang had been convicted of highway robbery and sentenced to fourteen days' confinement in the home of his father-in-law? That the capital had been moved to Rangkasbitung? That a new Assistant Resident had arrived, because the previous one had died a few months earlier? That this new official had made a remarkable speech at the first sebah? That for some time no one had been punished for submitting a complaint, and that the people were hoping that all the stolen property would be returned, or that they would be compensated?

No, sweeter visions entered his mind's eye. He searched for the ketapang tree in the clouds, since he was still too far away

to look for it in Badur. He grasped at the air around him, as if trying to embrace the figure that would be waiting for him under that tree. He pictured Adinda's features, her head, her shoulder . . . He saw the heavy kondé, glossy and black, caught in its own knot, trailing down to the nape of her neck . . . He saw her large eyes, glimmering with dark luster . . . the nostrils she would flare so proudly as a child when he teased her—how could he have done it?—and the corner of her mouth where she kept her smile. He saw her bosom, which would now be swelling under her kebaya . . . He saw her sarong, which she'd woven herself, wrapped tightly around her hips, tracing the curve of her thigh, spilling over her knee, and falling in a glorious wave to her dainty foot . . .

No, he heard little of what was said to him. He heard completely different tones. He heard how Adinda would say, "I bid you welcome, Saijah! I thought of you while I was spinning, and weaving, and pounding rice on the block carved with three times twelve notches by my hand. Here I am, under the ketapang, on the first day of the new moon. I bid you welcome, Saijah: I wish to be your wife!"

Such was the music that rang in his ears and made him deaf to all the news he was told along the way.

At last he found the ketapang tree. To be precise, he saw a patch of darkness that blotted out many stars. He knew it must be the jati wood near the tree where the next day, just after sunrise, he would be reunited with Adinda. He groped in the darkness, running his hand over trunk after trunk. Soon he found a familiar roughness on the south side of a tree and ran his finger along a cleft that Si-Panteh had hacked into it to ward off the ghost responsible for his mother's toothache, just before the birth of his little brother. This was the ketapang

he'd been searching for.

Yes, this was where he'd first looked at Adinda with other eyes than his playmates, when she refused to join in a game that not long before she'd played with all the children, boys and girls alike. This was where she'd given him the jasmine flower.

He sat down at the foot of the tree and looked up at the stars. And when one of them shot through the sky, he took it as a greeting to mark his return to Badur. And he wondered whether Adinda was sleeping, and if she'd kept careful count of the notches in her rice block. How hurt he would be if she'd missed one moon, as if there hadn't been enough of them . . . thirty-six! And had she been batiking beautiful sarongs and slendangs? And who, he wondered, is living in my father's house now? And his thoughts went back to his childhood, and his mother, and how the buffalo had saved him from the tiger, and he brooded on what might have become of Adinda if the buffalo had been less loyal.

He watched closely as the stars set in the west, and with each star that reached the horizon, he reckoned how much closer the sun was to rising in the east, and how much closer he was to seeing Adinda again.

For surely she would come at the first ray of dawn, yes, she would be there by the morning twilight . . . oh, why hadn't she come the day before?

It saddened him that she hadn't come early, in anticipation of that wondrous moment whose indescribable glow had lit the way for his soul those past three years. And in the unreasonable self-absorption of his love, he felt that Adinda should have been there, waiting for him, instead of him feeling sorry for himself—even before the hour of their

meeting!—because he had to wait for her.

But he had no reason to feel sorry for himself. For the sun had not yet risen, the eye of day had not yet cast a glance upon the plain. Yet the stars up above were already fading, embarrassed that their dominion would soon draw to an end. And strange colors were already streaming over the tops of the mountains, which seemed to darken as they stood out more sharply against the brightening sky. Here and there, hints of radiance darted through the eastern clouds—arrows of gold and fire, shooting back and forth along the horizon—but they vanished again and seemed to drop behind the impenetrable curtain that still hid the day from Saijah's eyes.

Yet gradually it grew lighter and lighter around him. He could already see the landscape and make out, in the distance, the tufted crest of the kelapa wood surrounding Badur . . . where Adinda lay sleeping!

No, she was no longer sleeping! How could she sleep? Didn't she know that Saijah was waiting for her? She couldn't possibly have slept a wink all night! The village watchman must have knocked on her door to ask why the *pelita* was still burning in her hut, and she must have replied with a sweet smile that she was kept awake by her pledge to finish weaving the slendang she was working on, which had to be ready by the first day of the new moon . . .

Or she'd spent the night in darkness, sitting on her rice block, checking with a yearning finger whether there really were thirty-six deep notches carved in a row. And she'd taken pleasure in frightening herself with the thought that she might have miscounted, that perhaps one was missing, and then, over and over again, savoring the delicious certainty that three times twelve moons really had gone by since Saijah had

last seen her.

Now that it was growing so light, she too would be straining her eyes in a vain effort to bend her gaze over the horizon so that it would meet the sun, the slow sun, which would not rise . . . and would not rise . . .

Then a line of bluish red appeared, clinging to the clouds, and their edges turned bright and blazing, and gave off lightning, and again, arrows of flame shot through the heavens, but this time they did not fall. They held fast to the dim background, heralding their radiance in spreading circles and meeting, crossing, meandering, veering, straying until they merged into beams of fire and flashed golden against a mother-of-pearl sky, and there was red, and blue, and yellow, and silver, and purple, and azure in the whole of it . . . Oh, God, there was the dawn: there was his reunion with Adinda!

Saijah had never learned to pray, and it would have been a shame to teach him, because no more sacred prayer or fervent word of thanks could ever be conveyed in human language than was expressed in the speechless rejoicing of his soul.

He did not want to go to Badur. Actually seeing Adinda again now seemed to him less marvelous than having the certainty that he would see her again. He settled himself at the foot of the ketapang and let his eyes wander over the countryside. Nature seemed to welcome him with a smile, like a mother whose child has come home. And just as the mother displays her joy by dwelling on past sorrow, showing what keepsakes sustained her in her child's absence, Saijah took pleasure in recalling all the places that had borne witness to his young life. But no matter how much his eyes or his thoughts wandered, his gaze and his longing kept coming

back to the path leading from Badur to the ketapang tree. Everything his senses encountered was named Adinda. He saw the ravine to the left, where the soil is bright yellow, and where once a young buffalo had fallen into the depths. All the villagers had gathered to save the animal—since it's no small matter to lose a buffalo calf—and they'd lowered themselves into the gap on strong rattan ropes. Adinda's father had been the bravest of all, and oh, how she had clapped her hands—Adinda!

And over there, on the far side, where the coconut trees swayed over the huts of the village—somewhere over there, Si-Unah had fallen out of a tree and died. How his mother had wept! "He was still so small," she wailed, as if she would have been less sorrowful if he'd been bigger. But he *was* small, it's true, even smaller and weaker than Adinda . . .

No one was on the narrow road that led from Badur to the tree. Soon she would be there, oh, yes—it was still so early!

Saijah saw a *bajing* scampering impishly back and forth on a tree trunk. The creature—the bane of the tree's owner, yet charming and graceful—never tired of dashing up and down. Saijah saw it, and forced himself to keep watching, as a way of resting his thoughts after the hard labor they'd performed since sunrise—resting after the grueling effort of waiting. His impressions quickly formed themselves into words, and he sang of what moved his soul. I wish I could recite his song to you in Malay, the Italian of the Orient,¹¹⁷ but here is the translation:

See how the *bajing* searches for sustenance
In the kelapa tree. It rises, swoops, darts left and right;
It circles the tree, leaps, falls, climbs, and falls again;

It has no wings and yet is as swift as a bird.

The best of luck, my bajing, I wish you well!
You are certain to find the sustenance you seek . . .
But I sit alone by the jati wood,
Waiting for the sustenance my heart needs.

My bajing has long since filled its belly
And long since returned to its nest . . .
But in my soul and in my heart
I still feel the same bitter sorrow—*Adinda!*

There was still no one on the path that led from Badur to the ketapang. Saijah happened to notice a butterfly, which seemed to delight in the new warmth of the morning.

See that butterfly flitting about,
Its wings as dazzling as a many-colored flower.
Its little heart is in love with the *kenari* blossom;
It must be searching for its sweet-smelling beloved.

The best of luck, my butterfly, I wish you well!
You are certain to find what you seek . . .
But I sit alone by the jati wood,
Waiting for what my heart loves.

The butterfly has long since kissed
The *kenari* blossom he adores . . .
But in my soul and in my heart
I still feel the same bitter sorrow—*Adinda!*

And there was no one on the path that led from Badur to the tree. By this time the sun was fairly high in the sky, and there was already heat in the air.

See the sun shining up there,
High over the *waringin* hill!
She is growing too hot and longs to descend
And sleep in the sea as if in a husband's arms.

The best of luck, O sun, I wish you well!
You are certain to find what you seek . . .
But I sit alone by the jati wood,
Waiting for my heart to find its rest.

Long after the sun has set
And fallen asleep in the sea, and all is dark . . .
In my soul and in my heart
I will still feel the same bitter sorrow—*Adinda!*
And still there was no one on the road that led from Badur to
the ketapang.

When butterflies no longer flit about,
When the stars no longer shine,
When the jasmine loses its fragrance,
When there are no longer sad hearts,
Nor wild creatures in the woods . . .
When the sun runs in the wrong direction,
And the moon forgets what is west and what is east . . .
If Adinda has not yet come,
Then an angel with dazzling wings
Will descend to the earth to find whatever remains.
Then my corpse will lie here beneath the ketapang . . .
My soul is filled with bitter sorrow—*Adinda!*

There was still no one on the path that led from Badur to the
ketapang.

Then the angel will see my corpse.
He will point it out to his brethren:
"Look, this dead man has been forgotten,
His rigid mouth is kissing a jasmine flower.
Come, let us take him and carry him up to heaven,
This man who waited for Adinda till his death.
Surely we cannot leave behind a man
Whose heart had the strength to love so well!"

Then I'll open my rigid mouth one last time
To call out to Adinda, whom my heart loves . . .
One last time I'll kiss the jasmine
That *she* gave me . . . *Adinda* . . . *Adinda!*
And even then, there was no one on the path that led from
Badur to the tree.

Oh, she must have fallen asleep just as morning came,
weary from staying awake all night, from staying awake for so
many long nights! She can't have slept for weeks; yes, that was
the reason!

Should he stand up and go to Badur? No! How could he
show any doubt that she would come?

What if he called out to that fellow over there, driving his
buffalo to the field? The man was too far away. Besides, Saijah
didn't want to talk *about* Adinda or ask *about* Adinda . . . he
wanted to *see her again, her alone, her* before all others! Oh,
surely, surely, she would be there soon!

He would wait and wait . . .

But what if she were sick, or . . . dead?

Like a stag struck by an arrow, Saijah raced down the path
that led to the village where Adinda lived. He saw nothing and
heard nothing, yet he could have heard something, because

there were people on the road by the entrance to the village, calling out, "Saijah, Saijah!"

But . . . was it his haste, his passion, that kept him from finding Adinda's house? He raced to the far end of the village, spun around, and raced back all the way like a madman, clapping his hand to his forehead because he must have passed *her* house without noticing.. And again he found himself where the road entered the village and—my God, was it a dream?—again he'd failed to find Adinda's house! He set off on another mad rush through the village but suddenly stopped, clasped both hands to his head as if to squeeze out the frenzy that possessed him, and cried out in a loud voice, "Drunk! Drunk! I'm drunk!"

And the women of Badur came out of their houses and looked with pity on poor Saijah standing there, for they recognized him and understood that he was searching for Adinda's house, and they knew Adinda had no house in the village of Badur.

You see, when the District Chief of Parangkujang had taken Adinda's father's buffalo . . .

I warned you, reader, my story is monotonous.

. . . Adinda's mother had died of worry. And her baby sister had died for lack of a mother to nurse her. And Adinda's father, fearing he'd be punished if he didn't pay his land tax . . .

I know, I know, my story is monotonous!

. . . Adinda's father had left the district, taking Adinda and her brothers with him. But he'd heard that Saijah's father had been caned in Buitenzorg for leaving Badur without a pass. So Adinda's father didn't go to Buitenzorg, or to Karawang, or to Priangan, or to the lands around Batavia . . . no, he went to Cilangkahan in the region of Lebak, which is by the sea. There

see note 114 on caning

he hid in the forest, awaiting the arrival of Pa-Ento, Pa-Lontah, Si-Uniah, Pa-Ansiu, Abdul-Isma, and a few others who had been robbed of their buffaloes by the Chief of the Parangkujang district. They all feared punishment for not paying their land tax. There they made off with a fisherman's proa in the night and put to sea. They headed west, keeping the land to starboard, until they reached the tip of Java. From there, they steered north until ahead of them they saw Panaitan, which European sailors call Prince's Island. They sailed around the east coast of the island and then made for Semangka Bay, heading for the tall peak in Lampung. At least, that was the route described in whispers around Lebak when there was talk of buffalo theft by officials and unpaid land tax.

But Saijah, dumbfounded, had no clear understanding of what he was told. He didn't even fully grasp the news of his father's death. There was a booming in his ears as if a gong had been struck in his head. He felt great jolts of blood surge through the veins in his wrists, which seemed close to bursting from the pressure. He wouldn't say a word, but looked about as if stunned, without seeing what was around him or beside him, until finally he broke into frightful laughter.

An old woman took him home with her and cared for the poor fool. Before long his laughter was no longer so frightful, but he still wouldn't speak, except at night, when the others in the hut were startled to hear his tuneless song: "I do not know where I will die." A few villagers collected money for an offering to the crocodiles of the Ciujung River to cure Saijah, because they thought he had taken leave of his senses.

But he hadn't taken leave of his senses.

For one night when the moon shone brightly, he rose from his *balai-balai*, quietly left the house, and went in search of the

place where Adinda had lived. It wasn't easy to find, because so many of the houses were in ruins. Still, he thought he recognized the place from the angle formed by certain beams of light through the foliage as they met his eye, just as the sailor takes his bearings from lighthouses or prominent peaks.

Yes, this must be the place . . . this was where Adinda had lived!

Stumbling over half-decayed bamboo and fragments of the collapsed roof, he cleared a path to the inner sanctuary that he sought. And sure enough, there he found a remnant of the partition against which Adinda had placed her balai-balai, and even the bamboo peg she used to hang her clothes on when she went to bed. But the balaibalai was in the same ruined state as the rest of the house and had almost turned to dust. He took a handful of it, pressed it to his open lips, and inhaled very deeply.

The next day he asked the old woman who had looked after him where the rice block was that had been out in front of Adinda's house. The woman was overjoyed to hear him speak and scurried all around the village until she found it. When she came to fetch Saijah, he followed her in silence, and upon their arrival at the rice block, he counted thirty-two carved notches.

Then he gave the woman enough Spanish dollars to buy a buffalo and left Badur. In Cilangkahan he bought a fisherman's proa, and after several days of sailing he reached Lampung, where there was rebellion against Dutch authority. He joined a band of rebels from Banten, not really to fight but in the hope of finding Adinda. For he was gentle by nature, and more susceptible to sorrow than to vengefulness.

One day, after the rebels had suffered another defeat, he was roaming around in a village that had just been captured

by the Dutch forces, and was therefore in flames. Saijah knew that the band of rebels that had been wiped out there had mostly come from Banten. Like a ghost, he wandered through the houses that hadn't entirely burned down and found the corpse of Adinda's father with a bayonet wound in his chest. Next to him, Saijah saw Adinda's three murdered brothers, young men, hardly more than children, and a little way off lay the corpse of Adinda, naked and brutally violated.

A thin strip of blue linen had found its way into the gaping chest wound, which appeared to have put an end to a long struggle.

Then Saijah went towards some soldiers, who had leveled their bayonets at the last living rebels to drive them into the flames of the burning houses. He spread his arms as if to welcome the broad sword-bayonets and lunged forward, giving the soldiers a final push as the hilts hit his chest.

Not long afterwards, there was great jubilation in Batavia over the latest victory, which had added so many new laurels to the laurels of the Dutch East Indies Army. And the Governor-General informed the Motherland that order had been restored in Lampung. And the King of the Netherlands, informed of this triumph by his state officials, once again rewarded them for their heroic courage with many a knightly decoration.

And we may reasonably assume that words of thanks ascended to heaven from Sunday services and prayer meetings when it was announced that "the Lord of Hosts" had once again joined the fray under Dutch colors . . .

But God, heartsore at all that woe,
Refused those offerings from below!¹¹⁸

I have wound up the story of Saijah more briefly than if I had meant to paint a truly horrifying picture. The reader will have noticed how I lingered over the description of his long wait under the ketapang tree, as though shrinking from the tragic ending, and how I rushed through the final scene in horror. Yet that wasn't my intention when I began to speak of Saijah. At first I was afraid I'd have to use garish colors to bring those foreign scenes to life. As I proceeded, however, I felt it would be an insult to my readers to think I needed to add more blood to my painting.¹¹⁹

Still, I very well could have, because I have documents here before me—but no . . . instead, a confession.

Yes, a confession, reader! I don't know if Saijah loved Adinda, or if he went to Batavia, or if he was murdered in Lampung with Dutch bayonets. I don't know whether his father succumbed to the beating he received for leaving Badur without a pass. I don't know whether Adinda counted the months by carving notches in her rice block.

I don't know any of this!

But I know *more*. I know, and I can prove, that there have been many Adindas and many Saijahs and that their story is fiction in its parts but truth in its whole. I have said that I can supply the names of people who, like the parents of Saijah and Adinda, were driven out of their country by oppression. It is not my aim in this book to provide the sort of evidence fit for a tribunal on the exercise of Dutch authority in the Indies, which would convince only those with the patience to read such evidence with great attention to detail, and that is something one can hardly expect from readers seeking to be entertained. That is why, instead of a dull inventory of names and places accompanied by dates, instead of a copy of the list of thefts

and extortions I have here before me,¹²⁰ I have tried to give an idea of what *may* go on in the hearts of poor folk robbed of their means of existence.

•

You might even say I was merely *guessing*, fearful as I was of portraying emotions that I myself have never had to endure.

But as for the *underlying truth* of my tale—oh, if only I were called upon to defend what I have written! Oh, if only people would say, “You made that story about Saijah up . . . he never sang that song . . . there was no Adinda living in Badur!” If only someone would demand a full accounting, someone with the intent and power to see justice done as soon as I cleared my name!

Is the parable of the Good Samaritan a lie simply because there may never have been a traveler who fell among thieves and was taken into a Samaritan home? Is the parable of the sower a lie, because no farmer would think of scattering seeds on stony ground? Or—to bend closer to the level of my own book—can anyone deny the truth underlying *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, simply because it is possible that no Evangeline ever existed? Would anyone say to the author of that timeless clarion call—timeless not for its skill or artfulness, but for its message and force—“You have lied! The slaves aren’t mistreated, because . . . parts of your book aren’t true. It’s a novel!” Wasn’t she too called upon to write not a catalog of dry facts, but a story that dressed up those facts, to impress the need for reform deep into the hearts of her readers? Would anyone have read her book if she had given it the form of a deposition? Is it her fault—or mine—that for the truth to be

accepted, it must so often cloak itself in lies?

And to any who may claim that I've idealized Saijah and his love, I would say, what makes you so sure of that? After all, very few Europeans think it worth taking note of the emotions of the coffee- and sugar-producing machines known as "natives." Yet even if there were some truth in this argument, if it were leveled against the main point of my book, I'd win a great victory. For here is the essence of that argument: "The evil you oppose doesn't exist, or isn't as bad as all that, because the natives aren't like your Saijah. The maltreatment of the Javanese is not as evil as it would be if your portrait of Saijah were closer to the truth. The Sundanese don't sing such songs, know such love, feel such feelings, and therefore . . ."

No, Minister of Colonies, no, retired Governors-General, *that* is not what you have to prove! You have to prove that the population is not maltreated, regardless of whether that population includes any sentimental Saijahs. Or would you dare to claim that a buffalo may be stolen as long as its owner is not in love, does not sing sorrowful tunes, is not sentimental?¹²¹ *"Reform"*

If attacked on literary grounds, I'd defend the accuracy of my sketch of Saijah, but in the political sphere I at once accept any and all criticisms of its accuracy, so as not to distract attention from the crucial question. It makes no difference at all to me whether I'm thought to be an incompetent artist, as long as it's acknowledged that the maltreatment of the natives is OUTRAGEOUS! That's the exact word used in the report by Havelaar's predecessor that he showed to Controleur Verbrugge, a report I have here before me.¹²⁰

But I have other evidence! And a good thing, too, because Havelaar's predecessor could have been mistaken.

But if he *was* mistaken, then, sad to say, he paid a high price for it. He was murdered.

*This refers to the vulgar Indonesian expression *anak sundal*, literally “son of a whore.”

†The translator Roy Edwards corrected a factual error in Multatuli’s description of the batiking process in his 1967 translation; we have gratefully adopted his correction here.

‡Hats woven from Manila hemp (also known as tagal straw) and similar in style to Panama hats were popular at the time.

§A reference to *Le Juif errant* (*The Wandering Jew*, 1844), an anticlerical novel by Eugène Sue in which the Indian prince Djalma and his beloved Adrienne de Cardoville, persecuted by the Jesuits, commit suicide together in a scene reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet*.

EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

IT WAS afternoon. Havelaar came out of his study and found Tina on the front veranda, waiting for him with tea. Mrs. Slotering came out of her house and seemed to be on her way to visit the Havelaars. Abruptly, she veered towards the gate, where a man had just entered, and began to shoo him off, waving her arms wildly. She stood guard there until she was sure he had left before making her way back across the lawn to Havelaar's house.

"It's high time I got to the bottom of this!" Havelaar said, and after they had exchanged greetings he questioned her in a lighthearted tone, so she wouldn't think he begrudged her a little authority over the grounds that had once been hers: "Won't you tell me, madam, why you're sending away the people who come through the gate? What if that fellow just now had chickens for sale, or something else we may need in the kitchen?"

Mrs. Slotering gave a kind of wince, which didn't escape Havelaar. "Oh," she said, "there are so many bad people!"

"That's true wherever you go. But if we make things so difficult for them, the good ones will stay away too. Come now, Mrs. Slotering, give me a straight answer. Why do you keep such a strict watch over the grounds?"

Havelaar looked into her moist eyes, trying in vain to read the answer there. Again, more insistently this time, he demanded an explanation. The widow burst into tears and said her husband had been poisoned in the home of the District Chief in Parangkujang.

"He wanted to do the right thing, Mr. Havelaar," the poor

woman went on. "He wanted to put a stop to the abuses under which the people suffer. He reprimanded and threatened the chiefs, in meetings and in writing—you must have found his letters in the files?"

Yes, Havelaar had read those letters, *copies of which lie before me.*¹²⁰

"He spoke to Resident Slymering about it many times," the widow continued, "but always in vain. Since it was general knowledge that this villainy was taking place for the benefit and under the protection of the Adipati, and the Resident had no intention of presenting the charges against him to the government, all those conversations led to nothing but maltreatment of the complainants. So my poor husband decided that if the situation didn't improve by the end of the year, he'd go directly to the Governor-General. That was in November. Soon afterwards, he went on a tour of inspection and had lunch at the house of the Demang of Parangkujang. That afternoon, he was brought home in a pitiable state, clutching his belly and shouting, 'Fire, fire!' A few hours later he was dead—a man who'd always been the very picture of health."

"Did you send for the doctor in Serang?" Havelaar asked.

"Yes, but he didn't have much chance to help, since my husband died soon after he arrived. I didn't dare tell the doctor about my suspicions, because I knew I wouldn't be able to leave this place any time soon in my condition, and I feared vengeance. Ever since I heard that you, like my husband, oppose the abuses that prevail here, I haven't had a moment's peace. I wanted to hide all this from you so as not to alarm you and your wife, so I decided to keep an eye on the garden and the grounds, so that no strangers could find their way into

the kitchen."

Now it was clear to Tina why Mrs. Slotering had maintained a separate household and not even wanted to use their kitchen, despite Tina's protests that there was plenty of room.

Havelaar sent for Controleur Verbrugge. While he waited, he wrote to the physician in Serang to request a medical report on Slotering's death. The reply he later received did not corroborate the widow's suspicions. According to the doctor, Slotering had died of an "abscess of the liver." Yet I've found no evidence that this condition can appear out of nowhere and lead to death in a few short hours. Mrs. Slotering said that her husband had always been in good health before then, and it seems to me this statement merits serious consideration. But even if we brush it aside—after all, "health" is such a subjective term, especially outside the medical profession—a crucial question remains. Can a man die of an "abscess of the liver" the day after riding out *on horseback* to inspect a mountainous region twenty hours from end to end in some directions? The doctor who treated Slotering may have been a capable physician and still have misinterpreted his symptoms, since he had no reason to suspect foul play.¹²²

Whatever the case may be, I can't prove that Havelaar's predecessor was poisoned, since Havelaar was not given the time to clear up the matter. But I can prove *that the people close to him believed he had been poisoned, partly because they knew of his fervent desire to fight Injustice.*

Controleur Verbrugge came into Havelaar's study. Havelaar asked him, gruffly, "What was the cause of Mr. Slotering's

death?"

"I don't know."

"Was he poisoned?"

"I don't know, but . . ."

"Out with it, Verbrugge!"

"But he made an effort to combat the abuses here, as you have, Mr. Havelaar, and . . . and . . ."

"Well? Go on!"

"I firmly believe that he . . . would have been poisoned if he'd been here any longer."

"Put that in writing!"

Verbrugge wrote down what he'd said. *His statement lies before me!*¹²⁰

"Another thing. Is it true or false that extortion takes place in Lebak?"

Verbrugge did not reply.

"Answer me, Verbrugge!"

"I don't dare."

"Put *that* in writing—that you don't dare!"

Verbrugge put it in writing. *It lies before me.*¹²⁰

"Well, then! One more thing. You didn't dare answer that last question, but you did tell me recently, when there was a case of *poisoning*, that your sisters in Batavia depend entirely on your support, isn't that right? Could that be the reason for your timidity, the cause of what I've always called your *halfness*?"

"Yes!"

"Put that in writing."

Verbrugge put it in writing. *His statement lies before me!*¹²⁰

"Very well," said Havelaar, "now I know enough." And

Verbrugge was dismissed.

•

Havelaar went outside and played with little Max, kissing the boy more tenderly than ever. After Mrs. Slotering left, he sent the child away and asked Tina to come into his study.

"Dearest Tina, I have a favor to ask of you! I'd like you to go to Batavia with Max. I'm going to bring charges against the Adipati today."

She flung her arms around his neck and, for the first time, disobeyed him, loudly sobbing: "No, Max, no, Max, I won't do it . . . I *won't!* *We eat and drink together!*"

Was Havelaar wrong when he told her she had as little right to blow her nose as the women of Arles?

He wrote and sent the letter I reproduce below. Having sketched the circumstances under which this letter was written, I see no need to dwell on the resolute sense of duty that radiates from it, nor on the forgiving nature that led Havelaar to argue that the Adipati's punishment should not be too severe. Yet it may be useful to point out his circumspection. He kept silent about the discovery he'd just made, so that his uncertainty about an important but still unproved accusation would not weaken the force of his charges. His intention was to have his predecessor's body exhumed and medically examined as soon as the Adipati had been removed from office and his accomplices rendered harmless. But he would not be granted this opportunity.¹²³

In my copies of official letters—copies that otherwise correspond with the originals word for word—I've seen fit to replace absurd honorifics with simple pronouns. I expect my

readers to have the good taste to appreciate this change.

Nº 88. SECRET. URGENT.

Rangkasbitung, February 24, 1856

To Resident Slymering of Banten:

Since accepting my appointment here ~~one month ago~~, I have spent most of my time investigating how the native chiefs meet their obligations to their people with regard to statute labor, appropriations, and the like.¹²⁴

I very quickly realized that the Regent Adipati, on his own authority and for his own benefit, calls on many more workers than the number of *pancens* and *kemits* permitted to him by law.¹²⁵

I was torn between the desire to make an official report without delay and the hope that gentle persuasion—or, in a later stage, threats—might induce the Adipati to mend his ways, thus stopping the abuses without recourse to measures too severe for a longtime servant of the government. One should not lose sight of the many bad examples I believe he was given, and to the special circumstance that he is expecting a visit from two relatives, the regents of Buitenzorg and of Cianjur, or at least from the latter, who I believe is already en route with a large retinue. Consequently he is presented with a greater temptation than usual—in fact, given his exhausted finances, it must seem a *necessity*—to resort to illegal means to make the requisite preparations for that visit.

All this led me to look mildly on his past transgressions, but not to show any leniency for the future. I urged him to desist from all illegal activities at once. This initial attempt

to remind the Adipati of his duties in a gentle manner was described to you in an earlier, private communication.

Now, however, having seen the brazen shamelessness with which he casts all these admonitions to the wind, I feel obliged by my oath of office to inform you

that I accuse the Regent of Lebak, Raden Adipati Karta Natta Negara,

of abusing his authority by making unlawful claims on the labor

of his subjects, and suspect him of extortion through requisitions

of personal property without payment, or for arbitrary, insufficient payment;

that I also suspect the Demang of Parangkujang, his son-in-law, of complicity in the aforementioned crimes.

To build an adequate case against both suspects, I take the liberty of proposing that you instruct me:

1. *to summon the Regent of Lebak to appear in Serang as swiftly as possible and make certain that he has no opportunity, either before his departure or during his journey, to influence, by bribery or otherwise, the witnesses whose testimony I must obtain;*

2. *to hold the Demang of Parangkujang in provisional detention;*

3. *likewise to detain persons of lesser rank who belong to the Regent's family and can be expected to use their influence to compromise the objectivity of the investigation;*

4. *to carry out the said investigation forthwith and submit a comprehensive report on the findings.*

I also take the liberty of suggesting that you countermand

the visit by the Regent of Cianjur.

Finally, I have the honor of assuring you—a needless assurance, considering that you know the regency of Lebak better than I possibly could at this stage—that there is absolutely no *political* objection to handling this case in strict accordance with the demands of justice, and that I would be more concerned about the risks of *not* resolving it satisfactorily. For I have been informed that the General population is, in the words of one witness, *pusing* from this harassment and has long been hoping for rescue.¹²⁶

I have drawn the strength to complete the difficult task of writing this letter in part from the hope that in due course I will be permitted to present some mitigating evidence in support of the elderly Adipati, for whose predicament—albeit of his own making—I feel deep sympathy.

The Assistant Resident of Lebak,
MAX HAVELAAR

The next day he received . . . not an official reply from Resident Slymering of Banten, ah, no—it was a private letter from *Mr.* Slymering!

This reply makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of how the Dutch East Indies are governed. In it Mr. Slymering complained that Havelaar had failed to “apprise him orally” beforehand of “the matter alluded to in letter N° 88.” This would, of course, have made it easier for Slymering to “finesse” the situation. He also wrote that Havelaar had “distracted” him from his “pressing business”!

He must have been writing an annual report about peaceable peace! I have his letter here before me and can

scarcely believe my eyes.¹²⁰ I am now rereading the letter from the Assistant Resident of Lebak . . . I am placing his words next to those of the Resident of Banten—Havelaar and Slymering, side by side

That Shawlman is a common tramp! I must tell you, reader, that Bastiaans has returned to his habit of staying home from work because of his gout. As I feel very strongly about squandering the funds of my firm, Burden & C°—for I'm a man of uncompromising principles—it occurred to me yesterday that Shawlman has fairly decent handwriting and, since he looks so shabby, could be had for moderate wages. So then, feeling I owed it to the firm to replace Bastiaans as cheaply as possible, I went to Lange-leidsche-dwarsstraat.

The woman was outside her shop but didn't seem to recognize me, even though I had recently told her very clearly that I am Mr. Drystubble, coffee broker, of Lauriergracht. Not being recognized is always a bit insulting, but seeing as the weather is mild these days—unlike last time, when I was wearing my fur-trimmed coat—let me assume that was the reason and shrug it off—the insult, I mean. So I said, once again, that I am Mr. Drystubble, coffee broker, of Lauriergracht, and I asked her to go and see whether that Shawlman fellow was at home—since I had no wish for another run-in with his wife, who's a malcontent. But the shop woman refused to go and fetch him, saying, "I can't be climbing stairs the livelong day for those moochers. You'll have to go up there yourself." And once again she launched

into her description of the stairs and landings, which I could perfectly well have done without, since I always recognize a place I've seen before, because I pay such close attention to everything. That's a habit I've acquired in business.

So I climbed the stairs and knocked on the familiar door, which swung open. I entered the room and, since no one was there, had a look around. Well, there wasn't much to see. A child's short trousers with an embroidered strip were draped over a chair. What call is there for such people to wear embroidered trousers? In one corner was a suitcase, not too heavy—I absentmindedly lifted it up by the handle—and on the mantelpiece lay a few books, through which I browsed. A peculiar collection! A few volumes of Byron, Horace, Bastiat, Béranger, and . . . care to guess? A Bible, complete with the Apocrypha! I hadn't expected *that* from Shawlman. It seemed he'd even read bits of it; I found loose sheets of paper with many notes on Scripture. He claims Eve came into the world twice—the man is crazy! Anyway, it was all in the same handwriting as the documents in that blasted parcel. He must have studied the book of Job with particular care, because it fell open to those pages. I suppose he's beginning to feel the hand of the Lord and hopes to make peace with Him by reading the holy books. Fine with me. But while I was waiting, my eye fell on a sewing box on the table. I took a closer look, suspecting nothing. It held a pair of half-finished children's stockings and a lot of silly verses, as well as a letter addressed to Shawlman's wife. The letter had been opened and, judging by appearances, crumpled in a fit of temper.

Now, it's a firm principle of mine never to read anything that's not addressed to me, because that wouldn't be respectable. So I never do it if I have no interest in the matter.

But this time I had a feeling it was my duty to take a good look, as the letter could contain information relevant to my philanthropic reasons for visiting Shawlman. It struck me that the Lord is always with His chosen ones and had offered me an unexpected opportunity to learn a little more about this man, so as to protect me from the danger of doing a good turn for an immoral person. I pay close attention to such pointers from the Lord, which have often proved useful to me in business. To my astonishment, I saw that Shawlman's wife came from a very good family—at least, the letter was signed by a relative of hers who has quite a distinguished name in the Netherlands, and let me tell you, that letter's splendid contents brought joy to my heart. The writer seemed to be one of the Lord's industrious stewards: he wrote that Shawlman's wife should seek a separation from the wretch who'd dragged her into poverty, who couldn't provide for his family, and was a villain to boot—in that he was in debt. The writer went on to say that he was sorry for her misfortune, even though she had only herself to blame, seeing as she'd forsaken the Lord to follow Shawlman. She was advised to return to the Lord, in which case the whole family might unite their efforts and find some needlework for her to do. But *first*, she would have to separate from that Shawlman, who was a positive disgrace to the family.

In short, even a church service couldn't have been more edifying than that letter.

I knew enough, and was grateful to have been warned so miraculously. Without that warning I would surely have fallen victim to my tender heart. So I decided once again to retain Bastiaans until I found a suitable replacement, because I'd hate to throw a man out on the street—and we can't do

without a clerk just now, with business as brisk as it is.

The reader must be wondering how I fared at our last social gathering and whether I mastered the three-peg variation. The fact is, I didn't attend. Wondrous things have come to pass; I've been to Driebergen with my wife and Marie. My father-in-law, old Burden, the son of the original Burden— back when the Meyers were still in it, but they've been out for a long time now—had been saying for quite a while that he'd like to see my wife and Marie. The weather was fair, and in my dread of the love story that Stern had been holding over our heads, I thought back to that invitation.

I discussed my dilemma with our bookkeeper, who's a very resourceful man, and after due deliberation he advised me to sleep on it. I resolved at once to do so, for when I've made a decision I act fast. The next day, it was already clear to me how wise his counsel had been, because it had come to me in the night that the very best thing would be to put off the decision until Friday. To make a long story short, after carefully pondering the plan—there was much to be said for it, and no less against it—we left on Saturday afternoon and returned on Monday morning.

I wouldn't go into such detail about the whole business, were it not so closely connected to my book. First of all, I must explain why I haven't protested against the nonsense that assuredly poured from Stern's lips again last Sunday. What kind of tale is that, about a person who thinks he'll hear things when he's dead? Marie was talking about it. She'd heard it from the Rosemeyer girls, who are in sugar. Second, I've now regained the firm conviction that all those reports of misery and unrest in the Orient are barefaced lies. It goes to show how travel helps a man get to the bottom of things.

Here's what happened: my father-in-law had accepted an invitation for Saturday night from a gentleman who was once a Resident out in the East and now lives in a big country house near Driebergen. So that's where we went, and I truly cannot praise his hospitality enough. He'd sent his carriage to fetch us, and the coachman wore a red waistcoat. It was still a trifle too chilly to tour the estate, which is said to be magnificent in the summer, but the house left nothing to be desired. It was filled with all the pleasures of life: a billiard room, a library, a conservatory of iron and glass, and a silver perch for the cockatoo. I'd never seen anything like it and couldn't help but remark that, in the end, virtue is always rewarded. This man must have taken excellent care of business, considering he had three knighthoods. He owned this marvelous country house and, on top of that, a place in Amsterdam. At supper, there were truffles in every course, and even the servants at table wore red waistcoats, like the coachman.

Being keenly interested in East Indies affairs—on account of the coffee—I turned the conversation to that subject and very soon learned what to think of it all. The Resident told me he'd always lived very comfortably in the Orient, so there can't be any truth in all that talk about popular unrest. I mentioned Shawlman. He knew him, and what he knew was highly unfavorable. He reassured me that I'd been very wise to send the fellow packing, because he was a true malcontent, always carping and caviling, even though his own conduct was far from irreproachable. He kept making off with girls and then taking them home to his wife, and he didn't pay his debts, a most unseemly habit. Since I knew, from the letter I'd just read, how true all these accusations were, it delighted me to learn that I'd shown such good judgment, and I was very

pleased with myself. I'm well known for that at my pillar—for my judgment, I mean.*

The Resident and his wife were dear, generous people, who told us many things about their way of life in the East. It must be an agreeable place after all. They said their estate in Driebergen was not half the size of their "grounds" in the interior of Java, where they'd needed a staff of more than a hundred for upkeep. But—and this shows how beloved they were—all those people worked for nothing, out of pure devotion. They also told us that, when they left, the sale of their furniture yielded more than ten times its value, because the native chiefs were so eager to buy souvenirs of a Resident who'd been so good to them. I later mentioned this to Stern, who claimed it had been a case of coercion, and that he could prove it with evidence from Shawlman's parcel.¹²⁷ But I told him Shawlman is a slanderer, that he made off with girls—same as that young German at Busselinck & Waterman—that his opinion held no weight whatsoever with me, now that I'd heard from no one less than a Resident how matters really stood, and, in conclusion, that I had nothing to learn from Mr. Shawlman.

There were other people from the Orient there, including a gentleman who is very rich and still earns a great deal of money from tea, which the Javanese are made to grow for him for very little money, and which the government buys from him at a high price to encourage the Javanese to continue their labors. That gentleman, too, was very angry with all the malcontents who are always speaking and writing against the government. He couldn't praise the Colonial Administration highly enough and said he was certain the government lost a fortune on the tea he sold them, and that it was truly noble to

persist in paying such a high price for such a worthless commodity, which he didn't even drink himself—he prefers Chinese tea. He also said that the Governor-General—who had renewed the tea contracts, despite having seen the calculation of how much the state had lost on the whole business—was a very competent, dependable chap, and above all faultlessly loyal to the friends of his youth. You see, that governor-general hadn't given a second thought to all the gossip about losses on tea, and he'd done this gentleman a great favor when there was talk of terminating the contracts—in 1846, I think it was—by declaring that the government would go on buying his tea in spite of everything. "Yes," the gentleman exclaimed, "my heart bleeds when I hear such fine men slandered! If not for *him*, my wife and children and I would have been reduced to going about on foot."¹²⁸ Then he sent for his carriage, which looked so smart with the horses so well-fed, that I can easily understand why he glowed with gratitude towards his governor-general. It does the soul good when the eye beholds such warm affection, especially if you compare it to the accursed grumbling and groaning of people like Shawlman.

The next day the Resident returned our visit, along with the gentleman for whom the Javanese make tea. They are fine, upstanding people, and yet so very well bred! They both asked, at the same time, when our train was expected to reach Amsterdam. We had no idea what this signified, but it later became clear. When we alighted at the station on Monday morning, there were two servants there, one in a red and one in a yellow waistcoat, each of whom said he'd received orders by telegraph to meet us with a carriage. My wife was in a state, and I tried to imagine what Busselinck and Waterman

would have said if they'd seen it . . . seen the two carriages waiting for us, I mean. All the same, it was a difficult choice, because I couldn't offend either party by turning down such a thoughtful gesture. Faced with this latest quandary, I was briefly at a loss, but I managed to extricate myself once more. I put my wife and Marie in the red carriage—the carriage with the red waistcoat, I mean—and I sat myself down in the yellow one . . . the yellow carriage, I mean.

How those horses could trot! In Weesperstraat, where it's always so filthy, they threw up great sheets of mud to the left and right, and—as if on cue—there was that tramp Shawlman, hunched over, head bowed, and I saw him raise the sleeve of his threadbare jacket to wipe the spatters from his pale face. Seldom have I had a more pleasant outing, and my wife felt the same.

*The pillar next to which Drystubble works at the Exchange, also mentioned in his earlier chapters.

NINETEENTH CHAPTER

IN THE private note Mr. Slymering sent to Havelaar, he said that in spite of his “pressing engagements” he would come to Rangkasbitung the next day to discuss what was to be done. Havelaar, who understood only too well what this type of discussion meant—his predecessor had so often “conferred” with the Resident of Banten!—wrote the following reply, which he sent ahead so that the Resident could read it before arriving in Rangkasbitung. The document speaks for itself.

Nº 91. secret. urgent.

Rangkasbitung, February 25, 1856, 11 p.m.

Yesterday at noon I had the honor of sending you my urgent missive Nº 88, stating in brief that I—after lengthy investigation and fruitless attempts to dissuade the person in question from misconduct through gentle persuasion—felt obligated by my oath of office to *accuse* the Adipati of Lebak of abusing his authority, and to declare that I *suspect* him of extortion.

In that letter, I took the liberty of proposing that you summon the Adipati to Serang, so that after his departure from this locale, and after neutralizing the pernicious influence of his extended family, you could open an investigation of the truth of my allegation and my suspicion.¹²⁹

I took this step only after long deliberation—or, more precisely, *much* deliberation.

It had been brought to your attention, through my efforts, that I had warned and threatened the old Adipati, hoping to spare him from misfortune and disgrace and

myself from the bitter sorrow of being its cause—even if only its immediate cause.

Yet on the other hand I saw the common people, who have been exploited and grievously oppressed for years; I thought of the necessity of setting an example—because I will have many other cases of exploitation to report to you, at least if this case does not lead to their redress; and, I repeat, after thorough deliberation I did what I regarded as my duty.

I have just received your kind and much appreciated private note informing me that you will be here tomorrow and hinting that I should have dealt with this matter privately beforehand.

So I will have the honor of seeing you tomorrow, and precisely for that reason, I now take the liberty of sending you this letter, in order to state the following prior to our meeting.

All my investigations of the Adipati have been kept strictly secret. He himself and the Patih were the only ones who knew, because loyalty demanded that I give some advance warning. Even the Controleur is at present only partly aware of the outcome of my inquiries. The purpose of this secrecy was twofold. At first I still hoped to dissuade the Adipati from his chosen path, and if my efforts succeeded, I did not wish to incriminate him. The Patih even thanked me, on the Adipati's behalf, for my discretion—that was on the 12th inst. But later, when I began to despair of a good outcome—or more precisely, when I heard of yet another incident and could no longer contain my indignation¹³⁰—when continued silence would have made me an accomplice—secrecy became necessary

for my own sake, because I also have obligations to myself and my loved ones.

For after writing yesterday's missive, I would surely be unworthy of serving the government if the claims made in it were empty, baseless fabrications. And how could or can I prove that I have done "as behooves an Assistant Resident,"¹³¹ that I am worthy of the office bestowed on me, that I have not rashly and frivolously jeopardized my career—and, more importantly, the interests of my wife and child—after seventeen arduous years of service . . . how can I prove all this unless my inquiries are cloaked in profound secrecy and the guilty party is prevented from covering his tracks, as the expression goes?¹³²

If the Adipati has even the slightest suspicion, he will send a special messenger to his nephew, who is en route and has a material interest in his uncle's welfare. He will ask for money, at any price, distribute it lavishly to everyone he has wronged in recent months, and the result would be—I hope I need not say "*will be*"—that I have judged rashly and am unfit to serve my country . . . if nothing worse is said of me.

This letter is my safeguard against that eventuality. I hold you in the greatest esteem, but I am familiar with what might be called "the spirit of East Indies officialdom," a spirit I do *not* possess!¹³³

Your hint that it would have been preferable to deal with the matter privately beforehand makes me apprehensive about our meeting. What I said in yesterday's letter is true, but it might appear untrue if my accusation and suspicion were made public knowledge *before* the Adipati has been removed from the area.

I cannot in good conscience deny that the very fact of your unexpected visit—in response to the letter I sent to Serang yesterday by special messenger—makes me fear that the guilty party, who refused to heed my earlier warnings, will now be alerted to do whatever he can to exculpate himself.¹³⁴

I have the honor of still holding to every word of yesterday's letter but take the liberty of pointing out that my missive also included the proposal to remove the Adipati *before* the investigation and see to it that his dependents can do no harm. I do not consider myself responsible for what I put forward in that letter unless you see fit to accept my proposal regarding the manner of investigation: open, impartial, and above all free.

Such freedom *cannot* exist until the Adipati has been removed, and in my humble opinion there is no danger in that. After all, he can be told that I am the source of the allegations and suspicions, that I am the one in danger, and not he, if he is innocent. For I myself believe I ought to be dismissed from the civil service if it is shown that I have acted frivolously, or even prematurely.¹³⁵

Prematurely! After years and years of misrule!

Prematurely! As if an honest man could sleep soundly and enjoy his life while those whose welfare he is bound to protect, those who are, in the purest sense, his *neighbors*, are exploited and sucked dry!

True, I have been here for only a short time, but I hope the ultimate question will be *what* was done and whether it was done *well*, and not whether it was done in *too short a time*. To me any span of time is too long if marked by extortion and oppression, and every second weighs

heavily on me if others spend it in misery owing to *my* negligence, *my* dereliction of duty, *my* desire to "finesse."

I regret the days that I allowed to pass before sending you my official report, and I ask your forgiveness for that lapse.

I take the liberty of requesting that you give me the opportunity to justify yesterday's letter and that you take action to forestall the failure of my attempts to rescue the Lebak regency from the worms that have gnawed at its riches throughout human memory.

That is why I take the further liberty of requesting that you approve my actions in this matter—which amounts to no more than investigating, reporting, and proposing a course of action¹³⁶—that you remove the Adipati of Lebak from the area without any advance warning, direct or indirect, and that you open an investigation of the facts I reported in my letter N° 88, sent yesterday.¹³⁷

The Assistant Resident of Lebak,

MAX HAVELAAR

This entreaty *not* to protect the guilty parties reached Resident Slymering while he was en route. An hour after arriving in Rangkasbitung, he paid a brief visit to the Adipati and asked him whether he had any complaints about Havelaar and whether he was short of funds. To the first question the Adipati replied, "No complaints, I swear it!" He answered the second in the affirmative, upon which the Resident produced a couple of banknotes—brought along for that purpose!—from his waistcoat pocket. The reader will understand that all this took place without Havelaar's knowledge, and we will soon see how he learned of this shameful course of action.¹³⁸

When Resident Slymering alighted at Havelaar's home, he

was paler than usual, and his words were further apart than ever. Of course it was no small matter, for a man so greatly skilled in "finessing" and producing peaceable annual reports, to suddenly receive letters showing no trace either of the customary official optimism, or of distortion of the facts, or of any fear of incurring the government's displeasure by "embarrassing" it with unwelcome news. Mr. Slymering was shocked, and if you will forgive me the vulgarity of the image for the sake of its accuracy, I am tempted to compare him to a guttersnipe complaining that ancient custom has been violated because an eccentric comrade has punched him without calling him names first.

He began by asking the Controleur why he hadn't tried to stop Havelaar from making his accusation. Poor Verbrugge said he knew nothing about it, but he wasn't believed. Mr. Slymering found it impossible to imagine that a person acting alone, on his own responsibility, could have decided to perform his duties in such an un-orthodox manner without long-drawn-out deliberation or tête-à-têtes. But as Verbrugge persisted in claiming—quite truthfully—that he had no knowledge of Havelaar's letters, the Resident, after many protestations of astonished disbelief, eventually had to give in, and he proceeded—don't ask me why—to read the letters aloud.

Verbrugge's agony as he listened must have been beyond description. He was an honest man and would certainly not have lied if Havelaar had called on him to confirm the truth of their contents. And quite apart from his honesty, he had often been unable to avoid telling the truth in his written reports, even when the truth was dangerous. What would become of him if Havelaar referred to those reports?

After reading the letters aloud, Resident Slymering said he would appreciate it if Havelaar retracted them, so it would be as if they'd never been written. Havelaar politely but firmly refused, whereupon Slymering, after trying and failing to change Havelaar's mind, declared he had no other choice but to open an investigation into the truth of the charges, and would therefore have to demand that Havelaar summon the witnesses who could substantiate his accusations.

Oh, you poor souls whose flesh was torn on the thornbushes in the ravine, how your hearts would have pounded with fear if you'd heard that demand!

Poor Verbrugge! You, first witness, chief witness, witness by office and by oath! Witness who had already testified in writing! The statement was there, on the table, under Havelaar's hand . . .

Havelaar replied, "Resident Slymering, *I* am the Assistant Resident of Lebak, *I* have promised to protect the people from extortion and violent oppression, *I* have accused the Adipati and his son-in-law in Parangkujang, *I* will prove the truth of my charges as soon as I'm given the opportunity proposed in my letters, and *I* am guilty of defamation if my accusation is false!"

How Verbrugge sighed in relief!

And how strange Havelaar's words sounded to the Resident!

The conversation dragged on. The Resident used his courtesy—for he was nothing if not courteous and well bred—to try to persuade Havelaar to abandon his perverse principles. But Havelaar, with equal courtesy, remained adamant. Ultimately, the Resident had to give in, and the threat he then uttered set the seal on Havelaar's victory: *he would be obliged to bring the letters in question to the*

attention of the government.

The meeting was closed. The Resident visited the Adipati—we have already heard what his business was there!—and then joined the Havelaars for lunch at their frugal table. Immediately afterwards he returned to Serang in a great hurry: Because. He. Was. So. Terribly. Busy.

The next day, Havelaar received a letter from the Resident of Banten, the contents of which will be clear from the reply transcribed here:

Nº 93. SECRET.

Rangkasbitung, February 28, 1856

I have had the honor of receiving your urgent and secret communication of the 26th inst. (file O), stating in brief

that you have reasons not to act on the proposals made in my official letters of the 24th and 25th inst., N°s 88 and 91;

that you would have preferred to be informed confidentially in advance;

and that you disapprove of my actions as described in those two letters.

Instructions follow.

I also have the honor once again, as I did in person at our meeting two days ago, of assuring you

that I fully respect your lawful authority to decide whether or not to adopt my proposals;

that the instructions received will be obeyed promptly and, where necessary, contrary to my own wishes, as if you were observing everything I do and say, or more precisely, everything I refrain from doing and saying.

I know you are confident of my loyalty in this regard.¹³⁹

key footnote

But I take the liberty of solemnly protesting the least whisper of disapproval of any action, any word, any phrase that I, in this matter, have performed, uttered, or written.

I am convinced that I have done my duty—in both my aims and my chosen methods—my whole duty, and nothing but my duty, without the slightest deviation.

Only after long reflection did I act—that is to say, I investigated, reported, and proposed—and if I have fallen short in the slightest . . . my fault was not haste.

Under similar circumstances I would again do exactly the same, to the very letter, only a bit more promptly.

Even if a higher authority than yours disapproved of any aspect of what I have done—aside, perhaps, from the idiosyncrasy of my style, which is part of myself, a flaw for which I can no more take responsibility than the stutterer for his—even in the face of such disapproval . . . but no, it's unthinkable, yet even if it were so, I have done my *duty!*

In any case, I am saddened—though not surprised—that you take a different view. If this were a personal matter, I would simply resign myself to what I see as your misjudgment—yet this is a matter of principle, and my conscience demands a verdict on whose opinion is correct, yours or mine.

I cannot serve in any other fashion than I have in Lebak. If the government wishes to be served differently, then as a man of integrity, I must respectfully ask for my discharge. In that case, at the age of thirty-six, I will have to try to begin a new career. Then—after seventeen years, seventeen difficult, demanding years of service, having

sacrificed the prime of my life to what I considered my duty—I will once again have to ask society to provide me with bread for my wife and child, bread in exchange for my ideas, bread in exchange, perhaps, for labor with a wheelbarrow or spade, if the strength of my arm is deemed more valuable than the power of my spirit.

But I cannot and will not believe that your opinion is shared by His Excellency the Governor-General, and I am therefore obliged, before resorting to the bitter extremity described in the previous paragraph, respectfully to ask that you propose to the government

to instruct the Resident of Banten to approve the actions of the Assistant Resident of Lebak relating to his missives of the 24th and 25th inst., N^os 88 and 91, or alternatively,

to call on the said Assistant Resident to respond to grounds for disapproval to be stated by the Resident of Banten.

Lastly, I have the honor of gratefully assuring you that if anything could dissuade me from the principles to which, after much consideration, I calmly yet passionately adhere in this affair . . . in all sincerity, it would be the truly winning way you argued against those principles at our meeting the day before yesterday.

The Assistant Resident of Lebak,
MAX HAVELAAR

Without taking a stand on the truth of the widow Slotering's suspicions about the events that had orphaned her children, and assuming only what can be proved—namely, that in Lebak there was a close connection between performance of one's duties and poison, even if only a surmised connection¹⁴⁰—it

will be clear to all that for Max and Tina the days following the Resident's visit were a distressing time. There is no need, I am sure, for me to dwell on the anxiety of a mother who, with each meal she sets before her child, is racked by doubt as to whether she might be poisoning her darling. And little Max was a long-awaited gift, born seven years into their marriage, as if the rascal had sensed the danger of coming into the world as the child of such parents!

Havelaar waited twenty-nine long days for the Governor-General's reply . . . but I'm running ahead of our story.

One day shortly after the fruitless efforts to persuade Havelaar to retract his letters or betray the poor souls who had trusted in his magnanimity, Verbrugge came into his office. That fine fellow was deathly pale and could hardly speak.

"I've been to see the Adipati," he said, "and—oh, it's vile!—but you mustn't betray me."

"What do you mean? How could I betray you?"

"Will you give me your word you won't make use of what I tell you?"

"This is halfness again," Havelaar said, "but . . . very well! I give you my word."

And then Verbrugge told him what the reader already knows: that the Resident had asked the Adipati if he had anything against Havelaar and, on that same occasion, had unexpectedly offered and given him money. Verbrugge had heard this from the Adipati himself, who wondered what on earth had made the Resident ask such a thing. Havelaar was infuriated, but . . . he had given his word.

Verbrugge returned the next day, saying Duclari had pointed out how unfair it was to leave Havelaar with no

defense whatsoever against adversaries of *that* stripe, and so he had come to release Havelaar from the obligation to keep his word.

"Good," Havelaar cried, "put that in writing!"

Verbrugge put it in writing. I have that statement, too, here before me.¹⁴¹

I am sure the reader figured out some time ago why I so readily relinquished any claim to the *legal* accuracy of the story of Saijah?

It was remarkable to see how thoroughly the timid Verbrugge—before he was reprimanded by Duclari—trusted Havelaar's word in a situation that offered such strong incentives for breaking one's word!

And one more thing. Years have passed since the events of this narrative, years in which Havelaar has suffered much; he has seen his family suffer—the documents here before me are proof of that!—and it appears he has bided his time . . . Consider this note, written in his hand:

I have read in the newspapers that Mr. Slymering has been made a Knight in the Order of the Netherlands Lion. It seems he has been appointed Resident of Yogyakarta. So I could now return to the Lebak affair without any danger to Verbrugge.

TWENTIETH CHAPTER

EVENING had come. Tina was reading in the inner gallery, and Havelaar was drawing an embroidery pattern. A jigsaw puzzle was magically coming together under the hands of little Max, who was pouting because he couldn't find "that lady's red tummy."

"Do you think it's all right now, Tina?" Havelaar asked. "Look, I've made the palm branch a little larger . . . it's precisely Hogarth's 'line of beauty,' isn't it?"*

"So it is, Max! But those eyelets are too close together."

"Like this, then? And what about the other strips? Max, let me see your breeches! Dear me, are you wearing *that* strip? I remember where you embroidered that one, Tina!"

"I don't. Where?"

"In The Hague, when Max was ill and we'd had a nasty shock —the doctor had said the shape of his head was so unusual that we'd have to take special care to keep the blood from rushing to his brain. It was then that you were doing that embroidery."

Tina went to her child and kissed him.

"I found it, I found her belly," the boy cried triumphantly, and the red lady was complete.

"Who else can hear the striking of the *tamtam*?" his mother asked.¹⁴²

"I can," said little Max.

"And what does that mean?"

"Bedtime! But . . . I haven't eaten yet."

"Of course, dear, you'll have your supper first."

And she went to bring him his simple meal, which she

fetched from what must have been a securely fastened cupboard in her room, for the click of several locks could be heard.

"What's that you're giving him?" Havelaar asked.

"Oh, Max, don't worry. It's a rusk from a can we bought in Batavia. And the sugar's been locked up the whole time too."

Havelaar's thoughts returned to the point where they had been interrupted.

"Do you realize," he continued, "we still haven't paid that doctor's bill—oh, it's hard to bear!"

"Dearest Max, we live so frugally here, we'll soon be able to pay off all our debts! Besides, it won't be long before you're appointed Resident, and then all our troubles will be over."

"That's part of what worries me," Havelaar said. "I'd hate to leave Lebak . . . and I'll tell you why. Little Max's illness made us love him even more, don't you agree? So imagine how much I'll love poor Lebak once it's been cured of its cancer, after so many years of suffering. The idea of promotion rattles my nerves; they can't do without me here, Tina! But on the other hand, when I think of our debts . . ."

"Everything will work out for the best, Max! Even if you do have to leave, you can help Lebak later, when you're governor-general."

The lines of Havelaar's embroidery pattern began to zigzag wildly! There was fury in those nosegays; the eyelets became angular and jagged, like snapping teeth.

Tina realized she'd said something wrong.

"Dear Max . . ." she began, warmly.

"Damn it! D'you want the poor wretches to go on starving all those years? Could you live on sand?"

"Dearest Max!"

But he sprang from his chair, and there was no more drawing that evening. He paced the inner gallery in a rage, until finally he spoke in a tone that would have sounded gruff and harsh to anyone who didn't know him, but which made a very different impression on Tina:

"Damn their indifference, their scandalous indifference! For the past month I've been waiting for justice to be done, and meanwhile the poor people here are suffering terribly. The Adipati seems certain that no one will dare to challenge him! Just look—"

He went to his office and returned with a letter, which I have here before me, reader!

"Look, in this letter he has the gall to tell me what sort of labor he would like to have done by the people he's summoned unlawfully. Surely he's taken his shamelessness a step too far this time!¹⁴³ And d'you know who these people are? They're women with small children, with nursing infants, pregnant women driven out of Parangkujang to the local capital to work for *him*! There are no men left! And they have no food, and they sleep on the road and eat sand! Can you eat sand? Are they supposed to go on eating sand till I'm governor-general? Damn it all!"

Tina knew very well the true cause of Max's rage when he spoke like this to the woman he loved.

"And what's worse," Havelaar continued, "all this is going on under my authority! If some of those poor wretches happen to straggle by, right now, and see the glow of our lamps, they'll say, 'There's the home of the villain who was supposed to protect us! There he sits calmly with his wife and child, drawing embroidery patterns, while we lie out here in the road

Is this house?

with our children and starve like stray dogs! Yes, I can hear them, I can hear them calling down vengeance on my head! Come here, Max, come here!"

And he kissed his child so fiercely as to frighten him.

"My child, if they tell you I'm a villain who lacked the courage to do justice—that I was responsible for the death of so many mothers—if they tell you your father's neglect of duty stole the blessing from your head—oh, Max, oh, Max, tell them how I suffered!"

And he burst into tears, which Tina kissed away. Then she took little Max to his bed—a pallet of straw—and when she returned, she found Havelaar in conversation with Verbrugge and Duclarri, who had just arrived. They were discussing the expected decision by the government.

"To be sure, I understand that this puts the Resident in a difficult position," Duclarri said. "He can't advise the government to accept your proposals, because then too many things would come to light. I've lived in the Banten area a long time and know a great deal about these matters, even more than you, Mr. Havelaar! I came here as a noncom, and military men hear things the natives don't dare tell officials. But if an open investigation exposes all that, you can be sure the Governor-General will take Resident Slymering to task for his failure, during two years, to catch wind of what was obvious to you from the outset. So he obviously wants to make sure there'll be no investigation . . ."

"That had occurred to me," Havelaar replied, "and once my eyes were opened by his attempt to persuade the Adipati to speak against me—which suggests he wants to divert attention from the affair by accusing me of goodness knows what—I took steps to protect myself, sending copies of my

letters directly to the government. In one of them, I ask to be called to account for my actions if ever any accusations of wrongdoing come *my* way. Now, if Slymering attacks me, common fairness demands that they hear what I have to say before making their decision. Even a criminal has that right, and since I've done nothing wrong . . ."

"The mail has arrived!" Verbrugge exclaimed.

Yes, it was the mail! The mail, which included the following letter from the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies to the *former* Assistant Resident of Lebak, Havelaar:

*The Office of the Governor-General. N° 54
Buitenzorg, March 23, 1856*

Your methods, upon discovering or suspecting malicious practices by the chiefs in the Lebak regency, in combination with your attitude towards your superior, the Resident of Banten, have incurred my profound dissatisfaction.

The actions in question show a lack not only of the mature reflection, discretion, and prudence so essential to an official charged with the exercise of authority [sic] in the interior, *but also* of a proper understanding of your subordination to your immediate superior.

Mere days after assuming office, you saw fit, without any advance consultation [sic] with the Resident, to make the head of the Native Administration in Lebak the target of damaging investigations.

These investigations led you—without even supporting your accusations against the chief in question with facts, let alone proofs—to propose subjecting a distinguished native official such as the Regent of Lebak—still a zealous

servant of our country at the age of sixty, a close relation by marriage of leading families of regents in neighboring regencies, and the subject of glowing reports throughout his career—to what amounts to a complete character assassination.

Furthermore, when the Resident expressed his disinclination to accede entirely to your proposals, you refused to comply with his reasonable wish for full disclosure of the information at your disposal regarding the actions of the Native Administration in Lebak.

Such conduct merits the severest censure and raises suspicions of your *unsuitability* for office in the Colonial Administration.

I have no choice but to relieve you of your duties as Assistant Resident of Lebak.

Considering, however, certain favorable reports about you that I received in the past, I do not regard the foregoing as sufficient to prevent your appointment to another office in the Colonial Administration. I have therefore appointed you to the position of Assistant Resident in Ngawi.

Your future conduct in that office will determine whether it is possible for you to go on serving in the Colonial Administration.

Below this was written the name of the man whose "diligence, competence, and good faith" the King had called unassailable when appointing him Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies.¹⁴⁴

"We will soon leave this place, Tina, my dear," Havelaar said stoically, and he handed the Governor-General's letter to Verbrugge, who read it with Duclari.

Verbrugge had tears in his eyes but said nothing. Duclari, a highly civilized man, let out a terrible curse: “G*****! I’ve seen this regency governed by scoundrels and thieves, who left with their reputations intact, and to think they’ve sent you such a letter!”

“It means nothing,” Havelaar said. “The Governor-General is an honest man; he must have been deceived . . . although he could have avoided that by interviewing me first. He’s caught in the web of Buitenzorg bureaucracy, and we know what *that* means! But I’ll go and see him, and tell him how things really stand here. He’ll do the right thing; I’m sure of it!”

“But if you go to Ngawi—”

“Yes, I know! The Ngawi Regent is related to the Yogyakarta court. I’m familiar with Ngawi, because I spent two years in Bagelen, which is near there.¹⁴⁵ In Ngawi I’d have to go on doing exactly what I’ve been doing here; the journey there would be pointless. Besides, I can’t possibly serve on probation, as if I had misbehaved! But most importantly, it’s clear to me now that I can’t put a stop to all these dirty dealings as long as I remain a civil servant, as it means there are too many people between me and the government with an interest in denying the misery of the common folk. And that’s not the only thing stopping me from going to Ngawi. That office wasn’t vacant; it was opened up for me, look!”

And he showed them, in the newspaper from Java delivered along with the letter, that the same government order appointing him to Ngawi also relocated that regency’s Assistant Resident to a vacancy elsewhere.

“Do you realize why I’ve been ordered to Ngawi, and not to that vacant regency? I’ll tell you why! Ngawi is in Madiun, and the Resident there is the brother-in-law of the previous

Resident of Banten. Remember when I said the Adipati had seen such bad examples in the past?"

"Ah!" Verbrugge and Duclari exclaimed in unison, realizing that Havelaar had been reassigned to Ngawi in order to prove that he could change his ways!

"And there's yet another reason I can't go there," he said. "The Governor-General will soon resign. I have met his successor, and know that nothing can be expected from him.

¹⁴⁶ To make a difference for those poor people before it's too late, I must speak to the present Governor-General while he's still in office, and if I go to Ngawi now, that'll be impossible. Listen, Tina!"

"My dearest Max?"

"You're brave, aren't you?"

"Max, you know I can be brave . . . as long as I'm with you!"

"Well, then!"

He rose to his feet and wrote the following request, which seems to me a model of eloquence.

Rangkasbitung, March 29, 1856

To the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies:

I have had the honor of receiving Your Excellency's missive of the 23rd inst., N° 54. That document compels me to request that Your Excellency grant me an honorable discharge from my country's service.¹⁴⁷

MAX HAVELAAR

It took less time in Buitenzorg to grant Havelaar's request for a discharge than it had to find a way of evading his accusations. The latter had taken a whole month, while the discharge was received in Lebak after just a few days.

"Thank goodness," Tina cried. "Now you can finally be

yourself!"

Havelaar was not ordered to turn over the interim administration of his regency to Verbrugge and therefore assumed he was to await his successor's arrival. That took quite a while, because the new Assistant Resident had to travel from a remote corner of Java. After waiting for almost three weeks, the former Assistant Resident of Lebak, who despite his discharge was still acting in that capacity, sent the following letter to Controleur Verbrugge.

Nº 153

Rangkasbitung, April 15, 1856

To the Controleur of Lebak:¹⁴⁸

As you are aware, I have been honorably discharged from the civil service at my own request, by order of the government of the 4th inst., Nº 4.

Perhaps I would have been within my rights to cease my work as Assistant Resident as soon as I received that decision, since it seems anomalous to hold a public office while no longer a public official.

I was not instructed to relinquish my office, however, and so—partly in recognition of my duty not to abandon my post until suitably replaced, and partly for less important reasons—I awaited the arrival of my successor, believing that he would arrive shortly, or in any case, this month.

You have now informed me that my replacement cannot be expected as soon as that—I believe you heard the news in Serang. You also told me the Resident was surprised that, despite my unusual position, I had not yet asked his leave to turn over the administration of this

regency to you.

No news could have been more welcome to me. I need not remind you that I—who have attested that I cannot serve my country in any other way than I did here—was punished for my service with a reprimand, along with a ruinous and dishonorable new appointment . . . and orders to betray the poor people who placed their confidence in my loyalty—and so had to choose between dishonor and destitution! And you know that, after all this, each new case required me to ponder, once again, the demands of duty, and even the simplest matter weighed heavily on me, trapped as I was between my conscience and the principles of the government to which I owe my loyalty until I have been relieved of my office.

This difficulty was especially great when I had to respond to *grievances*.

After all, I once promised not to surrender anyone to the rancor of his chiefs! Once—recklessly, it seems!—I gave my word that the government would see justice done!

The poor natives were not to know that my promise and my word had been repudiated, and that I was poor and stripped of my powers, alone in my longing for justice and human dignity to prevail.

And so they went on bringing their grievances to me!

It was agonizing, after receiving the Governor-General's letter of March 23, to sit before them as their supposed guardian, their powerless protector.

It was heartbreaking to hear their complaints of mistreatment, extortion, poverty, hunger . . . even as I and my wife and child face the prospect of hunger and poverty

ourselves.

Nor could I betray the government. I could hardly say to those poor people, "Go and suffer, because the administration *wants* you to be oppressed!" I couldn't acknowledge my impotence, for that would have been tantamount to acknowledging the scandalous, unscrupulous behavior of the Governor-General's advisers.

This is what I told them: "I can't help you right now! But I will go to Batavia and speak to the Great Man about your troubles. *He* is a just man, and *he* will come to your aid. For now, simply return to your home . . . do not resist . . . do not flee . . . wait patiently. I believe—I . . . hope that justice will be done!"

In this way, ashamed as I was about breaking my promise to help, I thought I could bring my beliefs into conformity with my duty to the government, which is still paying my salary for this month, and I would have gone on in this way until my successor's arrival, if not for an unusual event that took place today, which has obliged me to break off this ambiguous relationship.

Seven people came and presented their complaints. I gave them the above response. They returned to their village. On the way back, they ran into their local chief. He must have forbidden them to leave their *kampung* again, and—according to my sources—he took away their clothes so that they couldn't leave their homes. One of them escaped, came to me *again*, and told me that *he dared not return* to his village.

What I am to say to *that* man, I do not know!

I cannot protect him; I must not confess my inability to

take action; I do not *wish* to prosecute the Village Chief, because that would look as if I drummed up this case in support of my cause. I am at a complete loss what to do . . .

I charge you, subject to the approval of the Resident of Banten, with the administration of the Lebak regency from tomorrow morning onward.

The Assistant Resident of Lebak,
MAX HAVELAAR

Then Havelaar and his wife and child left Rangkasbitung. He refused all offers of an escort. For Duclari and Verbrugge, it was an emotional farewell. Havelaar, too, was touched, especially when he found a large crowd awaiting him at the first staging post. They had stolen away from Rangkasbitung to say goodbye.

In Serang, the family alighted at the home of Resident Slymering, who showed them the customary hospitality of the Indies.¹⁴⁹

That evening the Resident had many visitors. They said, in the most impassioned terms, that they had come to bid farewell to Havelaar, who was offered one hearty handshake after another.

But he had to go on to Batavia to see the Governor-General . . .

When he arrived there, he asked for an audience. The request was denied, because His Excellency had a sore on his foot.

Havelaar waited until the sore had healed. Then he made a new request for an audience.

His Excellency had "such a heap of business" that he had been "forced to turn away even the Director-General of

Finance," and therefore couldn't receive Havelaar either.

Havelaar gave His Excellency time to burrow his way out of the heap. He felt a pang of envy at the thought of the people assisting His Excellency in these labors, because he liked to keep busy and worked fast: such "heaps" usually melted away at his touch. But of course, that was out of the question. Havelaar's labors were harder than labor: he had to *wait*!

He waited. Eventually, he sent a new request for an audience. He was told that His Excellency couldn't receive him, because "the whole business of his imminent departure" prevented him from doing so.

Max recommended himself to His Excellency's favor for an audience of half an hour, as soon as a slight gap could be found between two "heaps of business."

Finally, he heard that His Excellency would be leaving the next day! He was thunderstruck. He still clung obstinately to the belief that was dealing with an honest man who had been deceived.¹⁵⁰ One quarter of an hour would have been enough to prove the justice of his cause, and it seemed this quarter of an hour would be denied him.

Among Havelaar's papers, I have found his draft of a letter he sent on the eve of the Governor-General's departure for the mother country. A penciled note in the margins reads "not accurate," which leads me to assume that some alterations were made in the final version. I mention this to prevent the absence of *literal* correspondence in this case from casting doubt on the authenticity of the other, *official* documents reproduced here, all of which were signed by an unknown hand as being *identical transcripts*. Perhaps the recipient of this letter would like to make the *fully* accurate version public.¹⁵¹ A comparison would then show where Havelaar had

departed from his draft. Here, then, is his *substantially* correct version:

Batavia, May 23, 1856

Your Excellency! My official request, made by missive of February 28, to be interviewed regarding the Lebak cases, has gone unanswered.

Likewise, Your Excellency has not deigned to grant my repeated requests for an audience.

In other words, Your Excellency, an official “of whom the government had received favorable reports”—those are Your Excellency’s own words!—a man who had served his country in this part of the world for seventeen years, and who not only did no wrong, but strove to do good, displaying unequaled self-sacrifice and placing honor and duty above all else—has been treated as worse than a criminal. For a criminal at least receives a *hearing*.

Your Excellency has been misled about me; I can understand that. But that Your Excellency did not seize the opportunity to be disabused—*this* I cannot understand.

Your Excellency will leave this city tomorrow, and I cannot allow that to happen without telling you one last time *that I have done my DUTY, AND NOTHING BUT MY DUTY, with discretion, composure, gentleness, and courage.*

The grounds for the disapproval expressed in Your Excellency’s missive of March 23 are *utter fabrications and lies.*

I can *prove* this, and would already have done so, if Your Excellency had seen fit to grant me a mere half hour—if Your Excellency had found just half an hour *to do justice!*

But you did not! And now a respectable family has been reduced to beggary . . .

This is not, however, the subject of my grievance.

Your Excellency has *sanctioned* THE SYSTEM OF ABUSE OF AUTHORITY, OF ROBBERY AND MURDER, THAT WEIGHS SO HEAVILY ON THE POOR JAVANESE, and *that* is my grievance.

That is what cries to heaven for justice!

Blood clings to the coins you have saved from the salary you have earned *thus*, Your Excellency!¹⁵²

Once more, I ask you to spare a moment to hear my case—late tonight, perhaps, or early tomorrow morning! And again, I make this request not for myself, but for my cause, the cause of justice and human dignity, which is also the cause of politics rightly understood.

If Your Excellency can reconcile it with your conscience to leave this place without hearing me out, my own conscience will be clear, in the certainty that I have done everything in my power to avert the sad, bloody events that will shortly ensue if the government persists in ignoring what goes on in the lives of the common people.

¹⁵³

MAX HAVELAAR

That evening, Havelaar waited. He waited all night.

He had hoped that indignation at the tone of his letter might bring about what he had tried and failed to accomplish through patience and persuasion. His hope was vain! The Governor-General left without having spoken with Havelaar. Yet another Excellency had gone to rest in the mother country!

Havelaar wandered the world, poor and friendless. He searched—

Enough, my good Stern! I, Multatuli, will now take up the pen. It is not your mission to write Havelaar's biography. I called you to life . . . I had you come from Hamburg . . . I taught you to write serviceable Dutch after very little practice . . . I let you kiss Louise Rosemeyer, who's in sugar . . . Enough, now, Stern, you may go!

•

That Shawlman fellow and his wife—

Silence, wretched product of filthy avarice and profane hypocrisy! I created you . . . you grew into a monster under my pen . . . I'm disgusted by my own handiwork: choke on your coffee and be-gone!

•

Yes, I, Multatuli, "who have suffered much," now take up the pen. I do not ask forgiveness for the form of my book. It seemed to me well suited to my aim.

My aim is twofold:

Firstly, I wanted to bring forth something little Max and his baby sister can keep as a *pusaka*, a sacred heirloom, when their parents have died of penury.

I wanted to give those children a patent of nobility, penned by my own hand.

Secondly, *I want to be read.*

Yes, I want to be read! I want to be read by statesmen who must heed the signs of the times . . . by men of letters who feel they should at least glance at the book people are saying such

awful things about . . . by merchants who have an interest in the coffee auctions . . . by ladies' maids who'll pay a few cents to borrow a copy . . . by governors-general in retirement . . . by ministers with heaps of business¹⁵⁴ . . . by the lackeys of those Excellencies . . . by pastors, who by ancient custom will accuse me of attacking Almighty God, when all I'm doing is standing up against the idol *they've* made in their own image . . . by thousands and tens of thousands of the self-serving Drystubble tribe, who'll clamor the loudest about my "charming" writings as they continue with business as usual¹⁵⁵ . . . by the members of Parliament, who should know what goes on in the great overseas Realm that belongs to the Realm of the Netherlands . . .

Yes, I *will* be read!

And if I achieve this aim, I will be content. My aim, you see, was not to write *well* . . . but to write so that I would be heard. And just as a man who cries, "Stop, thief!" gives little thought to the style of his spontaneous cry, I too couldn't care less how I'm to be judged for the way I have shouted my "Stop, thief!"

"The book is multifarious . . . disjointed . . . straining for effect . . . the style is poor . . . the author inexperienced . . . no talent . . . no method . . ."

Fine, fine, all of it, fine! But . . . THE JAVANESE ARE MISTREATED! The MAIN POINT of what I have written is irrefutable!¹⁵⁶

The louder the criticism of my book, the happier I will be, for the greater the chance that *I will be heard*. And that is what I want!

But all of you whom I disturb in your "business" or your "retirement," you cabinet ministers and governors-general, don't set too much store by the inexperience of my penmanship. That pen of mine could go on practicing, and,

with a little effort, even become proficient enough to persuade the public of the truth at last, in which case I'd ask for a seat in the lower house of Parliament,¹⁵⁷ if only to protest against the certificates of virtue that Indies experts keep awarding to one another,¹⁵⁸ perhaps to create the extraordinary impression that virtue is something they hold dear . . .

And to raise a protest against the ~~endless expeditions~~ and "heroism" perpetrated against ~~poor miserable creatures~~ who were maltreated until they had no choice but to revolt.

And to protest against the scandalously craven circulars that besmirch our nation's honor by calling for public charity for the victims of chronic piracy.¹⁵⁹

What ho! The rebels were famished skeletons, and the pirates hale and hearty!

And if I were denied that seat . . . if my readers continued to disbelieve . . .

Then I would translate my book into the few languages I know, and the many I can learn, to ask Europe for what I sought in vain in the Netherlands.

And in every capital city, songs would be sung with refrains like this: "There is a piratical state by the sea, between the Scheldt and East Frisia!"

And if that didn't work either?

Then I would have my book translated into Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, Alfurese, Buginese, Batak . . .

And I would sling sword-whetting war songs into the hearts of the poor martyrs to whom I promised my aid, I, Multatuli.

Aid and rescue by lawful means, where possible . . . and by the legitimate use of force, where necessary.

And all this would have a most injurious effect on the coffee

auctions of the Netherlands Trading Company!¹⁶⁰

For I am no poetical sparer of flies, no mild-mannered dreamer like the downtrodden Havelaar, who did his duty with the courage of a lion and is now going hungry with the patience of a guinea pig in winter.

This book is merely an introduction . . .

I will make my weapons as strong and sharp as necessary

. . .

God grant that it may not be necessary!

No, it *will* not be necessary! Because I dedicate my book to *You*, William the Third, King, Grand Duke, Prince . . . more than Prince, Grand Duke, and King . . . EMPEROR of the magnificent Realm of INSULINDIA, which winds around the equator like a girdle of emeralds . . .

I ask, with confidence, is it your imperial will:

That Havelaar be sullied by mudslinging Slymerings and Drystubbles?

And that your more than *thirty million* subjects out there be MISTREATED AND EXPLOITED IN YOUR NAME?¹⁶¹

*The British painter and author William Hogarth believed that certain “serpentine” lines played an essential role in aesthetic experience, evoking liveliness and motion.

Comments and Clarifications Accompanying the 1875 Edition (Revised, Altered, and Expanded in 1881)

For the delay in publishing this edition it is I who am to blame, and certainly not my very enterprising publisher. Yet the word “blame” may be ill-chosen. The right to blame implies guilt, and I wonder whether that could really apply to my almost insurmountable aversion to reliving, page by page, word by word, letter by letter, the tragic events that led me to write this book. This *book!* For to the reader, it is no more than that. To me, however, these pages are a chapter of my life . . . and editing them was torture, sheer torture! Time and again, the pen slipped from my hand, and my eyes grew dim as I reread the sketch—still incomplete and understated!—of what happened more than twenty-five years ago on the once obscure patch of earth called Lebak. And my sorrow grew deeper still when I thought of what has followed in the more than twenty years since the publication of *Max Havelaar*. I kept tossing the proof pages aside and trying to turn my inner eye to less tragic subjects than those summoned before it by the tale of Havelaar’s fruitless struggle. For weeks, and sometimes months—as my publisher can confirm!—I lacked the courage to inspect the proof sheets sent to me. After repeated sallies, I have now wrestled my way through the editing, which took more out of me than the original writing.

In the winter of 1859, when I was writing *Havelaar*—partly in an unheated room, and partly at a grimy, rickety table in a Brussels tavern, surrounded by good-natured but fairly

unaesthetic *faro* drinkers—I believed I would bring about something, achieve something, accomplish something. That hope gave me courage; that hope, at times, made me eloquent. I still recall the sensation that came over me when I wrote to *her*, “My book is finished, my book is finished! Soon all will be well!” I had fought my way through four long, four difficult years—alas! to no good end!—in my efforts to bring about, without publicity, without commotion, and above all without scandal, some measure that might improve the circumstances under which the Javanese languish. The wretched Van Twist—who should have been my natural ally, if honor and duty had meant anything to him—could not be persuaded to lift a finger. My letter to him has been published countless times and covers almost all the main incidents in the Havelaar affair. The man never replied, never gave any sign of wishing to repair the damage done by his wrongs. When his unscrupulous indifference *forced* me to appeal to the public, to choose a different path, my outrage finally gave me the means of attaining what had seemed unattainable: a moment’s attention. What the lazy Van Twist had refused me, I managed to wring out of the nation: *Havelaar* was read, and I . . . was heard. Heard, yes, but to my sorrow, I never received a full hearing! I was told that I had written a “good book,” and if I had any more such tales to tell . . .

Yes, my readers had found the book “amusing,” and hadn’t realized—or pretended not to understand—that in giving up the prospect of a brilliant career in middle age, my aim was not to become an entertainer, and that I had found no amusement in risking death by poison for myself, my brave and loyal wife, and our dear child. *Havelaar* was a most entertaining book, I was told outright, and much of this

fulsome praise came from readers who would cry out in alarm at the slightest everyday threat—not to life and limb, but to the smallest part of their wealth. Most readers seemed to believe that I had exposed myself and my family to poverty, humiliation, and death in order to provide *them* with a pleasant read.

This delusion—but enough of that. I can tell you, in any case, that I had little suspected such naive, heartless buffooneries when I rejoiced, “My book is finished, my book is finished!” In my conviction that I was telling the truth, that I had done what I described—overlooking the fact that the reading and listening public has grown used to cant, to meaningless babble, to an almost constant contradiction between words and actions—I was filled, back in 1859, with all the hope that, in fact, I *required* for the painful process of writing *Havelaar*. But now, more than twenty years later, when it has become only too clear that the Nation sides with the Van Twists and their cronies—in other words, with villainy, robbery, and murder—and against me, which is to say against Justice, Human Kindness, and enlightened Statecraft—now it was infinitely harder for me to review these pages than in 1859, although even then I was often all but overcome by painful bitterness. Here and there—on p. 114, for example—it welled up, despite my sincere wish to suppress it. Anyone wishing to hear more about the emotions stirred in me by my memories of what happened in Lebak and afterwards may refer to my first pamphlet on freedom of labor.*

And then there is all my sorrow at the continuing failure of my attempts, my pain at the loss of the woman who so heroically stood by me in my struggle against the world, and will not be there when the hour of triumph has finally struck!

Yes, reader, the hour of triumph. For, as strange as it may seem, I will triumph! In spite of the artifice and fumbling of those Mice of State to whom the Netherlands has entrusted its vital interests. In spite of our foolish Constitution, which puts a premium on mediocrity or worse, ruling out anything that might cure what everyone admits is rotten in our state. In spite of the many people with an interest in Injustice. In spite of the base envy of my “writing skills”... isn’t that the term? for believe me, I am not a writer, you makers-of-many-books who wish to see in me a peer and rival! In spite of the coarse defamation that will stop at nothing, however crude and senseless, to stifle my voice and destroy my influence. And lastly, in spite of the lamentable ~~faintheartedness~~ of a Nation that simply goes on tolerating all this... I will triumph!

I have been reproached by certain writers for achieving nothing or not enough, changing nothing or not enough, accomplishing nothing or not enough. I will return below to the source of these accusations. As for the matter at hand, I fully acknowledge that nothing has improved in the Indies. But . . . changed? Those who—first in the wake of *Havelaar*, and later due to our wretched constitutional seesaw system—have exploited the movement inspired by my book to place themselves in the seat of power . . . they have done nothing but make changes. What else could they do? Their vocation as political acrobats demanded it. The gang that “fell upwards into power for lack of weight” after 1860—some incompetent, others less than incorruptible—understood that they had to *do* something, although preferably not the right thing, which—as I acknowledge—would have smacked of political suicide. To do justice to the maltreated Javanese would have been tantamount to acknowledging the truth of Havelaar’s claims,

and that would have been a harsh verdict on most of them.[†] Yet they had to keep up the appearance of striking out in a new direction and threw many a bone to the People—who were “quivering” with indignation—not really to satisfy their hunger for reform, but simply to keep their jaws occupied, if only with putative politico-economical claptrap. These government men threw choice morsels to their electoral colleges, the newspaper publishers, and finally the coffeehouse public, a practice for which I coined the enduring term “penny-striking.” For years—and even before *Havelaar*—“Freedom of Labor” was the principal dish, the mainstay of their perfidious menu. For variety, those gentlemen would serve their gullible guests a selection of controversies about the Indies currency system, followed by the land registry controversy, the Priangan controversy, the culture system emolument controversy, the Agricultural Act controversy, the private land ownership controversy, and one or two others. Each new act of Parliament was followed by another, and every time, the men in power—liberal or conservative, it made no difference!—deluded the People into believing that the only possible resolution of the *unanimously acknowledged* difficulties was, in truth and at long last, whatever nostrum they had just proposed. No, really, *this* time it would do the trick! Thus each worn-out experiment was followed by a new one, each used-up quackery by a fresh quackery. Each new ministry had a new elixir, and for every new elixir there were new ministers, most of them destined to spend more years burdening the overloaded pensions register than months in office. And Parliament went on debating! And the electoral colleges went on manufacturing heroes and black sheep! And the People went on listening! All those novelties were

investigated, tested, applied, and implemented. In the Indies, incessant changes of scenery left the chiefs, the European officials, and above all the People *bingung* . . . and they say nothing changed after *Havelaar*? Or because of *Havelaar*? Come, come! After and because of that book, the same thing happened in the Indies that happened to Mr. Punch's timepiece. When that philosopher was told that his watch wouldn't run because the clockwork was dirty, he promptly threw it in the gutter and swept it clean with a stable broom. Our politicians in The Hague, following the traditions of our parliamentary puppet show, simply crushed the mechanism under their heels instead. I can assure the reader, all sorts of changes were wrought in that watch!

•

The Netherlands did not choose to do the right thing in the *Havelaar* affair. As long as two times two is four, there can be no doubt that this failure—this crime!—marks the first step towards the loss of its East Indian possessions. Those who are skeptical of this prediction because today, only twenty years after circumstances forced me to act, the Dutch flag still flies over Batavia, betray the narrowness of their political perspective. Do they truly believe that upheavals like the ones that await Insulindia, which have, as a matter of fact, already begun—can't you see that, people of the Netherlands?—could take place within a time span that would suffice for a mundane incident in private life? In the lives of states, twenty years is less than the twinkling of an eye.

Still, the catastrophe will unfold fairly quickly. The reckless war with Aceh—one of the last bits of penny-striking required

by a certain minister to distract attention from his incompetence—will prove just as catastrophic in its outcome and influence as it was rash and criminal in its conception. The teetering edifice of Dutch authority cannot withstand debacles like the ones we are suffering there.[†] Yet even before I reveal the wider consequences to which this cruel and costly idiocy is certain to lead, we must ask—where in this whole business is the vaunted principle of ministerial responsibility? Is the Nation now simply supposed to accept that a certain Mr. Fransen van de Putte saw fit to create a situation that—leaving aside, for the moment, our staggering loss of prestige in the Malay Archipelago!—has cost so many millions in treasure and so many human lives? Yes, of course! That man, too, has his name on the list of state pensions! It would seem the Dutch taxpayer has money to burn.

As for the war with Aceh, I will have no choice but to revert to the subject now and again in my notes to *Havelaar*. For now, suffice it to say that this, too, shows how inattentively my book has been read. Rarely, if ever, have I seen any sign of understanding that the present war, and my prediction thereof, are connected with the contents of the thirteenth chapter. *Havelaar* had been so widely distributed that it was very strange to observe—in September 1872, when my warning letter to the King was published, and the following year, when war was declared—that so few people recalled how, back in 1860, I mentioned our strained relations with the Sultanate of Aceh and presented evidence that I knew more about the matter than our newspapers and members of Parliament. Otherwise, perhaps my well-meant warning of September 1872 would have borne more fruit! Even today, when old Jupiter wants to destroy kings and nations, he still

makes them blind, deaf, mad, and conservative—or liberal. For it makes no difference. The essential thing is always to seek the truth, to acknowledge the weight of the truth, and above all to act on the facts that, by this method, may be held true. Anything else is unacceptable, and Holland will lose the Indies because of its failure to do me justice in my struggle to protect the Javanese from mistreatment.

There are those who still cannot comprehend the link between these two assertions, but is that *my* fault? To stifle my complaints is to protect untruth and encourage lies. Is it really so hard to understand the impossibility of governing such vast possessions for any length of time when people persist in demanding nothing but false reports concerning the country and its people? To organize, to administer, to rule, surely it is necessary first of all to know the present condition of the matters to be addressed, and as long as the facts contained in *Havelaar* are swept aside, we do not know!

And another thing. My book gave proof that the present laws are not being enforced. So, pray tell, how does it help for our parliamentarians and candidates for office to make a fuss about needing new laws, as if that will change anything? I still believe that the old laws were, in the main, not so bad. But the choice was made not to obey them. Aye, there's the rub![§]

There, and not in endless debates about subjects of purported or pretended political importance, the kind of quibbling that gives journalists material for their front pages, ministers another week in office, and parliamentary debaters the chance for a pointless display of their talents, but brings us not one step closer to the only thing that counts: protecting the Javanese from the greed of their chiefs in complicity with a corrupt Dutch administration.

While preparing the Notes to this new edition, I was in constant doubt as to how much explanation was required. There are two difficulties: clarifying Malay or foreign-sounding expressions and giving evidence for the facts stated in *Havelaar*. I am still not sure how deeply the myth spread by the Van Twists that I wrote "nothing more than a novel" has taken root. Does anyone challenge the authenticity of the official documents I have put forward? No such news has reached my ears. And yet, considering that I have still not been given the credit due to me if their authenticity is acknowledged, it was difficult for me to steer a middle course between too much and too little justification. Again and again, I ran the risk of failing to justify something for which some readers might require proof, while providing evidence for other things that required no clarification whatsoever, an error that could expose me to the—usually misguided!—reproach, "*Qui s'excuse s'accuse.*" But I have no excuses to make, since I did my duty. The Netherlands did not do its duty and should apologize for siding against Havelaar and with villainy. That's the situation! Vacillating between too much and too little justification of the stated facts became a great hindrance to my progress. But in a fairly advanced stage of editing the Notes, I discovered that I would greatly exceed the space allotted to me—a space I had originally estimated to be sufficient. My notes, explanations, and clarifications of philological, geographical, ethnological, and historical matters threatened to outgrow the original book. The pruning thus required was a sorrowful chore for me, and I cannot help but believe it was something of a loss for the reader. The accursed

ellipsis points with which Mr. Van Lennep saw fit to blight my work have, of course, been replaced in this edition with legible words composed of letters. I have left the pseudonyms Slymering, Verbrugge, Duclari, and Slotering unchanged, since those names have gained popular currency. My poisoned predecessor was named Carolus. The names of Controleur Verbrugge and Commander Duclari were Van Hemert and Collard. The Resident of Bantam was named Brest van Kempen, and Michiels was the name of the little Napoleon of Padang. Why did I change these names in the manuscript that I entrusted to Mr. V. L.? I refer you to the close of the nineteenth chapter and, beyond that, suffice it to say that I wished to shield the honest but less than heroic Controleur from malice. Although he didn't support me in my endeavor, he didn't stand in my way either, and he made frank declarations when I asked for them. This alone was a great step and could have been regarded as a crime. The name Slymering helped me to show the character of my model. And finally, those substitutions led me to change the names Carolus and Collard to Slotering and Duclari, for consistency. My intent was not by any means to keep their identities secret, as must be clear from the entire thrust of my book. I simply couldn't stomach the thought of exposing certain individuals to the judgment of the *lay* reading public. I believed that readers in the *official* world—whose business it was—would know whom to contact for more information about the matters I had brought to light. And sure enough, they did. As soon as my book arrived in the Indies, Governor-General Pahud hurried to Lebak "to investigate a few complaints of abuses there." I will return to the book's title in one of my notes. The full title, *Max Havelaar, or the Coffee Auctions of the*

Dutch Trading Company, is neither a farce, as some have claimed, nor "a signboard that was apparently necessary in Holland to attract buyers" as one commentator maintained in the *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Politik*. Oh, no, the title is an epigram. As for the spelling I use, I tend to follow the fashion of the day, as I do in my other works. "Not," as I said in the preface to the fifth edition of my *Ideas*, "because I feel the least reverence for the linguistic insights of those who are, these days, as good as official authorities in that field, but so as not to offend the eyes of my readers with unfamiliar spelling. The game's not worth the candle." To be sure, true linguistic science is another matter altogether! Yet even here, the ugly *ij* that some use to represent the *y* sound has been sent packing. Too bad for the purist who mourns it. Letter-men of that ilk will probably never make peace with my punctuation. Nor I with theirs. Well, I will do as I believe our great humorist Hildebrand did somewhere and present the purists with a couple of sacks of commas to scatter as they please until they reach the desired slyminess and can rest content, amen. Mr. C. Vosmaer, in his book *Zaaier*, remarks that *Havelaar* reflects an inadequate command of language and the struggle to find forms for its abundant subject matter. I agree wholeheartedly. As I was revising the book, I was repeatedly struck by a certain awkwardness of sentence structure, which was probably what prompted Mr. V.'s criticism. To the best of my knowledge, I have rectified that shortcoming in the present edition.

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Returning now to the accusation that I have accomplished so

little as yet . . . this reproach is not as witless as it looks. A man can become a doctor of letters on the strength of such claims. Good gracious, isn't that an accomplishment in itself? That people who were catching cold for want of laurels now feel the warmth of a doctoral cap on their bare heads, simply because they were clever enough to hurl a few rascally effronteries at me? In a country where official distinctions are scattered so carelessly . . .

So be it! What did I do, you ask? Well, I did what I described in *Havelaar*. Is that not enough? What did *you* do?

Again, what did I do? I took up the struggle, entirely on my own, risking my life and giving up every comfort, against your sort of people—that is, against Injustice. Go and do thou likewise!

And if my struggle has been unsuccessful, if I'm still an easy target for any fool who thinks he's mastered the art of phrasemaking—often despite meager talents, even in that regard—and if, more significantly, the situation in the Indies is more miserable than ever . . . am I to blame? I believe that I did all that could be done under the circumstances, and certainly more than any other Dutchman has. The taunts about the relative fruitlessness of my attempts call to mind Columbus's resentful sailors in September 1492. That mob, too, scoffed at their admiral. Whether they became doctors of letters, I don't know.

So my work has not borne fruit? This is not the place to examine my influence in fields far removed from Indies affairs. I cannot help but think that my writings have had a salutary effect in the moral and religious—or, perhaps I should say, in the intellectual—domain. There are numerous signs that I have set many people thinking. If anyone would question or

deny this, let him say so, and give his name, like the very distinguished gentlemen A. B. Cohen Stuart and Van Vloten, so that he may bear the discredit for his crude envy.

For I believe envy must be largely responsible for the tone in which some public commentators—or folks who aspire to that role—have attacked me and my work. The tone is generally too coarse for the subject matter.

I am clearly alone in thinking of jealousy when reading articles like those of *Doctor* Van Vloten; see, for example, the unminced article by Mr. J. Versluys in the January 19, 1875, issue of '*t Schoolblad*', in which Van Vloten's animosity is attributed to the essay "Vrye Studie" ("Free Study") in my third collection of *Ideeën* ("Ideas"). That same topic had also been discussed by Dr. Van V., and his thoughts on the matter had evidently failed to attract a wide audience. Is that *my fault?* In any case, it was after the publication of my own essay on the subject that I began to notice the antipathy towards me that now seems to prevail. I used to be described in the sweetest terms: "the victim of misrule in the Indies and apathy in Holland." What I am now, I cannot rightly say. A writer of drivel, I suppose, whose works must be suppressed to make room for the hyperaesthetic compositions of Dr. V. V. If you peruse his anthology, this supposition will start to look very plausible. The patent unfairness in that triumph of literary labor is also, very rightly, pointed out by Mr. Versluys. Even Mr. Vosmaer—assuredly one of our finest poets, perhaps the first among them—is cast from grace by the exalted Anthologist. Having committed the blunder of praising my work in *Zaaier*, he was not permitted to add his poetic flowerings to the collection.

But even in the absence of true professional jealousy, it has

Lately become a tic and a pastime to rail against me. Scores of pamphlets and “offprints” have no excuse for existing aside from such sniping, and they show a dismal lack of creativity. Those incapable of producing any such work themselves try to gain public attention—and royalties!—by sneering at another man’s efforts. You’d almost think I invited such treatment in my Idea 249, if not for the well-known fact that wasps, caterpillars, and shipworms are as ancient as fruit, foliage, and timbered vessels.

Still, it’s a pity! Of course, the Van Vlotens and their ilk need such stratagems to persuade publishers to risk “offprints” from their not very widely distributed magazines—that’s understandable. And I’m deeply honored to have risen so high in the public esteem that others can still raise their own profiles by taking me down a peg, even if I don’t always choose to encourage such parasites by responding seriously to their scribblings. Mind you, I don’t pledge everlasting silence, but it would be such a relief to me if others would take on the undemanding task of . . . pointing out the difference between wasps and fruit. Being obliged to spell everything out sours my mood, and that’s a shame for me and for my readers. Surely you can see why, when I’m in the middle of sketching some charming subject, I throw down my pen in horror as soon as I think of creatures like Van Vloten lying in wait to smear my work?¹¹ It’s beneath my dignity to help their kind increase their sales, and a quarter century ago, when I was embroiled in my struggle in Lebak, I would certainly have been amazed if anyone had predicted that, after making my attempts and exertions public, I’d have reason to make such a declaration! It doesn’t speak well of my readers that some of them dare to take a tone with me as if Havelaar were one of

them. As long as that continues, I will go on insisting that they have—by old habit—read badly. Otherwise, how can they bear it that a struggle taken up and pursued with such chivalry has, in the service of other interests, been transferred to a dunghill? Many thanks!

*1873 edition, p. 97 ff. There I also explain what compelled me, after *Havelaar*, to move on to a wider field than Indies affairs.

†Harsh indeed! See the closing pages of *Pruisen en Nederland* ("Prussians and the Netherlands").

‡The notion that Aceh has been conquered and the Acehnese defeated is a lie.

§For a clearer picture of the typical frequency of such misunderstandings, see the amusing incident in an audience with the Czar of Russia described in my pamphlet *Vryenarbeid* ("Freedom of Labor"), 1873 edition, p. 137.

||I give you my word that this is, in the most literal sense, one of the reasons for the repeated delays in publishing the story of *Little Wouter*.

NOTES

- 1 The book was divided into chapters by Mr. Van Lennep.* I myself—especially in 1860—was not enough of a writer to impose such a system on my argument, and I still believe that, from a literary perspective, these divisions could be left out without detriment. If sections by Drystubble and Stern succeed each other without interruption, there is a piquancy to the unexpected transition that keeps—or jars—the reader awake. Still, experience has shown that it is easier to cite specific passages if the chapters are numbered, and I have therefore left the divisions in place.
- 2 This Polish coffeehouse was, or still is, a popular establishment on Kalverstraat in Amsterdam, and above all a meeting place for certain classes of brokers.
- 3 “*Dass er bei uns speisen kann*” (“That he [young Stern] can dine with us”): that’s how a certain Mr. Stromer renders these words in his so-called translation of *Havelaar*. If I add that the same artful pen pusher can’t tell the difference between the words *pantalon* (“trousers”) and *pantoffel* (“slipper”) either, that he changes *witte mieren* (“white ants”) into *schweinsnieren* (“pigs’ kidneys”), etc., etc., then you will appreciate the quality of his work. Furthermore, he simply left out about two-fifths of the book without a word of explanation, turning the whole thing into nonsense. I propose that he be appointed a famous foreign author.

The French translation by Nieuwenhuis and Crisafulli is likewise very disappointing, but simply couldn’t be as bad as

the German. An impossibility!

The English adaptation by my noble friend Alphonse Nahuës, in contrast, is good, and has also been praised in Britain.

4 Far be it from me to disapprove of all the words I put into Drystubble's mouth. He "doesn't normally concern himself" with verses of the sort that follow. Well, neither do I! The difference lies in the reasons for our dislike. When a young heart that thirsts for poetry, misled by the hypnotic power of the literature forced upon it, goes astray in its first attempts at self-expression, taking as essential what ultimately proves to be no more than vain noise—"jingling and jangling," as I call it in my "*Naschrift op de Bruid daarboven*" ("Postscript to *The Bride Up Above*")—this misstep is not only forgivable, but highly necessary. There's no way around it! Before the oak tree can supply us with dry, sturdy wood, it must begin its days as a tender shoot. But the Drystubbles of this world were never tender and had no need to change to become what they are: dry and useless. They stand not above but below such youthful excesses, and besides, they would be the first to assign value to "verses and the like" if such commodities were listed on the Exchange. If Drystubble's realist outpourings can go any length toward pruning the love of false poetry from the souls of our young people, I warmly recommend his diatribes to the attention of parents, educators, and reviewers. As for me, if I had to choose between him and versifiers of a certain type . . . well, I still wouldn't choose him! But I admit that the choice, however justified, would cause me pain.

5 To what poem could Drystubble be referring? Chronology rules out Sentot's "*De laatste dag der Hollanders op Java*" ("The Dutchmen's Last Day in Java,") because that was written after *Havelaar* and possibly under its influence. Since I don't have Shawlman's parcel at hand but, even so, would like to give my readers an impression of Drystubble's indignation, I will take the liberty of presenting this work of Sentot's to the eyes of the nation. Future historians will be grateful for the chance to show that there were plenty of warnings.

There are those who claim that my friend S. E. W. Roorda van Eysinga was banished from the Indies for writing this poem. Mr. Van der Wyck, a member of the Council of the Indies and as such one of the advocates of his expulsion, has denied it. Other members of government have also denied any link between Sentot's prophetic gifts and Roorda's sad and undeserved wanderings. Some believed that the parliamentary debate on the Roorda affair would bring light into this darkness. There the disclosure of the official decision in this case could be expected—yes, even *demanded*, according to government decree. But Minister Fransen van de Putte believed that all he had to produce was an *excerpt* from that decision, and the members of the lower house resigned themselves, once again, to the flouting of the law. A question: What was in the undisclosed part of that document? Something about Sentot's Curse? Perhaps the curse itself? Might there have been some sense of guilt that accounts for the reluctance to make that poem public? In any case, the plot was unsuccessful, for it appeared in print a number of times—even though R.v.E. was never personally involved in its publication—and I

myself found it printed in more than one provincial newspaper. For the sake of both its fine and noble outrage and its literary merits, may it find a lasting place here. I have commented elsewhere that, in its fervor and expressive power, it out-shines even Camille's famous imprecation.

"THE DUTCHMEN'S LAST DAY IN JAVA" BY SENTOT

Will you continue to oppress us?
Will lucre make your heart so coarse
That, caring not for law or justice,
You goad the gentle into force?

Then let the buffalo inspire us,
Which, tired of torment, whets its horn,
And casts its driver down before it,
To crush him with its clumsy brawn.

Then may war's flame consume your fields,
May vengeance roll through hills and dells,
May smoke engulf your palaces,
May death-blows ring like mighty bells.

Then how it will delight our ears
To hear the wailing of your wives,
And how we shall rejoice to see
The end of our oppressors' lives.

We'll lead your children to the slaughter
And use their blood to bathe our own
To cleanse our endless debt and interest—

A rich repayment of our loan.

Then as the final rays of sunset
Shine crimson through a haze of blood,
We'll hear a last farewell from Holland:
A slow death rattle in the mud.

And as the pitch-black veil of night
Descends upon the blasted scene,
Jackals will snatch the lukewarm corpses,
And gnaw and lick and pick them clean.

Then we will carry off your daughters
And turn each maid into a whore,
And resting on their snowy bosoms
We'll find relief from blood and war.

And once we've thoroughly defiled them,
And kissed them to our hearts' content,
Once sated to the point of nausea,
Our ardor and our rancor spent,

Then we shall set about our banquet:
We'll toast—"To Profit!"—and applaud.
The second toast: "To Jesus Christ!"
The last one: "To the Dutchmen's God!"

And when the Eastern sun comes up,
"Praise to Mohammed," we shall say,
"He saved the world's most peaceful race
And chased the Christian dogs away."

The astute reader will have noticed that the worthy Mr. Drystubble was wrong to be offended by this poem, or some other one like it. In fact, Fransen van de Putte could have handed over the government's unexpurgated decision to banish Mr. R.v.E. without the slightest trepidation. After all, Sentot doesn't actually say these events will come to pass. He merely warns that they *would* take place if the Dutchmen persisted in hardening their hearts with lucre and oppressing the Javanese. As this prospect is inconceivable—especially after the founding of the Society for the Benefit of the Javanese and all the pettifoggery in Parliament—things are sure to work out much better than Sentot imagined in his fit of despair. For those who are unaware, I might also mention that the pseudonym Sentot rather appositely brings back the memory of the Java War. You see, Sentot was the literal nom de guerre of Alibassa Prawiro Dirdjo, the most outstanding general among the "insurgents"—as the followers of Diponegoro were called in chauvinistic Dutch, the same translation error made by the Spanish with respect to the Dutch when the latter tried to rid themselves of indelicate foreigners. The accuracy or otherwise of such expressions often depends on geographical location, date, skin color, belief, and the need for Profit. Yesterday's insurgents are often today's heroes and martyrs.[†]

Incidentally, the original Sentot was treated as a friend to the Dutch once the Java War had ended. In the final years of his life, he received a pension from the State of the Netherlands and his soldiers were absorbed into the Netherlands East Indies army, although not as a single

corps . . . and there were good reasons for that. In my own day—which began in January 1839, as far as the Indies are concerned—the soldiers from Sentot’s *barisan* (regular troops) were noteworthy for their good conduct, discipline, and military attitude. It was not unusual, during inspections or parades, for a field officer to point out a strapping soldier and say, “That’s one of Sentot’s men, still with us!”

6 *Romances in Malay*: Leaving aside for now that question of what Drystubble may have seen, I can tell you for certain that I originally wrote the song of Saijah—which begins on p. 234 in this edition—in Malay. I don’t know where those pages have got to, and at this point I wouldn’t be able to write it afresh in that language. It’s probably in one of the boxes or parcels of papers that I had to leave behind during the tragic odyssey that followed my departure from Lebak. Incidentally, a speculative trade in ersatz posthumous articles can be counted upon in our age of forgery. And if that falsification could be expected to limit itself to writing, you might consider it bearable for a dead man. But when I think of the conjuring tricks that will be performed with my life, my deeds, my character! Every day now I read and hear about incidents that involve me, events in which I play a leading role, and the news is more of a surprise to me than it ever could be to anyone else. The stories about me—even the benign ones—strike all who really know me as comical—no, idiotic! Not to shed any light on this, but simply to show how history is written: a certain anthologist has already seen fit, only thirty-seven years after my departure for the Indies, to shift the date of that departure by a couple of years. You

might well wonder, then, how much precision can be expected in the chronological ordering of Chinese dynasties, and above all, how much scholarly and moral integrity in character studies? Yet there are lessons to be learned from this error. By taking note of such blunders, the reader can cultivate the habit of asking, "Mr. Anthologist, do you even *know* the material you claim to be teaching us? If not, why are you meddling with it?"

7 *Signatures certifying that they were identical to the original:* This is truly the case for the items of evidence that I present in *Havelaar* and *Minnebrieven* ("Love Letters"). I similarly established the authenticity of still other documents, in the belief that they would one day be scrutinized. But no one has ever taken the trouble of doing so, a fact I regard as most peculiar. I am, of course, still willing to present the documents in question to anyone with a demonstrated interest in the truth. For the time being, I merely reiterate my demand for Duymaer van Twist to come out and say that the documents I claim to be authentic are mere fabrications. As long as he does not dare, I will go on insisting that *those documents demand justice.*

8 *The lawful ownership of Havelaar:* Drystubble regretted not having cheated the gullible Shawlman out of the copyright to his own work. I probably included this remark because I felt that it formed an essential part of my characterization of that hypocritical villain. But what I didn't realize is that these words of mine were, albeit in a very limited way, prophetic. By the very means that Drystubble regrets not having employed, I was deprived of control over *Havelaar*. The support offered to me—pressed upon me, in fact—which

was supposed to provide me with six months of peace and quiet after my miserable wanderings and pending the outcome of my plea—was used as a pretext to treat *Havelaar* such that the plea was drained of its force. And this was done deliberately. In a “Letter” addressed to me, Mr. Van Lennep states that he wanted to prevent my work from becoming popular. This from the same man who, with such a display of ardent sympathy, had asked me to entrust its publication to him! Yet justice demands that I warn the reader not to identify Mr. V.L. with the loathsome Drystubble. When V.L. first became involved with *Havelaar*, his intentions were good. But he gradually began to have regrets, and his weakness took such hold of him that he soon preferred to betray me—which must have pained him, since he wasn’t a bad man!—rather than be regarded by his peers as the defender of a cause that was *very wrongly* decried as revolutionary.

9 When I was a child, book auctions were held in the Wapen van Bern, a building in Spui Square in Amsterdam. I don’t know whether that’s still the case, or even whether the establishment still existed at the time of which Drystubble is presumably speaking, i.e., a few years after the date of the official documents included in *Havelaar*.

10 *Pandeglang and Lebak*: Here, for the first time, I had the pleasure of writing a few names in full that had been defaced with ellipsis points in previous editions. Until now, very many of my readers didn’t know the name of the province where the incidents described in *Havelaar* took place and had to content themselves with the syllable “Leb.” It goes without saying that these irritating omissions

detracted from the vividness of my scenes and made my claims less convincing. In fact, this was the point of that treacherous castration. The English author Wallace—who, I might add, cannot have seen the English translation of *Havelaar*, in which the names and dates are printed in full—denied that my work had any value, *because I had not included places and dates*.

I have been assured—though I don’t know whether it’s true—that Mr. Van Lennep donated my manuscript to the Maatschappy der Nederlandsche Letterkunde (Society of Dutch Literature) in Leiden. If so, that Society would surely be in a position to judge whether it’s my fault that the names of places and people and the dates were spelled, in previous editions, with pusillanimous dots.

11 *High road across Java*: This road runs from Anyer on the Sunda Strait, one of the island’s westernmost points, to Banyuwangi at the southeastern tip, across the strait from Bali. It takes 270 hours to travel from one end to the other. Its construction was such a massive project that the job could only be done by a man like Daendels, who combined great willpower with utter disdain for special interests. The tales of his harshness approach the unbelievable. Yet in some cases, people of that kind are needed. I argue that now, again, we need people with the strength and courage to break free, on their own initiative, of the usual routine. I tell you, there are deeds to be done in the East Indies *in our time* compared to which that post road is child’s play! We hope and expect that a new Daendels will step forward, but it remains doubtful whether the qualities that served him so well seventy years ago would be adequate today. In this

passage, I write of “opposition from rivals in Holland.” In our own day, what becomes of a person who tries to improve conditions in the Indies? However daunting Daendels’s task may have been, he did *not* have to suffer the impertinence of the lower house and the kinds of ministers emerging from a parliamentary system like ours.

I might add that as for “Marshal” Daendels himself—the *maréchal de Hollande*, reduced to the rank of general after the annexation of that puppet state—it is unfortunate, in this case as in so many others, that our Dutch literature offers such a poor crop of memoirs, a failing that makes our history dry as dust, and comprehensible only to those who lack the good sense not to understand and are therefore perfectly content with incoherence. Daendels’s life was a tragedy, as we can glean from the few official records, as well as the many anecdotes circulating in the Chinese church (see note 78). A well-written biography of the man would shed light on an important period in our history, from the revolutionary Patriot period to the restoration of the House of Orange. I have described the wretched bumbling that accompanied the annexation of our little country elsewhere. If, when reading that piece, you bear in mind that our “Marshal of Holland” had once been a Patriot—and one of the most committed revolutionaries!—you will be astonished at the man’s complete lack of character, unless the endemic nature of this malady has rendered you incapable of further astonishment. Mr. Van Lennep’s very important work (*Het leven van Mr C.v.L. en Mr D.J.v.L.*, “The Lives of Cornelis van Lennep and David Jacob van Lennep”[‡]) contains valuable though dispiriting contributions to our appreciation of this truth. Those who study history more

thoroughly than the officially approved schoolbooks permit will acknowledge that the figures they present for our contemplation rarely include anyone with character.

The question remains whether Daendels can be judged fairly on the sole basis of his lackluster performance in the month of February 1811. The deep suspicion with which he was viewed some years later by King William I suggests that he was deemed capable of extraordinary things. His appointment as governor of the Dutch possessions on the Gold Coast—which, all in all, were less significant than many a subregency in Java!—was a kind of prison sentence, and I know from reliable sources that he himself saw it that way, too. When the time is ripe, I will offer a few glimpses of his inner life. Although he does not deserve a place among *famous* men, he was certainly a *peculiar* figure. That is *something*, at any rate, in our age of deplorable ordinarism!

12 *Raden Adipati Karta Natta Negara*: The three last words are his name; the first two express his title. It goes without saying that such a title is hard to translate correctly. But that didn't stop old Valentyn from attempting to do so in his Dutch works on the East Indies. He writes of *hertogen*, "dukes," and *graven*, "counts." For those familiar with native chiefs, there is something distinctly odd about this. After the many titles of putatively independent rulers, that of *pangéran* is the most exalted. A *pangéran* could, with some semblance of accuracy, be called a prince, because this rank is conferred by kinship on one of the ruling houses of Solo (Surakarta) or Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta), although there are, I believe, some exceptions, which will not be dealt with here. The following title is *adipati*, or written in full, *raden adipati*.

On its own, “raden” indicates a lesser rank, though one well above that of the common people. Somewhat below the *adipati* is the *tumenggung*.

The aristocracy plays a major role in the Javanese administration. The Dutch government has arrogated the right to award aristocratic titles, a practice that actually runs counter to the fundamental idea of distinction *by birth*. The same thing is done in Europe. Strictly speaking, a government can permit a person to use a certain title and enjoy the privileges of a certain rank, but no power in the world can suddenly transform a man of unknown ancestry into the scion of a lineage that has been held in esteem for centuries. In the case of Java, the beneficiaries have stoically accepted the advantages heaped upon them. It is said, however, that among less fortunate parties—and perhaps even among the common folk, who show a religious devotion to authentic genealogies—there is a plan to review the certificates awarded by the old Dutch East India Company and today’s secretariat in Buitenzorg at the earliest opportunity. There are few, if any, aristocratic families in Java—the rulers of Solo and Yogyakarta not excepted—whose titles and official positions would offer no ground for controversy and opposition, as soon as a hole opens up in the net under which the entire Javanese administration is held captive.

13 *Workings of government*: Young people reading *Havelaar* for the first time in this edition cannot begin to imagine how essential it was, in 1860, to provide the sketch that follows of the organization of our regime in the Indies. What is more, even in the major cities of the Indies, the workings of

government were, until quite recently, a closed book. I could offer staggering examples of this ignorance. But for a full understanding of the ingenious—yet simple!—way the mighty Insulindia is kept under the thumb of a weak nation, I refer you to my two brochures on *Free Labor*.[§] The mistake of the Dutch is that they have grown so accustomed to the strangeness of this overseas relationship that they no longer see anything unusual about it and believe it will always remain the same.

Regarding the organization of the Colonial Administration, I should mention that a few years ago the Residents were replaced as chairmen of the regency council by so-called judicial officers. This division of authority, aside from its pernicious political consequences, greatly exacerbates the wretched conditions that prevail in Java's native justice system. The security of people and goods has suffered an alarming decline since the adoption of this naive measure. Highway robbery is becoming more frequent by the day.

14 *Dutch East Indies*: Some refer to the group of islands that may once have connected New Holland to the East Indies mainland, along with New Holland itself, as Australia. Others speak of Polynesia or Melanesia. In still other sources, we read of Oceania. In all these cases, it is purely a matter of personal preference whether the term in question includes the Society Islands and the Marquesas. These distinctions are and remain conventional. It is a weightier matter whether our possessions in the area can truly be called "Dutch." Politically, yes. But not socially, any more than geographically. Nothing could be less Dutch than the soil, the climate, the flora, and the fauna of all those islands. Nor

could anything be less Dutch than the history of the inhabitants, their traditions, their religion, their ideas, their character, their customs, and . . . their interests. Even without the least thought of the political connotations of the term "Dutch East Indies," the inaccurate associations that it evokes have always rankled me. This led me to introduce the term "Insulindia," which by now will be at least slightly more familiar to the reader than it was to Drystubble when he first encountered it in Shawlman's parcel (p. 36).

15 *Sawahs*, *gogos*, and *tipars*: Different types of rice fields, distinguished by their location and the method of cultivation, especially regarding the possibility of water supply.

16 *Paddy*: Rice in the husk.

17 *Desa*: Village. *Kampung* is used elsewhere.

18 *Plantation bonuses*: Such bonuses have been abolished for European officials. It goes without saying that I, having pointed out the devastating effects of this force-pump mechanism, was not mentioned by name in the debate on the subject. It is doubtful, I might add, that the measure led to the intended improvements in Java, since it was not accompanied by any increase in the regular income of European officials in the interior. They are still *compelled* to demand goods and services from the Javanese, goods and services that are not specified anywhere.

19 *Entire districts died of starvation*: This was probably a reference to the famine that depopulated the regencies of Demak and Grobogan. But so many disasters of this kind have been reported since 1860—and right up to the present

day—that it would be too much trouble to list them all. The claim that Java is in a permanent state of famine has become a truism. As for Lebak in particular, the famines there came at regular intervals. I will return to this topic.

20 *Alun-alun* and *kraton*: The *alun-alun* is a spacious forecourt to a regent's premises. Such a space generally holds two stately banyan trees whose advanced age shows they were not planted in the alun-alun—rather, the regent's home was built beside them and probably because of their presence.

Since I neglected to add a note on the word *kraton* on p. 57, I would like to correct that error here—all the more so because it gives me the opportunity to discuss a certain deception recently practiced on the Dutch by their officials, which some people have not yet seen through. In order to place the Acehnese hostilities in a chauvinistic light, the “*kraton*” of the sultans of Aceh has been portrayed as a *fortress* whose capture was a brilliant success. I do not suppose there has ever been a *kraton* in Aceh, or that the Acehnese had ever heard the word, since the phenomenon is very specific to Java. Yet even if I am mistaken about that, a *kraton* is no *fortress*, no “military site.” The capture of a *kraton* is a feat of arms roughly equivalent to the seizing of a fenced, or perhaps walled, Dutch country estate. In this affair, as usual, the political leaders involved have sought to placate the public with hot air!

No enemy force was overcome when the *kraton* in Aceh was “entered”—I use this word advisedly. That also explains the unusual way in which the “capture” took place. The commander, General Van Swieten, wandered inside the “fortifications” *without realizing it*. Considering that Van

Swieten presents this fact as plain as day in one of his reports, he can't have been in on the scheme—or have felt the same need as the minister!—to hoodwink the nation. But the success of that scheme proves, for the thousandth time, that the nation *cannot read!* After all, Van Swieten's humble, sincere report was published, and even so . . . and even so, the news spread that we had captured a *fortress*!

21 *Diplomatic caution in dealings with native chiefs:* It is generally forgotten that we ourselves are more than a little responsible for the duplicity of which we accuse Javanese grandees. They have an expression: "wicked as a Christian." And this epithet will not seem so baseless if you call to mind the tricks and schemes that we have used, from Houtman to the present, to cling to our advantage.

As a rule I have not personally found native chiefs to be more hypocritical than Europeans. And why would they be? The diplomatic axiom that speech was given to man to disguise his thoughts is not Asian in origin. I will leave aside the question of whether this blunder can truly be attributed to Talleyrand—who in that case was not concealing his thoughts in the slightest and was therefore, by his own lights, rather stupid! *True* diplomacy consists in sincerity.

22 *Southwest monsoon:* In Java, the rainy season lasts from October to March. In the north of Sumatra, however, the seasons are reversed. Storms from the west bring heavy rains there, even as all living things in Java are yearning for moisture. Strangely enough, the government in Buitenzorg has demonstrated its ignorance of this fact. They sent their famed first expedition to Aceh at a time when Horsburgh's *India Directory*—and any cabin boy on a coaster!—could

have told them that Sumatra's west coast was very dangerous. Another fine example of the consequences of bureaucracy. They mean to wage war without even knowing the ins and outs of their own country!

Returning to the difference in climate: in southwestern Sumatra, the seasons seem to run together. In Padang, for example, you can't rely either on regular, constant winds or on the rains or dry weather that depend on them.

23 *Sirih*, *pinang*, and *gambier* are the ingredients that, along with lime and tobacco, form the betel quid so indispensable to the Javanese. I met people in some regions of Insulindia who abstained from chewing *sirih* (betel leaf), but few or none in Java, the women not excepted. Brown tobacco juice, reddened by *gambier*, stains every lip and tooth. It's not a pretty sight, but they hold the practice to be very cleansing for the mouth. The use of betel and its accompaniments is so widespread that instead of the European term *pourboire*, or "drink money," in the Indies the usual term for a gratuity is *wang sirih*, "betel money."

Betel leaf grows on a vine not much thicker than our pea plants, which so strongly resembles a black pepper plant that only a practiced eye can tell the two species apart. I believe the two belong to the same botanical family, though it's possible that learned scholars, who enjoy making startling pronouncements—a lion is a cat, and whales are not fish!—will find a reason in that similarity to declare betel and pepper very distant from each other.

I'm surprised that betel is so rarely used in dentistry. It seems to me that such use would be encouraged by the leaf's cleansing and contractive properties, together with its

not unpleasant flavor. I believe gambier deserves a place in the European pharmacy, but I don't know if the same can be said of the pinang (areca nut). In outer appearance, this nut is not unlike nutmeg, but the tree on which it grows is a type of palm.

The word *selamat* means "greetings" and in this case refers to the very peculiar compliment—the folding of hands—described in the book.

24 This was a *kidang*, a medium-sized deer. A much smaller species, no larger than the average dog, is the *kancil* or mouse deer, known for its exceptional swiftness and grace. It is said that kancils cannot be kept alive in captivity. In contrast, the kidang, like most European deer, is apparently easy to keep in a fenced park.

25 The liquid known as "coconut milk" in Holland is cool and refreshing but rarely drunk. Coconuts are sometimes used in cooking, usually shredded, but they are most often crushed for their oil. Seldom eaten as fruit, they are never the main ingredient of a cooked dish. The stories about coconuts in children's books and expert disquisitions sound foolish to those who have lived in the Indies. I don't know whether the coconut plays a different role in the West Indies than in Insulindia. This difference certainly applies to the banana (*pisang* in Insulindia): on Surinamese plantations, it is given to the Negroes as food. The variety found there is very crude and a couple of feet long. The medium-sized variety in the *East* Indies grows no longer than six inches, and one of the smallest—the *pisang mas* or gold pisang, an excellent little fruit—is no larger than a child's pinkie, and very tasty.

26 *Ginger tea*: An infusion from the ginger root, to be drunk as hot as possible—for its cooling properties. The conventional wisdom in the Indies is that cold drinks, like fruits that refresh the mouth, heat the body. On the same principle, the Spanish pepper varieties *cabai* and *lombok* (*cayenne* in the West Indies) are said to have a cooling effect. As far as I have been able to tell in practice, these beliefs are not groundless, but in such matters, the imagination often plays a role.

27 *The native's question for First Lieutenant Duclarci*: Mr. Collard—who has been a field officer for many years and may be retired by now—will, if asked, undoubtedly be good enough to acknowledge that I am telling the truth here, as elsewhere.

28 This refers to a *tudung*, a woven hat in the form of a large round dish, worn by the Javanese to keep off the sun and rain, of which the natives are absurdly frightened. Certain garden hats recently in fashion among European women looked exactly like tudungs.

29 *Babu*: Native nanny.

30 *Gilded payung*: The color of the parasol—according to custom but in keeping with officially established rules—denotes the rank of the chief for whom it is carried. A gilded payung designates the highest rank.

31 *The census figures were inaccurate*: Every chief has an interest in making his subjects seem as small in number as possible, not to ease the burden of compulsory provision of goods and services, but so that he can claim more goods and services for himself. For a closer approach to the truth,

do not hesitate to add 10 percent to the official figures.

32 *Emigration to Cikande and Bolang*: Many workers on the private plantations around Batavia and Buitenzorg are refugees from Lebak. "If the oppression in Lebak stops," I once heard an estate owner say, "we'll have a shortage of people."

33 *Pisang*: Banana. I don't understand why the latter, West Indian term is better known in the *East* Indian Netherlands than the word *pisang*. It's also a mystery to me where the English word "plantain" comes from. The estimated number of pisang varieties is three hundred. See also note 25.

34 *Hollander*: Every white person is known to the natives as *orang hollanda*, *wolanda*, *belanda*, which are all references to Holland. In the main cities and towns they occasionally depart from this rule, speaking of *orang inggris* or *orang prancis*, i.e., an English or French person. A German is sometimes called an *orang hollanda gunung*, meaning a mountain Hollander or Hollander from the interior.

35 *Interpretation of the term "civilization"*: Europeans are wrong to believe that the higher degree of civilization in which they take such pride is universally accepted as an axiom, and that they really are more civilized in every respect. I could give many examples that call these boasts of ours into question, and a few that show them to be lies. The term generally used by liplaps and natives to describe Europeans is *immature*. I encourage friends of the truth to investigate how much bookishness and convention lies concealed in our understanding of the word "civilization." In this respect, we very closely resemble certain natives who

cannot understand how a civilized person could abide having white teeth. "Ugh," they say, "just like a dog!" Elsewhere, it is considered uncivilized not to have an ebony disc in your split lower lip or earlobes, or a ring in the septum of your nose. There are places in Insulindia where civilization manifests itself as—how shall I put it? Well, out with it, ethnology must not be constrained by prudery!—men wearing an ebony pin through the end of the penis, which is pierced for that purpose when they're very young. Those maniacs regard the coital act, without such an ornament, as . . . bestial. "Just like a dog," again, I suppose. However ridiculous this may be, an unbiased observer must acknowledge that we Europeans use the words "animal" and "bestial" in equally inappropriate ways.

36 *The liplap's point of view on social issues:* The question is whether the Netherlands can permit itself—in the "political" sense—to do the philosophical, unbigoted thing. Officially guaranteeing equal rights for liplaps might create a group that could pose a threat to Dutch authority. That explains the constant fumbling with provisions that, however they are dressed up, serve no other purpose than to ensure the dominance of the authentic European element. I am referring to the abolition of the colonial navy—a measure not unwelcome to pirates. To the endless fuss about a so-called radical. To the educational institutions in the Netherlands and the resulting compulsion, felt all too keenly by parents in the East Indies, to send their children to Europe. And finally, to the *absenteeism* artificially sustained by all these measures, which is so devastating to Insulindia! This is precisely the toll of our colonial regime, which rests

on immoral foundations: we *cannot* act in a “philosophical and unbigoted” way without putting our own interests at risk.

This is the curse of every evil deed;
That, propagating still, it brings forth evil.

[trans. Samuel Taylor Coleridge]

37 *Patih, kliwon, and jaksa*: Native chiefs. The patih assists the regent as a secretary, messenger, and odd jobber. The kliwon is an intermediary between the government and the village chiefs. He generally oversees local public works, guard duty, forced labor, etc. The jaksa is a police officer and public prosecutor.

38 *Gongs and gamelan*: The gong is a heavy metal cymbal suspended from a cord. The gamelan is played in the same way as European glass harmonicas or the well-known xylophone. In this scene, I could also have mentioned the *anklung*, a gridlike instrument with cymbals lying on taut cords. Note that all these instruments have onomatopoetic names. “Gong” sounds forceful. “Anklung” and “gamelan” (or “gamlang”) are, in contrast, soft and gentle, but very melancholy.

39 *Exasperation at obstructionism*: Such exasperation was fatal to the Governor of the Moluccas, a most accomplished man whose efforts to restore his country’s authority over the islands were undermined by the pencil pushers at the secretariat in Buitenzorg. Before the eyes of the incompetent Van Twist, who was of course completely under the thumb of that bureaucracy, he killed himself by jumping into a waterfall in Tondano (in the Minahasa or Manado

region).

40 *Havelaar's official career*: As early as August 1851, my name had been submitted to the government for an appointment as Resident. Furthermore, my duties in Ambon were entrusted to a Resident shortly after I left.

41 I can assure the reader that it is now (in 1881) more disagreeable to me than ever to enter the public sphere. When, at the age of forty, I was forced to do so in spite of myself, my hopes of some success were my ally against the aversion I feel to any contact with the *public*. Now that I've seen the results of my efforts, my repugnance is stronger than ever.

42 *Innkeeper's bill*: The arrangement was that the United States government could be billed eighty-three Dutch cents a day in compensation for support provided to the survivor of a shipwreck, whether an officer or a seaman. Most of the ostensible survivors of shipwrecks were little more than sea rovers. The Americans have a thousand whalers in the seas of the East Indies at any one time, and their crews are the dross of their nation.

43 *My children's great-grandfather*: His name is on the pedestal atop the Lion's Mound in Waterloo.

44 *Appanage of the Princes of Thurn and Taxis*: This was purchased by the German imperial government for tens of millions after the great changes of 1866.

45 *Dream of millions*: Well, it wasn't exactly a dream. The time limit for the claim has expired, and I still have no wish to discuss the remarkable family narrative connected with it.

Besides, certain things remain obscure to me, partly because some documents were stolen, as mentioned in this passage. Even so, I feel I must observe that certain individuals and branches of the family, who know more than the average reader about the subjects touched on in this passage, were among Havelaar's most rabid persecutors. Their interests demanded that he be silenced, or at least prevented from unraveling certain mysteries.

46 A Mr. Q. in the Arnhem newspaper has quoted this sentence as evidence of my immorality! And that insidious maneuver was cheered on by Dr. Van Vloten, as was Mr. Q.'s claim that I spent my time "drinking gin and bitters, playing billiards, and smoking borrowed cigars." I ask you, is the horror of which I spoke on p. 301 not justified? How do such people spend their time?

47 *Mantri*: Overseer. *Demang*: district chief; in central and eastern Java, this official is called a *wedana*.

The author of the French book *Felix Batel*, in which *Havelaar* is imitated and—undoubtedly through no intention of the author!—parodied, betrays his plagiarism by speaking of demangs in Java's Eastern Salient, where he sets his tale. This is like writing of . . . *the czars of Germany*. In that book the sun rises, *just as it was observed by Saijah*. The buffalo episode is also repeated word for word, and the author is good enough to acknowledge that this incident was *also* described by a certain Multatuli. Well, *Felix Batel* was reviewed at length by Dutch critics, but nowhere do you find even a trace of protest against this shameless pilfering, which seems to me every bit as evil as piracy. If a foreigner claimed responsibility for the refined art of gutting herrings,

the Dutch people would raise a hue and cry, but our “national pride” can endure the theft of *Havelaar*. If only such unfairness were limited to literature! Yet it also reaches bewildering heights in the social, political, and philosophical fields. The nation still cannot read. Or does it not wish to understand what it has been given to read?

48 *Bandung*: One of the Priangan regencies.

49 On the natural phenomenon of the flood (*banjir*), I refer you to my essay “*Wys my de plaats waar gy gezaaid hebt*” (“Show Me the Place Where You Have Sown”), which takes its name from this passage in *Havelaar*.

50 See note 32.

51 *Rebels in the Lampung districts*: There is a brochure about the expedition referred to here; I cannot give you the title. It probably dates from 1861 or '62, and I believe it was written by the commander of our forces. The author denies that there were many refugees from Lebak among the rebels whom he fought. I maintain my position, however, and cite the statements of the officers under him in that campaign. I have heard one of them confirm my claim in the strongest terms. There was a time when gainsaying my assertions brought a certain social cachet in The Hague, and the officer in question said that was why his former commander had flatly told what he called a “damned vulgar lie.” If I’d had the joy of concluding that the Netherlands valued the truth, I’d have presented the evidence a long time ago. But it’s tiresome to plead your case before a court so very infatuated with lies.

52 The custom of serving sweets with tea is Chinese in origin.

53 *District chief of Parangkujang*: He was the Adipati's son-in-law and accomplice. My predecessor was poisoned in his home.

54 *The Jaksa's costume*: This native official was Javanese, not Sundanese, and therefore somewhat differently and more ostentatiously dressed than the chiefs born and bred in Lebak.

55 A governor-general's titles include "Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Navy to the East of the Cape of Good Hope."

56 This address to the Chiefs of Lebak is generally admired, as I have heard from many people. So why have Havelaar's actions, which precisely conform to these words, been regarded as unworthy of attention?

To determine the degree to which I may have deviated from the *strictly literal truth* when I approximated that unwritten speech in print, it may be worthwhile to compare its tone and contents to those of a piece I wrote a few years earlier. I am referring to "*Publikatie aan de Inl. Hoofden der Minahassa*" ("Publication to the Native Chiefs of Minahasa") of April 1, 1851, which I believe to be animated by the same spirit. The weekly magazine *Oost en West* ("East and West") and later the *Spectator* (July 26, 1879) picked up the piece from the East Indies newspapers that had considered it fit to print, perhaps as a corrective to the many people who act as if they have deprived *Havelaar* of its force by calling it a fiction. The publication in question is an *official document* and has nothing to do with novel writing. I invite you, reader, to peruse the aforementioned issue of the *Spectator* and ask yourself whether it is fair that, more than thirty years after I wrote the publication that it contains, any

ragamuffin can still revile me with impunity? (On this subject, see also notes 81 and 93.)

57 *Sinyo*, often abbreviated to *nyo*: "Young master." This word is widely believed to be of Portuguese origin, mainly because the descendants of the Portuguese, who still form a unique caste in Batavia, are colloquially referred to as sinyos. But this etymology is dubious.

58 *Verbrugge knew!* I have kept a letter he wrote to me when I was still in discussion with the Adipati, in which—emphatically requesting that I not mention his name—he suggested that I reprimand the Adipati for his "abuses." This is not the place to go into the needlessness of that request. The letter shows:

- 1) that my objections were not the result of my own morbid point of view;
- 2) that my investigations had been conducted very discreetly, so much so that even the timid Verbrugge saw fit to urge me to put in a little more effort.

Interested parties—are there any?—may see that letter from the Controleur.

59 *Jimats* are notes or other objects that come falling from the sky so that fanatics and charlatans will have credentials. There's nothing new under the sun! There are plenty of suppliers of these divine revelations, and all Asia is still rife with apostles and prophets of this stamp. The difference from past centuries is that they are now punished for vagrancy—by the same people who revere the vagabonds of yesteryear as saints. Now that's what *I* call a shocking inconsistency!

60 *Garam gelap*: Contraband salt. In the Dutch East Indies, the making and selling of salt is a government monopoly. It is true that a great deal of salt was made on the southern coast of Lebak, and who can blame those poor people, considering that some of them would have had to walk many miles to reach the government warehouse, where the salt was expensive. A monopoly on salt production strikes me as unreasonable and, above all, cruel to people who live on the coast and have sea salt washing right into their houses.

61 The letters from my predecessor referred to here are among the documents still in my possession. No one has ever asked to see them. It seems to me they could be very relevant, especially with regard to his death. In any other country, wouldn't this case have become a cause célèbre?

62 Again, I still have the letters mentioned here; only copies, true, but they were certified by the clerk in Lebak as "identical in content to the original." No one has ever bothered to ask about them.

63 *Intention to forgive the advance paid to the Regent*: This is in fact what happened after the investigation launched by Governor-General Pahud. I believe his salary was also increased on that occasion. You must admit this was a peculiar way of doing justice to *me!* It was apparently essential that the established truth of my charges benefit, not me, but the person I had accused.

64 *Abraham Blankaart too Dutch for a German*: And perhaps for the current generation of Dutch readers as well. How many of my readers are still familiar with that delightful

character from *Sara Burgerhart*?

65 It seems to me this satire of orthodoxy justifies the comment that the moderns, the liberals, the . . . relatively enlightened—and even the *true* freethinkers—would do well to look to the example set by their opponents, who reveal a certain sincerity of faith in their *actions*. If some people contributed as generously to spreading light as others do to deepening the darkness, we would long ago have made a great step forward. Would the *believers* have left me homeless and penniless, as I was, if I had supported and advocated *their* views? Obviously not. Hurrah for the true believers!

66 *Those clever scientists!* One of the newest techniques in food science comes from Professor Virchow, a chemist who now claims that meat stock does not have the slightest nutritional value. I propose putting him on a diet of thoroughly boiled meat, which should be entirely to his scientific satisfaction.

67 *Molière*: I hold this author in less esteem than I used to, but I will save my remarks about that for a monograph on dramatic literature, for which there is not enough space in these notes.

68 *Fotheringhay*: Some earlier editions have “Fotheringeray,” a slip of Mr. Lennep’s. The manuscript contained neither, but instead referred to the “Tower.” That slip was mine.

69 *Arles* is thought to have been an inland colony of the Massilians, and Massilia (Marseille) was founded by Phoenicians. The truly unparalleled beauty of the women of Arles, better preserved there than in Marseilles, may be the

result of less interbreeding with outsiders. In coastal settlements such as Marseilles, the races quickly become very mixed. Whether the women of Nîmes—another outpost of Marseilles—are as beautiful as those of Arles is unknown to me.

70 Opinions about the characteristics of the different races that populate Insulindia differ widely. The population and chiefs of Sumatra are not as mild mannered as the Javanese, and the personalities found there are more masculine. The Javanese is certainly not welcome in Sumatra, and the true Malayan despises him, calling him *tukang makan kutu*—ask a cousin in the East for a translation—and considering himself far superior. General Van Swieten made the mistake of appointing a Javanese as his negotiator with the Acehnese. The valiant raden who accepted this role became, as was to be expected, the casualty of his own obliging and loyal nature. I am sorry to have forgotten his name.

71 Most Europeans in the Indies know little about the languages and customs of areas they have not visited. Duclari didn't know the expression *si upi keteh*. People in Holland generally make the mistake of assuming that anyone "who has been in the East" will have a general knowledge of Indies affairs.

72 *Ophir*: Could there be any connection between this mountain and the regions from which Hiram, King of Tyre, had gold, ebony, and precious stones fetched for the erection of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 9:28, 10:11). That would be a daring supposition to base on a single word. Besides, where does the word Ophir come from? The "f" sound is suggestive of the Arabs. In the *Arabian Nights*,

Sumatra is visited by Sinbad the Sailor.

73 *Tuan commodore*: In the parts of Sumatra where there were once English settlements, the governing officials are still known as commodores. During the English period Natal was seen as strategically important—a fact illustrated by the fort there, which was much too large to be manned by the troops available in my day (1842).

74 *Pedati*: Javanese cart. The unusual thing about this vehicle was that it did not have wheels rotating around an axle fixed to the vehicle, but disks whose axle turned with them. To complete this impractical, primitive system, their usual shape was a very irregular polygon. In the opinion of the “Chinese church” in Batavia (see note 78), Mr. W. R. van Hoevell was a skilled writer who did not hide behind his pen name, Jeronimus. It is unfortunate, however, that this public intellectual, partly out of ignorance of Indies affairs—he was a Batavian through and through—and perhaps still more out of a personal longing for a strident slogan, allowed himself to be tempted by the sound of the word “free” into extolling so-called free labor. All the waffling about this forcefully imposed topic has for years distracted attention from serious concerns such as those addressed in *Havelaar*, which remain relevant. On this subject, see my two brochures on “Free Labor.”

75 See note 22.

76 *Independent regions at the northern tip of Sumatra*: The number of more or less independent princelings in the area is legion. I have known two of them personally, the *tuankus* or rajahs of Trumon and of Analabu, who sometimes visited

me in Natal, to the great annoyance of the tuanku of that regency. One of those chiefs—I don't remember which—took the liberty of girding his loins with his silk cloth in a manner that, according to Natalese heraldry, bespoke greater distinction than he was due. Such matters of etiquette and precedence led to disputes and scuffles that sometimes vexed me sorely, since the followers of the Acehnese Chief were rather combative and the Natalese were extremely hot tempered whenever the rank of their tuanku was at issue.

In general, Natal was a popular destination for the Acehnese, and I had plenty of opportunities to learn about their character, especially because the naive Si Upi Keteh—one of my many first loves—came from Aceh. Nevertheless, I lack sufficient materials for a full description of their character and do not dare do more—unlike the many people who speak of the Acehnese these days without ever having seen one—than claim that, generally speaking, they had very many good qualities. In particular, they are undeniably proud and brave. The fact that when war was declared a minister addressing Parliament had the gall to depict the Acehnese as guilty of *piracy* simply proves, for the thousandth time, that some speakers consider no slander too vile for use in accomplishing their parliamentary goals. Has piracy decreased in the Malay Archipelago since the Acehnese ports were blockaded? Of course not. If our government wants to fight pirates, let it declare war on the Sultan of the Sulu Islands, on the Illanese in Maguindanao, and in fact on all the rulers and peoples of that large island. From *that* quarter sail the fleets that have, for centuries, subjected the assets of the Acehnese sultans, as well as our

own, to a pirate levy, hardly less shameful for those who pay than for the recipient. That would be an admirable job for our navy, or better still our army; shooting down bamboo beach huts is not much of a challenge.

But the accusation of piracy wasn't enough for our noble statesmen. To inspire the requisite bloodlust—and willingness to pay!—in the delicate souls of the Dutch people, they characterized the Acehnese in that same lower house as completely in thrall to . . . unnatural desires! I, who had frequent contact with the Acehnese, never noticed anything of the kind, perhaps because I never sought to further my career or position by finding putrid pretexts to wage war. I ask those who show such anthropological insight into this issue what "scientific arguments" they can put forward for their charming accusations. In any case, making such allegations against an enemy who has shown overwhelming evidence of manliness strikes me as rather . . . unmanly, and as distasteful as the supposed crime. What is to be said of a representative body that votes to spend millions at the proposal of ministers who do not balk at such incendiary and reprehensible tactics? The thought, I might add, that the government of the Dutch State—which is rotten to the marrow!—would take up arms *in the interest of morality* is ludicrous.

As for the present war, I repeat what I have said elsewhere: *our defeat begins in Aceh*. I lack the space here to explicate this thesis. Nor do I have any interest in repeatedly giving unpaid lessons to Dutch politicians. *They* are paid by the nation to know something about these affairs. If the nation persists in contenting itself with individuals who do not meet this criterion, I'm not to blame. There can be no

denying that the *inevitable consequences* of rescinding the secret article in the treaty of 1824 have never once been mentioned in the numerous pamphlets and countless newspaper articles on the subject, or in the speeches of ministers and “honorable members.” All those writers and speakers, either from ignorance of the circumstances or for reasons of a still lower kind, have never touched on the heart of the matter. If the minister of colonies politely inquires what consequences of the foolish Acehnese campaign can be foreseen, I will inform him adequately, although under protest against the injustice that *he*, not *I*, is paid for his efforts to maintain Dutch rule in Insulindia.

77 *Madame Geoffrin*: In the manuscript, I wrote, “Madame Scarron,” and it seems to me that Mr. Van Lennep made an inaccurate change here. Madame Geoffrin, being very rich, had no need to compensate for her meager table by telling stories. Furthermore, I know for certain that some writers assign the leading role in the well-known anecdote to Madame Scarron.

78 *Chinese church*: Everyone who’s anyone in the major cities of the East Indies. The origins of this expression appear to lie in the former practice of standing around gossiping after the Protestant church service in or near Batavia’s Chinatown.

79 *“People who witnessed certain events at close quarters.”* In 1843, General Michiels took remarkably oppressive measures to widen the roads in the Padang area. No one had any doubt what he meant to achieve: he needed a little military glory to maintain his position as the civilian governor. The unrest he had provoked first became visible

in Pau, near the capital. It was soon public knowledge that assemblies were taking place there, and everyone knew these would—by necessity!—give rise to insurrectionary movements. No immediate action was taken to stop them; the fruit had to ripen first. One night, I was awakened by a servant of the artillery captain J. J. M. de Chateleux. He had sent for me because our mutual friend, Captain Beyerman of the infantry, had come to him to bid the two of us farewell. I went to them and found Beyerman in a very grave mood. To his utter surprise, he'd been ordered to march on Pau “so that I can be killed there,” he said. He *was* killed there, that very night. When the news arrived the next morning, the general took to the field with more than sufficient troops. It was but a moment's work for him to win the laurels and the certificate of indispensability that he'd been so sorely lacking. Poor Beyerman!

Setting the scene for battles like that one by sending a small force out ahead on a suicide mission was one of Michiels's favorite tricks, but he was not alone in this criminal fakery. It plays a role in many campaigns and is unlikely to go away until the *art of reading* becomes more widespread. Those ludicrous advertisements for cheap books and universal remedies are nothing compared to the clownish lies that, for centuries, some military commanders have been churning out for their paymasters. And there are always versifiers and historians close at hand to lend those old wives' tales their official stamp—“witnessed and hyperbolized”—so that generations to come will parrot the nonsense they've made palatable. See, to give just one example—I have no end of them!—my remarks on the hyperstrategic feats of warcraft performed by the new

Prince of Orange at Quatre Bras.

80 This was prophetic of me, sad to say! The crudest, most unthinkable utterances are neither too crude nor too unthinkable, as long as they serve to knock down someone who's stuck his neck out. This tactic is used by mediocrities of all stripes. The passage shows that I knew something about this when I wrote *Havelaar*, but I still wasn't prophetic enough to anticipate that my caricature of the public would become the literal truth. If Duclari had interrupted me, saying, "No, now you've gone too far!" I would undoubtedly have made the error of tempering my bitter words, yet the ultimate outcome proved I hadn't overstated my case.

81 It was in those days (1843) that I wrote *The Bride Up Above*. This play was recently performed in The Hague, Rotterdam, and elsewhere. I attended one performance, and my feelings were very mixed. The renewed acquaintance with this work from my youth, almost forty years ago now, brought back more memories than my heart could bear. And to recall everything that happened to me and around me during that long span of my eventful life! But this is none of your concern, reader. All the same, considering the age of the play, I face a question I believe is relevant to some readers. Is the tone that some commentators take toward me these days truly in keeping with the respect we normally show to our seniors in rank? Have so many writings held up for more than a third of a century in our age of steam that any novice may address me as if I were a newcomer? My own opinion about *The Bride* is public knowledge, but the play is at least as good as *Emilia Galotti*, *Kabale und Liebe*, *Minna von Barnhelm*, and the sentimental comedies of

Kotzebue, which remain in the repertory. In any case, it shows how I spent my time in the days when many of those who now believe they may treat me as their peer were still—or not yet even?—in short trousers. To every man his due, gentlemen! (See also notes 56 and 93.)

82 Later, as a minister, that editor did his part to make the situation in the Indies untenable. For years, he used “penny-striking” to string along the two houses of Parliament and the Nation. Let me give just one example: the famous Accountability Act, a monument to bureaucratic futility, and as such an accurate reflection of the man himself. He was also the man who was so instrumental in paralyzing Dutch authority over the interior, by separating the judicial and executive powers (see note 13). This champion of our nation is named E. de Waal and, of course, holds a comfortable place on the list of state pensions.

83 Mr. C. Visscher, then general secretary of the government of the Indies.

84 What I mean to show here is that the requirements of art regarding moderation in the arousal of emotion, or rather in the means to that end, are not entirely unknown to me. I also claim elsewhere in *Havelaar* (see, e.g., p. 248) that I have met those requirements. It is precisely because I depict less horror than the circumstances are shown to have produced that the Saijah episode makes such a profound impression, and the critics are therefore wrong to charge me with “exaggeration.” Enough said about aesthetic sensibility. As for the facts reported in *Havelaar*, again, they are milder than the truth. I touched on nothing but what I could prove—and still can! That was far from the worst of it.

If anybody would nonetheless seek to nullify my argument by stooping to the cheap and threadbare accusation that I “exaggerated”—essentially no more than a cunningly disguised admission of the truth!—then please tell me: what did I exaggerate, in what way, how, and how much? I repeatedly made this demand of Duymaer van Twist, who would have been better placed than anybody else to contradict me if there was anything to be said against my claims. He, however, didn’t even dare to speak of “exaggeration”; instead, he merely complained that I had so much talent—a flaw in his eyes, no doubt—and that he would say no more for fear of seeming to take sides. And Parliament and the Nation accepted these puerile dodges! People of the Netherlands, is this justice?

85 *Sambal-sambal*: All sorts of side dishes, a type of cuisine in which the Indies excel. A description of the *sambals* found there would fill volumes. Prosperous families have one servant responsible solely for this part of the daily menu, and for the wealthy, even that is not enough. The basic ingredients include anything edible, made as unrecognizable as possible, as well as a great deal that the uninitiated would *not* regard as edible, e.g., unripe fruit and spoiled roe. Preparing all these dishes in the proper manner requires prolonged training. It sometimes takes a little practice for *baren* (newcomers) to learn to enjoy the flavors, but connoisseurs of Indies cuisine prize it above the many varieties of European fare.

86 As soon as the secret Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, which required a modicum of humility on our part, was terminated in 1873, war was declared. This might lead one to infer that

my opinion of General Michiels is more widely pertinent than I myself could have guessed in 1842.

87 Mr. P. Merkus, later appointed governor-general.

88 See note 32.

89 Nothing new under the sun! The Catholic with blind faith in the story about the Blessed Virgin taking the trouble to bring a message to a hysterical country girl in Lourdes mocks the Muslim claiming to have received a visit or a letter from Mohammed. And the Protestant, who laughs at the Catholic's messages from heaven, feels greatly edified by a sermon on the Song of the Angels in Bethlehem. Why does it cause hard feelings when I equate all these varieties of stupidity?

90 Padris is the popular name for the Acehnese, who not long before had converted the Batak lands to Islam. The word must mean Pediresse, after Pedir or Pidie, one of the least insignificant statelets in Aceh.

In point of fact, the accumulated evidence of the fanaticism mentioned in the text has reached incredible proportions. It should nevertheless be acknowledged that the arrival of Islam—even as it increased the use of salt—sharply reduced the incidence of cannibalism. Ida Pfeiffer reports that this old custom hadn't yet died out in the Panyabungan area—our center of authority in the Batak lands—when she visited (in 1844? 1845?). I hold this to be a lie. Her story of the relevant encounter is accompanied by an anecdote that bears the stamp of falsehood on its face. She was spared, she said, because of the humor in her remark that she was an “elderly woman” and her flesh

therefore "too tough." By the time she ran into Batak natives, a few years after I did, anthropophagy had been stamped out in that region, thanks to the same peoples on whom we now wage war in the name of civilization. When has the Netherlands ever used *its* religion and *its* weapons to turn an entire tribe of cannibals, in the wink of an eye, into mild-mannered people?

91 *The Rappat Council in Natal* consisted of the principal native chiefs in the regency, with the senior civil servant presiding. This council heard not only civil disputes and criminal cases, but also political matters. The only formality required for implementation of its verdicts was the fiat of the Resident in Ayer Bangies, as the text indicates. The derivation of the word *rappat* is unknown to me. Apparently it is used only in Sumatra.

92 *Séwah*: The weapon used by the inhabitants of this region, like the *kris* the sharp edge on the inside of the curve. The original reason for this shape must have been that the hilt can be concealed entirely in the hand, with the blunt outer edge of the blade resting against the wrist and behind the arm. The victim thus remains unaware that his attacker is armed until, with three swift motions of the wrist and arm, he strikes. Quite apart from its convenience as a murder weapon, the *séwah* symbolizes freedom and manliness. Anyone who takes a Malay chief prisoner—as I was sadly obliged to do under the circumstances described on p. 175—will confiscate his *séwah*.

Another Sumatran weapon that I do not believe is found elsewhere is called the *kerambit* and is used solely for killing. Its handle is little more than a circular opening

through which the murderer sticks his thumb, while the entire blade remains concealed in or behind the hand.

93 I believe this remark by the good Duclari is not without merit—a point I would raise in relation to the *kind* of weapon now being used to attack me, *thirty-eight years* after the events described in the text. It is hardly surprising that those seeking to destroy my reputation in order to further their own should cling to such a poor instrument. For it is said that poverty breaks through stone walls—that includes mental poverty, and it stands to reason that such people are oblivious to their own lack of stature. But the reading public shouldn't have put up with this childish mudslinging against me without protest. What have the Van Vlotens and their like ever achieved that would give them the right to speak out against me? Those gentlemen should be required to furnish their credentials.

94 One of the suspended officials, Resident A. L. Weddik, became the governor of Borneo. The Assistant Resident of Padang, Schaap, later became the governor of Makassar. My predecessor in Natal, Mr. Van Meerten—a very capable man, and the son of the well-known woman writer of that name—also remained in the civil service and was honorably promoted many times. I may mention here in passing that Mr. Weddik's promotion to the office of governor of Borneo, for all that it showed he was considered fit for such high office, was really no more than a fiction aimed specifically at the English—and the many private English fortune hunters!—as proof of our continued sovereignty over that enormous island of the Indies. The pointlessness of this pitiful artifice became obvious when Brooke took over Labuan, without

any regard for our government's authority. Soon the same thing will happen in New Guinea—which is also part of Insulindia. Dutchmen, be warned: our rivals are lying in wait. What is more, the governors-general are, in this respect, less guilty of wholesale neglect than future historians may suppose. Instead of putting their energy into keeping Insulindia intact, they have to focus on maintaining their authority in the face of ministers, parliamentary gossip, and incompetent Dutch newspaper scribblers. The cacophonous free-for-all resulting from the changes since '48 has had a *disordering* effect, at home and in the Indies. And yet . . . "Long live the great Thorbecke!" Isn't that right? It's pathetic!

95 I will return elsewhere to the abolition of caning—a relatively humane form of punishment!—and to the unhappy effects of that tendentious philanthropy.

96 In this paragraph, Resident Brest van Kempen is judged more generously than he deserves. Long after writing *Havelaar*, I was informed by an unimpeachable witness that Brest van Kempen had *a very particular reason* for sparing the Adipati. If only the competent authorities would ask me about that reason.

97 Since *Havelaar*, these remarks about the government have become fully applicable to the entire nation, which pretends to ignore my efforts for reform, and thinks it quite proper that I must scriven to earn a livin'. Meanwhile, those who go on deceiving the government with untruths are honored, rewarded, invested in positions of power, and placed in charge of affairs. The people *want* to be deceived.

98 The ludicrous fear of native chiefs is kept alive by the residents *in their own interest*, and is actually based on . . . wordplay. The truth is, we cannot do without the native chiefs in the organism of our administration—that is, the *system* in which those chiefs hold such a prominent role. But in no way does it follow that a native chief cannot be reminded of his duties. Where would we be if it were impossible to discipline or dismiss a lieutenant, simply because the army cannot do without its officers?

99 The poor man's name is Dongso, and he later became my faithful servant. In Java, criminals sentenced to forced labor fall into two categories. Some remain in Java, which is considered a great mitigation of their sentence. Labor *outside* Java is, for most of them, a terrible punishment that not infrequently drives them to suicide.

100 When I inserted this note number into the text, I intended to venture a characterological analysis of the reception of my efforts by my compatriots, but the *tone* in which some critics are attacking me these days, and the *field* on which they try to wage this battle, hold me back.

101 *Tikar*: Small mat. Finely plaited mats are used on top of mattresses almost everywhere you go in the Indies, and because they remain cool, are considered to be healthful. The production of these mats and other plaited products is an industry of some significance, in which the Makassars are particularly adept.

102 *Pukul empat*: Four o'clock. This is the name of a small flower that opens at that time in the afternoon and closes again just before dawn.

103 The average reader will take this for a fiction. But, again, I am telling the truth. One morning while bathing, Commander Duclari saw a corpse floating down the river, and he recognized the man who had come to the Assistant Resident's house the evening before to make a complaint. Mr. Carolus had instructed him to come back the next day and present himself at the office. But . . . measures had been taken to make sure he would *not* come back! Even without Duclari's testimony, Havelaar knew this was the usual course of events, *and everyone in the Lebak region knew it*, Resident Brest van Kempen as well as anybody else.

104 *How Havelaar should go about it:* Above all, he was bound by his oath and instructions, two factors that pointed him in exactly the same direction as his character and humanity. But . . . he'd come up against the ever-unwritten "spirit of the government," of which his immediate superior was the humble servant. That "spirit" demanded not that justice be done, but merely that peace and quiet reigned. Each individual attended solely to his own needs, his own career, his own pension. What did it matter how many Javanese had to be bled dry and murdered with impunity to achieve those goals? That was the way of the Slymerings and Van Twists! And the nation approved. Far from expressing gratitude to Havelaar for sacrificing himself to put an end to that immoral state of affairs, some are so shameless as to count his altruism against him, as if it were a crime. Perhaps he—like the others?—should first have served out his time and received his pension! In other words, he should have participated in the villainy and ended his worthless life as a colleague of Van Twist! As shameless as this argument may

be, it has the merit of being forthright—or brazenly outspoken, at least. Its author must be a bad man, but . . . he doesn't mind if people know. Bravo, Dr. Van Vloten, you learned theologian!

I am less impressed by the many hypocrites who praise Havelaar to high heaven—oh, yes—but don't lift a finger to defend his cause. They should stand up for their moral bankruptcy.

105 *Principles of administration that will ultimately prevail:* I acknowledge that thus far it hardly seems that way. The fairy tale that so much has improved in the Indies since 1860 is dealt with above, on pp. 292–294. What stands in the way of all progress is—along with many other things—our Elections Act. The decay in our state, which is now universally acknowledged, cannot be repaired until we rid ourselves of that immoral and impractical Thorbeckian rag. Quite apart from colonial affairs, this truth also applies in full to the Netherlands itself.

106 If you wish to interpret that “even” as sarcastic, I don’t mind! The simple truth is that few kings have the greatness to put up with great minds in their midst. Most of them feel the need for exceptionally little minds. Aversion to excellence often takes priority over self-interest, and many a high-ranking dignitary would rather see his own good—and the common good!—thoroughly undermined than tolerate the presence of a man whose merits would overshadow his. This is an old truth by now and, however sad it may be, not incomprehensible. But for an entire people to assent to this stupid jealousy, which results in their interests being neglected—that seems stranger to me. Here, again, our

Constitution stands in the way of any improvement. The King is not allowed to be . . . anything. So be it! But why are the articles on the distribution of authority designed to ensure that he will seldom encounter anything around him but mediocrity? The poor King should at least be given the chance to have someone beside, above, or beneath him of a little more substance than we can expect from the ministers crawling out of Parliament. I have heard people claim that our King is not respected by the nation. Whether this is true, I can't say. Nor can I say whether he deserves respect. But tell me, pray, do you believe that the reverse is possible? That the King can respect the nation, considering the exemplars he sees every day, which are, nota bene, pressed upon him as the country's elite? Experience has shown, I might add, how this affects the appointment of governors for Insulindia. For that office—the weightiest in the state!—Tom, Dick, or Harry is apparently good enough, as long as he fits in with the clique that happens to occupy the seat of power. There is a chapter on this in the new edition of *Specialiteiten* ("Experts").

107 In the very earliest days of the Van Twist government, one Controleur Bauer was dismissed from the civil service for accepting gifts "with no intention of enriching himself." I have taken this quotation from the decree itself, qv for a fine example of hypocritical moral prudery! Van Twist, who had sworn "to deem the protection of the native his first duty," may neglect his duties and yet enjoy his stipend, but a controleur who failed to refuse a bunch of bananas, "not to enrich himself" and without the least prospect of a landowner's seat in the Senate, is sent packing in disgrace!

I'd walk a long mile to see someone in the Colonial Administration who had never committed the dastardly crime of which Mr. Bauer has been accused. As I remarked in the body of this work, the presentation of this kind of gift should be regarded as a greeting, a ceremony, an expression of politeness according to the customs of the country. The fact that I disapprove of accepting gifts anyway—as the reference to the oriental tale on pp. 182–182 adequately shows—has no bearing on this matter. My intention is to shed light on the hypocrisy of the Governor-General, who squandered his virtue on such trifles and turned a blind eye as the natives entrusted to *his* care were robbed and killed. It was this same Van Twist who reintroduced the very recruitment method for the Indies army that *he himself* had abolished! That fine fellow had expressed the opinion that this method “could not stand up to the test of moral scrutiny.” Quite so! Feckless Javanese youths were, at the government’s behest, entrapped by junior officers with the aid of dice games and . . . whores. No, indeed, no, indeed, that certainly cannot stand up to “the test of moral scrutiny”! But the *reintroduction* of this recruitment method *could* bear the pious Van Twist’s “test of moral scrutiny,”¹⁰⁸ and the man is “highly esteemed” in the Netherlands. Will it not, by this standard, soon become an honor to be a thug in a house of correction?

108 The name Saijah is borrowed, with a slight transposition of letters, from “*Staat van gestolen buffels*” (“Statement of Stolen Buffalo”) in *Love Letters*, which also includes the true names of the villages of Badur and Cipurut.

109 My calculation of what is lost in the Indies under the

administration of one governor-general "who does not do his duty" has—as usual, nothing new there!—been called *exaggerated*. Few people realize the power of multiplication. Drystubble, too, was astonished when he found a piece on this subject in Shawlman's package. I would ask those who are so quick to dismiss this claim *how much*, in their opinion, *one governor-general of the Van Twist variety*—and he wasn't the worst!—*costs the nation*.

110 *Orang gunung*: mountain dweller, but in Java, more specifically one who lives in the mountains of the western end.

111 For lack of space, and because the matter at issue here is closely connected to general beliefs—most of which are grossly incorrect—about *authority in general*, I will not go into this subject any further. I refer the reader to the latest edition of *Experts* (Delft: Waltman).

112 *Kendang*: Enclosure surrounded by crude stakes.

113 Frits had asked all sorts of questions, Drystubble says. A few of those questions were included in the chapter, but Mr. Van Lennep preferred to omit them. Why? Surely not because the Wafflers of this world are at a loss to answer them? The most comical thing is that V. L. himself, who catered to the most narrow-minded superstition in this case, was often known to make fun of Bible stories. He felt greater enthusiasm than I do for Voltaire, and was delighted to be told he resembled that shallow thinker—which, in his later years, he truly did. Yet despite this turn of mind, he didn't feel at liberty to allow Frits to ask, among other things, "So where did Noah get his polar bears for the

Ark?"—a fact that shows, I believe, the soundness of my remark in the note to p. 310. He couldn't bring himself to offend the dime-novel religion of his orthodox Calvinist cronies in Amsterdam. Fortunately, the number of absurdities in the Bible is so great that no one need be at a loss to supplement Frits's "impertinent remarks," censored here, with however many others they please.

114 Here I have brought together the explanations of a few Malay words, regionalisms, and peculiarities that occur in the episode of Saijah.

Kris: The weapon of the Javanese people and, as such, part of their traditional dress, just as the dagger once was for us. It is a flat, serpentine dagger with a very small hilt. A kris is normally made of strips of soft iron forged together—a kind of damascening, perhaps—and then steeled with buffalo hooves. To protect them from rusting, they are rubbed with *jeruk* (a kind of citrus fruit) and arsenic, which gives the iron a strange, dull cast. According to superstition, if one wishes to see a kris, one must remove it from the sheath *entirely*. By removing it only partly, one exposes oneself to great misfortune. Countless tales circulate about enchanted krisses, etc.

"Heirloom" (*pusaka*) is used here—as usual—with religious overtones.

Sawah: Rice field prepared for planting by irrigation, in contrast with a *gaga* or *tipar*, a rice field that depends directly on rain for its water supply.

Kelambu hooks: A kelambu is a curtain. The flat, very wide hooks used for hanging curtains tend to be luxury items. Even in the least prosperous households, they are usually

made of brass.

The hoe (*pacul*) used by the Javanese has the blade at right angles to the wooden handle, like the head of a pickax. In other words, it is used for *hacking* at the soil, not for *pitching* it, an oddity possibly stemming from the fact that the natives go barefoot.

User-useran: The word is explained in the chapter. Supposed peculiarities in the shape of such whorls of hair give rise to all sorts of predictions, especially when they occur on a child's head. See, e.g., p. 106.

Galangan: Narrow dikes that keep the water in the sawah.

Alang-alang: Reeds, giant grass, or prairie grass. It is often so tall that a man on horseback can hide in it. In Sumatra it is called *rimbu*, which also means wilderness in general there.

Sarong, batik, kepala: The sarong is the garment peculiar to the Javanese, both men and women. It is a length of fabric woven out of *kapok* and sewn together at the ends. Silk is used in exceptional cases. One end is called the *kepala*, or head, and is dyed with a large border, usually made up of triangles pointing in alternating directions. The dyeing is called *batik*, and is done by hand. To that end, the fabric is stretched on a frame, and the dye is kept in an aluminum device in the shape of a teapot or antique lamp, but much smaller. A sarong without a *kepala*, and with ends that are not sewn together, is called a *slendang*. This garment is worn around the hips, and when worn by men, is partly or completely tucked in. Men often roll up the *slendang* all the way into a belt, in which case they wear trousers with it, a great departure from authentic Javanese tradition that is becoming more and more widespread

among those who are in frequent contact with Europeans. One noteworthy practice I might mention is the wearing of trousers under the sarong by *women*, solely at the northern tip of Sumatra. At least, that is the only place I have ever encountered this practice. It is Acehnese in origin, which is why the garments in question are called *serewah aceh* (Acehnese trousers). Their manufacture is a leading industry in the sultanates with which we are now at war.

Another point about the sarongs and slendangs is that for the past thirty years or so, European manufacturers have been imitating Javanese batik, and the trade in this article runs into the millions. Nevertheless, wearing a printed *kain* ("cloth," the generic term for all such garments) is always regarded as a sign of poverty, or at least of lesser prosperity.

Mata gelap, amok: The term *mata gelap* ("darkened eye") refers to the enraged state of a person who strikes down everything in his path until he is subdued. I once called it a "suicide in company" and still can't think of a better term. The unfortunate person afflicted with such rage recognizes neither friend nor foe. The usual cause is either jealousy or long-pent-up resentment about unfair treatment. The Javanese, like most natives, are gentle and accommodating by nature. But when injured too deeply, or treated unjustly for too long, their anger erupts into "amok." It goes without saying that *apiun* (opium) is involved—whether as the cause of the disorder or as a stimulating aid to venting one's anger.

Jati, ketapang: Two varieties of large tree. The wood of the first is very durable.

Jasmine (melati) plays a prominent role in ballads, sagas,

and legends, much as the rose does for us.

Rice block: A heavy wooden trough in which paddy is pounded to remove the husk. The pounding is called *tumbuk*—onomatopoeia again!

Telling time by the shadow that your hat casts on your face, as Saijah does here, is a practice peculiar to the Indies.

Kite (*lalayang*): In Java, this toy is not just for children. It has no tail and makes all sorts of curving motions, which the person holding the string controls by paying out, reeling in, and tugging. The object of the game is to intercept the strings of your opponents' kites in the air and cut them loose. These efforts result in a battle that is very entertaining to watch and excites a lively interest among the spectators. Saijah's suspicion that little Jamin must have cheated presupposes a degree of skill in throwing that is peculiar to the Indies.

Making salt on the south coast: see note 60.

"Big mouth" and "kill the fire" are calques of Malay expressions.

Wailing women: In Java, a death is followed by a terrible clamor, not by paid mourners, as in the Netherlands in the old days, but by relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors.

Spanish dollars: South American dollars. The ones with two columns are thought to be the best, and are equal in value to our old *rijksdaalders* from Zeeland, the weight and composition of which may have originally been based on the Spanish model. The "Spanish dollar"—now usually struck in Mexico—is called a *ringgit* in the Dutch East Indies and is still a much-coveted form of currency, because the Chinese, who export a great deal of coin and melt it down in China, highly appreciate its silver content.

Kemuning: Fine wood with yellow streaks, obtained from the root of the eponymous shrub and therefore never found in very large pieces. Very expensive.

Ikat-pending: The pending is the waistband itself. *Ikat*: In bad Malay, a commonly used abbreviation of *pengikatan*, its clasp or hook.

Susuhunan of Solo: The Emperor of Surakarta. In his official correspondence with the Governor-General, one of the titles he uses is "grandfather."

Kondé . . . caught in its own knot: In the first English translation of *Havelaar*, that excellent fellow Nahuÿs, without meaning any harm, saw fit to alter part of this description. He had Adinda's hair held together by a ribbon, which is very un-Javanese. In the Edinburgh *Scotsman*, this blunder earned me a sharp reprimand from a Dutch correspondent—as chance would have it, a former tea contractor, toko keeper, and . . . wholesale rice buyer, which is to say, a profiteer of the worst kind, a true bloodsucker of the Javanese—who concluded from it that I don't understand the first thing about the politics of the Indies, and that the natives are very well off.

The type of ghost (*pontianak*) that dwells in trees is very hostile to women, especially pregnant ones. I don't know if there's a connection between this meaning of the word and the name of the Dutch settlement on the west coast of Borneo.

"Eye of day" for the sun: A Malay expression.

Pelita: A small lamp.

Bajing: Javanese squirrel. This creature always seemed smaller to me than the European variety. It is easy to tame.

Caning: Under the influence of *Havelaar*, this form of

punishment was abolished—a poor decision, I believe. As usual, the debate was beside the point. If there *must* be punishments for petty crimes, then caning is more effective, more ethical, and above all more humane than imprisonment or forced labor on public works. On this last point, see p. 183. I regret not having the space to go into this matter more deeply here, as I first intended. Let me simply remark that the abolition of caning in response to *Havelaar*, given the deliberate disregard for the main point of that work, is a hypocrisy of Escobarian proportions. Yet again, the nation has allowed the wool to be pulled over its eyes. The reintroduction of caning in the Indies is an urgent necessity in the interest of the Javanese.

An offering to the crocodiles is made after dark, by placing rice and other food in a bamboo basket or dish along with a small candle and letting the current carry it away. When a fair number of offerings are put out on the rivers, the gently drifting flamelets make a pretty sight.

Balai-balai: Bamboo cot.

115 I've heard that individual land ownership is now being introduced outside Banten. This very important initiative will probably founder on the difficulty of organizing the communal irrigation of rice fields. I must confess, I don't know how this is done in the Banten area at present. Besides this measure, which is a life-and-death matter for Java, steps will have to be taken to protect the unsophisticated Javanese from the "commercial spirit" of certain industrialists. If the intent of this measure is to allow the natives to be wheedled out of their land by the first fortune hunter who happens to come along, then I am

against it!

116 It's true that very fine straw hats are woven in Tangerang, which come close to Manila hats in strength and flexibility. Why doesn't this industry receive some encouragement? If only *un chapeau Tangerang* could become all the rage in Paris, it would mean large sums of money pouring into Java. Indeed, there are many, many products of this kind in the Indies, including some of far greater significance, to which the European market remains closed—simply because the government requires all available hands for its spice shop, just like that fellow Drystubble, who knows and cares for nothing but his coffee. Oh—and then there's sugar, too, we mustn't forget that!

117 On this song of Saijah's, see the beginning of note 6. During my revision of the manuscript (in 1875), I learned that Mr. Wiersma, a missionary in Minahasa, had translated the Saijah episode into Malay. I am sorry to say I never had the chance to look at that translation. It would have been especially interesting to see this song in Malay. My version began, "*Lihatlah bajing cari penghidupan*"; I remember that, but not much more.

118 The lines quoted here are from Tollens. They form the end of his fairly apocryphal narrative *Dirk Willemesz van Asperen*.

119 With reference to note 84, I ask again whether I may fairly be accused of "exaggeration." If so, then I'd think it would be most evident in the conclusion of the Saijah story. Yet there was no shortage of material!

120 Never has anyone expressed any desire to see the evidence referred to here.

121 Minister Fransen van de Putte promised the lower house that "stories like Sajjah's would no longer take place." But there has been no sign whatsoever of anything being done to attain this end. On the contrary, he—not a bit less than his many predecessors and successors—always stood in the way of reform by distracting the nation with trifles.

122 I believe I can prove that the number of poisonings—even in Europe—is shockingly high, but I will save that dismal argument for another time. As for the incident described here, the health officer Bensen reported in the Rotterdam newspaper soon after *Havelaar* was published that after Mr. Carolus returned home from Parangkujang, he survived not just for "a few hours" but—if I am not mistaken—for two days. I accept Mr. Bensen's account without reservation and believe him to be an honorable man, and therefore acknowledge that either the widow was mistaken, or I misunderstood her, or my memory deceived me in 1859 when I wrote *Havelaar*. Bensen's rectification is all the more welcome to me because:

1. By making this comment on a minor detail, he has tacitly confirmed the overall accuracy of my statements regarding the main issues.

2. In a piece apparently intended to gauge the strict veracity of my description of these incidents, he does not return to the particular matter of the liver abscess. If ever a denial were called for, it would be there!

123 I do not know whether my predecessor's body was exhumed as part of the investigation instituted by Governor-General Pahud in 1860. What I do know is that the District Chief of Parangkujang was relieved of his office on that

occasion. The Adipati was punished by being allowed to keep the sum advanced to him and—as I was told but do not know for certain—with an increase in his stipend.

124 I pursued this investigation in order to meet the obligations explicitly stated in my oath and my instructions.

125 *Pancens* and *kemits*: Unpaid guards and servants. Appropriation of goods and labor without pay is a true cancer in the Indies, as Tamerlane (pp. 182–182) appears to have known. But our government still does not know it! Take, for instance, the incredible costs of a so-called inspection tour by a governor-general—“so-called,” I say, because the man is led around by the nose! Just recently, I was sent a newspaper from England with an article on this subject, in connection with the Prince of Wales’s planned trip to Bengal. Since I do not have the space to reproduce that article in full here, I will send it to *De Locomotief* in Semarang, and interested readers can find it in that newspaper.

126 *Pusing*: Dizzy, confused, at their wit’s end. I can still produce the witness mentioned here.

127 It is disturbing to see the moral pressure exerted on native chiefs, when a senior official leaves office, to purchase some of his belongings at fabulously high prices. What is more . . . they have no choice! Otherwise, they reason, the new Resident may think they have nothing to offer him. Needless to say, this bounteousness is ultimately at the expense of the common man. To my great surprise, I recently heard the high price paid for Mr. Loudon’s furnishings being presented as evidence of his

accomplishments. It seems to me that, since he must have known the reason for those inflated prices, he should have prevented this wrong by issuing an explicit warning. That's what I did, as poor as I was, when I left Lebak, and I can still have that confirmed by witnesses.

128 I said in note 48 that there are those who will have a better understanding of certain expressions in this book than the ordinary reader, and that among them are Havelaar's most zealous persecutors. That's especially true of this brief passage, where I appear to have hit a sore spot with my reference to the . . . peculiar decision to renew the tea contracts in 1845. Again, it goes without saying that the person alluded to here was appointed as the representative of the entire Dutch nation. Our man in tea—who was also our rice buyer, etc. (see the note on the word *kondé*, p. 339)—acquitted himself quite well in parliamentary debates on political economy, the national interest, human rights, Indies affairs, etc., etc.

129 See also pp. 79–80.

130 The poisoning of Mr. Carolus.

131 A clause in the oath of office.

132 "And"—I might have added—"from murdering *me* as well." Incidentally, the fear that the Resident himself would "tip off" the Adipati speaks volumes about the situation. And the Resident didn't even feel stirred to protest that fear as a kind of defamatory supposition. Instead, he demonstrated through his actions (see p. 268 and p. 273) that Havelaar had understood only too well what to expect from his superior—even though the man had sworn the very same

oath to protect the natives from the greed of their chiefs.

133 Again, it is striking that Resident Brest van Kempen allowed all such statements to pass without protest, or even a request for clarification. His silence indicates that he understood very well what Havelaar was asserting, which, in turn, demonstrates the accuracy of my description of the general situation. Here, for example, the Resident should surely have asked, "What do you mean by the 'spirit' of East Indies officialdom?"

134 Another remark like the one in note 132.

135 "Frivolousness" and "prematurity" should be deplored and punished, to be sure, especially in such grave circumstances. In that respect, Havelaar's loyal offer is beyond criticism. However, if it is taken to mean that a man required by the terms of his office to make a criminal accusation should be held personally liable for the truth of the accusation, we must concede that here Havelaar went beyond the requirements of duty. Who would ever agree to become a public prosecutor under those conditions? Yet Havelaar was too certain of the facts to allow himself even the smallest loophole.

136 "Investigating, reporting, and proposing"—for clarity's sake, all within the limits of my office, and by the authority of that office.

137 That investigation did not actually take place until years later, and the government was forced to acknowledge that Havelaar had told the truth. See the August 1860 issue of *De Gids*, in which Professor Veth, after discussing the affair in detail, says the following:

Since then Havelaar and his loved ones have lived in poverty, he has become an object of abuse for the Drystubbles—because the Drystubbles in the Netherlands still make common cause with the Slymerings in the Indies—and he has become Multatuli, not only in adopted name, but in fact.

And what can we conclude from the fact that, after his dismissal, an investigation was in fact undertaken in the regency of Lebak, that the Adipati received a severe reprimand, and that a few minor chiefs were deposed?

Firstly, the truth of the adage that petty thieves are hanged and great thieves pardoned.

Secondly, that the affair had caused too much of a stir to be hushed up.

Thirdly, that the wrongdoing in Lebak must have been very serious indeed, if even a Resident so fond of “finessing,” and so reluctant to prosecute a native chief, had to take the complaints seriously, and therefore,

Fourthly, that Havelaar was absolutely right.

So says Professor Veth. It doesn’t seem to have occurred to anyone, however, that any sort of compensation was due to Havelaar, or that the refusal to allow him any sort of legal recourse had most unfortunate repercussions for the welfare of the natives. Can any senior official in the interior be expected to do his duty, now that it has become so obvious that both the nation and the government will side with the wretches who turn a blind eye to the abuse of the Javanese people?

138 See p. 273.

139 I could have incited riot among the people. Instead, I did

everything in my power to defend the honor of the Dutch government, as the Resident trusted I would.

140 Nobody in Lebak doubts that my predecessor was poisoned. So why won't Mr. Pahud have his body exhumed?

141 I still possess this statement. No one has ever gone to the trouble of asking to see it.

142 A *tamtam* is a large, suspended hollow wooden block on which the hour is struck. The name is another example of onomatopoeia.

143 This letter from the Adipati is still in my possession and—rather characteristically!—torn to pieces, but still thoroughly legible. His intent in writing it was to implicate me in his extortion, and this plan would have succeeded if I had agreed to his proposals or thoughtlessly corresponded with him about them.

144 In the third paragraph of this letter, I am criticized for performing my duties under the law by a man charged, above all, with reprimanding and even punishing me in the event of neglect of said duties. Furthermore, his dissatisfaction with "my attitude toward my superior, the Resident of Banten" is utterly groundless, and Mr. B. v. K. himself told me later that he couldn't understand what this was supposed to mean.

The claim that the Adipati had been "the subject of glowing reports throughout his career" was a falsehood. The official file on him showed repeated complaints. The comment that I had failed to support my accusation with "facts, let alone proofs," is curious, coming as it does from a man who chose not to respond to my urgent plea for an

opportunity to support my accusations with facts and proofs.

It is untrue that I refused to provide "full disclosure of the information at my disposal regarding the actions of the Native Administration in Lebak." It was precisely in order to provide "full disclosure" that I called for a *free and open* investigation. But I wanted to avoid falling back into the same kind of pointless "conferring" that had been so common under my predecessor, which had led only to the *complainants* being officially punished or covertly mistreated.

"Unsuitability for office in the Colonial Administration" must mean that I was unable to work in the "spirit of the government," which is to say, the spirit of the Slymerings, the spirit of the exalted Duymaer van Twist. The nation should have demanded that all those varieties of duty-shirking good-for-nothings equip themselves to work in the spirit of Havelaar. How can his subsequent admission that the government thought well of me be reconciled with his base insinuation in Parliament that he "could say so much"—did he mean "speak so much evil"?—"about the author of that book"?

As for the assignment to Ngawi, there were yet more reasons than I gave on p. 279 to reject that appointment. But Van Twist, being so utterly ignorant of native affairs, was unaware of them. In picking that office for me, he was again the puppet of the Buitenzorg bureaucracy, which had a truly overriding interest in preventing me from making my case. It was a foregone conclusion: I had to be sent to Ngawi.

As much as I would relish exposing the machinations that this entailed, I will refrain from doing so, as I am not at

liberty to name my sources. Maybe one day this objection will no longer stand in my way.

The final paragraph of this delightful letter means, once again, that it remained to be seen whether Havelaar had the competence and temperament to serve among those infatuated with the “spirit of the government.” And the judge of that would be some senior official or other in the Slymering mold! Anyone can see that Van Twist’s incompetence was not restricted to native affairs, and that he was an equal dunce in “the proper study of mankind.” Recall that he had seen Max Havelaar’s letters, written for the express purpose of jarring him awake. People of the Netherlands, what sort of creatures do you consent to have foisted upon you as viceroys of Insulindia?

145 *Which is near there*: This is another illustration of my earlier remarks, on pp. 171–172, about becoming familiar with the situation in a region by residing in a neighboring province.

146 That successor was Mr. Pahud, another crown jewel of insignificance and therefore a darling of his nation, which found him useful for five years as a minister and another five as governor-general. As the words of this edition clearly state, I knew in ’56 what three million of my compatriots have learned since—that “nothing could be expected from him.” That is also the version in the manuscript of *Havelaar*. But whether it was Mr. Van Lennep himself, or the typesetter, or this or that editor—how should I know?—one of those people saw fit to falsify my words. The sentence in earlier editions is, “I do not know his successor”—that is, Van Twist’s—“and I do not know whether anything can be

expected of him." I do not know what the intention was of this apparently deliberate alteration—it cannot be a printer's error—but to me, it smacks of dishonesty.

147 A member of the Society for the Benefit of the Javanese, speaking in Friesland—Bolsward, I believe it was—regaled his audience with the news that "Havelaar had sunk to the lowest depths, and left the service in a most unpleasant manner." As far as I know, this did not lead to the speaker being shown the door. How it could possibly be to the *benefit* of the Javanese to slander the man who sacrificed everything for their sake, I cannot fathom. On this subject, see my letter to that priceless society in the collection *Verspreide Stukken* ("Scattered Writings").

148 As you read this letter to the Controleur, please keep in mind that it was addressed to someone who'd witnessed all that went on in Lebak, and who had moreover been involved in his official capacity. This document, particularly the episode described in the final paragraphs, provides the most concise proof I can imagine of the truth of my book's overall message.

149 A Batavian newspaper has criticized me for stopping at the home of Mr. Brest van Kempen. Well, I did this at *his* explicit request, and it was an act of generosity on my part. The man feared rioting, and for good reason. Even in Lebak, it had taken all my influence to keep the peace, a fact to which I alluded in my last letter to the Controleur. It would have made the wrong impression if, when leaving Banten, I had given any sign of being with the Resident, and in fact this was not the case. But it would have been the case if, at that time, I had been aware of all his motives for shielding

murderers and thieves from justice. As *Havelaar* shows, I suspected him of no more than a sense of duty distorted by habit, of the kind I had encountered at every turn for years. Later, however, I discovered that in this particular case, the desire to respect the “spirit of the government” went hand in hand with another motive, of a much baser kind . . . of the very basest kind! I do not care to speak of it at this time. Perhaps former Minister of Colonies Hasselman would be willing to provide inquisitive readers with further details. This official—one of my predecessors in Lebak—can attest to whether I deserve the charge of “exaggeration” in my account of the circumstances in the province. He will acknowledge that I *understate* the truth.

150 I said this to Van Twist himself in my “*Brief aan den Gouverneur-generaal in-ruste*” (“Letter to the Retired Governor-General”). It is true that he was deceived, but what turned out to be unfounded was my good-natured assumption that he was an honest man. An honest man tries to *redress* the wrongs for which he is responsible, but V. T. has never shown the slightest inclination to do so. On the contrary! It was *he* who came up with the diabolical plan to use my “fine writing” as a pretext to silence my accusations.

151 He has not done so. I think that after fifteen years’ wait, we may regard my version as correct.

152 And yet—a spokesperson on Indies affairs! And yet—a Liberal! And yet—a member of the Dutch Senate! And yet—an honorary chairman of Mettray Orphanage! And yet—“highly esteemed” in the rectitudinous, God-graced Netherlands! Time and again people ask me for a “program”

of the governmental kind, and some believe they have grounds for displeasure because I, making bitter remarks, have not yet put forward any such program. Oh, my dears, what program is possible in conditions such as ours other than the tip I offered on the last page of *Pruisen en Nederland* ("Prussia and the Netherlands")? Laws and regulations count for *nothing* as long as they are enforced and implemented by villains. Here, too, there is much to be learned from the incident in an audience with the Russian czar described in a quote in the first edition of my pamphlet "Free Labor," 1873 edition, p. 137.

153 See also pp. 294–296, as well as the note on the word "amok" on p. 338. Must all the horrors of Cawnpore be repeated in our beloved Insulindia? And what possible response, other than outbursts of rage, will ultimately remain to the long downtrodden, and consequently demoralized, Javanese? On what country estate will the Van Twists reside then, they who are to blame for the fury foretold in Sentot's Curse?

154 *Ministers with heaps of business*: Included are those who owed their elevation to the "stir" caused by *Havelaar*. Soon after the book was published, a money-grubber from the Indies became the minister of colonies. *He* was going to see to it that "stories like Saijah's would be impossibilities from then on"! How did he pursue this lofty aim, you ask? I do not know. Nobody knows. Instead, his gift to the nation was the sweet little war at the northern tip of Sumatra.

155 These last two sentences were added later. I must admit I didn't realize, in 1859, that the clique referred to here would sing my praises. But I might have known. It's only natural

that when you cry, "Stop, thief!" it's the crooks who join in most vociferously.

156 And indeed, no refutation has ever been attempted. With one exception—addressed in note 122—no one has ever dared to *openly* question a single fact stated in *Havelaar*.

157 Not any longer, voters! I would feel extremely out of place in *your* house of Parliament, face to face with *your* ministers!

158 Even now, Van Twist is known to his fellow landowners—regardless of their so-called political color—as a man of great distinction. He takes part in discussions of Indies affairs, not merely as if he were beyond reproach, but as if he were a leading expert and authority. And the nation does not protest!

159 People of the Netherlands, *this truly happened!* This blow to the reputation of your navy was a disgrace to your government in the Indies, and this low contrivance can be credited to that same exalted viceroy who had no time to hear what Havelaar had to say.

160 Here at last is the line elevated to an epigram in the title of this book. How sad it is to write for readers who need *everything* explained to them.

161 I have yet to receive an answer to the two questions with which this book closes. The King is probably occupied with weightier matters than doing justice and holding on to Insulindia for the Netherlands. I will send H.M. a copy of this new edition, and pending greater success—like my friend Chresos from *Love Letters*, but always *under protest*—will

spin yarns for a public that cannot read. After all, if it were otherwise, the nation would have demanded justice in the Havelaar affair!

According to the latest news from the Indies, Lebak is a wasteland. Entire villages have died out.

Nieder-Ingelheim,
August 1881.

*Translators' note: The first edition of *Max Havelaar* was edited by Jacob van Lennep, a towering figure in nineteenth-century Dutch letters. Van Lennep championed the manuscript and secured its publication in 1860, but in a small luxury edition rather than the mass-market edition that Douwes Dekker had hoped for, and with some place-names and personal names redacted. Douwes Dekker subsequently became embroiled in a legal dispute with Van Lennep over the copyright. The redacted names were included in full in later editions, but Van Lennep's other editorial changes (such as his chapter divisions) were largely retained.

†The brave Acehnese who defend their country are now accused of harboring "ill will."

‡Now that's what I call a memoir! Yet considering that book's undeniable value, it's unfortunate that the author believed—how shall I put it?—God preserve me from scandalmongering, but a reader who understands human nature will sense, when reading the biographies of the two Van Leneps, that the occasional episode has been left out. As grateful as I am for the valuable contributions to our knowledge of the mores of

those days, the dazzling immaculacy of the two goody-goodies to whom the author owes his existence is a strain on the eyes. And strangest of all, Jacob van Lennep himself was not a goody-goody and had no interest in being one. So I suppose the aforementioned gaps must be concessions to the tastes and demands of certain readers, whose influence Mr. Jacob v.L. was—regrettably!—never able to escape. It was just the same kind of timidity that kept him from sticking to his original intention of pursuing the Havelaar case.

§Especially the second one, *Nogeens Vrye-arbeid* ("Once Again Free Labor"), published in Delft by J. Waltman Jr.

||For the tenth time, I call on the "retired Indies army officer" who branded this claim an "untruth" in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* to retract his libel.

GLOSSARY

Glossary of Titles and Foreign Words

Malay and other foreign terms found only in Multatuli’s notes are usually explained there and therefore not included in this glossary. Words glossed or explained adequately in the main text are not always included either. Some words in these definitions, such as “native,” reflect the colonial Dutch social system described in the book; we acknowledge and emphasize that these are not neutral descriptive terms, but are linked to the political and racial ideology of that system. We are indebted to the SEALang Library’s online Indonesian dictionary at sealang.net for supplying or confirming many of the definitions here. Any errors are our own.

—INA RILKE and DAVID MCKAY

adipati	ruler, noble title superior to <i>tumenggung</i>
assistant resident	the Dutch colonial official governing a regency (with the native regent)
alang-alang	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> , jungle grass
alun-alun	forecourt to the house of a regent or district chief
babu	native nanny
bajing	<i>Callosciurus notatus</i> , plaintain squirrel
balai-balai	bamboo cot
baren	Dutch plural of <i>baar</i> , a mocking term for a

	newcomer to the Indies
batik	dyeing method for producing colorful designs on cloth
bingung	upset, confused, perplexed
controleur	title for various Dutch colonial officials; in particular, the deputy administrator of a regency under the Assistant Resident
datu	sovereign, monarch, king (obsolete); used by Multatuli as a term for a native chief
demang	district chief
désa	village
galangan	dike around a rice field (according to Multatuli)
gambier	an extract of the leaves of <i>Uncaria gambir</i> , used in betel chewing
garam gelap	bootleg salt
gogo	nonirrigated rice field
governor-general	the head of the Colonial Administration in the Dutch East Indies
ikat-pending	clasp for a belt or waistband
Insulindia	term for the islands of Southeast Asia, used by Multatuli to refer to the Dutch East Indies
jaksa	native public prosecutor
jati	<i>Tectona grandis</i> , teak
jimat	amulet, talisman, charm
juffrouw	a mid-nineteenth-century Dutch form of address for a middle-class woman, regardless of marital status
kain	a length of cloth, or a sarong or similar garment

kampung	hamlet or village
kancil	mouse deer
kapok	the fiber of the kapok tree, <i>Ceiba pentandra</i>
kelambu	mosquito net; Multatuli describes this as a curtain
keléwang	type of short sword
kemit	unpaid guard or servant (according to Multatuli)
kenari	kenari-nut tree, <i>Canarium commune</i>
kendang	enclosure surrounded by stakes (according to Multatuli)
kepala	head, name for one end of a sarong
ketapang	<i>Terminalia catappa</i> , known in the region as Singapore almond
ketimun	gherkins, pickled cucumbers
kidang	medium-sized deer
kliwon	hamlet chief; Multatuli describes this native official as an intermediary between the Colonial Administration and the village chiefs
kondé	chignon, knot of hair at the back of the head
kraton	palace, noble estate
kris	traditional Javanese dagger ("kris" is the traditional English spelling; the modern Indonesian spelling is <i>keris</i>)
mantri	title for various low-level native officials; Multatuli describes one such official as an "overseer"
mata gelap	to run amok, go berserk
mata-api	fire-eye(s), fiery eye(s); used by Multatuli as

mevrouw	an affectionate term for a particular person a mid-nineteenth-century Dutch form of address for an upper-class woman, regardless of marital status
New Holland	a name for what is now Australia, already old-fashioned in Multatuli's day
orang gunung	mountain person/people; used by Multatuli for the inhabitants of the mountains of western Java
paddy	rice in the husk, rice plant; <i>padi</i> in modern Indonesian spelling
Padris	Acehnese people
pancen	unpaid guard or servant
pangéran	prince
patih	a native official of intermediate rank
payung	sunshade or parasol, sometimes indicative of rank
pedati	two-wheeled horse- or ox-drawn cart
pelita	lamp
pendopo	an open pavilion supported by posts
pinang	areca nut
pisang	banana
pukul empat	<i>Mirabilis jalapa</i> , four o'clock flower
pusaka	heirloom or inheritance from one's ancestors
pusing	at a loss, dizzy, giddy, having a headache
regency	subdivision of a residency
regent	the native leader governing a regency (with the Dutch Assistant Resident)

residency	large administrative region of the Dutch East Indies
Resident	the Dutch colonial official governing a residency
sambal	spicy sauce or paste; Multatuli uses the plural <i>sambal-sambal</i> to refer to side dishes
sarong	length of fabric traditionally worn as a garment in Java
sawah	irrigated rice field, rice-growing area
selamat	an expression of good wishes, used in various greetings
séwah	type of dagger
si upi keteh	literally “little young lady” or “little miss”; used by Multatuli to refer to a particular young woman
sinyo	title meaning “young master,” used by native servants for Europeans
sirih	betel leaf
Solo	another name for Surakarta
susuhunan	title of the ruler of Surakarta
tamtam	type of gong
tipar	dry rice field
tuan	respectful form of address
tudung	head covering; Multatuli uses this word for a woven hat in the shape of a large round dish
tumenggung	ruler, noble title inferior to <i>adipati</i>
user-useran	crown of the head; Multatuli uses this word for the whorls of hair on the crown, and by extension those on a buffalo’s hindquarters. Certain patterns were said to predict good

	fortune.
waringin	banyan (or a closely related species), a sacred tree and symbol of justice
Yogya	an abbreviated name for Yogyakarta

CHRONOLOGY

- 1820 Eduard Douwes Dekker (Multatuli) is born in Amsterdam on March 2.
- 1825 Introduction of the Culture System (or Cultivation System), under which Javanese farmers have to use one-fifth of their land for export products traded and sold by a Dutch monopoly. The system encourages corruption and exploitation by both colonial officials and the Javanese leaders and functionaries who work with them.
- 1838 Sets sail for Batavia (now Jakarta), to work as a colonial administrator in the Dutch East Indies.
- 1842 Charged with civil authority over Natal in North Sumatra. 1843 Temporary suspension for "disloyal administration"; sent to Batavia the following year.
- 1845 Temporary appointment in Karawang, West Java; the appointment is later renewed.
- 1846 Marriage to Everdine (Tine) van Wijnbergen; appointed customs official in Bagelen, Central Java.
1848 Sent to North Sulawesi as secretary of the Manado residency.
- 1848 Liberal constitutional reform in the Netherlands leads to growing criticism of the Culture System.
- 1851 Dekker appointed Assistant Resident of Ambon Island.
- 1852 Granted a two-year furlough in the Netherlands.
- 1854 Birth of his son, Edu.
- 1856 Appointed Assistant Resident of Lebak in Rangkasbitung, West Java, on January 4, and soon clashes with the Regent over the use of unpaid labor; files an official complaint of the Regent's "abuse of

authority"; receives a visit from his superior with a severe reprimand for taking a high-ranking native official to task; the conflict escalates rapidly as the Governor-General becomes involved, culminating in Dekker's suspension and departure with his family within less than four months.

- 1857 Returns to Europe; birth of his daughter, Nonni.
- 1859 Writes *Max Havelaar, or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*, in the space of three months.
- 1860 Publication of *Max Havelaar*.
- 1868 Publication of English translation by A. Nahuÿs.
- 1870 In the Netherlands, liberal demands for reform of colonial policy culminate in the adoption of the Agrarian Act and the Sugar Act, which abolish the Culture System and give private companies access to the colonies. These changes do not improve conditions for the Javanese.
- 1874 Death of Dekker's wife, Tine, in Venice.
- 1887 Death of Eduard Douwes Dekker on February 19, in Germany.