MULTATULI

On Free Labor in the Dutch East Indies

and the present colonial agitation



Kacabenggala Editions

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There is something rotten in the State of Denmark.

—SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

Free labor or Cultivation System... the issue of the day. No, not of the day... the issue of years!

For years, the nation has been paying its ministers and sending representatives to The Hague to decide whether the Javanese should be exploited in a liberal or reactionary, conservative or progressive manner.

Say something about civilization... they call you a fool and respond: free labor.

Speak of progress—of real progress this time—stupidity! People ask your opinion about the Cultivation System.

Share something about abuse of authority, extortion, robbery, and murder...

Hey, is the answer, tell us something about Free Labor.

Call for help for trampled human rights. People don't understand that language.

Say something about virtue, honor, feelings, loyalty, truth, common sense... all in vain. People don't "do" those things.

Yes, even worse, point out the importance, the importance to 'people' themselves—something that 'people' do care about—and still you will not be heard, because you cannot tie that importance to 'people' themselves with a few phrases about Free Labor or the Cultivation System.

For now, I will give in to the monomania of the moment and write something about Free Labor.

At first, it may seem as if I am writing about something else. And this is natural. The issue of Free Labor is not an issue. So, in addressing this proposed question, I am forced to constantly point to other matters that are indeed issues. Magicians draw your gaze to the left when they want to hide something on the right. You know that, don't you? Well, I will try to direct your gaze to the side that the magicians do not want you to see. So I actually have little to say about Free Labor.

No one can accuse me of writing too much. Perhaps I have even written too little. I am already over forty, and so far only a few small books of mine have been published. No Muse Almanac ever suffered from me, even though I committed verses and treatises to Belgium's waste. I have burned all my 'love letters', and there are already grandmothers among them. No one but myself has suffered from the first lovely but intoxicating afflictions of a young, passionate heart. And when I finally had to reveal myself to the public, I was excessively praised for my style of writing.

That was unfair.

I deserved more praise for my silence. I say this in all seriousness. There is much foolishness in many writings. It is easier to fill a hundred volumes than to preserve the emotions that would fill a hundred volumes until the right moment, or—if necessary—to stifle them until death follows. Have you ever considered, reader, how much mental strength it took for me not to act before I turned forty? You can almost know how I view people and things. You can

know that I did not go through life without absorbing the impressions it offered me. Well, I collected these impressions for myself, for my immediate surroundings, fearing that they were not ripe, that tomorrow I would have to take back what I gave today, that there would be a lack of harmony between youth, manhood, and old age. In a word: I saved, and however generous or wasteful I may have been, I was never wasteful or generous with my ideas.

After the publication of Max Havelaar, however, my silence usually had a different reason than timidity. From two completely opposite sides in the political arena, people had promised me their help. I believed, trusted, and... waited. I have said that Havelaar was naive. I was deceived by both sides. By one side, I was even robbed.

Neither the conservatives nor the opposition showed the slightest sign of concern for the mistreated Javanese man, that is, my cause. The price of that help would have been that I had to rally behind a banner. That I couldn't. Je lève bannière, n'en suivre ne peux. Writing about—that is, in favor of—Free Labor would have given me bread and a position. I could also have clothed my children with some praise for the Cultural system. And behold, I had enough talent for that. To those who might think that I am elevating myself by attributing that talent to myself, I reply that there is no self-aggrandizement in claiming a quality that disgusts me. Be that as it may, I did have that so-called talent. Anyone who thinks otherwise is free to say so. But I also had—and this time I am indeed elevating myself—a disposition that resisted the slightest deviation

from the truth, especially when that truth was detrimental or dangerous to myself. Everything that is difficult attracts me. To concede something in an indifferent matter, or even when that concession would be harmful to myself...I could do it. But to go against the truth, to yield to force majeure in a matter of principle, where the penalty for refusal, as in my case, would be severe, I cannot do that, I do not want to do that, and I will not do that.

Everything that is difficult attracts me, I have said. However, I admit that when I entered the fray, I did not suspect the kind of difficulties that awaited me. I only thought I would be poisoned with my wife and child. Instead, I am being reviled. My opponents have managed to shift the battle to a terrain reminiscent of the cry of the Jakartans – it is historical, reader! – 'those dogs of the Dutch fight with dung!' I had not counted on that. Would I have acted differently if I had foreseen this... No, no, a thousand times no! But in that case, I would have entered the fray with less enthusiasm.

Do not accuse me of vulgarity for quoting Jakatrasen's exclamation. Can I help it, Dutchmen, that your history in the Indies is vulgar and mean? Can you undo those words, and the action they provoked? Who is trivial, someone who does mean things, or the man who rises up with all the strength of his soul against mean things?

The support that was promised to me after the publication of Max Havelaar was initially not linked to degrading conditions. Both conservatives and liberals claimed to be in-

terested in my case, without further ado. Only later, when the impression made by Max Havelaar was thought to have worn off, when it was hoped that an appeal to the people would remain fruitless, was ignoble service demanded in return for help. I have letters that show that for months and months—quite unnecessarily, of course! - I urged them to keep up their courage, without mentioning Free Labor, the Cultivation System, or other such matters. They pretended to put humanity and justice first, just like me. And only after I had waited a long time, after they were convinced that I knew from experience what it meant to struggle with deprivation, after they had assured themselves that the need was pressing, did they reluctantly extend the meaningful invitation: write something in the spirit of...

I would write something in the spirit of those gentlemen. Sit down, gentlemen, and try to write in my spirit. That would be difficult for you. Behold the difference. You would not be able to write in my spirit. I do not want to write in your spirit, even though I could. You saw that in Wawelaar's sermon and in the arguments of Droogstoppel, a person in whom, I am pleased to note, many members of parliament recognized themselves vice versa. In the last sessions, people kept shouting back and forth: "You are that man!" Everyone wanted to be Nathan, the rebuking prophet. No one wanted to be David, the caught criminal king.

I would write something in spirit...

In spirit! I write in my spirit, my gentlemen free workers and culture creators! You live in your villas, you enjoy your

money, you flaunt your principles, you cling to your lies, you compromise your consciences, you hypocritically use your spirit, but... I write in my spirit.

You must let me do that!

The first reason for my silence after Max Havelaar was a vain wait for promised recovery. And the publication of the Love Letters was no exception in this respect. It is clear that I wrote them to help a poor family that I did not know out of distress. It was a whim, as I had many in the past, and which I usually followed. This time, it was merely a memory of earlier times.

But this constant silent waiting may also show that I am not an agitator at any price. I had shown how shamefully the lives and possessions of the Javanese were being treated... they promised improvement, and I remained patiently silent.

Even before Max Havelaar, I had provided conclusive evidence that my aim was not to cause a stir or scandal, but solely to bring about reform. My predecessor had been murdered in November 1855 to prevent him from doing his duty. My failed attempts to urge Governor-General Duymaer van Twist to fulfill his duty date back to the beginning of 1856. Max Havelaar, the provocative book, was first published in May 1860.

Those are telling diary entries! Four full years lie between the events in Lebak and the moment when I invited the Nation to examine the way in which it is represented in the

Indies. There are those who claim that my actions in Lebak stemmed from ambition, from a desire to make a name for myself. I have two responses to that accusation. First of all, it would be desirable to find such ambition in the servants of the State more often. It would not be so bad, I think, if the performance of one's duty led to fame and prosperity. I believe that even if I had been driven by a desire to make a name for myself, that desire would easily stand comparison with so many other desires that we see satisfied every day in an easier way, the desire for money, for comfort, for luxury, the desire to achieve prosperity, honor, and fame by not fulfilling one's duty. I for one do not see what shame there would be in upholding the rights of my subjects—my neighbors, do you hear, Christians?—against predatory oppressors. I do not see that I have humiliated myself by upholding the eternal claims of justice and fairness against the unscrupulous but powerful opponents of that justice. I do not see what is reprehensible in upholding my so-called God's sworn instructions, which prescribed protecting the Javanese from the greed of their leaders, nor can I honor the violation of similar oaths by others who swore the same oaths in the name of the same God. (See the Government Regulations, which prescribe as the Governor-General's first obligation to protect the population against arbitrariness.)

I do not see the point of all this. And so I maintain, even if I had been driven by ambition, that this should not have been held against me as a reproach.

And secondly: those who accuse me of this admit that there was honor in my actions, that there was glory to be gained

through my deeds. I take note of that acknowledgment. To date, I have not heard that Van Twist was accused of neglecting his duty out of ambition. The levers that set such a creature in motion are of a somewhat different nature.

But... I did not seek honor. See the daily notes. I have remained silent for four years. Is that not telling?

When Mr. Van Vliet, some time ago, felt compelled to complain about the Indian administration, his case immediately became public.

After Mr. Van Hoëvell's departure from the Indies in 1848, the Nation very quickly, indeed immediately, had the opportunity to take part in the struggle he had begun with the establishment. And recently, when Messrs. Modderman and Van den Biesen had their interests infringed upon, every mail brought with it discussions and arguments about the things that had happened to those gentlemen.

I could multiply ad infinitum the examples of individuals who, in litigation with the Indian Government, immediately turned to the Nation. And I am by no means claiming that those who most urgently appealed to the People as judge were guilty of excessive haste. But it is certain that someone who, in an important matter such as mine, waits four years before exposing to the public the mistreatment that cost him and his family so dearly, does not deserve to be accused of seeking fame.

If Duymaer van Twist had been willing to hear me and then do justice—as was his duty—no one would ever have heard

anything about those sad Lebakse affairs.

And even later, Max Havelaar would never have been published if that man had responded to my letter of January 1858. If he had properly followed up on what I asked him to do in it. If he had gone to the King and said:

Sire, I made a mistake while governing the Indies on your behalf. Listening to biased advisors, blinded by conceit, giving in to laziness, and too ordinary to comprehend that someone could exist who was less ordinary than me... be that as it may, I realize that I have not lived up to the opinion you had of me when you deemed me to have sufficient 'zeal, skill, and good faith' to entrust me with the administration of those precious possessions. Sire, I confess my guilt, and since I value being considered an honest man, I want to atone for that guilt as much as possible and repair what can be repaired.

It is impossible for me to bring back to life those who have perished because of my negligence. Nor can I restore the possessions of all those who lost them through my slowness, carelessness, and unwillingness. For, Sire, however thrifty and attentive I was in collecting guilder after guilder from the princely income paid to me by the Nation... I have not yet gathered a full million, and you understand, Sire, that this is far from sufficient to provide full compensation. But I will do what I can, Sire. Here is all that I possess. I beg you, let your Minister of Colonies return some of it, as far as it will go, to the poor who have been robbed. I want to be considered a good man, Sire, and... I confess that the

curse of those poor people weighs heavily on me. I do not know how I will rid myself of the curse on the dying lips of all the people who were murdered under and through my misrule.

And then, Sire, you who are Emperor of Insulinde, I beg you, never again send a governor there who is as incompetent as I am.

Try to find someone, Sire, who has some understanding of human rights, virtue, honor, courage, and other such matters that were somewhat foreign to me, Sire, because I had been a prosecutor and had too much practice in acquiring knowledge of things that do not occur in everyday life.

Also investigate, O Emperor, before you entrust the administration of forty million people to anyone, whether the man you choose for that purpose has indeed made the study of man his main study, as an English poet says... from what I hear. For, Sire, I do not read English, nor poets either, as you understand.

And then give such a new Governor strict orders, Sire, that he does not interfere with the so-called political issues of the day concerning Free Labor and the Cultural System, but that he ensures that everyone does their duty according to the written and sworn provisions, so that the poor Javanese get what is theirs, even if it is but a little. For, Sire, I realize that I was wrong to concern myself so much with judging the systems of laws, and thereby neglected to pay attention to the violation of laws, which might not be so bad if only they were enforced.

I also recommend to my successors, Sire, that they show respect for anyone who has the courage to do their duty in extremely difficult circumstances, and tell them not to reproach such people, as I have done, because I could not understand that such people existed.

Forgive me also, Sire, that after my return from the Indies I allowed myself to appear as if I understood Indian affairs. For, Sire, I now recognize that in Buitenzorg one sees little or nothing of this, and nothing other than what the Councils of the Indies and the clerks of the Secretariat choose to reveal. Forgive me, Sire, for allowing myself to be tempted, pour me donner un genre, to defend an opinion on Free Labor. I admit that I know nothing about it, and that I am merely repeating what has been told to me by others who have an interest in Free Labor. Forgive me for that, Sire, and remember that I myself have never personally experienced anything in the Indies.

I cannot investigate this, because in five years I have not learned to say 'good morning' in Malay, and so I have never been able, through cross-examination and consultation with those involved, to form my own opinion on such profound matters.

Forgive me for all this, Sire! Forgive me for that unnecessary war on Banjarmasin that cost so many lives. Forgive me for the insult I inflicted on your Navy by writing a circular in which I appealed to public charity for the surviving relatives of people who had been robbed or murdered, who believed they could rely on the protection of that Navy, of which I

was Commander-in-Chief.

Forgive me, Sire, for being the cause of all the misery that Havelaar and his family are enduring, because he was under the mistaken impression that I would do my duty, as he did.

Forgive me for the bad example I set by neglecting that duty and extinguishing all noble zeal in the civil servants on Java, who, after the fate that befell Havelaar, would need even more courage than he did to do what he did.

Forgive me for all the extortion, all the robbery, all the murders that, after my departure, have been the result of my sanctioning the crimes that Havelaar opposed, above and beyond the usual quota.

Forgive me for all this, O Emperor of Insulinde, and even more for what I cannot mention now, because I cannot speak intelligibly after becoming a member of the House of Representatives. Forgive me, forgive me, O Emperor, and let me return to Deventer, where I have a position to fill that suits me better than that of Governor, and which I should never have left...'

Van Twist could have spoken in this vein after receiving my memorandum of January 1858, and I am convinced that his speech would have been more successful than the speeches he now dares to give from time to time—as far as one can understand—about Free Labor.

But, people say, to speak like that, the man would have to be a hero of virtue, and heroes are rare.

I am not saying no. I neither demand nor expect heroism in the first instance. But leaving aside what that man would have been if he had spoken thus, I dare ask what he is, by saying nothing, by doing nothing after receiving that cordial letter of January 1858?

I ask anyone interested to read that letter and ask themselves what to think of a man who can calmly and 'quietly' set aside such a piece without coming to the conclusion that his duty demands a response, a response in deeds above all.

One may pretend to believe that Max Havelaar is a novel... but this 'letter to the retired Governor-General' is not a novel. This letter was written to the person who should be in a position to refute anything that could be refuted in my account of the events in Lebak. That letter was accompanied by appendices that proved, point by point, the truth of everything I said. I had included extracts from the conduct reports of my predecessors, which showed that the regent I was accusing had been repeatedly accused of extortion. It was therefore a lie on the part of Mr. Van Twist towriteto me in his cabinet letter of March 23, 1856 (Havelaar, p. 283 of part I.) that favorable reports had always been received about that Regent, which, incidentally, would have meant nothing even if it had been true.

I provided copies of documents showing how the son-in-law of that Chief, the man in whose house my predecessor had eaten his last meal shortly before his death, had already been punished in Lebak for robbery on the public highway before my arrival. I submitted copies of the statements

made by the Controller, which I later publish the (Minnebrieven, p. 135 of this 2nd part.) - statements that were made after it became apparent that the Governor-General wanted to support the Resident of Bantam in his negotiations, and thus after that Controller knew that he had nothing to hope for or fear from me. By presenting other documents, I clearly demonstrated, on human grounds, that I was able to compel my subordinates to tell the truth, and that I made use of that influence, regardless of whether it benefited or harmed me.

Many documents were enclosed with that letter to Van Twist, all proving that I was completely within my rights. It is impossible for me to list them now, but if required, I will be able to do so. I am in possession of an authentic extract from a police register, which shows how 57 or 59 people — I believe in Pandeglang — were punished with flogging and taken back to Lebak in chains because, like Saïdjah's father, they had left 'without a pass' to escape the pressure on their heads. These were everyday occurrences. Reread Saïdjah's story, in which I summarize in a few words what would have given me the opportunity for detailed descriptions, had I felt inclined to do so. In De Havelaar, I have shortened, softened, and reduced reality to its simplest expression. Let Van Twist claim the opposite, if he dares! Let him say that I have exaggerated. Then, instead of names plucked out of thin air, I will give the correct, literally correct names of the poor people who were driven from their land by oppression. I will give those names, stating their place of birth and residence, date, oc-

cupation... Alas, they were all farmers like Saïdjah's father. Does one desire more? Let Van Twist deny, if he dares, that those who complained and fled because of the mistreatment were then mistreated again because they had complained or fled. Let him deny that the core of the rebels in the Lampongs consisted of fugitive martyrs from Bantam. Let him deny that in every uprising, the courage of our army has to contend with the fury of long-abused people who have been driven to extremes, who were once gentle and good-natured but have been driven to savage rampage by despair. Let him deny that in every battle, usually so bloody, the majority of the defeated on both sides are victims of political mistakes made by well-paid but stupid, slimy, former opportunistic civil servants and pension-seeking sycophants of easy-going Governors-General. Let him deny that the strength of our army, the lives of officers and soldiers, could be better spent than on murdering the poor who did nothing wrong except that, after long endurance, they finally resisted excessive violence.

Yes.

Yes, there were many enclosures with that letter, it was a bundle! I still remember how difficult it was for me to obtain the necessary paper and a place where I could sit down to write them. And yet it was all in vain! The man did not reply. That is his business.

But it is my business to point out the date of that letter. I wrote it in January 1858, almost two years after my departure from Lebak. Is that date not proof that my goal in

upholding justice was not to make a name for myself?

And after that letter, I waited another two years before writing Max Havelaar. I had been under pressure for a long time, I had tried for a long time to bring about improvement without causing scandal, I had tried for a long time to protect my family from starvation, before I appealed to the justice of the King and the Nation. Even when Max Havelaar had already been written and partially printed, I turned to the King with a request for redress. Even then, if he had been able to improve the miserable situation in the Indies, I would have burned my book.

I will publish that letter later, after writing to the King once more.

I ask nothing for myself in it. I stand by the statement already addressed to Mr. Van Twist: I cannot serve in any other way than I did in Lebak!

But even the King could not bring himself to intervene forcefully in the web of lies and deceit that will soon make the Dutch name an object of disgust among the nations. I believe that such intervention would have been a glorious calling for a King!

And only after a long wait for that answer, after the complete certainty that this answer would not come, did the book about the coffee auctions appear in May 1860, which, in the words of a Member of Parliament, 'sent a shiver through the country'. That was true. A shiver did indeed run through the country. But when? In 1860. That is: four

years after I, poor and powerless, left Lebak with my wife and child.

Like a patient Javanese, I had allowed myself to be mistreated for four years. For four years I had struggled from day to day with the worries of today, with fear for tomorrow, before I caused that shiver. For four years, Sjaalman had been mocked and taunted by Droogstoppel, before Multatuli decided to take Havelaar's side against that Droogstoppel.

That I did it then, forcefully, vigorously... who can blame me? Besides, that's how I am. I don't do things by halves. People will see that in the future, if I stay alive. And even if it were... but no, that future has been taken care of.

Four years, then. Years of bitter sorrow. Four difficult, heavy years...

Would I have waited so long if it had been about advancement or scandal?

I wished to redress the grievances of my poor protégés, and if I had succeeded in this, the Javanese themselves would never have known what they owed me, nor would the Netherlands have known how I sacrificed myself, with all that was dear to me, for its honor.

But I admit that, both before and after writing Max Havelaar, there was often another reason that forced me to remain silent. The wretches who are destroying the Indies have an ally who often, indeed usually, has the power to

knock the pen out of my hand. The Nation knows this and seems to approve of it. That is its shame, not mine.

The name of that ally is: lack. I don't always have paper. I don't always have the documents with me that I need to look something up, because it often happens that I have to leave a chest or suitcase here or there because I can't afford the transport costs. It is thanks to Van Twist, for example, that I do not give the names in this piece of the 57 or 59 people who were driven back to Lebak with lashes from Pandeglang. Often I have no place where I can sit down quietly to write. Hasn't one read that in the Love Letters... especially between the lines?

And finally, most of the time, yes, almost always, every thought that occurs to me is stolen by a ghost who, dressed in a Governor-General's costume or in the guise of a pot-bellied freelancer, asks me the taunting question: 'What will your children eat tomorrow? Where will you house your family in a month, in a week, in a day?

For many times it has been the case that this question was a question of weeks or days... yes, of hours!

In my Cross Song, I call myself tough. I always tell the truth, and there too I told the truth: I am tough.

But I must admit that I work reluctantly and with effort... that I cannot even work at all when the thought strikes me of seeing my dear family starving and perishing for lack of the Lord's way.

Exaggeration, you say? Please, how could it be other-

wise? I own nothing and receive nothing. And now let me present to you—you have the right to do so, Dutch people—the State of Indian pensions, which contain items that are higher than they should be—even those who added them acknowledge this—'because the person concerned did not hold a certain position'. That is what it says. Consider the sums that are allocated annually in your budget to keep people alive who never did anything important, and whose entire lives could have been omitted without anyone noticing. Count how many retired slackers you are fattening up, and then ask yourself whether it is fair that I have to struggle with deprivation from hour to hour. Exaggeration? I answer again: how could it be otherwise? I have nothing and receive nothing. But if you find it difficult, reader, to imagine how a father feels when he has to feed his family with nothing... then I will aid your understanding by showing you a certificate proving how a Belgian village mayor once gave me two days to prevent me and my wife and children from being taken away across the border by the military police as vagrants...

See, in such circumstances I feel 'somewhat weary', as at the end of my Cross Song!

That is your shame, Dutch people, and it is not mine. You cannot escape it, even if you were to pray at the beginning of the week and speak at the end.

And anyone who now thinks that I take pleasure in sharing the misery I endured because I did my duty—that I am proud of it, it is true!—consider how long I remained silent

before I revealed anything.

And that I finally spoke about it was to show that I bought and paid dearly for the right to speak about the issues of the day. Let us examine closely what others have paid for that right. Indeed, have they paid anything at all, sacrificed anything at all? And did their opinions not often bring them benefits instead of requiring sacrifice?

THE ISSUE OF FREE LABOR IS NOT AN ISSUE .

THE CURRENT AGITATION ABOUT COLONIAL AFFAIRS IS A MANUFACTURED AGITATION .

History teaches us that wherever major movements were imminent, the leaders of general interests were keen to put side issues at the forefront in order to divert the attention of the nations from the main issue.

This is what petty administrators call the art of governing.

And often the course of events comes to the aid of governments in providing such distractions. The people instinctively notice that all is not as it should be, and ask themselves, more than usual, with every idea that is put forward: "Could that perhaps be the cause of my malaise?"

Never before were so many economic issues on the agenda as shortly before the French Revolution. I am referring to the first, the true precursor to the great World Revolution that awaits our children, and in which the main question will be: to have or not to have. Peasant wars and Jacqueries are as regular as the seasons. This will remain so as long

as humans are humans. And people will always be blind enough not to foresee these inevitable upheavals.

The pioneers of such revolutions, those who first proclaimed new ideas, did not always intend to bring about a revolution. They were, like everyone else in a sense, the expression of their time. They did not push, they were drawn. 'L'Homme ne manque jamais aux circonstances' (Man never fails to rise to the occasion), said Montesquieu, and how true it is, as certain as the fact that there is always air to fill the void created by the displacement of other air. But the truth of Montesquieu's statement lies deep . It is as if one said: 'no nutmeg without mace'. I am inclined to believe it; it is the same fruit.

For as soon as a people feels the need for certain impressions, the same cause that brought about this need will prompt some to communicate those impressions. The men who preceded a revolution did not bring it about, but were, on the contrary, produced by the same circumstances that caused the revolution. It is neither post nor propter, it is simul. This is as understandable as the fact that one does not find shipbuilders in the mountains, nor gardeners on Nova Zembla.

One may therefore observe that the individuals who are often regarded as the architects of a revolution, because they played an important role shortly before, owed their importance more to the need and predisposition of the people to hear something new that would shed light on the darkness, than to the subjects they dealt with, or the direction

they pointed to as the right one. To be convinced of this, one need only view matters from a later perspective, when a great difference becomes apparent between the course of events and the opinions or expressions that preceded the change in that course. The terror of the French Revolution bears no resemblance to Rousseau's Contrat Social.

However, when reformers who are acting in good faith find such fertile ground for new ideas, regardless of whether their ideas prove feasible or not, regardless of whether they meet the needs of the moment, and simply because the people feel that qu'il y a quelque chose dans l' air - with how much more enthusiasm will controversial issues be accepted when those who raise them are not acting in good faith, when they invent, create, and bring to the fore such points of contention with more or less artifice, with the aim of keeping the people busy.

This, Dutch people, has been the case with you for years.

Rather than limiting myself to the small circle of our interests, I would cite examples from world history. But I understand that I would do better to limit myself to things that are more familiar to you, close to you, and which I imagine will be clear to you. So, one example among many:

Do you remember, Dutch people, how a few years ago you were preoccupied with the Indian monetary system and coinage? You swallowed those coins goodnaturedly. How many discussions were held about them, how many brochures were written! How much scholarship and reasoning was expended on them! You were fed millimeters of

the circumference of the Indian guilders, you breakfasted on images, and your supper overflowed with circulating media. How it was possible to deceive you so badly and for so long with a matter as simple as a monetary system, I do not understand, but it succeeded. Please, how did that matter, that important matter, on which the fate of your Indian possessions seemed to depend, finally turn out? Do you even know? You must have known, if the question was as important as it seemed in those days...

The explanation for this coinage issue is simple. At the time when people were preoccupied with copper coins, receipts, silver content, agio, and the like, the population of the Indies was on the verge of erupting in a general uprising, which did indeed break out in some places, but was suppressed everywhere in bloodshed.

Have you not seen in the newspapers how every mail brings news of heroic deeds? And do you not also see how more and more reinforcements are always needed? Haven't you noticed how Europe is failing to recruit enough soldiers, despite the excessive increase in enlistment bonuses, and how the protectors and defenders of Dutch interests must once again, as in the past, be sought in Africa? Are we ever at peace there? Doesn't war follow war, turmoil follow turmoil, unrest follow unrest?

Does it never occur to you that there is something suspicious about those stereotypical telegrams: "Perfect peace on Java"?

Don't you find it strange that the governors, who proclaim

and telegraph this tranquility with such imperturbable monotony, always need more soldiers to prevent themselves from being driven away?

You see, this puzzles me. There are reasons why people want to deceive you. I find it strange and regrettable that you so readily accept this deception.

The number of issues raised to keep your attention occupied is very large, and among them is the question that seems to be the order of the day in the Netherlands: the question of free labor and the cultivation system, of which the disputes over the consignment system, cultivation emoluments, etc. are parts.

The real question of the day is this:

IS THE JAVANESE BEING ABUSED ?

WILL THEY CONTINUE TO TOLERATE THIS ?

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO PUT AN END TO THIS ABUSE ?

But these questions are not being asked. There will come a time when you will be ashamed of your lack of insight. It will be inexplicable to you that you persistently allow yourself to be distracted by other questions.

For I enabled you to see through and avoid this deception. In Max Havelaar, I demonstrated that the Javanese are mistreated. Who has refuted that? Newspapers, magazines, and brochures have clearly shown that I have not exaggerated, that I have understated the truth. See De Indiër, De

Gids, Het Nederlands-Indisch Tijdschrift... in short, all the organs of the liberal party. Whether those organs would have declared so emphatically that I spoke the truth if they had known that I was not a party man is doubtful. But what is written is written. It is true, I understated the truth. I feared and avoided telling the whole truth, out of a sense of artistry. I wanted to arouse sympathy, not disgust. And that would have been the case if, instead of the simple story of Saïdjah, I had sketched the misery of a famine, such as occurs from time to time in Java as a result of the exaggeration of the Cultivation System....

- You see, cries the free laborer here... the Cultivation System! Just a moment, gentlemen. I have seen horrors in the Indies under Governors-General of all colors, horrors that had nothing to do with the Cultivation System. In Lebak, for example, the Cultivation System did not operate, and yet there was famine every year. And elsewhere, too, the condition of the population, which is at the mercy of free laborers in collusion with the chiefs, is far from enviable. Or worse still, I have seen villages that had been massacred by pirates, who took away everything that could row and left behind those who were too weak to row. After all, neither the Cultivation System nor free labor came into play here, did it?

Truly, gentlemen party members, you have no right to accuse each other. I have the right to call you both before the court of public opinion. And that is what I will do. You will not distract me with your platitudes about free labor or the consignment system...

- Under your leadership, the Javanese have been robbed, abused, murdered, and I can prove it!

Thus speaks the liberal to the conservative.

- I say that the Javanese are mistreated and murdered under your leadership... I can prove it! prove it!

Thus the conservative answers the liberal. And then:

- You are the reason we will lose the Indies!

- If we lose the Indies, it will be your fault!

- No, your fault!

- No, yours... damn it! Here come the people... I said, sir, that your ideas about free labor...

- Exactly! I believe that the figures in Money's book...

- Indeed! But read Say, Malthus, Scialoia... And pay attention to the opinion of the esteemed speaker from...

And the people go home, believing in their naivety that the gentlemen have a difference of opinion about political economy. And the people take the conjured-up subject for the truth, and buy a book by Money, and believe they are participating in the discussion of public affairs by calculating the figures contained therein.

And thus... what should be dealt with in a criminal court is treated as a profound system of government, and the main issue, the only real main issue, is once again stifled for a time!

For the hundredth time: the issue of free labor is not an issue! The endless bickering about it is merely a distraction, a path down which the people are led by the closing words of gentlemen who were busy accusing each other of theft and manslaughter, but who are eager to wash their dirty laundry in public and, for the sake of their families, present the people with some points of contention. To the people, who ultimately – even if only out of a desire for change – would not tolerate these scandals. The password of these gentlemen is: silence!

And I am not talking about ministers alone. I ask you, reader, whether it would not have been reasonable for the House of Representatives—or even the Senate, why not?—to ask the government whether Max Havelaar contained any truth? We have had conservative and liberal ministries since the publication of that book, but no opponent has dared to ask a conservative government, no conservative has dared to ask a liberal government whether I had told the truth. Everyone felt that the answer would be as detrimental to their own party as it would be to the enemy. Everyone understood that there was nothing to be gained by substantiating accusations that would immediately be brought against them with equal justification. I don't mind if I seem trivial... I use the expressions I find... the people will understand me: it's a thief with a thief's measure!

That's what happens, voters, when you don't mind your own business.

So be quiet, smother it!

Yes, smother! But still there are enfants terribles who, in the heat of battle, pay no heed to the fact that the people must be excluded from the truth. Recently, during the debate on the colonial budget, people called each other Droogstoppel. You can read about it in the report of the sessions of the House of Representatives.

Droogstoppel now—I made that man, I have the right to say how, what, and who he is—Droogstoppel is the mean thief, minus the courage to break in. Droogstoppel is the Pharisee who devours widows and orphans and blows kisses to a self-made god who helps him with his digestion. Droogstoppel is the bloodsucker who swells with unjustly acquired wealth, but retains a resilient thinness in order to squeeze his bloated vanity through the narrow gate. Droogstoppel is the whining, cowardly, miserly, scriptural thief... Oh dear, I forgot to say whether Droogstoppel is liberal or conservative...

In the House, they have been kind enough to fill this gap. Liberals have said to conservatives:

- You Droogstoppel!

And conservatives replied:

- Droogstoppel, you!

And me? What do I answer?

Ah, I realize that I had a prophetic spirit at the moment when I recounted in the Love Letters the story of a couple

of twisters on Amboina who had treated each other unpleasantly.

- Go home in peace, O Joseph and Abraham... or Ezekiel, you are both absolutely right!

I would like to state that I fully agree with the opinion of Mr. Wintgens, who asked the question: were not the worst Droogstoppels the so-called free workers, since they exploited the Javanese more directly than their colleagues on Lauriergracht?

I answer that question with a resounding yes. But I also note that Mr. Wintgens, with his superlative gradus – 'were they not the worst Droogstoppels?' – is moving within the scope of the paragraphs in our schoolbooks, above which was written: 'on the steps of comparison', and that here we are only talking about what is more or less Droogstoppelig...

Dutch people, I hope you will allow me to read Droogstoppel: wretch? Well, in your House of Representatives, the question has been raised: which of the two socalled State parties are the worst wretches?

What is written is written. The supplement in which this question appears will already have been printed and distributed. And even if this were not the case, the question is reported in the abridged reports that the newspapers gave of the sessions in which the colonial budget was discussed.

I challenge the members of the States General to destroy and hide from posterity the fact that in 1861, during their meeting, the question was raised as to which political sec-

tion of the Dutch people was most productive in hypocritical thieves?

Yes, those are the enfants terribles of the parties! And don't think that this was a coincidence, a slip of the tongue, an oratorical turn of phrase by Mr. Wintgens... absolutely not. The insult Droogstoppel - meaning wretch - was used repeatedly by both sides. I found that word ten or twelve times in a single paragraph in a very abbreviated report of the proceedings. It was even used countless times by Mr. P. Mijer, the man who draws such a high pension: "because he—I quote—did not hold a certain position." And after Mr. Wintgens, others have also been eager to show that the Droogstoppels...

O God, O God, is it enough, Dutch people? It is too much for me.

Was I not right to choose Hamlet's exclamation as the motto for this brochure? Truly:

THERE IS SOMETHING ROTTEN IN THE STATE !

But, some may say, what exactly is this Cultivation System, what is meant by free labor?

I know that this question is still asked by many, and this is further proof of the truth of my assertion that the alleged points of difference do not affect the main issue. If there were any truth in all the arguments for and against these systems of Indian administration, then, after all that has been said and written on the subject, we would now be at a stage where we knew what the issue was. But this

is not the case. Care has been taken to confuse the matter so that the general public is lost in a sea of technical terms about economic wisdom and comes to the despondent conclusion: the gentlemen must know! Yes, and then the 'gentlemen' have the leisure to continue their discussion of the matter that occupied them when the people joined in: the mistreatment of the Javanese, and the uprising that must result from it. When I wrote Max Havelaar, I did not think about free labor. I dealt with a main issue in it, and I was very surprised to see the book misused as a weapon against the Cultivation System. Even abroad, people have fallen into this error. In the Annuaire des deux Monies of 1860, my work is treated as a plea for free labor, which led to the downfall of a conservative - cultural system - ministry. Both are incorrect. Neither in Havelaar nor later did I engage in the petty, hypocritical disputes that are used in The Hague to undermine ministries. Just as I call every person who acts well good, without asking about their faith, I would likewise support a minister who practices justice, regardless of whether he adheres to old systems or proclaims new ones. I have sought that justice in vain, both on the side of the conservatives and on the side of the so-called liberals. And as long as this does not change, I am indifferent to who governs. And so are the Javanese.

However, I am not entirely alone in my opinion about the futility, uselessness, and irrelevance of the issues of the day. I read the following simple but meaningful words in a brochure recently published by Günst in Amsterdam:

Imagine, dear reader—you can see that the brochure is not

mine—that in a country where public roads are made very unsafe by bandits who demand tribute from travelers in an unprecedentedly brutal manner, and sometimes go even further in their arbitrariness, the question arose among the representatives as to how desirable it would be, for example, to abolish tolls on public roads, and that endless discussions were held on this subject, without a single member expressing the desire to do anything to protect the property and person of the traveler. Dutch people! Do you want this situation in Java to continue? Do you want the laws and regulations that are in place to protect the poor Javanese to remain unenforced?

Exactly! Those laws and regulations exist, but they are ignored. Every day they are violated and abused. The "compromise" that is: turning a blind eye to violence, robbery, and murder, is praised and rewarded. See Slymering. Cracking down on these crimes is considered incompetence, eccentricity, and punished with a penalty that would be too severe for the crimes themselves. See Havelaar.

This is the issue, this alone! Everything else is of very secondary importance.

And again, I am not entirely alone in this opinion. I read in one of Hagiosimandre's piquant communications a few lines that demonstrate with little ado how contrived the issue of free labor and the Cultuurstelsel is:

Ministers and members of parliament talk a lot, an awful lot, about the cultural system and free labor; but the question: 'Are the Javanese being mistreated?' is never raised. An

official who has spent a long time with the Javanese writes to me: - The Javanese are human beings like anyone else in that they would rather have a lot of money than a little, a good house than a bad one, prosperity than poverty. That preference for well-being would make him work of his own free will, if that work could bring prosperity. But!... he is used to people taking away what he has saved, what he has achieved; or rather, to people not even letting it get to the point where there is anything to take away. He is poor and remains poor. That is why he does not want to work voluntarily. At least, it has never been proven that he would not work voluntarily if there were security for people and goods in Java. This does not seem to exist at present, or rather, according to Max Havelaar, it is completely lacking. And until this is restored, it is foolish to talk about free labor.

Let there be moral, honest governance in the Indies and in The Hague with regard to that wonderful country, and then it will become clear whether the Javanese are willing to work voluntarily. Well, people say, that is easy to prescribe. How can one be sure that the administration is honest? That is very difficult; but it is certainly impossible as long as Havelaar is not given justice in a manner that demonstrates a desire for truth and justice. As long as Havelaar is not rehabilitated or convicted, the Chambers, ministers, and governors-general are morally responsible for everything that is criticized in Havelaar. Whether good will be achieved by supporting him is the question. But... it is certain that evil will be supported as long as no investiga-

tion into the matter has taken place. Which government official in Java would dare to do his duty when he hears how Max Havelaar and his people have to suffer because he fulfilled his duty? After all, as long as it has not been proven that he told untruths, the facts he substantiates with authentic documents must be recognized as true.

So it seems that others are also tired of the bickering over trivial matters. Those 'others' are still in the minority. But their numbers will grow as defectors from both parties, who will feel satiated with useless polemics, join them. In this way, those 'others' will eventually form the majority, and that is the party, the honest third party, that I recommended to voters in the Love Letters.

But how did people come to believe that I was a supporter of the Free Labor Doctrine? This was only possible by taking a few sentences from Max Havelaar out of context. I will quote them here, as they also serve to characterize the Cultivation System.

'But then strangers came from the West and took control of the land. They wanted to profit from the fertility of the soil, and ordered the inhabitants to devote part of their labor and time to producing other goods'—earlier mention had been made of rice, which the Javanese need to survive—'other goods that would yield greater profits on the markets of Europe. To persuade the common man to do this, all that was needed was a very simple political strategy. He obeys his leaders. So all that was needed was to win over those leaders by promising them a share of the

profits... and it worked perfectly.

I readily admit that in writing these lines I had in mind the system devised by General Van den Bosch—who, as we can see, has acquired the title of genius rather cheaply—but I did not in any way intend to take sides with that other, even more abhorrent form of exploitation known as free labor. On the contrary.

'If one considers the enormous quantity of Javanese products sold at auction in the Netherlands, one can be convinced of the effectiveness of this policy, even if one does not consider them to be of high quality. For if someone were to ask whether the farmer himself enjoys a reward commensurate with this outcome, I would have to answer in the negative. The government obliges him to grow whatever it pleases on his land, punishes him if he sells the produce to anyone other than the government, and determines the price it will pay him for it. The costs of transport to Europe by a privileged trading body are high. The incentive payments to the chiefs also increase the purchase price, and since the entire trade must ultimately yield a profit, that profit can only be found by paying the Javanese just enough so that they do not starve to death, which would diminish the productive power of the nation.

European officials are also paid a reward in proportion to the proceeds. However, the Javanese are whipped into double ... they are deducted from their rice fields... famine is often the result of these measures... yet the flags of the ships' masts, laden with the harvests that make the Nether-

lands rich, fly cheerfully in Batavia, Semarang, Surabaya, Pasuruan, Besuki, Probolinggo, Patjitan, and Tjilatjap. Famine? On rich, fertile Java, famine? Yes, reader. A few years ago, entire districts died of hunger. Mothers offered their children for sale for food. Mothers ate their children...'

That is the Cultivation System... say the free laborers, and I acknowledge that after reading those rules, no one could consider me a fervent supporter of that system. But this does not in any way imply that I take sides with those who, abusing the beautiful sound of the word 'free', want to introduce forced free labor, whereby the first adventurer would take the place of the government, in collusion with the chiefs, to exploit the Javanese. Mr. Wintgens is absolutely right, those are the worst dry stubble!

The misery that the Cultivation System brings upon the Javanese can be avoided by a Governor-General who does his duty and does not reward the concealment of the truth. If, long before the famine in Central Java, the residents had not lied in their reports, for example by always adding thousands of pikols of rice on paper that were not actually present, if they had not constantly cried out like unfaithful sentinels, 'Everything is fine!' when the shortage was already imminent, then it would have been possible to provide timely relief to the poor population, who now had to perish, not because they supplied coffee and indigo to the Government, but because they had supplied too much indigo and coffee, regardless of whether that supply was to the Government or to private individuals. If the residents

had given timely notice of the consequences of this disastrous overproduction, instead of violating their oath and duty by concealing those consequences, "because their time would hold out," then the Government could have taken measures to keep thousands of people alive, those who have now succumbed... to the great detriment of coffee culture.

Oh, I am not advocating for the Cultivation System, which hinders all progress, all development, all refinement. The Javanese are machines. No, not even that. He is merely a part of his village, of the community which, taken as a whole, is a tool for producing coffee. His own will and ideas are numbed. Prosperity remains unknown to him, and with it all the impulses to strive, which are usually the result of the pursuit of prosperity. The meager wage for his product, which has been assigned to him by decision of the Governor-General—note, not after consultation with himself, the person concerned—is never paid to him in full. The Chiefs give him what they see fit. Oh, that Cultivation System – especially under a Governor-General who does not do his duty – is terrible!

But... in order to assess the free labor system, add to all these elements of shameful abuse the greedy private schemers, and you will have a pretty good idea of what the fate of the Javanese would be if they were left to their own devices.

I recently read a newspaper article defending free labor, in which the writer—a tobacco planter, naturally!—pointed to the increase in the supply of tobacco in Amsterdam over the

past few years. Two million pounds, I believe, had risen to ten million pounds! Well! Place a free labor resident in Rembang, and within a short time you will obtain fifty million pounds of tobacco instead of ten. Anyone who does not know more about this could safely omit his articles. The question is: has this increased production of tobacco not replaced other commodities? And secondly: could this increased production of tobacco perhaps lay the foundation for circumstances that would result in people later receiving neither tobacco nor anything else? This is how the issues are shifted.

I remember that, when serious efforts were made a few years ago to improve the nutrition of the Dutch people.

I believe he found too many hunters and too few grenadiers among the militiamen—a scholar suggested having the Javanese catch fish to feed the Dutch. There was no mention of payment. One must be very learned indeed to come up with such an idea. The man had heard that there was so much protein swimming around unscathed in the Indian Ocean. That may be true. But there is also a lot of fish in the North Sea. Did the Dutch catch it and bring it to Java for free when there was famine there? And the ratio is not even the same. For the hunger of the Javanese was a consequence of Dutch oppression, and the Javanese were not to blame for the declining number of grenadiers. On the contrary. Without them, our entire army would have consisted of hunters for a long time... of drummers and pipers, perhaps.

There is something amusing about the idea of the entire Dutch nation floating around on fishing boats and barges to keep another distant nation alive. It would be Christian, that's true. "From the nets you have come, to the nets you shall return!"

But however amusing this idea may seem, I believe that people would very soon find such an experiment very sad in reality. What reasons can you give, Dutchmen, to justify demanding of the Javanese what you yourselves would never want to do for another? Where is it written—even if it were written, I reject such writing, and you would do the same if it were in your interest—where is it written that the Javanese must work for your needs? The laws of war? I am not familiar with those laws, even though De Groot wrote a thick book about them, probably with the same pen he used to defend the Christian religion. The laws of war? Once again, I am not familiar with those laws, and I certainly do not recognize them, especially after I dreamed my first dream of authority, in which the older brother forced his younger brother into service. Well, he had learned that from a wild beast. The law of war again? But, please, even if such a law existed, you still cannot invoke it against the Javanese, whom you have never conquered. Where are the battles you fought against them? Where are the fortresses you took from them? Your history is silent on that.

That history reveals a repulsive fabric of groveling subservience in adversity and cruel brutality in prosperity. Betrayal and broken promises play a leading role in it. It goes without saying that the meetings of the Lords Seven-

teen in the mother country, and of the noble, more or less extraordinary Councils of India there, always opened with an invocation of the Lord of Hosts... the same Lord who protected the blessing thief Jacob from Esau.

And later, the Java War of 1826-1831! It was prolonged in the interests of one of the commanders, who was a gambler and, being mostly court d'argent, needed war to get money. People in Batavia still remember the house he doubled in one night. The Javanese had to pay for such a loss.

And how did that war end, after all? Through betrayal. Dipo Negoro, the leader of the rebellion, had been granted safe passage when he was captured. His son was in my custody on Amboina, and it was curious to hear that man's opinion about Dutch good faith and other Christian virtues, too many to mention. Ferdana Mantrie of Palembang can also speak about this. The penultimate Emperor of Solo was captured, deposed, and banished because he... had prayed on the graves of his ancestors without permission from the resident of Surakarta...

You show old papers in which some chiefs declared... but you yourself later dismissed those chiefs and declared their sovereignty null and void as soon as you no longer needed them to betray their subjects to you, without whose betrayal you would never have become masters of Java. You have schools for 'rights' and pulpits for... I don't know what, but I would like to hear you prove from your pulpit or lectern that you have a right to the labor of the Javanese.

It is good for man to work, I hear you say. Without us, the

Javanese would be too lazy to do anything, and so...

Exactly! That is how you speak. But you are mistaken in thinking that this reasoning is your private property. It belongs to Droogstoppel, who, after hearing Wawelaar's sermon, praised the expansion the expansion of coffee cultivation as beneficial to the Kingdom of God. It is true that the Javanese, in order to continue living in their blessed climate, need less labor than you. But is this a sufficient reason to take from them and appropriate for yourself what nature has given them for free? Is it his fault that your homeland is so barren, so unfriendly? May you blame him for the fact that in your regions the first, most necessary... only question in life is: how to preserve that life?

You have intruded upon the Javanese—that is, upon their chiefs, for you do not know the Javanese themselves—with soft, flattering words. You have set yourself up as arbiter in the disputes, which they innocently submitted to your judgment. You have abused that naivety to take possession of what did not belong to you. Step by step you have crept forward, setting foot on your neighbor's field, constantly moving the boundary posts... that is forbidden in your own Bible, hear me! Or is it not written in the Scriptures that you claim to hold sacred, but which you set aside as soon as they do not agree with your interests: "Cursed be he who moves his neighbor's boundary stones, and all the people shall say Amen"?

I do not consider your Bible to be entirely sacred, but that word was well spoken, I think, and I would like to preach

a sermon on that text. How do you respond when you read from that Scripture and suddenly come across such a commandment? Don't your children ask: Daddy, are you skipping something?

Or do you know how to explain to your offspring that such a Javanese is not your neighbor, and that the treatment of his landmarks is governed by laws other than the ordinary ones? This will probably be the only way out.

Meanwhile, you continue to oppress, rob, and fleece your poor neighbor to your heart's content, and to give yourself an air of benevolence, you engage in reasoning about the various systems according to which these manipulations are carried out. Cultivation system, free labor... which yields the most?

I have said in the Love Letters, and I repeat here, how characteristic it is that in your House of Representatives, serious consideration has been given to whether the Money given were correct, and how he had gained access to your books? But consideration of the means by which the money was obtained, which is the subject of that bookkeeping, seems to have been below the attention of the meeting. And after Max Havelaar, one could surely know how the lives and possessions of the Javanese are treated! That did not seem worth noting, but the gentlemen did take an interest in the way in which all that miserable mess had been recorded, and especially how a stranger had gained access to their office.

Do you see how, once again, the main issue was overlooked,

deliberately overlooked, in order to draw attention to trivial matters?

And, Dutch people, it is not only the House of Representatives or Ministers who constantly betray the public interest with feigned concern, knowingly neglecting the disease that plagues us through criminal silence. The newspapers are the voice of the people. I know that the ability of that voice to speak is hampered by a stupid, medieval institution that opposes all development—the seal law!—which, in the year of our Lord 1861, as before, makes you the Chinese of Europe. But even if we accept this institution as a mitigating circumstance for this impediment to speech, it remains no less irresponsible for the editors of the newspapers to disregard their high calling: to inform the people about their essential interests.

I attach little importance to your written rules of morality, which are mostly invented out of self-interest. Nor do I value the good behavior and virtue that are so commonly referred to. But this rejection of most of your principles seems to have nothing to do with an absence of true honesty and a true sense of justice. I conclude this, among other things, from the indignation that inspires me when reading the articles of those who, in setting up a newspaper, tacitly took on the obligation to proclaim the truth.

When a minister opens his mouth, one knows that he is bound by a so-called program. In order to become a minister, he has promised to speak and act in a certain spirit. This may be stupid, inhuman, impractical, detrimental to

the general welfare... fine! The man has promised it, and those who do not like the promised spirit can skip the ministerial speeches.

As the people usually do.

A member of parliament, who was president of the Concordia or Harmony society, promised: 'to represent the interests of... his district with the utmost impartiality.' Edam votes for cheese. Drenthe for peat. Schiedam for gin. Schokland for cod. Utrecht for tea leaves. This may be stupid, incompetent, impractical, and criminal... fine! The man has publicly promised it - it is assured by all the 'only voters' who signed his advertisement, that is: who did not sign it - and anyone who has no interest in the speeches of such a member can skip them.

As the people usually do.

A preacher who realizes how unpleasant it is that all people would be damned for the sins of one person, and how unreasonable it is that they are all saved again by the merits of another, may be forced into dullness in his sermons, by the realization of the impossibility of clarifying for another what is not clear to his own mind... may he be tossed back and forth from one understanding to another, and through an excess of contradictory concepts to misunderstanding... may he become long-winded, drawn-out, boring, incomprehensible... may all this lead him to the inevitable choice between stupidity or hypocrisy... Good! The man has promised to preach from the Bible. And anyone who does not enjoy the confusion that is drawn from a confusing

book can stay at home or go for a walk if the weather is good. One can even go to church and fall asleep there. As the people usually do.

No one is forced to listen to paid preachers, distinguished speakers, or programmatic ministers. I am opposed to all these practices, but I recognize that the accused can offer something that smacks of an excuse: the hope that no one has been listening.

But you, newspaper writers, what can you give as a reason? To reduce punishment? You take upon yourself the task of enlightening the people, civilizing them, giving them insight into their interests. You therefore find no excuse in the hope that no one will hear you. On the contrary, your aim is to be heard. You would cease to exist if no one heard you, unlike those other gentlemen, who only retain the opportunity to continue because of the limited circle in which they speak. They need blind and deaf people. You, on the contrary, need readers, that is, subscribers.

Your calling is more serious, more dignified, more sacred. And how do you fulfill that calling, you who, with high priestly dignity, call yourselves 'we' in your leading articles? Do you, who want to be read, and indeed are read by the people faute de mieux, give truth to that people?

Oh, I know that you whisperingly complain of being sold to this or that party, and thus claim as much right to lie as a minister or preacher, but this excuse does not hold water. The poor people, whose relative innocence you cite as an exculpatory example, acknowledge that they are bound. They

do so openly in their programmatic speeches or inaugural addresses. They warn. But you write on your banner: King, Fatherland, Justice, Fairness, Good Faith, Impartiality, and so on... all things that sound good and sweet. And even though I now know that sweetness is only sound, and even though you whisper in my ear that your party—the shareholders! - Mr. So-and-so, who would cancel his subscription... your hatred of that other newspaper that claimed the opposite... in short, even though I know all this - the people, the good, faithful people, who have such respect for everything that is printed, do not know it.

Every day, I find all kinds of things in your newspapers that we do not need; but you ignore the issues that do concern the Dutch people. Long articles about free labor and the cultivation system fill the front pages of your newspapers. Please, if you are going to concern yourself with the affairs of the Indies, why do you not demand an answer to the question I have put to the government?

Suppose you know how to talk about free labor or the culture system, assume that there is wisdom in dealing with the consignment system - Another system, dear God! - Then you must admit, mustn't you, that something is needed to keep all that system going? In this case, it is the coffee, the sugar, the indigo, the tobacco, the cinnamon, and the bamboo cigar cases that the young ladies receive as gifts from their cousins in the East. Now think about the consignment of those cases—made of bamboo or peacock feathers, it doesn't matter—think about it for so long that you finally cobble together a system of consignment

as perfect as any system ever devised by another band of robbers, and then look around and see what you will have to consign in the end, when the Javanese who wove the tubes, planted and harvested the coffee, cut and ground the sugar, or pressed and fermented the indigo—when that Javanese, during your consignment study, had stopped grinding, weaving, pressing, and fermenting? Or if, pressed too long, he had started fermenting himself?

Then no young lady would receive gifts from her cousin in the East anymore, and all your consignment wisdom would fall hopelessly by the wayside.

Consignment! Always such fine words, smelling of study and science! Simply tell the people: friends, we are deliberating whether the shop for our groceries will be kept here or there, and what will yield the most?

But add, if you want to be sincere, that your supplier is insisting on payment, and that he finds it very sad to keep your store stocked in the long run, without the slightest benefit to himself. Say that the Javanese are completely indifferent as to whether you sell the stolen products there or here, and that from now on you would rather devote your wisdom to studying the question of whether you will always have sugar and coffee, rather than the soon-to-be-obsolete question of where you will market them.

The Javanese are being mistreated!... That is the issue!

But you remain silent about that, newspapers.

No, I am mistaken. When my protest against this mis-

treatment appeared, newspapers and magazines wrote a lot about it. So much so, in fact, that no other work in the Netherlands has ever been so widely discussed. But... this lasted only as long as people were under the false impression that I belonged to a party. I could have become one of the leaders of the so-called opposition if I had agreed to subject the sacred cause I advocate to the demands of a clique that gives itself an air of science and statesmanship by pretending to have opinions about a system. If I had wanted to put myself on the rack in order to write long editorials about things that I cannot express more eloquently than I often have done with these words:

'DO NOT OPPRESS THE JAVANESE , DO NOT EXPLOIT THEM , DO NOT KILL THEM . THEN, AFTER SOME TIME, IT WILL BECOME CLEAR WHETHER THEY ARE WILLING TO WORK VOLUNTARILY .'

I say that he will want to, and in that sense I am in favor of free labor. But raising systemic issues before one has stopped mistreating and plundering the Javanese is... duitenplatery. I hope you now know what this word means. I write texts, not sermons.

And the newspaper writers know it. But those subscribers!

Do you hear that, Dutch people? Those gentlemen say that you want to read nothing but lies and unnecessary ramblings about lies. Is that so? I can't believe it. Truly, the truth is more piquant from time to time. Just look at my writing... everyone buys it. Now you know the secret of my so-called talent.

But even if this were not the case, even if the truth were as bland and unsellable as a supplement to the Staats-Courant, how is it possible that you allow your opinion on public affairs to be guided by public information officers who—leaving aside the issues of the day—show themselves to be completely beneath their calling in every respect? Subscribe for a month or so to L'Indépendance, the Kölnische Zeitung, or The Times, and if you still value your organs, your leaders of public opinion... then, yes, you would deserve to be praised in a three-column editorial in such a publication.

Do not think that I am exaggerating the value of foreign Newspapers. Today, I read in the résumé politique of the Indépendance that Napoleon, in response to New Year's greetings, expressed his hope that the royal families would be spared all kinds of misfortune in 1862—illness, death, colds, and the like, I imagine— 'grâce aux louables efforts qui seraient faits partout dans ce but, et auxquels son concours absolu était acquis á l'avance.' There you have it, according to the Indépendance, Napoleon is the guardian of everything in the Almanach de Gotha! There you have the Emperor of the French, a competitor of Holloway, Meidner, and Hoff! He will do his best to keep all monarchs healthy. He will ensure that no prince catches whooping cough and that no roof tile falls on a princess's head. If he had come up with this wonderful idea a year ago, Prince Albert would not have died of typhus, nor the King of Portugal of... who knows what.

I know that the French emperor did not say that, and that

it is a mistake on the part of the editors of L'Indépendance, who summarised 'les commotions des peuples' (the commotions of the people) with royal inconveniences in one fell swoop, but... if there is something to choose tomorrow, then that same editor will enlighten the people in their choice.

That is how newspapers are edited!

And yours, Dutch people? Yours are a pale imitation of those papers... no, if only that were the case! Yours are a mangled, botched, unrecognizable, distorted, faded excerpt. That botching is comical. But anyone who pays attention to the consequences feels sadness about that comedy.

I recently noticed how our newspapers, under the distinguished heading "English mail," had space for a report that a tightrope walker had broken his balancing pole. However, when it comes to the true interests of the people—not "the party," I ask you—those newspapers have no space... for the oppressive postage law, certainly.

As soon as there is something to choose, Dutch people, for municipality, province, or kingdom, I propose that you deny any newspaper that has not informed you in advance whether the balancing rod has been properly repaired any claim to lead your opinion. What the heck, if you tell news, you have to tell it to the end.

Yes, it's getting ridiculous. Would you like an example of what you're being fed? I have them at my fingertips. Here you go:

In Paris, as you may or may not know, there is censorship

on epitaphs. A man lost his wife, and since misfortune never comes alone, he wrote an epitaph in verse. Its placement was refused, according to a French newspaper, 'not because his verses contained anything immoral, or because they were disruptive to public safety and public welfare, but... because they sinned against the rules of prosody'.

It's strange, I admit. But that's not the question here. The question is how your newspapers are edited. Well, Het Handelsblad, the distinguished Handelsblad— and perhaps other newspapers too, but I don't know—tells you that "in Paris, the placement of an epitaph was refused because it contained nothing against morality, etc." I don't know if there was anything to choose from shortly afterwards, but if so, that same Handelsblad informed you of your choice!

Recently, I believe in the Presse, a most witty satire appeared against the rage for regulation and the excessive centralization of bureaucratic power. The writer caricatured the subject by recounting that a very problematic king in South America had issued regulations on cannibalism. He communicated these regulations in standard bureaucratic language: "Heard... etc. Read... etc. Considering... etc. Having regard... etc. It is understood... etc. Our Minister of the Interior is charged... etc.' The satire was clever.

A few days later, the Amsterdamse Courant reported very matter-of-factly that the king of Araucania had abolished cannibalism, or at least had brought that abomination under restrictive provisions in a decree consisting of so many articles.

I don't know if there was anything to choose from shortly afterwards, Dutch people, but if so, that newspaper has once again informed you in your choice!

And such a newspaper—or such newspapers, because I am quoting one of many—such a newspaper presumes to speak on matters concerning your highest interests. The people who cobble such things together drape themselves in the robes of the tribunal and climb onto the podium in the forum, after having just informed the people that a child has been born with three heads in some unknown village, or a headless calf that can edit a newspaper. But in such a case, the village is known, because the matter can be investigated.

I could fill an entire newspaper every day with just the abbreviated reports of the follies of other newspapers. This would be tedious work, however, and I prefer to limit myself to the two examples I gave to warn you, Dutch people, against the influence exerted on you by the same pens that wrote such nonsense.

Oh, I hear you reply, nonsense of this kind does not affect the editorials! They are the products of the dii minorum gentium, of the second, third... seventh class editors, and we ourselves laugh at them.

But then how does the public know what to believe and what not to believe? How can one know what is fairground humor and what is serious?

On the back page? Is it serious, genuinely serious, what you

write on page one? Is the nonsense on the back page, on the third page, in the supplement? Where, if you please? Or rather, where is it not? Because, don't take offense, I find it everywhere, and certainly no less on the front page of your newspapers than in the vicinity of the child prodigies or absent-minded fools.

And those children, those heads, do no harm to anyone. But your so-called editorials do harm. When one reads such long discourses on the correct meaning of Article 56 of the Government Regulations of the Dutch East Indies, which refers to the promotion of free labor by the Governor-General, the people will indeed believe that this is where the issue lies, and will not notice that you—with criminal distortion of the truth—are concealing the main issue, the only real main issue:

THE JAVANESE ARE BEING ABUSED .

Newspaper writers, you talk so much about Article 56. So I can assume that you do read the Regulations, right? Have you never read in them that the same Governor-General is obliged to ensure that the population is not mistreated? Is that rule too natural, too simple, too human for you? Can you not attach a system to it? Can you not make it a party issue? Is that the reason you prefer to skip that text, just as the Dutch householder skips the article about moving the boundary stone?

What talent, que diable! I assure you that with a little effort, you would very soon be able to string together long passages on such a subject. The fact that, by constantly

devoting your talents to trivial matters, you have acquired a phraseology that suits such trivial matters, should not be a reason for you not to try your hand at the main subject. Give it a try. You will discover that one can be long-winded, incomprehensible, and even learned when dealing with something serious. Yes, I do not despair of the success of your attempts to cobble together, even after some fumbling, a system for the proper way to mistreat the Javanese. A system, a system, do you hear! A system with economics in it, on it, about it, through it! A system with words ending in 'tie', 'atie', 'itie' and 'otie'. A system with a base and a top, with syllogisms, theories, utopias, rhetorical figures, moral or immoral convictions, and fictions! A system, an orderly system with supporters, opponents, champions, renegades...

A system, in the end, like people without ideas need to write editorials.

Try it out, gentlemen newspaper writers.

And—I am a generous prince—I will even give you the choice between two systems, between more systems, between a systemless infinity of different systems. Doesn't that make you smile?

The first—but I advise against this, because it is too simple and would require too much talent to defend—the first system is that a Governor-General must do his duty and ensure that the Javanese are not mistreated. This is my system, and it is too difficult for you.

But all the others! Indeed, embarrassment of riches! Take a look:

First system. Outline of processing. "The Javanese, gentlemen, the Javanese are human beings. Human beings, gentlemen, human beings are sinful. Sin comes from the devil, gentlemen, and that devil, gentlemen, uses the idleness of the Javanese as a pillow. It is our duty, gentlemen, to take away the devil's pillow. That pillow was sold at the last coffee auction for so many cents a pound. We do not engage in empty reasoning, gentlemen! We let the figures speak for themselves. Here are the figures for imports, sales, and net proceeds. And now some people want to claim that the consignment of that devil's bedding...

You see, gentlemen newspaper writers, you are just two steps away from the Consignment. Doesn't that tempt you?

Second system. Outline of adaptation. 'The law is the anchor of the State. No State can perish as long as the law is respected. And what does the law prescribe with regard to our fellow subjects in the Indies? The Governor-General is obliged to protect against violence. Correct, that law must be respected, like all laws. Behold our system, gentlemen. We will not deviate from it. This system is a building made of stone... no, of bluestone... no, it is a rock. Those who love this system love us... us, the chief, deputy, and other editors of this newspaper. Those who attack this system attack us... us, the chief, associate, and other defenders of the system, including the writers of sensationalist reports. If this system remains standing, nothing can fall.

If this system falls, nothing will remain standing, not even our newspaper. And how, you ask, should this wonderfully unparalleled system be maintained? Do not listen, we implore you with the deepest sense of economic concern, do not listen to the suggestions of the incompetent or misguided, who know nothing but the interests of their party! Of those who cling to the dead letter of the law and overlook the spirit that makes it alive. No, far be it from us—the editors of this newspaper—far be it from us to violate our high priestly dignity in this way. The law, gentlemen, the law, the wise, unassailable, sacred law... nothing outside that law. With that law, everything! And what does it say? It instructs the Governor-General to protect the Javanese. That is what he must do, that is his first duty. How should he fulfill this duty? Punctually, continuously, without ceasing. He must not deviate from this duty, not for a day, not for an hour, not for a moment. This is our system, gentlemen. And what should the Governor-General do if someone writes him letters informing him that the Javanese are being mistreated here and there? The answer is obvious. Such a Governor-General should not read those letters, for it is clear that such correspondence would interfere with the fulfillment of his duty: the protection of the Javanese. This is our system, gentlemen. And if the writer of such inappropriate letters of complaint persists? Then the Governor-General must express his displeasure in a cabinet letter and force him to resign. This is our system, gentlemen. And if such a person still does not cease to submit complaints about the mistreatment of the Javanese, who hinder the Governor-General in his uninterrupted pro-

tection of the Javanese? Then, gentlemen, we raise our voices and appoint that Governor-General, who never for a moment allowed himself to be distracted from his duty by anyone or anything, as our esteemed speaker. Behold our system, gentlemen, in all its beauty. Third system. Draft version. 'Everyone is familiar with the system that we have defended with complete conviction for years. We respect and honor the laws, but precisely for that reason we oppose with all the power at our disposal the false interpretation of Article 55 of the Government Regulations. It clearly states that the protection of the Javanese is the first duty of the Governor-General. What was the intention of the legislators by emphasizing this significant word: first? That the Governor-General would make that protection his main concern? His primary concern? Not at all, gentlemen. Then it would say: foremost, most important, most significant. It is clear to anyone who is not blinded by party fervor that the word first is a numeral of rank, not an adjective of superiority. Upon disembarking, the Governor-General must immediately, instantly, protect this or that Javanese from this or that. This is his first duty, and the legislator has quite rightly commanded him to perform this first duty quickly and once and for all, so that he may subsequently have the time, inclination, strength, and opportunity to perform his second duty, his third, his seventh... if there are so many duties, which we do not know. Behold our system, gentlemen. Away with those who, violating all sound notions of order, demand the fulfillment of the first duty after the second has been accomplished! Do these party men not realize that they constantly substitute this unfortunate

first duty for other duties? Do they not understand that the legislator must have had his special reasons for being so clear here, so completely contrary to custom and taste? The protection of the Javanese is the Governor-General's first duty. We repeat this. Hac nitimur, hanc tuemur, as an old golden rule. The Governor who would dare to exercise that primary duty after it has been superseded by other duties, the thirteenth, or—horror of horrors! - the twenty-seventh duty would have become... such a governor... Thank God, such governors do not exist. And if they did... but no, our newspaper editorial writers' minds resist such assumptions, and with this preliminary development of our system, we conclude this first article on the primacy of the Governor-General's duties.

This charge is not as strong as it seems. In the House of Representatives, former Minister Mijer felt compelled to excuse the Governor-General whom I accuse of dereliction of duty.

- Not by saying that I had spoken untruthfully, oh no! - But by claiming that the Governor-General had once, at the very beginning of his administration, fulfilled his "first" duty. And no one protested! So if this or that newspaper editor wants to adopt my approach and create a system by playing with the word 'first', he can immediately count on the alliance of Mr. Mijer and all those silent ones. Yes, yes, with a little talent, it would indeed be possible to turn this into a political party. The parties currently in power do not have much more to offer.

Fourth system. Trial of processing. 'It is incomprehensible how men who, incidentally, cannot be considered devoid of intelligence, can stray so completely from sound legal interpretation when it comes to the correct interpretation of the regulation that commands the Governor-General to protect the Javanese from the greed of their chiefs. We regret the blindness that sees something different in this article than we... chief, deputy, assistant, second, and thirteenth editors of this newspaper. The party that is engaged in undermining the Church, the State, coffee auctions, and hermeneutics continues to claim, or rather, continues to behave as if it claimed—because in truth...

Good!

... in good faith, trusting in good faith, we dare to entrust ourselves with hardly any mistrust...

Very good!

... some distrust...

Fine, but I see no way to properly end that phrase.

So, gentlemen, here is our system. The law clearly stipulates that the Javanese must be protected against the greed of their leaders. In contrast to the systems of unsettled propositions, which systematically put the opposing party first, we do not presume to assert too much by stating with the utmost certainty that our system is correct...

See, gentlemen newspaper writers, there is something to be made of this. Come on... some talent, for heaven's sake!

Behold our system, gentlemen. The Javanese chiefs suffer from greed, that is: from the desire to have. The word and the disease consist of two parts: from having and from desire. No desire without having. No having without desire. That is our system, gentlemen. How should the Javanese be protected against this disease? After the introductory part of our system, the conclusion is very simple. One need only ensure that the Javanese never have anything, then it is impossible for them to be affected by a disease which, as we have clearly demonstrated, consists for the most part of nothing. This is our system. We are not unaware of how others claim that the Javanese should also be relieved of their sighing, but these are vain theories, gentlemen, proclaimed by the newspapers of the other party, whose system is wrong. Our motto, gentlemen, is impartiality, strict impartiality, and adherence to our system. The truth—and our system—is as dear to us as a seven-year subscription paid in advance. So as long as we are given the floor – we, the chief, assistant, junior, third and thirteenth editors of this newspaper – we will proclaim that word and adhere to the unshakeable first principles of political economy, which teach that all desire to possess will disappear among the Javanese as long as the Governor-General continues to act strictly in accordance with Art. 55 of his Instructions, which prescribes that he must ensure that the Javanese never know what it is to have. There you have it, gentlemen, our system. And more besides. Our system also stands head and shoulders above other systems because it can be viewed from two sides without losing any of the symmetrical and majestic perfection that characterizes a good system.

For even if some know-it-alls—namely, those who write for other newspapers, watch out for that!—if some claim that we are wandering around in a shameful confusion of ideas by proclaiming the thesis that the Javanese must be protected against the greed of their chiefs, and not against his own predisposition to that sickly condition, well, even then our system remains unshaken, standing there like a beacon to which shipwrecked peoples will turn their keels whenever they spring a leak in the ocean of world history by striking the dirty rocks of the undersea misconceptions of that other party which advocates a wrong system. Well then, we take up the fight in this area too. The Javanese must be protected by the Governor-General against the greed of the chiefs, and not against his own greed. Then we ask you, how can this be better achieved than by transferring all the prosperity of that Javanese to Willemspark in The Hague? Will the disease not be alleviated, even completely cured, if the cause is transferred to another country? Do not write morality, piety, and brotherly love - not to mention all the other perfections in which the Dutch of our party have always excelled so particularly? - Do they not command us to sacrifice ourselves for our fellow creatures there? Is not every Head on Java protected against coveting the buffalo of the poor, as long as the Governor-General ensures that the poor never own a buffalo? If, by faithfully upholding our system, we convert every buffalo into free tickets to the opera in The Hague, or shares in the Dutch Trading Company? Have you ever heard of a Javanese chief becoming greedy for a country house near Deventer or a residence in Driebergen? Behold our system: remove the cause of the

disease, and the disease will disappear. Cessante causa cessat effectus, said Quinctilian, and we repeat this great lyric poet's words with complete conviction, not without paying heed to Hippocrates's fundamental principle, which cannot be overestimated, that some things in the world have their causes. Our hearts bleed when we consider all the people who think differently from us and who subscribe to newspapers of a wrong system. The attacks we constantly suffer, concerning the inaccuracy of our report that X. triplets had been born, clearly demonstrate that people do not hesitate to take up even the most despicable weapons to fight us and our system. Twisting our words, sophistically interpreting phrases taken out of context, that is all that our opponents are capable of doing. We stand with our hands on our hearts and say that three children were born in X. That is our system, gentlemen. But we have not claimed, as that other newspaper accuses us, that those children were born of one mother, nor that they were born on the same day. That is how they take everything out of context, those blinded by their desire to bring about the downfall of our revered King, our beloved Fatherland, and our system. The consequences will be theirs, theirs and their subscribers'. As for us, we will continue...'

All right, carry on! That's enough for today, gentlemen newspaper writers! And you, Dutch people, will you also continue to be informed by these gentlemen?

THERE IS SOMETHING ROTTEN IN THE STATE !...

Yes, there is rot in the State, and the name of that rot,

Dutch people, is: lies.

I will prove that to you. I had to prove that to you first and foremost, when dealing with the so-called issues of the day.

And anyone who now thinks they have been deceived by a false title, because I have said little or nothing so far about so-called Free Labor, is mistaken.

I have already spoken at length about Free Labor. I did so wherever I stood up against falsehood.

Because:

FREE LABOR , AS PREACHED BY MINISTERS OR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT , AS DEFENDED BY SOME NEWSPAPERS , IS A LIE .

That will be, among other things, the conclusion of my current writing.