

## Literature, &amp;c.

## The British Magazines.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

## DUTCH ANNA.

It was shortly after the outbreak of the French Revolution that the humble heroine of this story made her appearance in my native village. Dutch Anna (for so she was called by the country people) was, as the name implies, a native of Holland; and at that time she was about twenty five years of age. She was of the middle size, stoutly and firmly built, with a round, good-humoured face, dark hair, clear, honest-looking hazel eyes, and a mouth which, though wide, was expressive of decision and firmness. Her dress, which never varied in style, consisted of a coloured petticoat of a thick woollen material, a short bod-gown of striped cotton, confined round the waist by the strings of a snow-white apron, a close fitting, modest cap, underneath the plaited border of which appeared her glossy hair, neatly braided over her low, broad forehead; add to this a pair of well-knit stockings, which the shortness of her petticoat afforded ample opportunity of admiring, with heavy wooden shoes, and you have a complete picture of Dutch Anna's costume. At the time I speak of, the prejudice entertained by the mass of the people against foreigners was much greater than in the present day, when the means of communication between different countries are so much improved, and the general diffusion of knowledge has shown the unreasonableness of regarding with distrust and contempt those of our fellow-creatures who have been born in a different climate, and trained in different customs to our own. It may therefore be readily imagined that Anna was for a time regarded with suspicion and jealousy, for the very reason which ought to have commanded the sympathy and good-will of her neighbours—'that she was a stranger in the land.' Her mode of life perhaps increased the prejudice against her. Respecting the reason of her voluntary exile, she preserved a studied silence; though I afterwards learned that the prosecution she endured from her own family on the subject of religion was the principal cause. Our village adjoined a populous manufacturing district, and Anna, having been accustomed to such occupation, soon obtained employment. Being a person of a peculiarly reserved and serious turn of mind, she could not endure the thought of living in lodgings; and as she was not able to furnish or pay the rent of a cottage, she hired for a trifling sum an old lonely barn belonging to my father, who was a small farmer, and, with the labour of her own hands, managed to put it into a habitable condition. The furniture of this rude dwelling was simple enough, consisting of a bed of clean straw, a round deal table, and two three-legged stools. The whitewashed walls were ornamented with coloured prints on Scripture subjects, framed and glazed, and a small looking glass, placed in a position to secure the best light afforded by the little window, completed the decorations. Various were the conjectures formed by the villagers respecting this inoffensive though singular woman; and many were the stories circulated, all tending to keep alive the prejudice her eccentricities were calculated to excite.

A casual circumstance, which led to my becoming obliged to Anna, at length enabled me to overcome the suspicion and dislike with which our neighbour was regarded. Our acquaintance speedily ripened into friendship; for with the reaction natural to the generous, I felt as though I could never sufficiently compensate for my former injustice towards her. Often in an evening I would put on my bonnet, and, taking my work with me, go to spend a leisure hour with Dutch Anna; and on these occasions she entertained me with descriptions of her own country, and of the customs and manners of its inhabitants; or with striking anecdotes, and incidents which had come under her own personal observation; never failing to draw some useful moral or illustrate some important truth from what she related. She could read well, and write a little—rare accomplishments in those days for one in her situation in life. Her powers of observation were extremely acute, and her memory retentive; but what struck me as her most remarkable characteristics were, her sincere and unaffected piety, her unswerving truthfulness, and her extraordinary decision and fearlessness. When I have said, on bidding her good night, 'Anna, are you not afraid to be left alone here during the night, with no one within call?' she has replied, 'Afraid, Miss Mary! no; how can I feel afraid, knowing myself to be under the protection of One as great and powerful as He is wise and good? I am never alone, for God is ever present with me.' After Anna had resided some years in this country, during which time she had, by her constant good conduct, gained the esteem of all who knew her, and, by her good nature and willingness to oblige, won the kindly feeling of even the most prejudiced, she became anxious to pay a visit to her native land; and as the accommodations for travelling at that period, besides being few, were costly, she obtained letters of recommendations from her employers and other gentlemen in the place to friends residing in different towns on her route, and set out, intending to perform the greater part of her land journey on foot. At the end of several months she returned, and quietly resumed her former mode of life. Not till fully a year after this period did she relate to me an adventure which had occurred to her on her journey homewards, and which I shall now transcribe:

It was at the close of an autumn day that

Anna, who had been walking since early morning with scarcely an interval of rest, found herself, in spite of her great capability of enduring fatigue, somewhat foot sore and weary on arriving at the town of —. As she passed along the streets, she observed an unusual degree of bustle and excitement; and, on inquiring the cause, found that a large detachment of soldiers on their way to the continent, had arrived in the town that afternoon, and that some difficulty was experienced in finding them accommodation. This was not very agreeable news for Anna, tired as she was; however, she pursued her way to the house of the clergyman, where she had, in passing that way before, been hospitably entertained, hoping that there she might be able to procure a lodging, however humble. But in this she was disappointed; for though the good clergyman and his wife received her kindly, they could not offer her shelter for the night, as they had already more guests than they could conveniently accommodate. Anna would have been contented and thankful for a bed of straw by the kitchen fire; but even this they could not give, as the lower apartments were wanted by those who had been obliged to give up their beds.

At length, after some hesitation, the clergyman said, 'I know but of one place where you could at this time find a lodging. You appear to be a woman of good courage, and if you dare venture, you may occupy a room in that house you see from this window. It is uninhabited, and has been so for some years, as it has the reputation of being haunted.' Anna looked in the direction indicated, and saw through the deepening twilight a large two-storied house, built of a dull red brick, with stone copings, standing at some distance from the high road. The house itself occupied a considerable extent of ground, being beautifully situated, with fronts to the south and west. The principal entrance was by folding doors, half of which were glass; and the house was sheltered on the north and east by a grove of trees, whose branches, now but thinly covered with leaves, waved mournfully to and fro in the night wind. 'The last proprietor of that place,' continued the clergyman, 'was a vicious and depraved man, whose very existence was a curse to the neighbourhood in which he dwelt. At an early age he came into possession of a large property, which he spent in the gratification of every base and lawless passion. His life, as far as I can learn, was one unvaried course of cruelty, lust, and impiety, unredeemed by one noble aspiration, one generous, unselfish action. He died suddenly, in the prime of life, in the midst of one of his riotous midnight orgies, and the house has ever since been deserted. It is said, and believed by our good townsmen, that there he still holds his revels, with fiends for his companions; and many affirm that they have heard the sound of their unearthly merriment, mingled with shrieks and wailings, borne upon the night breeze; whilst the few who have ventured within its walls, tell of shapes seen, and sounds heard, which would cause the stoutest heart to quail. For myself, I am no great believer in the supernatural, and have no doubt that imagination, united to the loneliness of the spot, and the strange freaks the wind plays through a large uninhabited house, have originated reports which we are sure would lose nothing in the recital; so if you are inclined to make the trial, I will see that what is necessary is provided, and I think I may venture to promise you an undisturbed night's rest.'

Anna, as I have said before, was remarkable for her fearlessness; so she thanked the gentleman for his proposal, saying, 'that she had not the least fear of spirits, good or bad; that the former, if indeed they were ever visible to mortal eyes, could be but messengers of mercy; and for the latter, she could not conceive that a Being infinite in goodness would ever permit them to revisit this earth for the sole purpose of terrifying and tormenting innocent individuals like herself; that she far more dreaded evil men than evil spirits, and that as, from the estimation in which the place is held, she should feel herself secure from them, she would thankfully accept his offer.' As soon, therefore, as the necessary preparations were made, and Anna had partaken of the good substantial fare set before her, she begged to be allowed to retire to rest, as she was fatigued with her day's journey, and wished to set out again early the next morning. Her request was immediately complied with; the good clergyman himself insisting upon seeing her safely to her destination; who, having ascertained that proper provision had been made for her comfort, and told her that refreshment should be provided for her early next morning at his house, he bade her good night, and left her to repose. As soon as he was gone, Anna proceeded to take a more particular survey of her apartment. It was a large, but not very lofty room, panelled with oak, and having two windows looking across a wide lawn to the main road. The bright fire in the ample fireplace illuminated the richly carved cornice, with its grotesque heads and fanciful scroll-work. It had evidently been a dining-room, for some of the heavy furniture, in the fashion of the period in which it had been last inhabited, still remained. There were the massive table, and the old-fashioned high-backed chairs, with covers of what had once been bright embroidery, doubtless the work of many a fair hand; but what attracted her attention most, was a picture over the chimney-piece. It was painted on the wooden panel; perhaps the reason it had never been removed, though evidently the work of no mean artist. It represented a scene of wild revelry. At the head of a table; covered with a profusion of fruits, with glasses and decanters of various elegant forms, stood a young man; high above his head he held a goblet filled to the brim with wine; ex-

citement flashed from his bright blue eyes, and flushed the rounded cheek; light-brown hair, untouched by powder, curled round the low narrow forehead; whilst the small sensual mouth expressed all the worst passions of our nature. Around the table sat his admiring parasites; young beauty and hoary age, the strength of manhood and the earliest youth, were there, alike debased by the evidences of lawless passion. With what a master-hand had the painter seized upon the individual expression of each! There the glutton, and here the sot; now the eye fell on the mean pander or the roystering boon companion; now on the wit, looking with a roguish leer upon his fair neighbour, or the miserable wretch maudlin in his cups; and again on the knave profiting by the recklessness of those around him. The bright blaze of the fire lit up the different countenances with a vivid and life-like expression; and as Anna gazed, fascinated and spell-bound, her thoughts naturally reverted to what she had heard of the life and character of the last owner of the place. Was that youthful figure, so evidently the master of the revel, a portrait of the unhappy man himself who had thus unconsciously left behind him not only a memorial, but a warning. How often had the now silent halls echoed to the bawl of the drunkard, the song of the wanton, the jest of the profane, the laugh of the scorner. It was here, perhaps in this very room, that the dread hand of death had struck him; here he had been suddenly called to account for property mis-used, a life mis-spent. Saddened by these reflections, she turned from the picture, and taking her Bible from her bundle, she drew aside the tarnished curtains, and seated herself at one of the windows. The moon had by this time risen, and was shedding her soft light on the peaceful landscape without. The beauty of the scene soothed her excited feelings; and as she read, her mind resumed its accustomed serenity. Closing her book, she prepared to retire to rest, first examining the doors, of which there were two: the one by which she had entered, opening into the front hall, she found to be without a lock, or indeed any fastening at all; the other, leading in an opposite direction, she was unable to open. As, however, she was quite free from apprehension, she felt no uneasiness from this circumstance; and, commending herself to the care of her Heavenly Father, she composed herself to rest, and soon fell soundly asleep.

How long she had slept she could not tell, when she was awoke by what seemed to her the confused sounds of song and merriment. So deep had been her sleep, that it was some time before she could rouse herself to a recollection of her situation. When, however, she had done so, she raised herself in bed, and listened; all was silent, save that the night, having become rather gusty, the wind at intervals swept moaningly round the deserted mansion. The fire was almost out, but the candle in the lantern which stood by her bedside shed a feeble light upon the oaken floor; and the moon, though occasionally overcast, was still high in the heavens. Readily concluding the disturbance to have been wholly imaginary, the result of the impression made by her waking thoughts upon her sleeping fancies, Anna composed herself again to sleep; but scarcely had she lain down, when the same sounds, low at first, but gradually becoming louder and more distinct, broke in upon the silence. The noise appeared to her to proceed from a distant part of the house, and came with a kind of muffled sound, as though doors of some thickness intervened. Peals of laughter, bursts of applause, snatches of song, crashing of glass, mingled in wild confusion. Higher and higher grew the mirth, louder and louder swelled the tumult, until, when the uproar appeared to have reached its height, there was a pause—a silence as profound as it was sudden and appalling. Then there rang through the wide deserted halls and chambers a shrill, despairing shriek, whilst far and near, above, below, around, rose mocking and insulting laughter. Dauntless as Anna was, and firm as was her reliance on the protection of Heaven, it would perhaps be too much to say that she felt no quickening of the pulse, no flutterings and throbbings of the heart as she listened. But surprise, and a strong desire to penetrate the mystery, greatly preponderated over any feelings of alarm, and her first impulse was immediately to endeavour to find her way to the scene of the disturbance. But a moment's consideration showed her how foolish and imprudent this would be, totally unacquainted as she was with the house, and with no better light than the feeble glimmer of the lantern. If it was the work of designing persons, such a step would be but to expose herself to danger, whilst, if the effect of supernatural agency, she could neither learn what they wished to conceal, nor shun what they chose to reveal. She therefore decided upon passively awaiting the result of her adventure. As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, the noise subsided; the laughter became fainter and fainter; until at length it died away, seemingly lost in the distance, and silence once more reigned round. After a short interval, this was again broken by a noise resembling the rattling and clanking of a chain dragged heavily along, which seemed to approach by slow degrees towards her apartment, and as gradually receded; then again approached, and again receded; and so on several times, but each time coming nearer than before; until at length it paused beside that door of her room which Anna had been unable to open. Cautiously raising her head from the pillow, Anna endeavoured, with fixed and strained look, to pierce the darkness in which that part of the room was enveloped; but though she could not distinguish anything, and though no sound was made, she became, with a thrill more nearly approaching

terror than she had before experienced, instinctively conscious that she was no longer alone. Resolutely determined, however, not to yield to feelings of alarm, Anna said, in a firm, unfaltering voice, 'Whoever or whatever you are that thus disturb my repose and intrude upon my privacy, show yourself, and name your errand, if you want anything from me; if not, begone; for your attempts to terrify me are vain. I fear you not.' The only answer returned was a low laugh; and where the moonlight streamed in through the partly-drawn window-curtain, there stood a frightfully grotesque figure. Its body, as well as Anna could distinguish, resembled that of a bear, but the head, face, and shoulders, were those of a human being; the former being decorated with a horn over each shaggy eyebrow. Round its neck an iron chain was hung, which, as it now slowly advanced, sometimes in the light, and sometimes in the shade, it rattled menacingly. The sight of this creature, far from increasing Anna's alarm, considerably diminished it, and she lay perfectly quiet, steadily watching its movements, until it came within arm's length of her, when, suddenly springing forward, she seized hold of it with a firm grasp, exclaiming, 'This is no spirit, for here is flesh and bone like myself.' Apparently, the ghost being composed of too solid materials to melt in air, had no other resource than to oppose strength to strength, for it struggled vigorously, and with some difficulty succeeded in freeing itself from Anna's hold. No sooner was it at liberty, than it made for the door with as much speed as its various encumbrances would allow; and Anna, now completely roused, and forgetting all prudential considerations in the excitement of the moment, hastily put on a few articles of clothing, and, throwing her cloak around her, seized her lantern and followed. The ghost had, however, gained so much in advance of her, that it was with some difficulty she could decide which way to turn, but, guided by the clanking of the chain, she went boldly along a wide stone passage, and through several rooms, opening one out of another, until just as she was again within sight, and almost within reach of the object of her pursuit, it suddenly disappeared; and Anna, in her eagerness, springing quickly forward, was herself the next moment precipitated through an opening in the floor, in her fall breaking her lantern. Fortunately she alighted on a heap of straw, or the consequences might have been fatal. As it was, though bruised and stunned by her sudden descent, she did not entirely lose consciousness, but was sensible of a confused murmur of voices near her; and as her perceptions became clearer, she was aware that the tones though low, were earnest and angry, and that she herself was the subject of conversation. 'I tell you it is the only thing to be done; so what's the use of talking about it, you fool?' were the first words she distinguished. 'But,' interrupted another voice, evidently a woman's, 'would it not be better to wait and see?' 'Death and fury, wait and see what?' fiercely exclaimed the first speaker. 'If she's dead, it'll do her no harm; and if she isn't, the sooner a stopper's put in her mouth the better.' Completely roused from her stupor by the danger with which she was threatened, Anna opened her eyes, and perceived that she was in a large vaulted cellar, at one end of which was a small heated furnace. Scattered about the floor, and on rudely-constructed work-benches, as though the persons using them had hastily abandoned their employment, were many curious-looking tools and machines, together with heaps of metal of different sizes, and in different stages of manufacture, from the merely moulded shape to the finished shilling or guinea. Some half-dozen or eight men and women were grouped together, amongst whom she recognized the ghost, not quite divested of his masquerade dress. In a single glance Anna perceived all this, and it needed no conjuror to tell her that she had fallen into the hands of a gang of coiners.

Fully sensible of the peril of her situation, her extraordinary courage did not forsake her; for Anna, though somewhat peculiar in her religious opinions, was perfectly sincere, and even at this awful moment felt unshaken confidence in the protecting care of Providence. Though a foreigner, she possessed great command of the English language, and her style, notwithstanding its singularity and quaintness, was well calculated to overawe the rude and lawless band into whose hands she had fallen. With a calm and steady gaze she met the eye of the ruffian, who brandished his weapon before her, and said—'I pray you, do not commit this great wickedness, nor shed the blood of a helpless woman, who has never injured you.' 'Oh, come,' interrupted the man in a surly tone, 'let's have none of that gammon, for it'll be of no use. If folks will meddle in other folks concerns, they must take the consequences; we're not such fools as to put the rope round our own necks, I can tell you.' 'Nay,' but hear what I have to say,' repeated Anna, eluding the man's grasp as he endeavoured to seize hold of her; 'my coming here was no fault of my own, and I promise not to betray you.' 'Oh ay, a likely tale,' said the man with a brutal laugh. 'We are all for ourselves in this world and no mis-are all for ourselves in this world and no mis- take; so we shall just put you where you can take no tales, old girl.' 'Stop; hear what she has to say; you shall; you must,' cried a young woman who started up from a table at the further end of the cellar, at which she had been seated, with her face buried in her hands, during the foregoing colloquy. 'I tell you, Jack,' she continued, advancing into the midst of the group, and laying her hand on the man's arm, 'you shan't touch that woman; you won't; I know you won't. Bad enough you are—we all are, God knows—but there's no blood upon our hands yet,' and, added she, lowering her