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THE KEY OF THE
Holy House

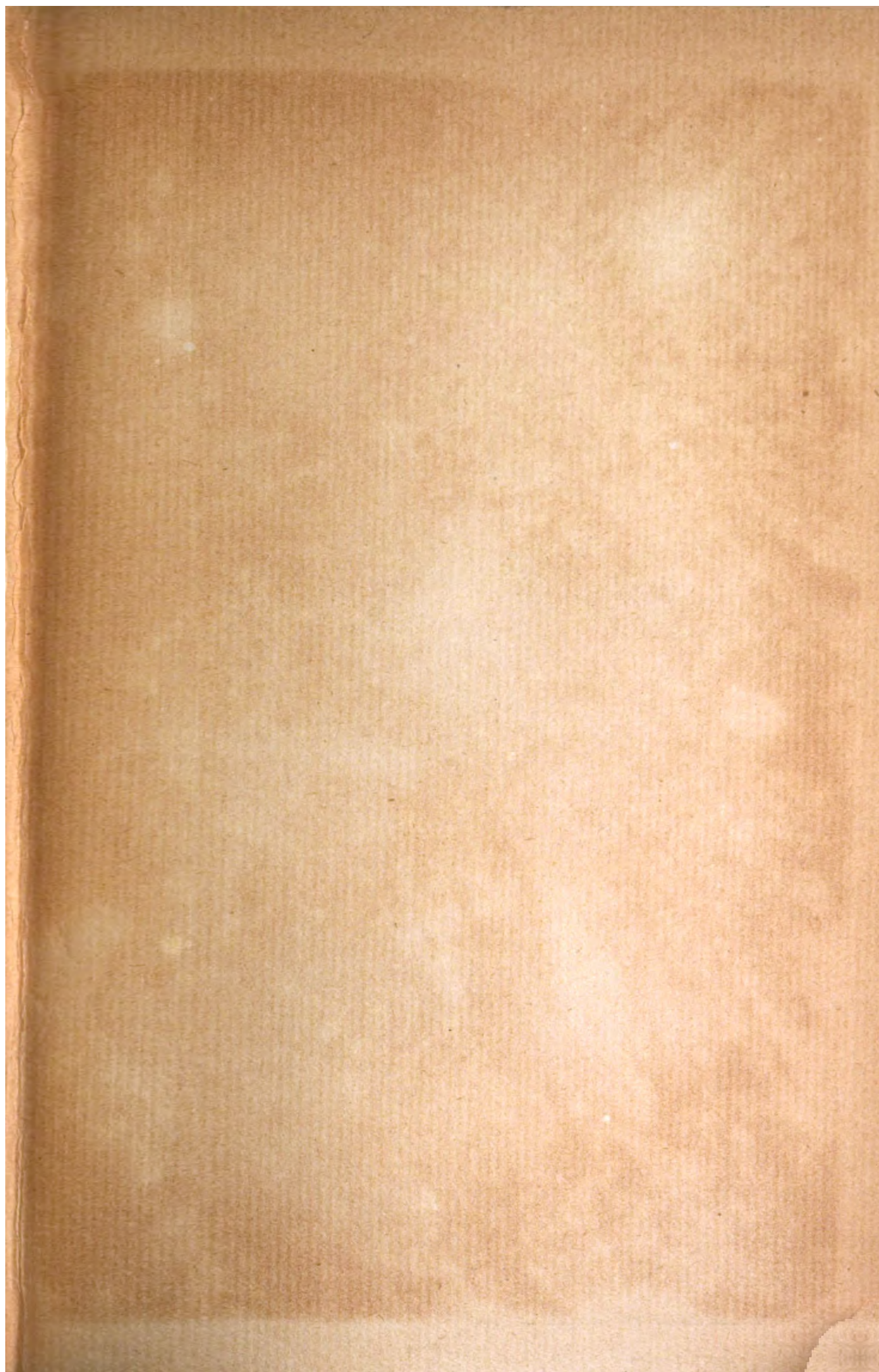


ALBERT LEE

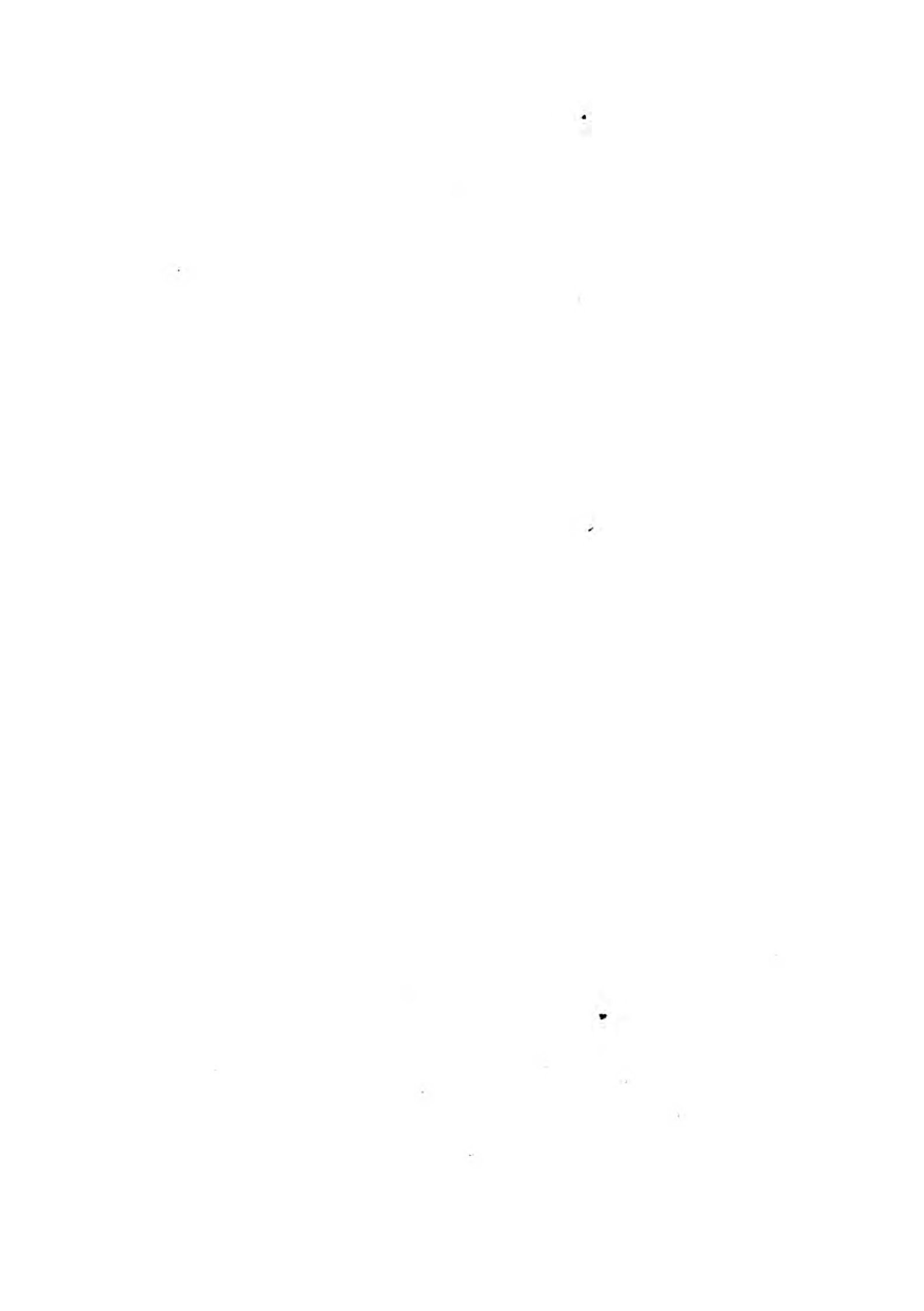


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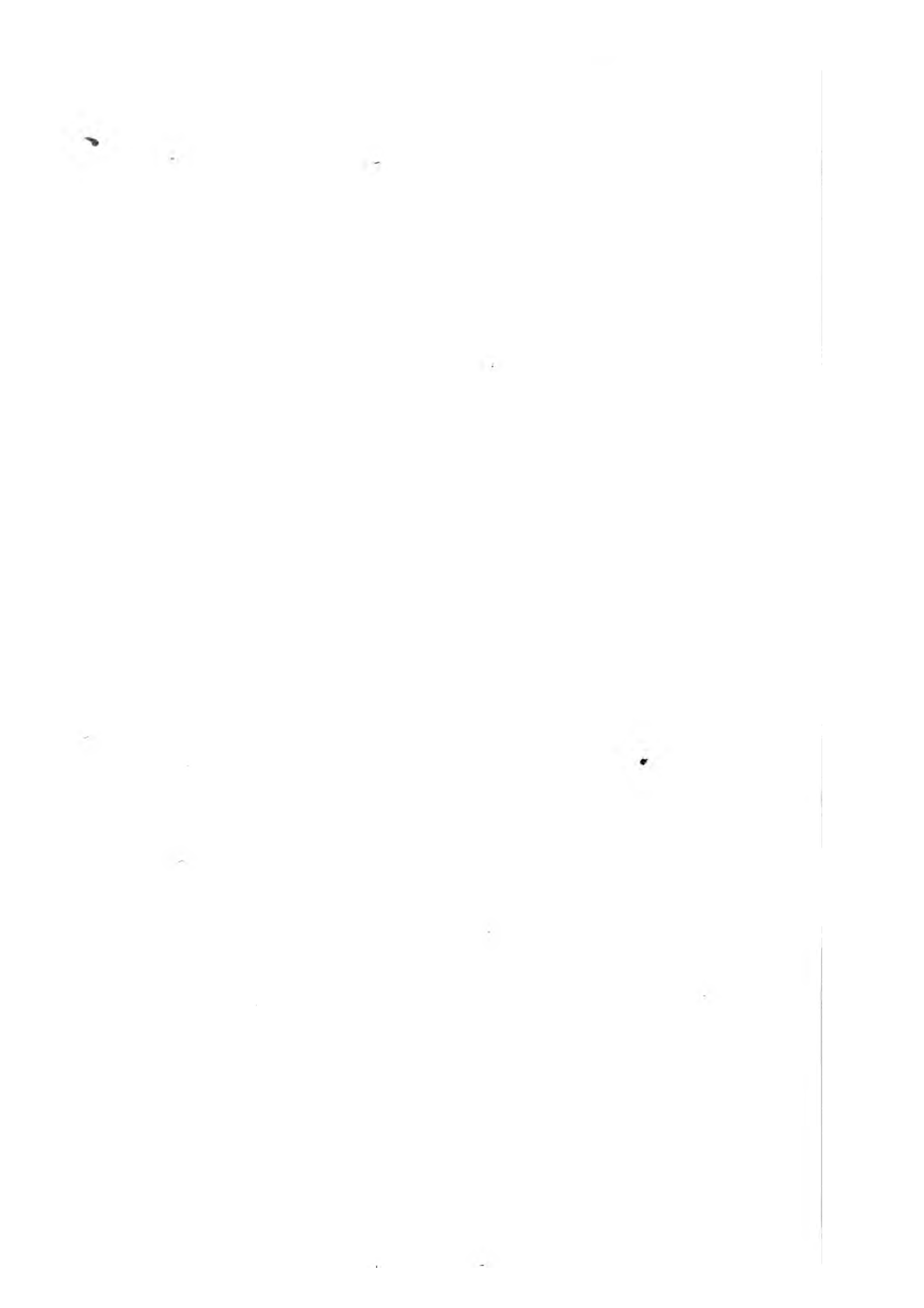








THE KEY OF THE HOLY HOUSE



THE KEY OF THE HOLY HOUSE

A Romance of Old Antwerp

BY

ALBERT LEE

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THE KEY OF THE HOLY HOUSE

A ROMANCE OF OLD ANTWERP.



CHAPTER I.

WHAT I FOUND IN THE NORDENSTRASSE.

THE sun had gone down, and the streets of Antwerp were growing dark, so that it was necessary that the wayfarer went forward carefully, lest he should trip at some protruding doorstep, or fall over anyone who chanced to be idling outside one of the house windows, chatting perhaps, or—as was very possible—whispering secrets to a pretty girl inside. As a rule, however, there was little loitering out-of-doors after sunset; for, what with the prowling Spanish watchmen, who came out like noisome night-birds, and worse than these, the spies and informers of the Inquisition, on the lookout for victims, it was unsafe to be on the outer side of one's street door.

That evening I sat in the room on the first floor, and, for want of better occupation just then, whiled away the time in listening to the passers-by, whose forms showed up indistinctly in the dim light which an occasional horn-lantern threw into the thoroughfare.

The Nordenstrasse, into which our sitting-room looked, was long and narrow,—very much unlike the majority of the thoroughfares of the beautiful Flemish city we were all so proud of. These, generally speaking, were broad and handsome, and betokened almost unlimited wealth. My father, who was rich, had often been questioned as to why he did not bring his business into the broader ways, along which the majority of the people passed, and where he would have done a far greater trade. But he used to shake his head good-humouredly, and say that he had a fancy for the old home where he was born, and where his father before him had first seen the light of day. And as for business being better, he cared but little, since he already had wealth sufficient.

The Nordenstrasse was certainly an old-fashioned street, compared to many others in Antwerp. The houses appeared to tumble together, the upper stories projecting over the shop beneath, so that as we sat in the window we could readily touch hands with those who lived in the house opposite, and could hold conversation with almost as much ease and privacy as if we were in the same apartment.

While I sat there, my father came into the room, followed by my mother,—buxom, and fair to look upon, in spite of her constant assurance that since she was going on towards the age of fifty she was an old woman. And with them came my sister Gertrude, than whom—with a single exception—there was no one more beautiful in all the famous city of Antwerp; and that was saying a great deal. I could only see them indistinctly, for by this time the dim light hanging at the door of our neighbours opposite was all there was to dispel the darkness, and it was no more than sufficient

to show that three persons were near at hand. Their voices, however, plainly told me who they were.

"How dark it is, Caspar," said my sister. "I will light the lamp."

"Nay, let us sit here in the darkness a while," exclaimed my father; and so saying, he sat down in the window with us.

What we talked about I cannot remember. I dare say that it was the old topic of conversation,—the cruel and high-handed doings of the Spaniards. My father, who was speaking at the time, stopped abruptly, and we started to our feet with beating hearts; for we heard a piercing scream in the street below.

Throwing open the window, and looking out, we saw a girl lying on the ground. About her stood three men clad in long black robes, while over their heads were drawn the cowls that completely hid their faces, but having eyelet holes, so that the wearers might see whither they were going, without being known. They were the dreaded Familiars of the Inquisition. Finding that the girl did not stir, one of them stooped and touched her. Then he looked up, and said something to his companions, whereupon a second one knelt beside the prostrate form. They gazed into her face, throwing the light of their lanterns on it, to see the more distinctly. One of them felt the girl's pulse, and laid his hand upon her bosom, to discover whether her heart was beating. But the poor creature was dead. She had been walking along the streets in the darkness, after having been in hiding all the day, when suddenly a hand was laid upon her shoulder, heavy and menacing. She turned to see who had touched her, and when she saw the black forms of the dreaded Inquisitors, she gave one long, agonising cry, and fell senseless at their feet.

Lancelot Bockholt, our opposite neighbour, told us this later on, for he had been standing at his door, looking about him idly.

None dared to say anything to the three who had dogged the maiden's steps; and those who were passing by, when they caught sight of the black-robed figures, hastened on with silent tread, and quickly-beating hearts, fearful lest, being robbed of their prey, these hungry vultures might claim them in the dead girl's stead.

We stood speechless at the window, gazing down upon this too-familiar scene,—my mother and sister with clasped hands, and tearful; my father and I with an indignant helplessness, since the creatures of the Inquisition were sacred from all molestation. Two of the men spurned the dead body with their feet, and then the three passed on, doubtless in search for some other victim.

As they disappeared, the door of a house a little way down the street opened cautiously, and a woman came out. The moon had just emerged from behind a heavy cloud, and we could watch the new-comer's movements. Running to the dead one, she threw herself beside the prostrate form, and wept passionately. But none of the passers-by ventured to help or comfort her. They went on with averted faces, and hurried tread. One could scarcely wonder at it. While full of sympathy, as I am sure they must have been, they were also moved to fear; for sympathy with a heretic was adjudged rank heresy, and had often led the sympathisers to the rack.

"It is Martha, the cordwainer's widow, and that must be her daughter Mary," said my father. "Come, Caspar, let us go down, and help her to carry the poor girl to her home."

I turned and followed, knowing full well that we were

bent on doing a dangerous thing. But why should we hesitate? Was the maiden to lie there the long night through? and but for our help she must have done so, for the widow was far too feeble to carry her to the house unaided. When we reached the street, we looked up and down, and finding it clear, went forward. My father stooped, and touched the weeping woman on the shoulder, to arouse her and offer our assistance. What he said I do not know, for, as I drew near, my foot kicked against something which, from my hurried movement, went several feet away. Wondering what it might be, I went after it, and picking it up, found that it was a small but heavy fold of paper. There was no time to examine it then, so I slipped it into my pocket, and returned to my father's side.

"Take the shoulders, my son, and I will take the feet," said he; and lifting the body gently, we carried it to the widow's home.

"God give thee consolation, friend Martha," he said, as we laid the girl upon her bed; but the poor woman could not be comforted.

While my father sought to console her, I drew out the package I had found in the street, and opened it. It contained a brass key, which, after glancing at it hastily, I thrust back again into my pocket. The paper I was about to crumple up in my hand, when, by the light of the lamp, I saw some handwriting. Taking it to the light, I read, and as I did so, my brain seemed to reel with horror. It was a list of names, seven in number, and all well known to me. Three merchants were therein described, and their dwelling-places indicated; a priest who officiated at the Cathedral; two women of the humbler order of society, one of whom was this dead girl; and last of all, Dorothy Fabry, the beautiful

daughter of the Burgomaster of Antwerp,—the one of all the world whom I loved, beyond even my own life. In the margin someone had pencilled various remarks, and opposite Dorothy's name were these words:—

'At the Burgomaster's palace. She arrives there on the morning of Wednesday, at the hour of nine.'

This for a moment misled me ; but for a moment only. I had that very afternoon seen her in her father's garden, and she had come upon them laughingly, as her parents sat in the bower, startling them by her abrupt appearance.

"Dorothy!" exclaimed her mother. "How is it that you come hither now? We did not expect you until to-morrow."

"Nor did I expect to be here, my dear mother, but the winds were favourable, and we came into the harbour earlier than was thought for. Being impatient to be home after so long a stay, I got the master of the ship to send me by boat to the jetty, from whence I ran home at once, to give you a surprise."

The next moment she had her arms about her mother's neck, and was kissing her fondly, every kiss being begrudged by me, who did not yet know, except in fancy, how sweet those kisses were. Even her severe-looking father came in for a share, which only served to make my longing all the greater.

"The Inquisitors are after her!" I cried ; and without waiting to explain, I dashed out of the house, and took my way to the Burgomaster's palace. As I turned the corner of the street, I almost ran into the arms of three black-robed Familiars, who were walking slowly, looking on the ground as they went, throwing the lantern-light around them, as if in search of something. They were doubtless looking for the key that was in my own doublet, and the paper also.

They called on me to stop, but I hastened onwards, heedless of their challenge, and glad to think that in the darkness they could not see my face, or even discern my figure. How I blessed the fact that the clouds had rolled up to hide the moon, so that even the lynx-eyed Inquisitors could not know me! Quickening my pace, if that were possible, I went along the tortuous and irregular streets, across the spacious, handsome squares, and round by the beautiful Cathedral, whose bells were chiming the hour of ten as I passed.

I hurried down a side lane to save time, but my way was barred by a *clapers-mans*,—a Spanish watchman.

“Halt!” he cried, when he saw me coming.

“Get out of my way!” I shouted, in answer to his call.

But he stood there, huge and broad-shouldered, and waited to grapple with me.

“Get out of my way!” I cried again; but he refused to move.

“Then take the consequences,” said I, and dashed full on him, crashing my fist into his face. He fell almost without a sound; but heedless as to whether he was dead or living, I ran on, and panting with my run, drew up at last outside the palace I was seeking.

Pulling the great bell violently, I awaited the opening of the door with impatience. It seemed to me as though the porter would never draw the final bolt, and I rang again, although I heard him shoot back first one and then the other.

“How slow you are, Martin,” I cried, as the great door swung open at last.

“Why, Master Ursulens, what is the matter?” said the old man, astonished at my haste, and the disturbed look upon my face.

"Where is the young Mistress Dorothy?" I asked, heedless of his enquiry.

"With the Burgomaster and Mistress Fabry in the dining-hall," he answered, closing and bolting the door while he did so. For even as I had spoken I had stepped over the threshold, and stood within the spacious hall.

Around me were suits of armour ranged along on every side, while on the walls were hung cuirasses and skull-caps of steel, lances, swords, battle-axes, and maces, all of which were massive, and spoke of the fierce energy with which the men of old did battle. But I had seen all these before, and had neither care nor time for them now. Being bent on something vastly more absorbing than these things, and without asking Martin to announce my arrival, I darted across the marble floor, turned round to a door beneath the great staircase, and knocking loudly, threw it open abruptly.

Those within looked up quickly, and with startled air, for in days when none knew how night would find them, anything that transpired out of the ordinary course was sufficient to set the heart beating wildly, and quaking with very fear.

They had all been seated at the table, the Burgomaster facing the door, and Dorothy and her mother on either side of the master of the household. But as they looked up they started to their feet, and gazed eagerly in my direction to discover who it was that disturbed them.

"How now, Master Caspar!" cried Van der Fabry, with a touch of anger in his voice, when he saw who the intruder was. "Why did you not suffer Martin to announce you in the usual way?"

"Pardon me, Burgomaster," I answered, breathlessly, casting an anxious look at Dorothy, whose beautiful face

had become pale with fear. "I have brought news that more than makes amends for my apparent rudeness." And drawing forth the paper I had picked up in the Nordenstrasse, I laid it on the table, and told my story.

Even the strong-willed, stern-visaged Burgomaster trembled as he heard my words, and the perspiration stood upon his brow when, taking up the fatal paper of the Inquisitors, he saw his daughter's name written thereon.

"God spare us!" he cried, as the crumpled sheet fell from his fingers to the floor; then, burying his face in his hands, he struggled to become calm.

I looked on in silent sympathy, and while I did so, Dorothy, who was standing near me, stole her hand in mine, and her eyes did for her what her voice refused to do,—appealed to me to do something to save her.

"Van der Fabry," I said, in quick response to this mute pleading, "I do not think that anyone can know that Dorothy has come home. Let me take her to my father's house, where her presence will be unsuspected. From thence, if needs be, we can remove her to a still safer spot."

"Yes, father, let me go to Caspar's house," said Dorothy. "I shall have his mother's care, and Gertrude's companionship. It is night, and none will see me on the way thither."

"Then go, my child," said the Burgomaster. "Take off that gay dress, and put on one of darker colour. Or, what is quite as well, throw a dark cloak around you, and go in God's name. For if I lost my darling daughter, I should almost pray to die."

It was not often that Van der Fabry showed emotion. He was one of those hard men who judged such a thing

unworthy of a man, and betokening weakness. Never had I seen anything like softness in his face, save when he spoke to his child, and then he suffered his features to relax into what one might call a smile. But never for more than a moment or two. It was, as it were, but a flash, and then it was gone. This time, however, he was touched to the very quick, and when he looked up, I saw that his face was pale, and his eyes were dim with tears.

Dorothy left the room to prepare herself for flight, and after a few minutes' absence returned, nothing showing out of the black wrappings but her beautiful face.

"Good-bye, dear ones," she exclaimed, her eyes overflowing with tears as she kissed her parents. "I thought it so delightful to come home to you, but now I must needs go again."

She said no more, for other words were impossible. All that she could do, as she drew her arms from around her mother's neck, was to take my hand in hers, and wait for me to lead her away.

Passing into the hall, we came to the door, but Martin, who had had it open, ready for us to go out into the night, was hastily closing it.

"Go back! go back!" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "The accursed Familiars are coming down the street. Go some other way!"

"Cross the garden, and go out by the wicket-gate, and along the Westernstrasse," cried the Burgomaster; and turning back, he led the way through an open door, and across the greensward where, many a time, I had walked and talked and played, when Dorothy and I were children. The garden was not a large one, and we were soon at the wicket-gate. When we reached it, and

Dorothy's father flung it open, the great bell in the hall rang out a loud and noisy summons.

"They have come! Go back, father, and tell them I am not here," said the maiden, as she gave her father one more kiss, and hurried out into the dark lane, made darker by the trees that lined it.

"Good-bye, my daughter, the Lord go with you!" said the Burgomaster, as he quietly closed the gate, and returned to receive these late and unwelcome visitors.

There had been tokens of a coming storm when I entered Van der Fabry's palace. Some big drops of rain splashed upon the stones, and the black clouds drew together into one great heavy canopy, which shrouded the whole city in complete darkness. It had only been possible for Martin to see the three black forms approaching, by means of the lanterns that swung at some of the doorways in the street. Here, in the lane into which the garden-gate opened, the darkness was so dense that we could take our way in safety. The rain was falling in torrents, and the wind, which had risen suddenly, was in our faces.

"I must take your hand, Caspar," said Dorothy, who, with a resoluteness that filled me with admiration, threw aside all weeping, and bent her whole soul on the effort to escape.

"Yes, dear one," I answered, heedless as to whether she would resent such a familiarity. And taking her hand we went on as quickly as the storm would suffer us. More than once we had to draw into a doorway to gain our breath, and that done, we set forth again.

"Who goes there?" cried a watchman, as we crossed the Beguinstrasse at a run.

"A friend," I shouted in return, but at the same time putting my hand to my sword, and loosening it in its

scabbard, in case it should be needed. For on this I was resolved, that rather than be turned aside from taking the maiden who was with me into safety, I would even dare to withstand this well-armed representative of our oppressors. But the man was too intent on finding shelter to question us further, and suffered us to go in peace.

Ere long we were at home, where I told the story, and left my mother and sister to look after the comfort of the Burgomaster's daughter.

CHAPTER II.

MIDNIGHT VISITORS.

It seemed sheer waste of time to lie in bed, for sleep had entirely deserted me that night. The events of the past few hours had been so exciting that I could not calm myself down, however much I tried, and my brain was busy with plans for getting Dorothy away. The fear rode uppermost that the Familiars of the Inquisition would discover her hiding-place, for they appeared to me to be ubiquitous, and no corner, however dark, was out of reach of their piercing eyes. So far as I knew, no one had seen us go out of the wicket-gate from Van der Fabry's garden, and as for entry into my father's house, we had looked up and down the street most carefully. I had even thrust my sword into every doorway to make sure that no one was in hiding to watch for my return. I was justified in the thought that there was small chance of this, seeing that none had known of my whereabouts after leaving the house of the cordwainer's widow.

But a disturbed mind in such perilous times is very much like a guilty conscience,—that is to say, it needs little to make one thoroughly anxious and sick at heart. I began to think that there was the bare possibility that the Familiars had tracked me to the Burgomaster's palace, had guessed my hasty errand, had followed me

swiftly, and finding Dorothy and myself gone when they got to Van der Fabry's home, guessed that I had taken her to my father's dwelling, under cover of the stormy night. At any moment there might come the fatal summons at the door, although my father had the reputation of being a good Catholic.

Unable to lie still any longer, I sprang from my bed and dressed, sitting down in the darkness after that was done, and gazing into the street. Then I found myself listening intently, as if in expectation of hearing the tread of the Familiars. But the night was wild, and all that one could hear was the sougning of the wind as it went along, and the rain as it pelted fiercely against the window-panes. To be alone under such circumstances was misery, for imagination ran riot, and drew ghastly pictures of awful possibilities. It was as real to me, as I looked into the dark room, as though I actually saw the torture-chamber itself; and the victim was the maiden I loved as I loved my very life. My feelings were so wrought upon that the perspiration started from every pore. I think my hair stood on end.

With such dark thoughts as these for my companions, I felt that I should go mad if I stayed alone any longer. Opening the door, intending to cross the landing, and ascend the stairs to my parents' room, I heard stealthy footsteps, and looking before me, saw something that filled my soul with horror. I stood in the darkness, so that none could see me, but coming up the stairs were three black forms, with hooded faces, and each one carried a lantern.

"Great God! The Familiars! Oh, what shall I do?" I exclaimed, with bated breath.

How swiftly one's thoughts come in times of peril, all can tell, who have known what danger is. One

hears of the rushing by of a whole life's pictures, even in a moment, when face to face with violent death; and in such an instant one can plan his actions, since time appears to have stood still. In the brief period of waiting I formed a desperate resolution, and darting back to my bedside, snatched up the sword which, happily, I knew so well how to use. Dorothy should not die, cost what it might to save her!

Going along the passage swiftly, I met the intruders at the top of the stairs.

"What do you here?" I asked, in a low voice, and halting before them. There was little reason to fear that anyone in the house would hear them, if they would speak quietly, for my room was on the floor above the shop, and all the other bed-chambers were at the top of the dwelling.

The men looked at me, and scrutinised my face by the aid of the lights they carried.

"We want Mistress Dorothy Fabry, and the man who aided her in escaping from her father's house," said one.

"I am the man," I answered, quietly, with a strange tremor through my frame. "Follow me, if you would find the maiden." And passing by them on the stairs, I descended, while they turned and came after me, with that stealthy tread that had become a kind of second nature to them.

By one of those strange providences that often come to our aid, a way was opened for me in dealing with these deadly and never-satisfied night-birds; and, as I trod the streets, silently followed by the Familiars, I blessed God for the happy chance. Yet, that they should not think me too pliant, and so suspect me, I halted presently.

“Will you be content with me alone, and let the maiden go?” I asked.

“Pass on in silence,” responded one. “Take us to her, or it will be worse for you and yours.”

“What!” I exclaimed, in an angry tone; “do you threaten me?”

“Proceed,” was the laconic rejoinder.

I had done enough to remove suspicion, and they came after me when I led the way.

“I must needs take you to a ship in the harbour, if you are resolute to find her,” I said, as we drew near to the quay.

“That matters not. If we do not find her, the lives of those at home, and your own life also, are forfeit.”

“What! The lives of my parents and sister, who are all good Catholics?” I cried, in feigned surprise. For now that the first sense of horror had passed, and I had calmly thought out my plan, I was free to speak.

“That is our concern. Proceed.”

Without another word I went forward, and after passing boat-builders' yards, rope-walks, smitheries, and sail-lofts, we came to the quay-side. I would have left the men for a moment, but they would not suffer me to pass out of their reach, and followed me down the steps of the jetty, where I found a boat. Stepping in, I sat down, and while I was placing the oars in the rowlocks the Inquisitors took their seats in silence.

With all the calmness I could summon, I spoke again:

“Once more I ask you,—Will you not be content with me alone, and let the maiden go?”

“Take us to her, or it will be worse for you and yours,” responded the spokesman, as before, but with still more ominous tone.

My heart began to beat with gladness as I plied the

oars, and drew the boat away. The waters were rough, and the wind was strong; but I was stalwart, and made light of any little extra toil, so long as I could save Dorothy. All around were the merchant vessels that had come to port, some ranged along the quay, others out in mid-harbour. The lights of lanterns at the bows and sterns, casting long and broken lines on the waters of the Scheldt, came from every quarter, only, however, serving to show how dense the surrounding darkness was. For nothing could be seen in that black night; not even the forms of the great hulks that rode lazily at their moorings.

But I knew where I wanted to go, and pulled with good will. After a time we ran in under the stern of a ship, and by the aid of the lantern, which was swinging there, I saw that good fortune favoured me. Backing the boat before my dread companions had time to read the name of the vessel, I shipped oars, and drew along the side with the boathook, until we got to the ladder that was hanging over.

“Go up, my masters,” said I, as I held on to a rope.

“I will go first,” said he, who had been spokesman so far. “Then, Master Ursulens, do you follow. My companions will bring up the rear.”

I saw what that meant, and I smiled to myself, although I made some pretence at objection. They feared that if they left me in the boat I might row away, and so escape them.

“As you will, then,” was my answer.

Slowly and deliberately we mounted, the Familiar before me going with wary step, for he was plainly no seaman; and in a minute or two he and I stood on the deck. A man came up at once with a challenge, but I hastened to meet him, and whispered a caution, and by

the time I had done so the other two were at the first Familiar's side.

Standing between them and the ladder, I beckoned the sailor to my side, and drawing my sword, told him who these men were, and bade him fetch his commander. The Inquisitors saw at once that they were trapped, and two of them turned upon me furiously; but the third stood where he was, moving neither hand nor foot.

"Stand back, you fiends!" I shouted, as the two approached; but when they saw my sword gleaming in the light that came from lanterns here and there, they halted before me, terror-stricken.

"You have deceived us!" they cried, as they stood cowering, fearing what might be behind them, and dreading to come nearer to me, lest the glittering steel should find its way into their breasts.

It had been their lot to strike terror into other hearts; to go about with merciless spirit to take the strong and weak, the rich and poor, the frail and beautiful into their toils, and never to display or feel one pang of pity. What had they cared for others' woe? How I wished that I might see their faces, to know whether they were blanched with fear or not; and when they changed their mood, and begged me to let them go, I laughed, and bade them do as they had bid me do,—be silent.

"Set your minds at rest, my masters," I added. "You are on board the flag-ship of the brave old Admiral Boisot." And I laughed scornfully.

"The Beggars' Admiral!" exclaimed two of them, with an increased horror in their tones.

And it was truly so. With the daring that characterised their every movement, the Beggars of the Sea had entered the port the day before, and now lay drawn up—some twenty-two ships in all—in the centre of the great

expanse of water, with guns levelled on the Governor's palace, the citadel, and other spots that were occupied by Spaniards only. This in a sense provided for their safety, since any attempt to molest them would mean the destruction of Spanish life and property. They had not much to fear just then, and they knew it; for Don Luis de Requesens and Cuñiga, Grand Commander of Castile, and now Viceroy in the Netherlands, had, a few days before, drawn off from Antwerp so many of the garrison for service elsewhere, that the Governor had but a handful of soldiers at his disposal. He dared not, therefore, oppose the Beggars, who might indulge in rough reprisals if he interfered. The leader of these warlike patriots, who went from port to port, bearding the Spanish lion in his den, was the fine old Admiral, next to the Prince of Orange, the idol of the people, and one who had already led his veterans in working deadly mischief against the Spaniards.

"What is this?" cried someone, with sturdy voice; and, looking up, I saw the Admiral, who, as he came, was buttoning up his doublet. He was followed by half-a-dozen other men whom the sailor on guard had called from their various posts to provide against any possible treachery.

"I am Caspar Ursulens, Admiral," I cried; "and I pray you give me a moment or two to tell my story."

The Admiral started when I told him my name, and looked at me strangely.

"Are you the son of Margaret, the wife of Goswyn Ursulens?" he asked; and there was a strange look on his face, and a tremor in his voice.

"I am, Admiral," I answered, somewhat wondering. I found out a long time after why he was so disturbed.

"Then speak on, my young friend, for there are many

reasons why I would serve you," was the old sailor's response, and I told him all that had befallen me since sunset.

"Thrust these creatures into the ship's hold," said Boisot, as soon as I had finished my story. "When morning comes, they shall have what their victims never had from them,—a fair trial."

Trembling with rage and fear, the Familiars went unwillingly to the spot indicated; and with rough and ready hands, and only too willing for the unusual task, the sailors dropped them down into the darkness, and fastened the hatchway securely. The Inquisitors were to be tried at day-dawn, and the Admiral bade me stay on board the flag-ship so as to be present at the trial.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRIAL OF THE FAMILIARS.

WHEN the morning broke—which was but one short hour after my arrival on board with my strange companions—the quietness was exchanged for the greatest activity. Boats went from ship to ship throughout the fleet of the Beggars, and before much time had passed the captains clambered on the deck of the flag-ship, wondering why the Admiral had sent for them at such an early hour. They were directed to go into the State Cabin, to which I was also summoned. Boisot came in almost immediately, and, taking his seat at the head of the table, called for the prisoners.

While we were waiting for their arrival, I looked up and down the two lines formed by the men who held commissions from the Prince of Orange, and a strange scene it was. Here were some of the most reputable men in Holland, who had done great things for their country, and were held in dread by the Spaniards. The Beggars' fleet had stormed strong cities, and captured many a rich galleon, so that on the high seas Philip was as much troubled as on land.

Notable by reason of their valour, they were none the less remarkable in their garb. Every sailor in the fleet was dressed like them, the only difference being in

the quality of the clothing they wore. To all appearance they were a company of Flemish mendicants dressed in cloth of ashen-grey, each with a beggar's wallet, a wooden bowl, and a spoon slung at his back, while in the hand was a staff, such as was commonly borne by those who begged alms. But a stout sword was belted on every man's thigh, and a brace of pistols was thrust into the leathern girdle round the waist. On each breast was hung, by a silver chain, a Gueux penny, as it was called, cast in gold. On one side was the bust of the Spanish King, and round it the legend: *Fideles au roi*. The reverse had stamped upon it a beggar's wallet, clasped by two hands, and encircled by the words: *Jusques à porter la besace*.*

. But there was a stir at the door, and, turning my eyes in that direction, I saw the prisoners. The Beggar captains stared in amazement when they saw three black-robed figures enter the cabin guarded by full-armed sailors, and they turned to the Admiral, with inquiring looks.

For a little while Boisot did not take any notice of their glances, but as soon as the Familiars were ranged along the lower end of the cabin, he rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I have called you together to hear your judgment. Possibly this may prove the strangest court-martial ever held, seeing that the prisoners before you are Inquisitors whose office it has been to seek for victims, and hand them over to the tormentors. Some may say that we have no jurisdiction in this matter, seeing that a court like ours can only take note of offences of a military character. But as patriots we may, I think, consider that this is something more than a court-martial. It is a court consisting of

* "Faithful to the King, even to carrying the wallet."

Netherlanders of good standing, who venture to consider the doings of any who are charged with having offended against the laws of humanity, and against the comfort of their countrymen, and to judge accordingly. What these men have done we may proceed to discover. Master Caspar Ursulens, stand forth and tell what you know of the prisoners."

Without hesitation, I told all that had befallen since sunset, including that sad scene in the Nordenstrasse, the finding of the package which contained the list of the victims, my errand to the Burgomaster's house, the midnight intrusion, and the strange capture of the Familiars. The Netherlanders listened eagerly, and a smile of satisfaction crossed their stolid faces when they heard how the Inquisitors had been caught in the toils.

"It was cleverly done!" exclaimed Van der Weeld, a sturdy old captain, who sat at the Admiral's right hand, and as I finished he rose to his feet.

"Whether we are a properly constituted court or not, Admiral, I care not," said he. "It is enough to know that we are Netherlanders of good repute, who have sworn to put down tyranny in our land, of whatsoever sort it may be. And who does not know that this tyranny which these men represent is the fiercest of all? If in self-defence alone we condemned them, we should be within our rights, seeing that these Inquisitors spend their days in desolating our homes, and rendering life intolerable. But here are three men who have been caught red-handed as it were. They stole into a citizen's house in the dead of night, and for that they deserve death. Had we but liberty, and were the accursed yoke of Spain but thrown aside, our own laws would avail in Antwerp, and throughout the Netherlands. Then the house of a Netherlander would be his castle,

even as it is in England, and one might kill an intruder outright without hindrance. Why not let it be so in the case of these men? Here, at any rate, within the Beggars' fleet our country's laws hold good, and for their intrusion they ought to die."

"More than that, Van der Weeld," exclaimed one, who rose to his feet as the old captain sat down. "It is enough that these men are the creatures of the Inquisition. Such men as these have robbed us of our dear ones. Such men as these took my mother, my wife, my only child, and put them to the torture, and then to death. An Inquisitor is an enemy to my country, and ought to die!"

There was a murmur of applause, and, when it had subsided, a captain at the lower end of the cabin rose to his feet, and spoke.

"Why, Master Boisot, should we waste our words and our time? We have sworn vengeance on the enemies of our country, and the destruction of all who serve the Inquisition. Let these men die. Their garb declares their office, and convicts them of the crimes that have filled our land with horror."

Whether all this was logical or not, I can scarcely say. We were all prejudiced—and I plead guilty of prejudice even now—for one might safely declare that without exception we had all suffered more or less by the Inquisition. The havoc wrought in nearly every home in the land robbed us of calm judgment, and awakened a desire for vengeance whensoever opportunity offered itself. Not only was there the desire, but vengeance was a part of the Beggars' vow. Yet so terrible was the power of Spain, and so awful the vigilance of the Inquisition, that three Familiars might pass untouched through a crowd of a thousand Nether-

landers, since no one knew whether his neighbour might not be an informer. It was altogether different here. On board the flag-ship of the Beggars' fleet were none but good men and true, sworn each and all by the most solemn oath to free their country from Spain's dreadful power, and to do all they could to crush out the murderous Inquisition.

"What say you?" said the Admiral, signalling for silence, when the last speaker had taken his seat. "Are these men held guilty of violating our country's liberties?"

One by one the answers came, and always the same, spoken with a decision which showed the prisoners that there was no hope of mercy from the stern-souled patriots who had become their judges.

"Then, gentlemen, before we pass sentence on these men, we will give them an opportunity to say what they can in their own favour. Shall it be so?"

"Yes," was the general rejoinder.

Two of the men, when Admiral Boisot asked them what they had to say, maintained a stolid silence, and refused to speak.

"Have you no word,—nothing to plead against the sentence of death?" urged the Admiral; but they stood mute, and only their trembling robes betrayed their agitation.

"Speak, if you will," exclaimed the Admiral, sternly, turning to the third, who had drawn back a little from his companions, and who, throughout the trial, had betrayed more feeling than the rest. "Have you anything to say?"

"Yes, Admiral! much!" the Familiar answered. "But let me first tear off this accursed mask, and speak with greater freedom." And as he spoke, he tore

away the hideous cowl that always gave the creatures of the Holy Office such a forbidding and terrifying appearance.

We looked in astonishment at the man who stood revealed before us. His countenance was far different from that which one would have expected to find among the human butchers who prowled among the people as spies and informers. We saw a young man of fair complexion, elongated face, blue eyes, and pale brown hair. There was a fine intelligence about him, and he bore himself, in spite of the fact that he was face to face with death, with a fearlessness that won admiration even from his judges.

"Are the Romish bloodhounds all like these?" cried Boisot, as the man stood ready to speak. "Who are you, and what is your name?"

"I am Walter de Swarte of Bergen-op-Zoom," was the quick response.

"What? Walter de Swarte was done to death six months ago, and his wife with him!" cried Van der Weeld, starting to his feet. "And yet," he added, gazing at the man intently, "you bear yourself like him, and your face is like his." Then turning to the Admiral, he exclaimed, with a sudden revulsion: "The man lies, Boisot, for Walter de Swarte was ever too tender-hearted to be a murderer of women and children."

"Van der Weeld," said the Familiar, earnestly, "I pray you give me fair hearing, and then if the gentlemen here judge me worthy of death I will kneel and receive the headsman's stroke without a word."

"Shall we hear him, captains?" cried the Admiral, looking too intently at the man to have an eye for any others in the room.

"Yes," came from every lip, for even the sailors who

stood on guard were carried away by this strange turn of events, and joined in the response.

“I am Walter de Swarte of Bergen-op-Zoom, and was one of the gentlemen in the body-guard of the Prince of Orange. It was I who saved him from a dreadful death, when he lay sick and helpless at an inn on the road to Amsterdam; for the assassin’s dagger went into my own arm instead of into the Prince’s bosom. See if it be not so!”

And so saying, the Familiar threw down his black robe, and drawing off the woollen vest beneath it, he showed a thin red cut, such as a keen dagger would make, when tearing its way into the flesh.

“But you are an Inquisitor,” cried Boisot, looking bewildered. “De Swarte was a staunch Reformer.”

“True, Admiral, but let me tell my story. A year ago I married the daughter of the Burgomaster of Harlem, and three months later her father died. As he lay on his death-bed we stood beside him.

“‘My son,’ he said, faintly, ‘the Inquisitors have dogged my daughter for many a day. Swear to me that you will never suffer her to die at their hands.’

“‘They shall kill me first,’ I answered.

“‘But swear it by all that is most sacred that you will forfeit everything—even your honour—rather than let my daughter die. For you know, Walter,’ he added, with a tenderness I cannot express, ‘she is the very apple of my eye, and even here on my dying bed it is agony to think that she should fall into the clutches of those Romish butchers.’

“I did as he desired, and when he lay dead I stood bound to forfeit everything to save her. But I loved her so, that I could have readily done everything for her sake.”

De Swarte paused for a moment, as if to conquer his emotion. Everyone sat silently gazing at this man, and even his black-robed companions turned in his direction. Perhaps they knew the story which was taken up again.

“Three months after that, my wife and I were sitting in the house. My back was to the door; my wife sat opposite. In the midst of our pleasant talk a look of horror came into my wife’s face, and she half rose to her feet, gazing at something beyond me with a fascination such as might hold the bird that is rendered spell-bound by the serpent. Looking behind me, I saw such men as these;” and the speaker, pausing, pointed to his fellow-prisoners. “For a moment the sight took the very life out of me, and while I stood amazed, armed men filed into the room, and laid hold of me. It was too late when I recovered my presence of mind, and before I could move, my hands were bound behind, and I was a helpless prisoner. Half-an-hour later we both lay in a dungeon filled with nameless horrors.

“When the dull grey light of morning stole in through the barred window, the chains outside fell against the door-posts, the bolts were drawn, and the door opened. Cowled creatures stood before us, and one of them bade us follow them. Slowly and dejectedly we went along the narrow way, and entered a chamber lighted by oil-lamps. At the further end was a table on which stood a golden crucifix. Three men sat there—priests of the Church of Rome—and as we entered they were talking and laughing as though such a thing as pain did not exist. Standing before them, we waited. They had their talk out, laughing boisterously at times; so did two other men who stood before a blazing fire, in which were irons which I justly deemed to be instruments of torture. The delay added to our agony—

perhaps it was done with a purpose—but at last the ecclesiastics turned their attention to us.

“‘Now, Master Scrivener, what is the charge against these people?’ said he who sat at the head of the table.

“‘The usual one,’ was the answer.

“‘Heresy?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘And what are the names of these heretics?’

“‘The man’s name is Walter de Swarte, and here also is his wife, Matilda.’

“‘Ah, I know the name full well. This is the pestilent fellow who is of the body-guard of the Prince of Orange,’ said one of the Inquisitors.

“He who presided turned over the pages of the book that lay open before him, and in which he had written our names. After a while he looked up at me. Then he conferred with his companions, who, rising from their seats, looked into the book, and read at the place to which he pointed with his finger. That done, they sat down again.

“‘Walter de Swarte,’ said the President, ‘you must enter the service of the Inquisition!’

“I listened with horror. For my own sake I would rather die, and I said so.

“‘It is not for your own sake that we have any care. You can serve our cause, and must do so, whether you will or no.

“‘I will not!’ I answered, emphatically.

“‘But think of the vow you made to the Burgomaster of Harlem as he lay dying; and consider the peril in which you place your wife.’

“I was thunderstruck, and for a few moments my brain reeled. My limbs trembled, and but for my wife

who stood near me, I should have fallen as before a heavy blow."

De Swarte paused a moment in his story.

"Do I tire you, my masters?" he asked, presently.

"Go on," we cried, as with one voice; for this story thrilled us. But for the restless moving of the other prisoners, and their murmurs of disapprobation, the silence was intense.

"And what if I persist in my refusal?" I asked the Inquisitors," De Swarte continued.

"Then we shall break down your refusal by a method we are well acquainted with. Put the woman to the rack!"

"Stand firm, dear one," my wife exclaimed, as the men laid their hands upon her. 'I would rather die, Walter,' she added, and there was a brave look on her face.

"They threw her down with a roughness that maddened me, fastened her arms and feet to the awful instrument, and began the torture. At the first turn of the wheel I heard the sinews crack, and my wife could not forbear to scream with pain. That scream broke down by resolution.

"If I serve the Inquisition, will you spare my wife?" I cried.

"Yes," the President made answer. 'But we shall keep her as a hostage for your good behaviour. This service is your punishment. You will perform the duties of a Familiar, though it should cause you ever such disgust; and at the first sign of obstinacy your wife will go to the rack. At the second, she will be dragged naked on a hurdle to the market-place. At the third token of insubordination her right hand and foot shall be twisted off with red-hot irons. What shall follow we need not

tell you. We heard of your vow, and since you can be useful to us you shall keep it.'

"I began to realise that I was paying dearly for having saved the Prince. To hear of such horrors being practised on my wife was more than I could bear, and I entered on this infamous task. In so doing I have displayed a disregard for the welfare of the State, but affection is my excuse. Beyond that story I have nothing else to plead, and, since you say it, I must needs die like these, my base companions."

While Walter de Swarte had been telling his story he had unconsciously approached the foot of the long table around which the captains sat. But when he had ended, he stepped back, and stood in a line with the other two men, one of whom, with a fearful oath, lifted his hand and struck him a heavy, blow in the face. The pent-up indignation of six long months now burst forth, and as the Familiar's hand fell upon him De Swarte returned the blow with such fury that the Inquisitor fell with a groan, and lay senseless on the floor of the cabin. The guards did not interfere but suffered him to lie there.

"Let me die soon," exclaimed De Swarte, when he had thus repaid this onslaught. "I should hail death as a relief from my shame, if I could but save my wife."

A murmur ran down the table, and the captains turned to look into each other's faces. The Admiral, without waiting to consult his officers, spoke what was in his mind.

"What you may say, comrades, I know not; but I, for one, will be no party to the death of this brave man."

"Nor I," came, as with one voice, the response from all the others.

“Guards, suffer Walter de Swarte to go free!” cried Boisot. “As for me, I give him my hand as to one who deserves my heart-felt sympathy.” And stepping down the cabin he took the Familiar’s hand, and shook it warmly.

“It was an ordeal I pray God I may never be called upon to go through,” he added; and as I looked at him I saw that the old Admiral’s eyes were full of tears.

There was no doubt as to what the feelings of the others were. They crowded round their countryman, who stood bewildered, his brow bleeding with the fierce blow he had received from his hateful companion.

“I do not deserve your kindness,” he exclaimed at last, in a voice that was tremulous with emotion.

* * * * *

Half-an-hour later, two bundles, weighted with shot, were dropped over the side of the flag-ship into the black waters of the harbour. They were the bodies of the two Familiars. The third prisoner was being feasted by the Beggars of the Sea.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MASTER OF "THE PENGUIN."

I DID not wait to see the execution of the men who had been so strangely captured, but returned to the quay, and made my way to my father's house as speedily as possible. I knew that I should be missed, and my absence, in such distracting times, was certain to fill my friends with consternation. I was, moreover, anxious first to know how Dorothy fared, and then to devise some scheme for taking her to a safe hiding-place, and that without delay.

"Where is Dorothy?" I cried, even as I mounted the stairs that led from the shop to what was called "The Living Room"; and barely had I ended my question, when I heard a cry, the very tone of which bespoke relief.

"'Tis Caspar!" And the next moment my mother and Gertrude were standing on the landing, eager to greet me, and ask a hundred questions.

"Where is Dorothy, mother? Is she safe?" I asked; for their tearful faces awakened a great fear lest, after all, the precautions I had taken to save her had been in vain.

"She is in her room, my boy. It would not do for her to be seen. But where have you been? Your

father wanted you two hours ago, and going to your sleeping-chamber, found you gone. Then he went out to seek for you."

"Do not trouble, mother. I will go to my room, and put myself tidy. Send someone to find my father, and when he returns I will tell you of my night's adventures. And please get me something to eat, for I am starving."

Scarcely waiting for me to finish what I was saying, Gertrude ran down the stairs to tell one of the men in the shop to seek my father, and eager to have him back as soon as possible—quicken, without a doubt, by a natural curiosity to hear what had to be told—she sent another man in the opposite direction.

Half-an-hour later, we were all—Dorothy included—sitting at the table, where, having satisfied my hunger, I told them what had befallen me, and of the strange confession of Walter de Swarte. When I spoke of my meeting with the Familiars on the stairs, I chanced to look at Dorothy, and saw how startled she was. Her face was pale as death, and she breathed quickly, as if in pain. But she bore up bravely, and listened with the selfsame eagerness.

From the story we passed on to consider how we could find a safe hiding-place for Dorothy. None, perhaps, knew her whereabouts but the men who had dogged her steps across the threshold of our dwelling; and two of these were dead by this time, while the third was only too thankful to be free from the horrible bonds that had bound him. But all our plans appeared to be futile. There was a weak place in every one of them, and with all our thought we could not strengthen in any way.

"Do you think that Walter de Swarte could be of

any service?" said Dorothy, at last. "He would know whether others were aware of my having come here, and might tell of a spot where I could be secure from discovery."

"That is a good suggestion, child," said my father. "Caspar could find his way to the Admiral's ship, and question De Swarte."

"I will go at once," I exclaimed; and without waiting to hear any more, I left the house, and went down to the quay. It occurred to me, however, as I walked along, that it would never do to row straight out to the fleet, for some Spaniards were certain to note the fact, and my safety would be imperilled the moment I landed again. Wondering what was best to do, I stood still, but before much time had passed someone greeted me cheerily.

"How now, Master Ursulens? Are you thinking of offering yourself as steward on my ship?"

Turning round, I saw a master mariner, Bertrand Ogier by name, a burly, broad-faced, honest-hearted seaman, who traded between Antwerp and London. He was one of our best customers, and performed many a commission for us in the capital of the great English Queen.

"Come apart, Master Ogier, and I will tell you my difficulty," I responded; and walking side by side with him to a broad open space, where we could not possibly be overheard, we sat down on a coil of rope, while I told of Dorothy's peril. I knew that he could be trusted, for although he made no great pretension to religion, his sympathies were on the right side, since before all else he was a thorough-going patriot. It was whispered, too, among the Reformers, that he had a place in his hold, where many a suspected one had been

in hiding from the Spaniards, and so safely were the fugitives stowed away that the searchers had never yet found one of them.

“God pity the poor child!” he exclaimed, with a flush of indignation on his face. “And as for Walter de Swarte, I know him well, and a better fellow never trod the streets of Antwerp. Would to God he could find his wife, and bring her to my ship. They should have free passage across the seas, whatever the risk might be.”

A sudden thought flashed into my mind. Could not Bertrand Ogier also take Dorothy with him on his next voyage? Yet it was a great thing to ask him to do, and a perilous one. For a long time past a proclamation had been in vogue, threatening the most fearful penalties, and among the mildest that of death, alike to those who sought to escape from the land, and to those who aided and abetted them in their flight.

Things had come to such a pass that human endurance had reached its extremity. It had been bad enough when the man-like Duchess of Parma was Regent. It was intolerable when she went away, and the Duke of Alva came. She had beaten the people with whips, as Solomon had done in the olden times; but Alva flogged the Netherlanders, like the Wise King's son, with scorpions. It was the all-absorbing topic of conversation everywhere. In noblemen's houses the constant theme was that of the Spanish tyranny. It was the same in the church, or in the market. It damped the gaiety of the wedding. It added to the sombre surroundings of the funerals. In the shops, the streets, the fields, the taverns, by the tradesman's fire-side; in the lodgings of the mechanics, it was always the same theme,—the merciless cruelty of the Spaniards,

and their coadjutors, the Inquisitors. Goaded past all endurance, living in deadly fear for their own safety, missing first one and then another of their friends—a father, wife, sister, brother, or a neighbour—people took to flight, and went out of the country in droves, bidding fair, indeed, to depopulate the land.

Already the effect upon the country was disastrous. Trade was paralysed everywhere in the provinces. The very streets through which I passed when going to the quay were grass-grown, for traffic had so long ceased. The roads that led from one city to another, which were once busy with the traffic of waggons that lumbered heavily along, and lively with long trains of pack horses, that had gone clattering by to the crack of whips, and the lusty songs of the drivers, were silent and deserted now. They were only crossed occasionally by fugitives, seeking to escape from the Inquisition, or the Blood Council, or by the Spanish soldiers on the lookout for heretics and outlaws. In bygone days there were cheery greetings between travellers, and a pleasant loitering to hear the news. But there was none of that now. When men rode, under the changed conditions, they loosened their swords in the scabbards, so as to be prepared to strike or guard, as circumstances might demand, while some even rode with their weapons ready drawn, and gleaming in the sunshine, as if to show that they were alert and armed. When travellers passed, they eyed one another askance, as if in dread of a cowardly attack. The overwhelming tyranny of Spain had destroyed the spirit of confidence everywhere. It was better to be poor and safe, than hold one's money in constant dread of its loss, and live forever in jeopardy. And hence this continual drain of the population.

But Alva saw that unless he adopted vigorous

measures, he would have no people to govern, and no money to draw in the shape of taxes. Hence the proclamation, forbidding all persons, whether foreigners or natives, to leave the land, or to send away their property, and prohibiting all shipmasters, waggoners, and other agents of travel, from assisting in the flight of such fugitives,—all upon pain of death.

I give the words as the people read them from the papers that were hung on the doors of the churches.

I thought of this when the question came to my mind—Could not Bertrand Ogier take Dorothy with him on his next voyage? It was a great thing to ask him to do, and a hazardous one; but since he had suggested that Walter de Swarte should find his wife, and go on board his ship, why should not the maiden, for whom I cared as much as I cared for my own body's welfare, go as well?

“Master Ogier,” I said, and then I hesitated.

For a moment he looked at me, but did not help me out of my difficulty. I did not like to ask this man to imperil his life; yet what should I do?

“What is it?” he exclaimed, at last, wondering at my hesitation.

“I scarce know how to ask so great a favour,” I responded. “And yet what shall I do if I let you go, and do not ask it?”

“Ask it, my friend, and do not be afraid. If it does not please me, I can easily say no. Yet I will put the question for you, since I think I can read your mind. You want me to take Dorothy Fabry on board *The Penguin*, and land her in London. Is it not so?”

My heart leaped within me as I heard the words. The seaman's honest face had grown pale, although he spoke so cheerily; for every fresh attempt at rescue did

but add to his own danger. He was already under suspicion, and knew that a closer watch than ever was set upon his movements. Indeed, only that morning he had found a Spaniard prowling about on the ship between decks, and nothing but the thought that he might have to pay for it heavily, prevented him from tossing the man overboard.

As Ogier spoke, my impulse was to take his hand in mine, and plead with him; but the thought came—we were forced to be thoughtful and consider our surroundings in those days—that Spanish eyes might be upon us.

I contented myself with the words: "What will you say, Master Ogier, if I ask you such a question?"

"What will I say?" said he, his broad face brightening again. "There is only one thing I could say, friend, and I say it with all my heart."

"And that?"

"Yes."

I could have flung my arms about him, and kissed him out of gratitude; but there was always that remembrance of vulture eyes on the look out for prey.

I paused a moment, after I had thanked him alike with look and word, and then spoke again.

"And now for my next difficulty, Master Ogier. On yonder flag-ship is Walter de Swarte, and I want to see him, to hear what he can tell me as to the safety or danger of the Burgomaster's daughter. Yet I dare not go out from the wharf, and board the Admiral's ship in face of all the Spanish officials who are prowling about, and are even now wondering what we two are talking about so earnestly. What can I do?"

"Come on board *The Penguin* to begin with. They can say nothing to that, since they will presently see you return; and as they know that I do not sail for

seven days, they will not imagine that you want to get away, and would be content to lie in hiding so long. Once on the other side of my ship, which is anchored out yonder, I can send you across to the Admiral, who is not far away. Come now, if you will."

As I nodded by way of consent, my companion turned and led the way to a boat that was waiting at the quayside. Lowering ourselves into her, the word was given, the boat cast off, and the sailors pulled out to *The Penguin*, which lay a long distance away. For Antwerp harbour was immense—a broad and deep river—capacious enough for two thousand vessels to ride at anchor; and before the Spaniards began their policy of tyranny, and ruined the trade, a hundred craft of all sizes would come up to the port with every tide.

When we got alongside, instead of going on board, we slid round to the further side, and keeping *The Penguin* between us and the spot where we had stood upon the quay, so that our movements could not be seen, we reached the vessel to which I had taken the spies who were on the quest for Dorothy the night before.

"The Admiral will send you back to my ship," cried Bertrand Ogier, as I clambered on board; and so saying, he raised his hand, and the men rowed him back to *The Penguin*, leaving me with the Beggars of the Sea.

CHAPTER V.

THE MASTER-KEY.

I FOUND De Swarte in the Admiral's cabin engaged in eager conversation with Boisot and some of his captains. He was sitting by the small porthole, through which the light came in sparingly, but enough to show the careworn face. Yet there was a look of hope in it now, which doubtless had long been a stranger there. A very beautiful face it was, and full of fine intelligence. The tormentors of the Holy Office must have known that the most terrible punishment they could inflict would be to put the one he loved to pain; and with a cruel and devilish refinement, of which they had such ample reserve, they invented that sort of anguish for him which he had undergone for six long weary months.

"What is your will, Master Caspar?" said the old commander, when, having knocked for admission, I entered and stood beside him.

"I have come, Admiral, to ask Walter de Swarte some questions concerning the safety of the Burgomaster's daughter," I responded.

"Then we will leave you together. We can easily continue our conversation when you have ended." And so saying, Boisot held up his hand, by way of signal to

the others, and, followed by them, went out, leaving me alone with the late Familiar.

It was the first time I had ever exchanged words with De Swarte; for, when his companions had been condemned, I left the cabin, glad to be in the fresher air, away from the close and stifling atmosphere which the spies of the Holy Office seemed to render poisonous. For a moment or two, while I gazed into his face, the thought came that he might loathe me for the trick that had led to his capture, but when, by the dim light, he began to recognise me, he sprang to his feet, and came forward with open hands.

“Master Ursulens, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the service you have done me. My daily life for the last six months has been one long-continued hell, the days and nights interminable seasons of unspeakable horror, which I dared not break from, lest my dear wife should be done to death by the tormentors.”

“I am glad to have your thanks,” I answered, with a sense of great relief. “I feared that you might despise me for the trick I played.”

“What! despise you?” he cried, his face flushing, as I could see, even in that dark cabin. “What must the thoughts of all honest men be concerning *me*, whose days have been spent in spying out the doings of my own countrymen, and my nights in driving them to the Holy House, from whence I never yet knew one to return?—save myself,” he added, bitterly. And overcome by his feelings he sat down, and, placing his elbows on the table, hid his face in his hands and sobbed.

“My friend,” said I, laying a hand on his shoulder, “what power had you to do differently? It was the fiendish punishment which the Inquisitors, with a Satanic cleverness, put upon you,—tenfold worse than

death to such an one as you. There was no escape from it, and God knows you deserve our compassion, and not our censure."

When I said this, he looked up into my face with a look,—half smile and half tears.

"I thank you, Master Ursulens, for your words. God knows what heartaches I have had throughout the weary months,—what self-loathings and sleepless nights, hours passed in devising some way for releasing my wife, even though the price I should have to pay would be my own destruction."

"And every right-minded man will honour you when they hear your story, Master Walter. Yes, and every woman in the Netherlands—Catholic or Reformer—will say that it was nobly done, when they hear how you accepted your punishment."

"It is good of you to say so, and I will believe it," was the grateful answer. "But now let me hear what I can do, Master Ursulens. I heard you say to Admiral Boisot just now that you desired to know what I could tell you about the Burgomaster's daughter. I know but little, for the Familiars rarely spoke in my presence, and never to me. For days I have gone in and out with them, their only token that I was to accompany them being the motion of their hands. I had to sit alone in a dark cell to my meals—bread and water—the coarse fare which the other prisoners received. And as we walked along the streets no word was spoken when a gesture would serve as well. But the solitude of my life quickened my hearing, and I often overheard their plans. As for Mistress Dorothy, I knew that they were after her, and had watched the eastern gate of the city for many an hour with the other two that we might see her enter, should she soon return. What her present peril is—the

full extent of it—I cannot well say ; but I know that when the Fiscal finds that we do not return at the end of eight and forty hours, Familiars will be sent forth to find us, and others to go in quest of the maiden.”

“And how long is it since your absence began ?” I asked, eagerly.

“Yesterday morning at daybreak, so that there is the remainder of to-day and the night that follows. If you can get her away, say here, on board the Admiral’s ship, she will escape ; but it must be done to-night, and in secrecy. When daybreak comes I must be gone,” he added.

“But why ?” I cried. “Why not stay here, where you are safe, and let the Admiral take you to England ?”

“Do you not see, my friend, that when I disappear, my wife’s life is forfeit ? Scores of times I have been told that ; and for her sake I must go back.”

I looked into his face, and wondered at the depth of his love. Then I thought of his words to me when he first greeted me on entering the cabin ; and finding it hard to reconcile his thanks since I had wrought his deliverance, with this resolution to return, I said so.

“Alas ! I forgot everything save my own safety. But if I can save her whom I vowed a year ago to cherish until death I will save her, be the price I have to pay ever so heavy. So I pray you, Master Ursulens, devise some way of escape for Mistress Dorothy, and when daybreak comes I will present myself at the Holy House, and tell my story.”

“But they will not believe you innocent of your companions’ deaths,” I cried, “and they will torture you.”

“I know it,” was the quiet response. “But I must go. Whatever comes, I must lessen the peril of my own dear one.”

After this we settled into silence, he busy with his own sad thoughts, and I actively endeavouring to frame a scheme for Dorothy's escape.

"Can you not think of some method by which you might get to your wife?" said I, at last. "You surely know the prison in the Holy House, as those fiends call it."

"Yes, I know the house full well, and know, too, where Margaret is. But unlike the other Familiars, I have no key to enter."

As he spoke I thought of what I had found the night before in the Nordenstrasse, and putting a hand into the pocket of my doublet, drew out the brass key—heavy and intricate—and held it forward for De Swarte to see.

"Look at that, and tell me if you know it?"

He looked at it eagerly, and cried aloud:

"Yes, I know it! Let me have it, Master Ursulens, and I will risk my life in putting it to some use. It is the master-key which the Secretary used."

"The Secretary?" I exclaimed, interrupting him. "Who is he?"

"The senior of those two men who were executed this morning. He was Secretary of the Tribunal of the Holy House, and one of the Familiars being ill, he came out in his stead, so eager were his colleagues to lay hands on the Burgomaster's daughter. You will give me this key, will you not?" he asked, springing to his feet, and taking me by the hand.

"But of what use will it be to you?" I asked, anxious to know what its true value was.

"The use? The life of my wife, perhaps. As I have told you, it is the master-key, and opens every door of the Holy House. I will try this very night to effect her release."

After this we settled down into an earnest conversation, contriving ways and means, alike for the safe placing of the maiden on whose escape my own heart was set, and the poor prisoner in the Holy House. We called in the Admiral, and told him our plans, and receiving his promise of assistance, separated. Walter de Swarte, with the key in his possession, remained on board until the shades of evening fell, while I went back to *The Penguin*, from whence Bertrand Ogier's sailors rowed me ashore, in the most open manner, and thus removed all suspicion.

It was not long before I was safe at home, where I found Dorothy awaiting my arrival, and eager to hear what had been done towards effecting her escape.

* * * * *

When night came, it pleased me greatly to find that the rain-charged clouds obscured the moon, and buried the streets in a gloom that hid the movements of all who were abroad. Of these, fortunately, there were fewer than usual, for the air was damp and chill, and a sense of discomfort caused people to put their shutters together so as to keep out the raw air, and everything that would tend to remind them of what was going on in the outside world. The wind, moreover, was rising, as if to herald another storm, such as had swept the streets the night before.

The great danger lay in the chance meeting with any of the emissaries of the Inquisition, although I had come to the desperate resolution of driving my sword through the body of anyone who sought to hinder me in this endeavour to convey Dorothy on board the flag-ship of the Beggars' fleet. It had been suggested that since the garrison in the Citadel was small, a strong force of the

Beggars should be landed, so as to provide an escort for us from my father's door, and resist, if necessary, any soldiers whom the Spanish commander might send forth. But there were grave reasons why this should not be done, for it was certain that as soon as the fleet had gone out of the harbour, my father would pay a heavy price to the oppressors. It was decided, therefore, that I should trust to my own skill and caution in reaching the quay, and once there, we should find some sailors ready to pull us out to the ships.

The street was silent when I looked out. One would have thought that our friends had known of our venture, for there were fewer lighted lamps than usual. This, perhaps, was due to the fact that the heavy rain that had set in just before sunset had put the lights out. If so, we had much to thank the storm for.

"Come, Dorothy," said I, in a low voice, putting out my hand to take hers, and finding it already outstretched. I could not see it, for the shop was kept in darkness, in order to lessen the chances of any one seeing us pass out. A moment later we were in the open air, and on our way, having heard a whispered "God Speed" from those who remained behind.

Following us closely and silently was Mistress Martha, the cordwainer's widow, whose daughter had been startled out of life by the ghastly sight of the Familiars the night before. She was glad to go out of a country where she had endured so much; and now that her child was dead, there was nothing to bind her to the Netherlands. My father promised to pay her well, if she would go with Dorothy as a helper, during her stay in England, and she acquiesced without a moment's hesitation.

"Keep well up, Martha," I whispered, or you will lose

sight of us." And then, hand in hand with Dorothy, we went on quickly. Street after street was passed, side alleys and even stable yards being made use of, so as to shorten the journey.

Reaching the spacious quay, we halted, drawing back into the doorway of one of the great warehouses. Standing there, we looked about us. Behind, and to right and left, as far as the quays extended, lay a great city, with a hundred thousand people and more, but dominated in spite of the charters by a tyranny that was unendurable. Two of our number were flying from that. Before us lay the great harbour, where, if the night had been clear, we should have seen the twinkling lights of the Beggars' fleet; but a heavy mist hung over the waters, and we could discern no sign of life. There came, however, a shrill cry, like that of the storm birds of the sea. I had heard it before, as we drew near to our hiding-place; and hearing it a second time, I answered back in imitation. It came again, and taking Dorothy's hand once more, we walked across the broad open space, where ropes, heaps of tarpaulin, anchors, boats that were undergoing repair, oars, chains, and a thousand other things that are to be found on the quay-side, lay about in a confusion that made the short journey treacherous.

We went forward with caution, groping in the darkness, sometimes stumbling over some unseen obstacle, but keeping in the right direction by reason of the occasional bird-cry. After a while we reached a spot where we not only heard the waters splash upon the steps, but the steady grating of a boat's side against the granite walls.

"Who goes there?" I asked.

"A Beggar."

“Then send someone up the steps to show the way, I said, in a low tone.

My request was responded to at once. A lantern was drawn from beneath some tarpaulin, and by its aid I was able to lead Dorothy down in safety. When she had stepped into the boat, I returned to give a helping hand to Mistress Martha. As she sat in the stern at Dorothy's right hand, a black-robed figure stepped from the little craft, and stood beside me. Then a sailor held out a bundle which the man took from his hand, and the word was given quietly to pull off. Nothing was said more than that, but the Familiar who stood at my side grasped my hand, then slowly walked up the steps that led to the wharf. At the top we paused a moment. We could hear the grating of the oars in the rowlocks, the swish of the blades as they cut the water, and the occasional cry of the man on the look-out, so as to guard against any possible accident. We gazed out on the dark waters, but saw nothing, and presently turned away. Dorothy surely was safe; but as for me and my companion, God only knew how the night would end.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE HOLY HOUSE.

“LET us go into the shadows yonder,” said the black-robed Inquisitor; and, without a word, I followed him as he led the way among the many things that lay strewn about the wharf.

“This will do,” said he, at last, placing his bundle on a cask that stood near. Then, opening it, he handed me first a lantern, and then a long black robe which I threw over my head, so that I stood, like himself, cowled in such a manner that not even the Fiscal of the Holy House, his secretaries, his receivers, nor all the rest of the officials, would know that I was other than one of the spies of that accursed Inquisition.

“I will hide this third robe beneath my own,” said my companion; and with this he lifted up his black garment, while I bound the spare one about his waist, so that it hung beneath, and gave no indication of its presence. That done, he said again, in a low voice, “Now let us be gone, and may God prosper our errand.”

It was not often that two Familiars went forth in Antwerp. They were generally in threes, but why, I have never discovered. Yet no one ventured to question the doings of these informers, but got away from their neighbourhood as speedily as possible.

It was so that night. Dorothy and I had been fortunate in finding the streets empty as we passed along them. Indeed, I do not think we met a single person during the whole journey,—not even a watchman, which was certainly unusual, seeing that these men were given small beats, and might be met with at any corner. But in our walk to the spot where we were bent on making a desperate venture, we met several, not one of whom spoke to us as we went on swiftly and solemnly. Nor were we accosted when, turning into the *Borgerhout-strasse*, we came into the midst of a group of mounted Spaniards,—the city patrol. This night it was doubled, and even trebled, by reason of the proximity of the Beggars of the Sea, who, it was feared, might make a dash on the Citadel. As we walked along, the light of our lanterns declared what we were, or were supposed to be; and such was the awe which the Inquisition inspired, that the horses were drawn aside to right and left, leaving a broad lane, down which we passed without exchanging a word with anyone.

Once, however, we drew into hiding, since it was well to run as few risks as possible. There chanced to be a rather brighter lamp than usual at the corner of one of the streets, and our eyes caught sight of three forms, robed like ourselves. They were just coming round into the same street that we were traversing, and approached us slowly. We instantly turned down into what proved to be a *cul-de-sac*, one of the many blind alleys which Antwerp boasted, and there, placing the lanterns in the folds of our robes, we waited. The new-comers passed on, much to our relief, for they might have come into this very place, since no spot was free from their prowlings.

Giving them fair time to go out of sight, we started on

our way again, ending the journey by halting in front of the Holy House, where the Inquisitors imprisoned and tortured their victims. As I looked at the massive doorway, I thought of the legend which the Italian poet had seen inscribed over the doors that led into the city of woe:

“All hope abandon ye who enter here.”

For surely there had passed into that dread place

“the souls
To misery doom'd”;

and had I but hearing keen enough, I might have heard what never once disturbed those callous-hearted creatures of the Inquisition—

“Sighs with lamentations and loud moans
Resounding through the air.”

How dreadful was the lot of those who had entered through those gates—to be absolutely hopeless! It is a terrible thing to have lost the stimulus of hope. However great a man's misfortunes are, if there be but the faintest glimmer of hope on the far-off horizon, he will not despair, but will wait his opportunity to rise superior to his sorrows. But to be hopeless, to have nothing overhead but an impenetrable canopy, settling down over one like the blackness of an endless night,—this is more dreadful than death itself. When one's life is bereft of hope, one might well pray to die; for to such a man the grave is the goal of life.

I felt, when we halted at the doorway that led to that place of horrors, that I could have done as Dante did, and wept at entering. But this was no time for tears,—not even for pity; for there was stern work to be accomplished, and unspeakable peril to be undergone.

It was no part of our plan to go in by this main entrance, for, as Walter de Swarte said, his wife lay somewhere to the western side of the prison, but in which cell he was not sure. To get there it was best to go in by the Secretary's private entrance, since scarce anyone but that official ever entered that way, and also because our movements were less likely to be observed.

The door, bound and studded with iron, stood half way down a *cul-de-sac*, and as we passed into the forbidding blind alley, we muffled our lights, and trod with caution. Before Walter placed the key in the lock, we walked to the end of the passage to be certain that no one was near to watch us, and fortunately we found it empty. Then began our real danger. My companion whispered to me :

“ Shall we lock the door behind us, or simply close it ? ”

“ Close it. We may be hard pressed, and have no time to find the lock.”

I saw that he inclined his head somewhat, as if in approval, and then the key was thrust into the keyhole, and the bolt went back silently. Lifting the heavy latch, De Swarte pushed the door open slowly. It rolled back on its hinges without a sound, and we stepped across the threshold. While this was being done, I loosened the sword in the scabbard which hung at my left side, beneath the robe, and having placed it in readiness for action, if need called for it, drew a keen dagger from my belt. De Swarte did the same as soon as the door was latched again, holding the weapon in his left hand, for he needed his right to use the master-key.

Turning to the left was a flight of steps, leading down into a damp vault. Arriving there, we looked around, and found ourselves in a great chamber, on either side of

which were doors so strong as to indicate how impossible it was for a prisoner to escape. The walls were full eighteen inches thick, and built of blocks of granite, held in their places by cement that appeared to be as solid and firm as the close-grained stone itself. By the aid of the lanterns, we saw that we were in a vaulted space some twenty feet high, into which, on either side the cells had been built, one row above another, the upper ones being approached by a flight of steps at the further end of the vault. Along the front of the upper cells ran a stone landing, which was railed in, so as to prevent those who passed along from falling over.

For a moment or two—although time was most precious—we halted, while my companion considered what the next step should be.

“I chanced once,” he whispered, “to stand at the door yonder, and saw some officials lead my wife into this place. I had but a momentary glance, for the door was shut in my face almost instantly. But the leader turned to the left, and obliquely, as if going to those middle cells. That was only last week, and I think she must be there now.”

“Then let us try it. Begin at this end, and go from cell to cell, until you find the right one.”

Without a word, De Swarte stepped quietly across the floor, and unlocked a strong door that would have defied the onslaught of the most vigorous axe-man. Within it—to my own surprise, but not to my companion’s—was another door, still stronger than the outer one. It was cased with iron, and had straps of the same metal across it, well bolted into the solid substance of the door. At a height such that an average-sized man could look in easily, was a grate, through which the jailers put the prisoner’s food.

This, too, we opened, and passed in. An exclamation of disappointment escaped from both of us, for the cell was empty. Yet, in the quick brief glance, I saw how dreadful imprisonment in such a place must be. The walls had but one opening, scarcely large enough for one's head to go through, and even that was barred transversely and horizontally, so that a prisoner's hand could barely pass. It was the window through which the light struggled in the day-time.

If this was a sample of the other cells, then, apart from the tortures, and the horror that comes when death is always in prospect, one knows not how nor when, the lot of those who fell into the clutches of the creatures of the Holy Office was unspeakably wretched. A dank and mouldy air came forth as Walter pushed the door open. Before us was a bed of soddened straw, and the rats scrambled away to their holes, disturbed by our entrance.

We did not linger, but after flashing our lights round, to be sure that we were not mistaken, we passed out, and went to the next cell. Here we saw an old man, who cried as we looked upon him :

“Have you come to bring me further torture?”

We would have stayed, but dared not. So, without a word, we went on. The next cell, and the next, brought us further disappointment, and I could hear Walter's sigh of despair, when he drew the doors after him, and went to the chamber beyond. Here, when the inner door was flung open, he threw a light into the cell, and it fell across the damp straw bed, showing the form of a woman, who, awakened by the opening of the door, sat up and looked upon us with eyes that could scarce endure the feeble rays of the horn-lantern after the dense blackness of her prison.

“Go!” she cried. “Why do you come here, in the dead of night, to torment me with your horrible proposals, and your threats of torture?”

Even in her misery, with her dishevelled hair, and startled look, her face was beautiful,—one that spoke of goodness and tenderness which might well claim the undying loyalty of a husband.

“Is this the woman?” I asked myself, as I gazed upon her. But I had the instant answer from my companion.

“It is my beloved! my wife! my poor imprisoned bird!” cried Walter, forgetful of everything save this, that before him on that bed, with all its noisome surroundings, lay the woman for whom he had undergone a punishment that made his life a long experience of hell upon earth.

“Oh, what is this?” cried Matilda de Swarte. “It is my husband’s voice, and yet it is one of those creatures of the devil who kneels at my side! Begone!”

Her voice thrilled with anger and surprise. Anger was in it, roused there by the thought that one of the iron-hearted tormentors should dare to over-reach her by a pretence such as this, and perhaps induce her by false endearments to make a confession that would bring her to still greater anguish than she had already endured. But surprise was in the tones as well. It was the hideous form of a Familiar that bent over her; yet it was her husband’s voice, or something like it, that she heard, unless her memory had befooled her during the long days of sorrow. It was like, and yet unlike. It was unlike, because it was muffled beneath the cowl. But was it not her husband after all? None had ever smoothed back her hair as he was doing even now, and whispering the old pet names to her.

“I am your Walter,—your husband!” said De Swarte.

“I am come to save you. Rouse yourself, Matilda, and come at once.”

“Ah! but I would see your face, and know for a very surety that you do not deceive me. Take off that cowl, and let me see your face.”

“Then be it so, dear one. See!” he exclaimed, a moment later, when, throwing back the black mask, he held the light so that it fell upon him.

“Oh, Walter! Walter! it is my husband!” she cried, in ecstasy, and flinging her arms about his neck. “Thank God you have come at last!” she said again, as she covered his face with kisses.

They said no more, for grief and joy mingled together, and robbed them both of speech.

I stood and watched them, and my sight was blurred with tears. But only for a little while. For the thought of our peril came to me, and brushing my hand across my eyes, I turned to gaze—for caution’s sake—into the great chamber outside the cell. Then horror filled me, and my blood ran cold.

“De Swarte,” I exclaimed, in a low tone, “beware! There are men outside!”

“What!” said he, in little more than a whisper, and he sprang to his feet. But there was something in that simple word which showed that now he would go from the cell with his wife, and then away to freedom, or die even where he stood.

Gazing, like myself, with startled eyes, he saw the gleam of light upon the floor, and heard the muffled tread of men who came slowly, and with irregular steps, as though they walked in a little bunch, and with no thought of any adventure before them. Then we heard a door fall together, as if one of those who came through it had given a careless push behind him.

It was too late to close the doors, for the first one of Matilda's cell had been drawn outward, and was wide open.

"Get your sword ready," I whispered. "We may have to fight for it."

"True," responded the other. "And now I thank God that ever I learnt to be an expert swordsman," he added.

As we spoke, I snatched at the hand of the woman, drew her up from her bed, and thrust her behind me in the corner of the cell that was hidden by the door that opened inwards. She would be safer there. In my left hand I held a dagger. With my right I grasped the handle of my sword, having placed the lantern on the floor. My companion, no less alert, did the same, and so we stood, eager and resolute. There was no time to formulate any plan. All that we could do was to act as circumstances determined, our main object being to get away from this horrid den. But not alone, nor even we two. The wife was to go with us, or none would go. That was the thought within our minds, and we expressed them hurriedly in whispers.

"Courage, my dear husband!" exclaimed Matilda. "Strike, if needs be, for we must get away from this dreadful place. Ah! would that I had a dagger, so that I might play my part!"

While she spoke thus, in a low voice, the men outside halted.

"What means this open door?" said one.

"It is the Secuestrador," whispered Walter. "I have a long score to pay that man."

"Speak," again cried the Secuestrador, a leading official of the Holy Office. "Whose duty was it to secure the doors?" And his voice was full of anger and apprehension for the safety of the prisoner that had been lodged within.

"It was mine," answered one of the company; "and I locked it securely when I brought the woman's food two hours gone by."

"But see! It is open now. Who but yourself could open it? Who has a key beyond the one you carry?"

"None but the Secretary, and his, as you are aware, is the master-key," was the man's response. "I know full well that both doors were securely fastened when I left them."

The man was yet replying when the Secuestrador tramped into the cell, followed by a Familiar, a soldier, and the turnkey. The Familiar flashed his lantern about him as he came, but all the Inquisitors had their backs towards us.

For a brief moment I thought it possible that we might have given them the slip, silently; then, having got outside the cell, we could have thrust the door upon them. De Swarte evidently thought the same, and laid his hand upon my arm. But it could not be. Seeing that the bed was empty, and noticing also the light from the lanterns on the ground behind them, the four men swung round, and brought themselves face to face with us.

"How now?" cried the Inquisitor, as he snatched the lantern from the turnkey, and held it up so that he might see us. His face was the picture of amazement when he recognised Walter, whose face was still uncovered. "Here is that accursed De Swarte himself, in his wife's cell. Who is the other? A Familiar! Seize them!"

The men made a dash at us, but had not counted on our being prepared for them. We had drawn our swords, and they, not seeing them, ran full on them, as we thrust out the keen weapons to meet their furious

dash. Throwing up their hands, and screaming with pain—no unusual sounds in that fearful place—the turnkey and the soldier, leaping back convulsively, and almost overturning the others as they did so, fell heavily to the floor.

For a moment there was an awful silence, during which Walter, with swift movement, stooped, snatched the two pistols from the soldier's belt, and pointing one at the Secuestrador, handed the other to his wife.

"Move but an inch, or speak one word," he exclaimed, "and I will fire. Your deaths would ill repay the tortures you have inflicted upon so many; but one victim at least, with God's help, shall escape you to-night."

The Inquisitor, who had come hither to add to the torments he had already visited upon the poor woman behind us, looked on, terror-stricken. He had been callous to the sufferings of others, and had gloried as, with the rest of the tormentors, he brought men, women, and even children, down to death's door in the extremity of pain. But now that a slight pull of the trigger might ensure his own death, he quailed. He would have spoken, but Walter sternly bade him be silent.

"Words will not avail you now," he exclaimed. "And if you speak, I swear that you shall die. Do you, my friend," he added, turning to me—and he was careful not to call me by my name, lest it should lead to my recognition, and bring future trouble upon me—"Do you, my friend, bind both those men, hand and foot. If they object, then we will kill them, for they shall not hinder us now."

Thrusting my sword back into the scabbard, and giving the dagger to Matilda de Swarte, I stepped forward. Taking the dead soldier's belt from his body,

I put it round the scowling Secuestrador's arms, and strapped them down tightly to his sides. Then I pulled off the Familiar's robe, tore it into stripes, and with these, bound the two men, hand and foot, and flung them both upon the bed where Walter's wife had spent so many hours of bodily and mental agony. Next, I gagged them, so that no shouts should bring any relief; and that done, with Matilda's aid, we stood ready for escape.

"Matilda, throw this about you, and be a Familiar for once," said her husband, loosening the robe that he had fastened about his loins. "It is the only way in which we shall get you safely through the streets."

"Whatever you will, Walter," she answered, and with our help she donned the garment, and stood before us waiting.

"Now come," said De Swarte, turning to quit the cell.

But the way was not yet clear. I had already got as far as the door, leading the way with my lantern, when I drew back suddenly. Coming into the vaulted chamber by the same entrance as that by which our prisoners had done, were two more officials of the Holy House. A happy inspiration came to me, and I called to them:

"Lock that door, and come hither quickly."

The thought had flashed into my mind, that if the door that communicated with the rest of the prison remained unfastened, still more, perhaps, would be coming, and we should fail to secure our escape.

"Go back," I whispered to my companions, while the new-comers turned to do as they were bid. "If they resist, kill them off-hand; but if possible, we will bind them like these others, and let them live."

Drawing back into the cell, we stood so as to keep the lights from showing what else that cell had to reveal;

and very shortly after, the other two Familiars entered. Scarcely had they done so, when I held the lantern in such a way that the two men saw the gleaming barrels of the two pistols held in readiness to fire at them by two who were robed like themselves.

“A word, and you die,” said I.

Bewildered at this strange reception, they gazed around them, and saw the Secuestrador and his companions on the floor, the two men lying silent where they had fallen. For a moment they hesitated, but I called them back to a full sense of their helplessness.

“A word, or a movement, and you die!” I said again, sternly. “Disrobe at once, for we are in haste.”

They still hesitated.

“Hasten, or we must needs kill you off-hand, even as those two men have been disposed of,” said I, decisively, and nodding my head in the direction of those who lay dead on the floor. We were growing impatient, and eager to be gone, for time was passing.

The Familiars shrugged their shoulders, pulled off their robes, and suffered us to bind them. Then, leaving them to fare as best they could, unable to call for aid, since they were gagged, like the others, we went out, locked the inner and the outer doors, and hastened to that one which led into the street. Hurrying out, and pulling the door after us, we stood waiting for a moment in the shadows. While Walter was looking up and down the street to see that we were unobserved, I fastened the door securely, and put the key into my pocket.

“Dear one, let us hasten,” said Walter, tenderly, as he held out his hand to his wife, who, now that she was free, knew not what to do,—whether to laugh or weep. For a few moments she was overpowered with her thoughts, and had it not been for the necessity for action, would

have broken down altogether. Happily the sense of danger, only partly overcome, steadied her; and taking the outstretched hand, she walked at her husband's side, sometimes going forward so eagerly as to outstrip him. Then she would say :

“Come, darling, lest they find us, and take us back to that hell I have been delivered from!”

Presently we slackened our speed, and walked with steady and deliberate pace; for the same patrol we had met before was returning. But no one spoke on either side. The ribald songs of the soldiers hushed as we approached, and many of the troopers crossed themselves. The honour, the property, and the life of every servant of the King — Spaniard or Netherlander — was in the hands of that Church which they supposed we served.

“Can you not take us to the harbour along some by-ways, Master Ursulens?” said Walter, when the patrol had passed on its way. For Matilda de Swarte, called upon to face such an ordeal as this, seemed well-nigh overwhelmed with terror, and the strain upon her overwrought nerves was already beginning to tell. She trembled like an aspen leaf, and began to sob. Poor woman! Who could wonder at it? Each soldier, and each successive watchman we should pass, might well appear to her—so lately released from durance—an emissary of the Inquisition, charged to arrest and take her back to misery.

“Come this way,” said I, in response to the question; and going on before them, I turned down a side street, walking on and on through many a dark alley, crossing the main streets, and diving down some narrower way, sword in hand, in readiness for self-defence, until we came into the broad open space, hard by the spot where

I had met the boat, and given Dorothy over to the care of the Beggars of the Sea.

A long, low sea-bird cry escaped my lips, followed by an answering call ; and going down the steps, preceded by Walter and his wife, I was soon seated by them in the boat, while the sailors pulled out to the fleet, that lay far back in the fog that yet hung—but less densely—over the waters. When Matilda stood upon the deck, where the old Admiral waited to bid her welcome, her strength forsook her, and she fell back unconscious into her husband's arms.

CHAPTER VII.

DOROTHY'S MESSAGE.

THE Admiral, having provisioned his ships, and secured a large supply of ammunition, had resolved to quit the harbour at the break of day, since he had heard that a Spanish convoy was in the English Channel, bringing stores for the use of the troops that were serving the Grand Commander in the Netherlands. This would be a glorious prize, and would possibly provide the Prince of Orange with much-needed money wherewith to prosecute the war.

I heard this from his lips with mingled feelings ; for, on the one hand, it meant that Dorothy and the other fugitives would soon be on their way to a safe refuge ; but, on the other, she, who was all the world to me, would be far away, and I should no longer enjoy her companionship.

Whether she herself had any serious thought concerning the parting from me, I could not say. She had always been kind and pleasant in her greetings ; in all our intercourse, in fact, ever since childhood, we had been on some such footing as brothers and sisters might be. But of her own will she had never shown me, by look or word, that I was more than friend to her. Once, indeed, when a stray word fell from my lips—I do not remember what

it was now—I chanced to glance in her direction, and her pale face flushed a rosy red, and her eyes betrayed more than she would have cared to own. But since I dared not speak to her just then, I did not seem to notice, and held my peace. It was the straw of hope on which I was prepared to throw my whole weight, now that I was struggling in the broad, deep sea of love.

As I turned away from the little group of which the Admiral formed the leading figure, I went to the deck-house where I was told that I should find Dorothy Fabry, who would not go to rest until she knew how the perilous venture had ended.

The door was opened by her own hand when I knocked.

“Oh, Caspar! how glad I am that you have come back safely,” she exclaimed, when she saw me; but how she looked I could not say, for her face was in the shadows. Yet my heart beat more quickly by reason of the tone in which she spoke these words. Was it possible that she cared for me as one she loved? I had come to the cabin simply to say good-bye, knowing that I should be more hungry in my heart than ever when I left her; but as she took my hand, and held it longer than she was wont to do, the old hope revived again.

“I have come to say good-bye, Dorothy.”

“Good-bye?” said she, with a gasp in her breath. “Good-bye? Surely not yet.” And her hand closed on mine with a convulsive grip that betrayed her deep emotion.

“Yes, Dorothy. The Admiral sails at daybreak, and will land you in England, on his way to intercept the Spanish fleet in the English Channel.”

But now her face was just beneath the lantern, that swung to and fro with the slow movement of the ship.

What I saw was a revelation to me, and made me bold to speak without delay. What it was that I saw I cannot tell; but as I gazed at her, and perceived that her tall and graceful form was trembling, her rich full lips quivering, and her blue eyes clouded with something more than regret, I dropped her hand, and took her in my arms instead.

"Dorothy, I must tell you, before you go away, how great my love is for you," I exclaimed. "I loved you in my boyhood; I have loved you ever since. And now that you are going from me, it is as if the light was going from my life."

Instead of drawing back, she nestled close up to me, and with her head upon my shoulder, rested there. There was no need for words; but, lest I should not understand, she looked up at last.

"My own beloved Caspar, I was but a child myself when I learned to love you. But oh, I love you,—yes, I love you beyond anything that words can tell, and until I have you with me once again, I shall know no ease of heart."

They were the sweetest words I had ever heard spoken, and as her eyes met mine, I stooped and covered her dear face with kisses.

"I will go with you, darling," I said, finding it still harder to leave her now.

"Oh no, Caspar, that must not be, much as I should love to have you with me. It would spoil your life, and jeopardise the safety of your dear ones. No, it must not be. Go back, Caspar. Tell my father from me that I love you as I love my own life, and that he must consent to our marriage as soon as opportunity affords. Kiss me, dear one, and go, or my own resolution will fail me."

How I bade her farewell, I do not know. It was

desperately hard to say good-bye. But it had to be done, and I left her. As I turned back to have one last look before I crossed the deck to quit the ship, I saw her kneel down upon the floor beside a locker, and resting her face in her hands, she wept without restraint. I would have gone back to her, but it would only add to the pain of parting. So, with dim eyes, and a heart charged with gladness, and yet bursting with sorrow—if such a mingling of feelings could ever be—I resolutely turned my back upon her, and walked away.

“Good-bye, Master de Swarte,” said I, as my late companion came forward to say farewell; and for a moment we stood with clasped hands. No other word was spoken, for our hearts were too full for speech. One more shake of the hand, and then I climbed down the ship’s side, and into the boat, which four sturdy Beggars pulled with lusty will to the quay-side.

There is no need to tell what my thoughts were during that ride on the waters, or as I walked to my home. I was so intent on what had transpired, that I forgot all caution, and walked on and on, heedless of any peril that might await me in being abroad at such an hour. I was only brought to myself by feeling a heavy hand upon my shoulder, and looking up, saw before me a Spanish watchman, who demanded my name. He had evidently been leaning against the wall of one of the houses, and tired with tramping the streets, had placed his light upon the stones,—a thing most fortunate for me, since he could not see my face.

“Who are you?” he exclaimed, as he took his hand away, and stooped to lift the lantern, so as to scrutinise my features. Then, realising my danger in case he should recognise me, I kicked the lantern vigorously with my foot, and thrusting against the Spaniard, as he

bent his body, hurled him furiously from me. His head came in contact with a doorstep, and he lay stunned and bleeding, whereat I was sorry. Yet, after all, self-preservation is a strong and reasonable principle with men, and I was no exception to the rest of my fellows in desiring safety. It was the Spaniard's hurt, in this case, or my almost certain death. For if I was tracked to my home, none can say what the consequences might have been. Strong and lusty as I was, discretion ruled when I saw that the man lay still, and without more delay I hastened homewards, alert against any further surprises.

The great Cathedral bell was sounding out the second hour of the morning, when, worn out and exhausted, I quietly entered my home. Bolting the door securely, I crossed the shop, and stumbled up the stairs, where I found my parents and Gertrude awaiting me, and showing signs of the intolerable anxiety that had possessed them during my absence.

"Is Dorothy safe?" was the question from each one of them, as I stood in the doorway of the living room.

"Yes, thank God, and others also," I answered. While I spoke, my mother threw her arms about my neck, and found it hard to keep from weeping, after the strain which such a long waiting entailed.

"Why did you wait up for me, mother?" said I, as I stooped and kissed her.

"How could I go to bed when my boy was in peril?" she asked, half indignantly. "Come and sit down by the fire, and tell us your adventures." So saying, she led me to the chair, first insisting, however, before I began my story, that I should partake of the steaming meal that Gertrude placed before me.

Astonishment was on each face, as I recounted what Walter de Swarte and I had done. And then fear

began to have ascendancy,—a natural fear, when one comes to think about it, lest even the dark robes of the Inquisition had not sufficed to hide my personality. For those creatures of the Holy Office appeared to be lynx-eyed. The common talk was, that they could peer through stone walls, were even able to divine men's thoughts, and recount words spoken in secret. Their keenness of perception was on a level with the refinement of torture which they knew so well how to practise.

“Have no fear, mother,” I answered, when she expressed her anxiety in this regard. “No one saw me. No one heard my voice, and the black robes, with that heavy cowl, hid me entirely. But see! I have come home in my ordinary garb.”

This reassured her, and not long after, with a weariness that made it toil even to undress, I lay down in my bed, and fell into a dreamless sleep.

It was late in the morning when I awoke, and then all trace of fatigue had gone. But even my waking moments did not dispel the idea that I ought to have been somewhere else. For a little while I forgot what had followed that desperate adventure in the vaulted chamber of the Holy House, and I looked around with a sense of some surprise to find myself in the room I knew so well. But I speedily drew my thoughts together, and called to mind the journey to the ship, and the interview with Dorothy. My heart bounded with joy at the delightful memory, and I jumped out of bed and dressed.

Now and again, however, a sense of depression stole over me. I was exulting at the thought that the one girl in all the world to me had confessed her love; but even now she would be on the waters, her ship

steering for a foreign shore. God only knew when, or how, I might have her soft hand in mine again. With no well-defined idea in my mind—simply a vague hope of seeing her again, and a very faint one at the best—I dressed quickly. Then, quitting the sleeping-chamber, I looked into the living-room, where my mother and Gertrude were busy with their household duties.

“I shall be back soon, mother,” I exclaimed; and, without waiting to hear any word from her, I hurried down the stairs into the street, and thence made my way to the harbour. One after another gave me a morning greeting, but I had neither eyes nor ears for anyone, but walked on quickly, and totally absorbed in my own concerns. When I drew up at last, there was no surprise in store for me, since I saw what I quite expected to see. Yet there was a deep regret as I looked out to the spot where the Beggars' fleet had been riding at anchor the day before. The great space of waters was void of war-ships now. The fleet had gone. I took no heed of the signs of life that were about me, the cries of men on board the various craft, the creaking of pulleys, as men hauled goods from ship to quay, or the dip of oars, and squeak of rowlocks, as boatmen pulled their craft to and fro. I was lonely in spite of my surroundings, and sat down disconsolately on a cask that was standing near.

But this was not manly, and what was more, people would begin to wonder at my queer mood, if I lingered on the quay like this. Drawing myself together, I went home again, and sat down in the fireplace, without a word for anyone. Now and again one or another spoke, but I took little heed until my mother put her arm about my neck, and whispered:

“Is she gone, my son?”

“ Yes, mother.”

“ Then have a bold face in the matter, Caspar, and continue to bear her absence as a stout young fellow should. Do not carry your heart on your sleeve, boy. Set to work, and occupy your hands, and that will be relief for your mind as well.” And she kissed me kindly.

“ You are right, mother,” said I, standing up, and shaking myself, as if to be rid of the devil of despondency. “ Let me have some breakfast, and I will show you how I can bear myself.”

A day of downright hard work did me good, the things I did, and the briskness with which I went through with everything, astonishing my father and the men. Work, as I proved that day, was a wonderful antidote for a fit of the blues. By sunset, tired as I was, I was another being altogether, devising a dozen plans whereby I might bring about a meeting with the absent one.

I was in no mood to spend a quiet evening at home, and I set about carrying out Dorothy's instructions. She had said to me, “ Tell my father from me, that I love you as I love my own life, and that he must consent to our union as soon as opportunity affords.”

“ He shall have her message within the next hour,” said I to myself, while dressing in a garb more fitted for a visit than the suit I had worn in the warehouse ; and when that was done, I set out for the Burgomaster's house, eager to obtain his sanction to a betrothal to his daughter.

But the evening was not to pass off as smoothly as I hoped. I had no doubt as to my eligibility, for, save that my father filled no public office in the city, having no relish for such a thing, we were of as good blood, and

possessed as great a store of wealth as the Burgomaster himself. My father, however, was not so ostentatious with his riches as most of the well-to-do citizens of the Netherlands. He was cautious, but never niggardly. His idea was, that if he abstained from display, he would escape many disagreeable attentions from the Spanish officials, who had a hankering after the tons of gold that were supposed to be stored away here and there in the cellars of the men of trade.

“If you want to be thought a crow, do not strut about like a peacock,” he used to say.

But the Burgomaster of Antwerp loved to display his wealth, and it was evident in the home, and in all his belongings. Even the cows on his farm outside the city were lodged in state, and the windows of their stables were curtained, while ranged about the walls were shelves which bore plants in full bloom, and here and there some singular specimens of pottery had their place.* More than once my father warned him that so much display was likely to make the Spaniards hungry for his gold, and cause him to make the acquaintance of the Council of Troubles, which was nothing less than a gold-squeezing machine, into which wealthy Netherlanders were too often flung. More than once I saw the Burgomaster's lips curl scornfully at my father's warning words.

Yet the magistrate knew well enough that my father's treasure-box was as heavy as his own, and that, I felt assured, would be in my favour. I was not, therefore, particularly anxious as to the issue of my interview; but it was the interview, I found, that was likely to be wanting.

* This may appear to be far-fetched; but it is deliberately stated by Reclus, that rich Yeomen occasionally provided their cowhouses with curtained windows, curious china, and rare flowers.

Martin opened the door in answer to the vigorous pull I gave to the bell; but by reason of his eagerness to hear what news I brought, he had no remonstrance ready for me on account of my noisy summons. As I stepped across the threshold, he whispered in my ear:

“How fares it with Mistress Dorothy?”

“She is on her way to England in Admiral Boisot’s ship,” I answered, quietly, lest the walls should hear the reply. I verily believe that our nerves had been so wrought upon, and we had got into such a hunted state, that we had the idea sometimes that the dull dead stones were spies upon our words and actions, for the minions of the Spanish King penetrated to the bottom of our greatest secrets, and knew all about our most guarded interviews.

“Thank God for that!” old Martin said, when he heard that the maiden was speedily sailing out of harm’s way. “Do you want the Burgomaster, Master Ursulens?”

“Yes, Martin. Is he at home?”

“He is in yonder room with Mistress Fabry,—and another,” he added, with a significant look which I did not fail to note.

“Who is it?” I asked, eagerly.

“A Spaniard of high degree, as you will see when you go in, Master Ursulens.”

I stamped my foot impatiently at this news; for how could I speak about Dorothy now? This man, whoever he should be, might out-stay me, and I could neither say where Dorothy was, nor set my mind at rest as to her father’s unwillingness to receive me some day as a son-in-law.”

“Beware, my young master,” said Martin, anxiously. “Whatever you do or say, give no offence, and show no

impatience. If you cannot find opportunity to speak alone with the Burgomaster, I will tell him what you have already told me."

"You are very kind, Martin; but I wanted to consult him on some matter of the first importance."

"Then call again, later on in the evening," the old servant responded.

"At any rate, Martin, having come so far, I will go in, and perhaps it will re-assure them, when they see my face."

"Then come this way, Master Ursulens."

So saying, he led the way to the state room, only used on rare occasions. The door stood close to the base of the white marble stairway, with its gilt baluster and crystal handrail, caught across with narrow bands of silver. As the porter flung the door open, I looked into a large apartment which I had often seen before, and truly palatial in its splendour. It was a saloon whose walls were lined with white stamped leather, touched up with gold, and the richly-ornamented ceiling was centred by a picture painted by Otto Venius, at that time the most renowned painter in Antwerp, and some day to be the master of the great Rubens. The chamber was brilliantly lighted with wax candles, that stood in crystal chandeliers, showing the many beautiful pictures that occupied the panels in the walls.

But what concerned me most was this visitor of whom Martin had spoken. Who was he? and what did he want there? When I saw him these questions rose in my mind again, with still greater point, and with no small jealousy. Mistress Fabry sat with her back to me, and the Burgomaster, not far away, was also seated so that his face was turned towards the fire that blazed on the hearth. They looked up when I was announced;

but my eyes were rather for the gay Spaniard, who lounged in a chair on the farther side of the fire-place, where the light fell full upon him.

The greeting was a warm one, and Van der Fabry introduced me to the stranger, who bowed distantly, but in such a way as to give no offence to his host and hostess.

“And how have you fared since last we saw you, Master Caspar?” asked the master of the house, with a meaning glance, and at the same time a cautious one, which I understood at once.

“Well, Master Fabry, in every particular,” I responded.

The answer was short, but I saw that it was sufficient. Mistress Fabry, who could not disguise the anxious look upon her face, appeared relieved, and sank back into her chair with a smile. And then we all sat down and talked.

But this Spaniard.

The Burgomaster had called him Don Cristobal de la Fuente, and I knew therefore that he was a nephew of Don Luis de Requesens, the Grand Commander. Having in mind all that I had gone through during the last few hours, a sense of great discomfort came upon me, on finding myself in the company of one who was able—if he only knew what I had done—to order my immediate arrest. But how could he know anything? I asked myself. What had been done had been under cover of dense darkness, and in the guise of a Familiar. He could not possibly know, I reasoned, and so sat down with all the ease I could command.

As the conversation went on, I looked at him, and found him a Spaniard of the bluest blood, and—when he thought himself unobserved—scornful in his glances,

not merely at me, but at those who were treating him as an honoured guest. This much I was bound to confess,—that he was as handsome a Spaniard as I had ever seen, with an air of breeding that bespoke the grandee, even had I not heard his name. His dress was irreproachable, being in the highest fashion. The surcoat of black velvet had sleeves slashed with satin, and was turned back with fur. This enabled me to see his doublet, which was of Genoese velvet, richly jewelled, and underneath again was a soft white shirt of silk. His toque, or cap, which lay beside him on the rich Brussels carpet, was of dark-blue velvet. His hose was white silk, and on his feet were long-pointed and embroidered shoes. The long gold-handled rapier at his side, and the gold chain about his neck, completed his equipment.

What a contrast this was to my own habiliments. They were those which befitted the son of a wealthy and influential citizen. I was clothed in a sleeved doublet of light-brown cloth. Over this was a jerkin of the same material, which buttoned from the neck down to the waist. From thence downwards I had donned a pair of hose made of buckskin, these fitting the legs and thighs closely, while on the feet were stout shoes of tan leather. About the waist was an embroidered girdle,—the gift of my sister Gertrude, and to this was fastened a small wallet of leather, in which I carried such money and articles as I thought likely to be useful whenever I went to and fro in Antwerp.

At my side I carried a sword that had cost my father a considerable sum; for, being a fine swordsman, I had begged him to buy me one that I had seen in a shop, and which had taken my fancy. In my hand, as I entered the room, I carried a cap of velvet, which

served to lift me from the common rank, and stamped me as a well-to-do merchant's son. The very possession of it gained some respect for me when I rode abroad, whereas I might have received many hard words. Blows, I make bold to say, were scarcely likely to be given to such a stout young fellow as I was, unless the odds were heavy, for I looked capable of giving a good account of myself, if any one should venture to molest me.

Perhaps Don Cristobal thought this himself, for once I caught him looking at me furtively; but I did not heed his stolen glances, any more than I suffered myself to be depressed in any way because I displayed such a contrast in the matter of dress, and the like. If his heart was stout, mine was none the less so; and after all, he was one, who, if he chose to be insolent, might even yet come to know that I could take my part with my hands, if not with my tongue.

That was something in a time when deeds went farther than words.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNWILLING CONSENT.

I STAYED on and on, but Don Cristobal showed no sign of departure. Finding that I had said sufficient to set the minds of Dorothy's parents at rest, as to any immediate danger, I rose and took my leave; and this much was plain to me, that there was no love lost between this Spanish don and me.

As I passed out into the street, having first told Martin to say in private that I would come again, and tell the Burgomaster all about his daughter, I said to myself:

“That gay Spaniard and I will do well not to come too often into each other's company.”

While I spoke, I drew out my sword, and looked at it carefully, standing, when doing so, in a low archway, where a smoking lantern hung. I found myself wondering, as I resumed my journey homewards, what sort of swordsman he might be. Not that I had any fears, for I learnt of one of the best masters, and was able even to better my instructor in a bout.

The great bell struck the hour of eight when I reached our own doorstep, and I entered the house, intending to spend an evening at home. Yet I was so restless, that when it drew near to ten, I made up my

mind to try once more to find the Burgomaster, and deliver Dorothy's message. The idea had come to me—why, I cannot say, but strange notions spring up at times within one, and without any apparent reason; perhaps it was intuition—but the idea had come to me, that this don was looking after Dorothy, having an eye, not merely to her beauty, but to her wealth. If it were so, I would circumvent him.

Emboldened by my resolution not to be baulked in this way, I started at once, going cautiously along the streets, and finally found myself at the door of Dorothy's home.

"Is the Burgomaster disengaged, Martin?" was my eager question.

"Yes, Master Caspar. That Spanish peacock only went away a few minutes since."

I smiled at the old man's expression of dislike, for it fell in with my own feelings.

"Then I will go to your master at once," said I; and so saying, I crossed the hall, and entered the room to which Martin had pointed.

"Caspar!" exclaimed the Burgomaster, who was alone. "What brings you here?" And he stood on his feet, his face pallid, and being a Catholic, crossed himself in haste, which showed that my visit had disturbed him. "Do you bring me bad news about Dorothy?"

"No, Van der Fabry. I bring the best of news, for she is safe," was my quick reply. Stern as he was, he dearly loved his child, and I was eager to set his mind at rest. "Shall I tell you the story?" I added.

"Yes, I pray you do. But stay, I will go to Mistress Fabry, and bid her come and hear the story also."

A few minutes later, Dorothy's mother came into the

room with her husband. Although she had begun to undress for the night, the longing to hear news of her daughter drove everything else from her mind, and throwing her dressing-gown about her, she came down in haste, and bade me tell her quickly all I knew. I told how I had decoyed the Inquisitors on board the Beggars' flagship, and how, too, I had been able to find Dorothy a refuge with the Admiral. But as to the rescue of Matilda de Swarte, and her husband's story, I was silent; and many a time since then have I been glad that I was thus far discreet.

When I had finished, Mistress Fabry came to me, and flinging her arms about my neck, kissed me again, and yet again, thanking me with her whole soul for what I had done. Even the imperturbable Burgomaster shook my hand, and bade me say what he could do for me in return for the great service I had rendered.

Here was my opportunity, and rising to my feet, I began to plead my cause. I confessed my love, and gave them Dorothy's message. Then I asked their consent to wed their daughter, whensoever a favourable time should come.

"Who should have her, and be more worthy of her?" cried the mother, taking my hand. "Caspar, you shall be my son in very deed, for my child could not hope for a better husband."

"Softly, Margaret," said the Burgomaster, as if to check his wife's impulsive response to my pleading "How do we know that there may not be a better match in store for her, and that one of a better stock may desire her?"

"A better match!" she exclaimed, taking my part, and putting out her hand, as if to hold me back in my chair. For the suggestion that I did not come of a

stock good enough to mate with one of the Burgomaster's family angered me; and with my face flushing with indignation, I was about to spring to my feet, and express my resentment.

"Yes, a better, Margaret," the Burgomaster rejoined, with a meaning glance at his wife.

"Nonsense, my husband," she answered, with some asperity. "Where could you find anyone better than an Ursulens? Their blood is as pure as ours, and their wealth is as great, though they make but little show; and what is better still, the young man has a brave heart, and is a Netherlander. Would you have my child wedded to one of those sinister-souled Spaniards, that would marry her for her wealth alone, and when that was secure, hand her over to the tormentors of the Holy House?"

I looked from one to the other, and firm-minded as the father was, I saw, by the mother's face, that she was strong enough to win the cause for me, if the matter resolved itself into one of mere prejudice. But there was more. At that mention of a possible Spanish husband, I thought that Van der Fabry started, and looked confused.

"But," said he, in response to his wife's words, "would you say that every young man who chances to do our daughter some little service must needs have a claim upon her hand?"

The Burgomaster spoke quietly enough, but I saw that he was angry, and even the smile on his face was forced, and at best was only sour.

"Do not talk nonsense, Matthew," answered Mistress Fabry, impatiently. "Do you call it small service to snatch our child from the clutches of those fiends of the Inquisition? Was it a small service for Caspar

Ursulens to risk his own life on her behalf? Why, sir, even you, Burgomaster though you are, could not stand between your daughter and the torture-chamber, and you know it!" And as she spoke, she rose to her feet, and her eyes flashed with indignation, to think that her husband should fail to recognise how great her child's peril had been.

The magistrate looked at his wife, who put her hand on my shoulder, as if to show how much in earnest she was.

"Matthew, put aside all scruples about a 'better match' as you call it, and take the boy's hand. He has fairly won Dorothy, and deserves her. She loves him well, I wot, for I have often seen the flush upon her face when she heard Caspar's footstep, to say nothing of her parting message. Come, Matthew, my husband, be generous," she added, dropping her quick-spoken tone for one of quiet persuasion. "Tell Caspar that you will give your daughter to him!"

With no small reluctance the Burgomaster came forward, and took my hand.

"I do not like such rash haste as this. The child may change her mind. A hundred things may happen. But since you will both have it so, here is my hand upon the compact. Be sure when you take my daughter for your wife, that you prove worthy of her."

Setting aside all thought of the ungracious manner, and the implied doubts, I took the outstretched hand, and bending low over it, answered:

"So long as I have life, and a strong arm, I will shelter your daughter from all ill. If needs be, I will die for her."

No more was said, for the Burgomaster went from the room. Mistress Fabry, whispering to me to keep a

brave heart, kissed me once more, and then I left her.

I little thought as I went home, exulting in my good fortune, that the unwilling consent, almost wrung from the Burgomaster, was to bring me sorrow, and unheard-of adventures. It was well for me that the future was veiled. Had some hand drawn back the heavy curtain, and suffered me to look upon the actual picture of my future, I should have lost courage, and in place of exultation, should have groaned in sheer despair. But as it was, I went to bed and spent a sleepless night, not one hour of which was tedious. Love was active in mapping out the coming days, foolishly forgetful of the old saying which experience has so often proved to be cruelly true: "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

CHAPTER IX.

DON CRISTOBAL'S BLOW.

Two months went by, during which time the affairs of the Netherlanders pursued their wonted way, the tyranny growing no less, but happily becoming no worse. Plunging into business in order to kill the spirit of impatience, I passed the days as well as I could. But whenever I called at the Burgomaster's house, I felt chilled and discouraged with the reception I had at his hand. Mistress Fabry was as a mother to me, and it was pleasant to see the smile she gave me, when I entered her workroom to ask whether she had received any news from Dorothy. She shook her head each time, and the smile died out. Still, she was a woman with a wonderful amount of pluck, and she smiled again, simply saying :

“It will come in due time, Caspar.”

But the Burgomaster's coldness increased, and he appeared to me, as he did to the men of Antwerp in general, austere and unfamiliar. One had a right—as a prospective son-in-law—to expect better treatment than that; and it was as much as I could do to keep from saying so.

Once or twice I met Don Cristobal de la Fuente there, and his greeting was always courteous; but beneath it

I detected something sinister, and felt that his pleasant words had a smack of sarcasm in them. Anxious to put the best construction upon this, I pretended to myself that it was only natural that a Spaniard should hold a Netherlander in some contempt. But as surely as such a thought as that came, my pride rose, and I felt that I should like to take this Grandee aside, and let him find out what a Netherlander could do in the way of fighting.

One night I came away dissatisfied with the courtesy which Van der Fabry showed this man, and the open brusqueness he displayed towards myself. More than once I saw an evil smile on Don Cristobal's face by reason of these rebuffs, and at last it was so apparent, that Mistress Fabry looked up quickly to see whether I had noticed the rudeness. My face flushed with anger; but for her sake I kept my indignation within bounds. When I left, I bowed to the two men, and kissed her hand; but she rose, and came after me into the hall.

"Do not be troubled, Caspar. I cannot understand why my husband is so unfriendly towards you. I fear that he is worried at the lack of news from Dorothy; but as for that Spaniard, God only knows how I distrust him."

And she kissed me, and let me go.

I had not gone far on my way home, before I heard footsteps behind me, and although I was walking swiftly, the foot-passenger, whoever he was, gained considerably, until he actually drew level with me. As he did so, the light streaming from a lamp in a doorway close by fell upon us both, and when I turned to look I found myself face to face with Don Cristobal.

Seeing who it was, I deliberately turned my back upon him, but he laid his hand upon my shoulder, as if

to force me back again to look him in the face. The touch was enough, and I swung round, with hot anger in my heart.

"How dare you lay hands on me, Don Cristobal?" I cried.

"Softly, Master Ursulens. You ask one question, and I ask another, and I pray you answer it. What is your business at the Burgomaster's house?"

I saw by the dim light that the smile I so hated had gone: but there was a vindictive look upon the don's face,—a look that meant anything that was bad,—insolence, and I know not what besides.

"What is it to you?" I exclaimed, hotly. "Am I to be compelled to answer the impertinent questions of every chance comer in the street?"

And so saying, I again turned my back upon him, and walked away.

Whether my great size made him doubt his ability to cope with me, I do not know; but for a moment he hesitated, and stood still where I left him. Then I suppose his Spanish pride bestirred him, and he came after me again. This time I waited for him.

"Now, Sir Spaniard," said I sternly, as he overtook me, "have your say, and have done with it."

"That, indeed, I mean to do," he answered. "What is your business at the Burgomaster's house?"

I looked at him keenly, bending forward, as if to read his face, and penetrate into his motive.

"Well, Don Cristobal, since you seem to have a great wish to know, I will tell you this.—It is business that concerns the Burgomaster and myself. Now, are you satisfied?"

"Master Ursulens, I warn you that I will not be trifled with. You shall tell me."

“Then, since you are resolute on your side, so let me express my own resolution to you. When it pleases me, I will tell you, and not before. So fare you well.”

Before I could move, he laid a hand on my arm, and in a sharp, angry tone, exclaimed :

“You are hanging about the Burgomaster’s palace to find a chance to woo the Mistress Dorothy. She will never be yours. She is to be mine !”

At these words my self-restraint burst all its bounds, even as the ocean waters have overwhelmed the dykes, and flooded the fields of Holland at times. Without waiting to think of consequences, I lifted up my fist, and with one stinging blow, struck him to the ground. His head came against the curbstone with a sickening crash, and without a groan he turned on his side, and lay still and senseless. He had trifled with me, and interfered in my love ; so I turned away, and left him lying there.

Next day it was common talk in Antwerp, that Don Cristobal had been found lying in the Southern-strasse, senseless and bleeding, and that he still lay unconscious on the bed to which the watchmen had carried him. It was also said that the Grand Commander, who had returned to Antwerp the night before, was furious when he heard how his kinsman had been treated, and vowed vengeance on the guilty one, if he could be found. When this was told, a shiver passed through me, for I could readily imagine what Spanish vengeance meant. Yet I dared to think that Don Cristobal would prefer to settle with me personally, since he would scarcely like it to be known that he had quarrelled with me concerning the daughter of a Netherlander.

I kept silence, therefore, and went about with as unconcerned an air as possible, not even taking Gertrude into my confidence.

The Spanish don, however, had not yet done with me, and when he was sufficiently recovered, he took good care to let me know it. The first time he went to see the Burgomaster, he found me at the palace, and gave me greeting with a nonchalance that gave no token to those present of our differences. After remaining a while, he took his leave. It must have been a quarter-of-an-hour later when I also went away, and as the door closed behind me, and I found myself in the street, someone walked up to me. It was Don Cristobal.

"Master Ursulens," said he, in a voice that had lost its old aggravating calmness, but betokened the hot Spanish spirit instead, "the last time we were together we quarrelled. So far I have suffered most: but I thought I would stay to tell you this, that the blow you gave me will be richly atoned for before I have done with you."

"So you threaten me, Don Cristobal?" I responded, growing cool, in proportion to his own heat. "Then be sure of this, that I shall know how to defend myself."

"Ha! so you think! But remember, Master Ursulens, what I have said. You have had your turn. Mine will come, and it will more than make amends for the past."

"Very well, Don Cristobal. Be it as you say; but bethink you, I shall not be found asleep when the time comes."

"Fool!" he exclaimed. "You little know how the blow will fall!"

And so saying, he left me.

He was right, and the blow was one that crushed me utterly. My own heart bled, but, alas! so did the hearts of others. Not only so, it was a blow that would be a long while healing.

It came two days later, so that Don Cristobal lost but little time.

My father and I were in the shop in the evening, looking over some of the stock after the men were gone home, and we were doing this so that it might be known to us what new things were needed. Slowly coming down the street was the tramp of men, yet we did not take much heed, for such a sound was common. If we thought about it at all, we should merely suppose that it was the guard passing by, to change at the city-gate not far away. But my father, who was about to speak, looked up suddenly, the words hanging on his open lips.

"They have stopped outside, Caspar," said he, presently.

There was a startled look upon his pallid face, and a tremor in his voice. I think I must not have looked less disturbed, for my face seemed to be drawn tight and rigid, and the packet of cloth that was in my hand trembled so, that I laid it on the counter.

But we had little time to think, for there came a loud knocking, and then a voice :

"Open in the King's name !"

"Go to the door, Caspar," said my father, as I leant against the counter, unsteadied by this evening summons. Was I, at last, to receive the blow which Don Cristobal had threatened ?

"God forbid !" I muttered to myself, as I went across the shop, and, drawing the bolt, drew open the door.

Instantly some one stepped across the threshold—a splendid señor, with glittering green eyes, round cheeks, and flowing beard, and clad in cramoisy velvet. The light from the shop showed up the men who were behind him—the archers and halberdiers of the city guard.

"What is your will, señor?" exclaimed my father, standing with one hand upon the counter, and the other thrust into his vest, as if to still his beating heart.

"I wish to speak with Master Goswyn Ursulens," was the sharp, imperative reply.

"Then I am he," was the nervous response. "What may your business be?"

"I am here, Master Ursulens, to bid you appear before the Council of Troubles, to answer certain charges that have been laid against you. You must come with me, and that without delay."

My father drew himself together, conscious of his innocence of any crime, either against the State or the Church. Then, with a dignity that sat so well on him, and caused me to be proud of him, he demanded to see the warrant that gave this officer the right to arrest him.

"It is here, Master Ursulens," was the quick rejoinder of the Spaniard, who drew from his bosom a parchment from which a heavy seal dangled. "This is the seal of the Grand Commander, as you may see for yourself; so that there can be little doubt, I think, as to my authority," the officer added, with a sour smile. Verily these Spaniards took a grim delight in the discomfiture of the Netherlanders.

My father took the warrant in his hand, and having gazed upon it for a moment or two, laid it down on the counter, and spoke quietly:

"This is of no avail, señor. It is drawn up in Spanish, and no Netherlander, according to our laws, should be arrested on a warrant written in a foreign tongue."

"That is nothing to me, Master Ursulens," the officer exclaimed roughly, his scant courtesy having vanished completely on hearing this objection. "I have been sent hither, and you must needs accompany me, and

that without delay. I need scarcely say that it will be better for you to yield quietly," he added, with somewhat of a menace in his tone, and a glance towards the open door, where the soldiers were standing.

"Then be it so," answered my father, taking up his velvet cap. "But the arrest is iniquitous, señor. The warrant sets forth no crime, and therefore is worthless."

"Pardon me, it is worthless when there is no power behind it," said the officer with a sneer. And that ended all objections. It was all too true, for brute force alone crushed us all, since law and privilege went for naught.

"Do not tell your mother, Caspar, till I am gone," said my father, his face pale and bloodless, and his lips quivering. "I would not say farewell to her; it would give her too much pain." Then, grasping me by the hand warmly, he turned to the Spaniard and said: "I am ready; lead the way."

Before I had time to realise it, he was gone. Going to the open door, I looked up the darkening street, and watched the procession slowly taking its way to the place where the Council of Troubles met.

As I gazed after them my heart felt like bursting, the blood rushed to my head, and the sweat came out in great drops on my brow. Had they been drops of blood I could not have wondered, so intense was my agony of heart,—so awful was this blow that had come upon me and mine. Oh, how I cursed my own mad pride and indiscretion, that had gone to raise another enemy, when already we had too many. Would it suffice, I thought, as I stood gazing up the street, but seeing nothing—would it suffice if I sought out Don Cristobal, and craved his pardon, and accepted his own terms, if only he would save my father?—aye, even if he would sub-

stitute my name on the warrant, for the one that already stood there?

But no! How could one stoop so to a Spaniard? If my father knew all, and heard of the wild thought that had come to me, he would be the first to bid me crush it out at once, as unworthy of his son. Drawing back at last, I closed the door, and barred it. Then going upstairs, I told my mother and Gertrude what had happened.

I have not courage, even now, to tell how they received the dreadful news. It is better left untold.

The Council of Troubles was an invention of the infamous Duke of Alva, and while it was ostensibly established to administer justice, it was in reality a cruel money-squeezer—a tribunal before which men were brought who were known to possess wealth, and there having been tried in an absolutely one-sided manner and often after the testimony of hired witnesses, were fined up to the point of ruin, although they had committed no crime. The surrender of everything was the price of liberty, and many a man who went out of his house opulent and influential, came from the Council Chamber where the judges sat, little better off than the beggar who sat at some street corner and begged for alms.

Through the long week that passed, during which we could obtain no news, we thought over in our minds all the possible charges that could be made against my father, and failed to fix on one that could be justly maintained. As a citizen, there was not one in Antwerp more law-abiding. When any levy had been made, he responded promptly, although unwilling—which was perfectly natural. He was cautious in his speech, and in every sense kept free of all possible accusation of

actions of a treasonable character. As for his religious attitude, it was, from the Spanish standpoint, beyond reproach, for my father was a good Catholic, and therefore could never be charged with having harboured or aided Protestant preachers, or with having sympathised with those who had destroyed the Catholic churches. As for having taken part in what the Spaniards called "treasonable disorders," he was known by the authorities to have advised a more peaceable course altogether. Indeed, the Duke of Alva, who was never wont to praise men—Netherlanders especially—had expressed a wish that there were more citizens in Antwerp like Master Ursulens.

Such considerations only served to make me more and more miserable, and to curse myself without restraint, since I was forced to the conclusion that my father was the scapegoat of my own indiscretion.

Some eight days had gone when a messenger, accompanied by a score of archers, and a lumbering waggon, came from the Blood Council, as this tribunal was justly called by the people of the Netherlands. This man bore in his hand a document addressed to my mother, and a letter also from my father. The document conveyed the decision of the Court, and an order that the bearer was to be paid the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand ryksdaalers,* or their equivalent, that being the amount of the fine which was to secure my father's liberty.

We turned pale as we read this, and the letter that came with it gave us no hope. The money must be paid at once, my father wrote, since the alternative to instant payment was death at the hangman's hand and confiscation of everything to follow.

* A ryksdaaler = 4s. 2d.

"Where is the money?" I asked, my heart like lead, and my body as limp as though all the life had left me.

"In the cellar, my son," was my mother's answer. "Come, Master Spaniard, and see for yourself what load your men must carry."

So saying, she led the way down some steps behind the stairs. I had never known of this place, for the trap-door which she raised was in a dark corner that was always filled with lumber. In the cellar lay a great brass-bound chest, bearing my father's name in letters of the same metal on the cover.

"There is my husband's wealth, but whether it contains sufficient to satisfy the Council of Troubles I do not know. I can only pray that it may."

So said my mother, who knelt down by the side of the strong box, and drawing a key from her bosom, placed it in the lock, and presently threw back the lid, disclosing long rolls of coin, wrapped in paper.

"Now, sir messenger," she exclaimed, in a sharp tone, "bend your knees if you dare to spoil your dignity, and look into this treasure-box. The demand is for two hundred and fifty thousand silver ryksdaalers, or their equivalent. Count them, if there be so many, but see that you take no more. The Council has fixed its price, but I am in no mood to pay more than it demands."

The Spaniard gazed at her with a look that nearly set me laughing, and even my mother's face had a wan smile upon it. To kneel and count such a sum of money, and on those bare stones too,—it struck the man as simply preposterous.

"Why, mistress, it will take me a week to get through such a task as counting a quarter of a million of coins," he exclaimed, hopelessly; and I found it hard not to laugh outright at his discomfiture.

“And you would be hungry, meanwhile, señor,” said my mother, provokingly. “But what care I for that? You have to take back so much money. Now count it, and speedily, for I want to get back to my household duties; and more than that, I want my husband.”

The Spaniard knelt down, and opened one of the packages, and counted out the coins laboriously. It was evident that he was not used to handling money in great quantities, and when my mother had worried him sufficiently, she desisted, and came to his assistance.

“I will help you, señor, for I want you to be gone. Here are precious stones in these packages, and their value is set forth on the coverings. Set these aside, and let your masters appraise their value at their leisure. Now for the coins. Each of these rolls holds two hundred and fifty ryksdaalers, or their equivalents, and labelled thus.” And she showed the official the amount marked on the rolls in ink. “The large ones are in silver, the small ones are golden ducats. Call each of them at their proper value, thus—four rolls of gold make the equivalent of a thousand ryksdaalers. That done you can calculate for yourself.”

The man, taking my mother's suggestion, opened one of the packets at hazard, and counted its contents; and since they answered to the amount named outside, he consented to consider them all as correct, adding, however, that the money would be counted by his masters, as soon as he should carry it to them. In an hour, therefore, he had set aside the amount demanded—precious stones, gold and silver—and rose to his feet, stiff with such long kneeling. But my heart was sick when I looked into the chest. A few rolls only remained there of all my father's great store of wealth. The quarter-million of ryksdaalers once handed over to the

Council of Troubles, my father, one of the most wealthy men of Antwerp, would have but two thousand left to keep the wolf from a door within which there had once been such plenty.

"Get this money away at once!" cried my mother, with a sudden access of passion, such as I had never seen before. "Here, Sir Spaniard, I take out what belongs to me"; and she stooped and took the remaining rolls into her own hands. "Pile all that money into the chest, call down your men, and let them carry it away!" And with an anger I had not thought possible to her, she stamped her feet upon the floor.

The man looked up with a sullen face, and it brought my mother to her senses. She calmed down instantly, for she saw that she had gone too far. A word from this man would suffice to immure her in one of the dungeons of the State Prison, or worse, in the Holy House, and she remembered this.

She looked at the Spaniard; then at the rolls of ducats in her hands.

"Pardon me, señor," she said, in a broken voice. "Can you wonder at my anger, when from wealth you bring us down to poverty? See! take this and think no more of my behaviour to you." So saying, she handed him a small roll of gold, retaining the others for herself.

With a word of thanks for such an unexpected gift, the man took the money, and thrust it into the pocket of his doublet. No doubt he was well satisfied with the outcome of my mother's anger.

"I will have this chest carried up to the shop, mistress," he said. "Then the men can carry up the money, for filled like this, it is too heavy to take up such narrow stairs."

“As you will,” was the quiet response.

And half-an-hour later the waggon lumbered up the Nordenstrasse, surrounded by the archers who guarded the treasure that had taken so many years to gather.

As the last man turned the corner of the street, my mother, who had been looking out of the window, came to the table, and sitting there, threw her arms across it. Bending down in the attitude of despair, she wept until she could weep no more; and nothing that Gertrude and I could say or do would comfort her. She did not move until, as the evening drew on, she heard a familiar step upon the stairs. Then she raised her head and listened. Springing to her feet with a cry of joy, in such startling contrast to her woe, she ran to the door.

“My husband! my husband!” she cried. Ah! dear one, thou art more to me than all our wealth!” And she buried her face in my father’s bosom, and told him again, and yet again, how she would help him start in the world once more.

The blow which Don Cristobal had threatened had fallen with awful force upon us, and it pained me more than if he had sent his sword into my body. It left, as I have already said, a wound that might well be a long time healing.

CHAPTER X.

THE BURGOMASTER AND HIS PROMISE.

THE day following, I went to see the Burgomaster, thinking that he might not have heard of my altered fortunes, and to assure him, that since he had consented that I should some day marry his daughter—a tardy consent as I have shown, and an ungracious one as well,—I would go out into the world, and find the means to maintain her.

As Martin threw open the door, he started, and turned pale; then stood, and with a sad look upon his face, barred the way.

“I am sorry, Master Caspar, to hinder you, but the Burgomaster said that I was to close the door against you.”

“What!” I cried, incredulously. “Where is Van der Fabry?”

“He is in the parlour yonder. But do not press me,” he added, when I made as though I would pass in. “I have received the strictest orders, and dare not disobey.”

“I care not, my good Martin,” I answered, angry at this rebuff, not with the man, but with the master, who had put such a slight upon me. “I will see him, even if I have to force my way in; so do not withstand me, for I will not be restrained.”

Still the old man did not move, although I know that it pained him to be obliged to hinder me.

"I dare not let you enter," he cried.

"But I *will* enter!" I answered vehemently; and taking the old man's outstretched hands, held up to keep me out, I pressed him back with as much gentleness as possible, into the seat which he usually occupied in the hall, when waiting to answer the summons of those who called at the palace.

"Martin," I said kindly, in spite of my indignation, "it is your duty, and I would not hurt you. But no one in Antwerp shall prevent my seeing the Burgo-master to-day."

So saying, I left him where he sat, not unwillingly, and crossed the hall to the door, where Martin said that Van der Fabry was sitting.

Knocking, I heard the summons to enter, and a moment later stood in the open doorway. Van der Fabry was bending over some papers, and did not look up at once, so that I had time to go into the room, and close the door after me. But when he saw who his visitor was, he sprang to his feet with what sounded like an oath, and glared at me furiously.

"What brings you here?" he cried. I gave orders that you were not to be admitted."

"You did," I answered, quietly; for somehow this man's anger quieted me, and made me calm. Why it should be so, I do not know, but there is the simple fact — he was savagely angry, and I found myself standing cool and collected before him, ready to plead my cause, if needs be, or, if circumstances demanded it, to defend my honour.

"You did," I said, a second time, while he looked at

me, wondering at my attitude. "I came to see you, to tell you how the world has fared with me——"

"I know all about it!" he interrupted.

"Yes, Van der Fabry, I think you must have heard of it, since Martin told me that he had imperative instructions to refuse me admission if I called. It was strange conduct for one to display towards the son of an honoured citizen, and the promised husband of your daughter!"

"Hold!" he cried, his face red with rage, as I spoke those last words. "Whatever you may have been a few days ago, you are no longer the promised husband of my daughter. I will not have my child wedded to a scurvy beggar!"

This was an intolerable insult, and had it been any other man in Antwerp who had dared to speak to me like that, I would have struck him to the ground. But this was Dorothy's father, and it would have grieved her to hear that I had laid hands upon him.

"You call me a scurvy beggar! Me! a young man with as good blood in my veins as ever ran in yours," I answered, unable to keep back the hot words.

"What else are you, I would crave to know?" he asked, with a sneer. "Think you I would suffer my daughter to marry a man who has no more to boast of than yonder petty trader, calling his wares to passers-by?" And he pointed to the busy street.

"It may be so at present, Master Fabry," said I, striving to be calm, in face of this man's cruelty and insult. "But have I not a strong arm, and fine skill as a swordsman, and a brave heart?"

"That may be," he answered. "But you shall not marry my daughter. I have already promised her to another."

At this I turned sick, and for a moment a feeling of faintness came upon me, Was I indeed to lose Dorothy, and was she to become the wife of another? It did not occur to me at the moment that she must needs be consulted on so grave a point as this, and that her independent spirit would brook no dictation in the matter of the choice of husband. All that I could think of was, that fathers did dispose of their daughters' hands, and expected a tame compliance.

I must have betrayed my confusion, for the Burgomaster added—as though it pleased him to increase my pain :

“ Yes, Master Caspar Ursulens, my daughter is promised to another.”

“ But she has promised to be my wife,” I exclaimed, “ and she will be as good as her word.”

“ What! and marry the son of a penniless burgher, when she may wed the kinsman of the Grand Commander ? ”

My heart beat painfully. Now I saw how that cynical Spaniard had supplanted me, and for a while the news daunted me. But before I left the Burgomaster, I sought to give him something to think about.

“ Van der Fabry, you are a Netherlander, and the Burgomaster of Antwerp to boot. What, think you, will your countrymen say, when they know that you are selling your daughter to a Spaniard? They will cry shame on you. They will declare that you are another Judas. For what is this compact with Don Cristobal but a betrayal of the common cause ? ”

I looked straight into his face, and saw that he turned pale. Had he, a man of the world, so far forgotten that this dallying with those who tyrannised over our land would rob him of all honour, and win instead the

execrations of the people he had been chosen to represent? And yet that could scarcely be. It was altogether incredible. But whatever he felt or thought, a strange pallor overspread his face, and I saw that he trembled. The thrust got home, and hurt him sorely, for he stood speechless. And when I added: "Van der Fabry, shall I tell the citizens I meet?" the sweat drops stood out upon his forehead, and a paper that he had taken into his hand, unthinkingly, shook so, that he set it down again, since it displayed too much his intense emotion.

I did not wait to say more, but turning my back upon him, stalked out of the room, across the hall, and into the street, resolved to tell all whom I met of the fact, that the Burgomaster of Antwerp was playing into the hands of Spain.

But second thoughts altered my purpose. I knew that others would be pained if I did such a thing. The mother, who had been so kind, and had doubtless fought my battle for me in my absence; and beyond even her, tender as she had been to me, there was Dorothy, my promised wife by her own sweet will. To do as I had intended would be to bring them also into odium, and I could not do that. Their honour and their happiness should be my chiefest care.

The next few hours were as full of misery as any I had yet spent, although there had been more than enough to crush me. The thought that there was the bare chance that Dorothy would obey her father, and withdraw her promise, came to the front again and again with a persistency that was sickening. In time it grew to be a certainty in my mind that she was lost to me; for obedience to her parents had been instilled from her infancy. In addition to the demand, this

might also be said to her—that to refuse Don Cristobal would endanger the safety of those who were nearest to her in this world. The very thought made me unspeakably miserable.

As for the strange look upon Van der Fabry's face when I spoke of the opinion of the citizens, that soon passed out of my mind. I had no thought of further consequences to myself, but I had reason, before long, to consider my position a dangerous one. I was crossing the *Grande Place* next day, just as the glowing autumn sun was bathing the tall cathedral spire with its last rays of glory, when someone touched me on the shoulder, and looking round, I saw it was Martin, the Burgomaster's porter. His face was full of anxiety, and there was a strange tremor in his voice when he spoke.

"I must not linger, Master Caspar, lest I should be suspected; but meet me at the hour of eight this evening, under the archway by Ottinger's warehouse on the quay. I have something to tell you,—a matter of life and death." And without waiting to say or hear another word, he hastened on, and was soon out of sight.

At the appointed hour it was dark, and the archway named by Martin was not even lighted by the ordinary smoky oil lamp that was then in vogue. The place was in almost absolute silence, the only sounds being the occasional dip of oars in the harbour, or the laughter of sailors who were either loitering about at the water's edge, or leaning over the ship's side, indulging in gossip. No one passed the spot where I stood, impatient to know whether any danger was threatening, and if so, what its nature was. Martin was a full quarter of an hour beyond his time, and came up breathlessly, begging me in a half whisper to pardon his delay.

"Never mind that, Martin," said I. "I am all

eagerness to know what it is you have to tell me. Is Mistress Fabry in danger? Or have you any ill news of Mistress Dorothy?"

"No. It is concerning your own safety that I have come, and I must not stay. So listen, I pray you. This morning I chanced to overhear the Burgomaster and Don Cristobal talking about you. My master told the cavalier how you had resented his action in refusing you his daughter's hand, and that he feared lest he should come into disrepute with the citizens, if you made it known that he was in league with the Grand Commander's kinsman. From what I could gather, you had threatened to do so, and my master is uneasy. Herein lies your danger, that Don Cristobal bade him have no fear. He was due, he said, to visit the Fiscal of the Inquisition to-night to sup with him, and he would induce him to follow you up, and bring you to trial on a charge of heresy."

"I am no heretic, from anything that the Inquisitors may know," I exclaimed; but I felt my cheeks grow hot with terror.

"What matters that, Master Caspar?" said Martin. "Think you that the Inquisitors care? You might be the most faithful son of the Romish Church, but the Holy Office is allied with the Blood Council, and will do its work for it when needs be. And whether you be heretic or Catholic—I know not which you are—it avails not. I tell you that Don Cristobal said plainly, 'The Familiars shall be on young Ursulens' track to-morrow.' I have told you all I know; but it is enough to make me bid you be gone. Do not sleep in Antwerp to-night."

"But where can I go?" I asked, my mind a blank for the time as to any plan for future movements.

“Go to the Prince of Orange. He needs the aid of such young men as you, alike for personal service, and for fighting when it comes. But I must return to the palace. Fare-you-well, Master Caspar, and may God prosper you.”

A moment later he had disappeared through the archway, being lost in the dense darkness.

Hurrying homewards, I told my people when I got there, what I knew, and hastily prepared for a journey to the Isle of Bommel, where the Prince was gathering an army, for the purpose of securing the Independence of Holland, or at least with the intention of forcing the Grand Commander to observe the rights and liberties of the people.

To go by sea would be the most expeditious, but we knew of no vessel that was in readiness to quit the harbour, since, within the last few days, a Spanish fleet had come up the Scheldt, and practically blocked the river. The only way of escape that remained was through the gates at sunrise, and that might be too late. As fortune would have it, however, Bertrand Ogier had brought *The Penguin* up to port that very afternoon; but we were not aware of the fact until, in the midst of the discussion of our plans, a knock came to the door, and the master mariner stood in the room. He had come to bring us news of the fugitives whom he had seen in London, and when he told us how happily settled they were, and handed me a letter written with Dorothy's own hand, I forgot my present peril in hearing the glad news.

Yet glad news from a far country would not dispel the pressing perils at home, and after the first greetings had passed, and the messages had been duly given, we went forward with the preparations that had been interrupted.

“What is your trouble now, friends?” said Ogier, when he had watched our movements for a brief space, and noted the anxious looks that succeeded the pleasure of having greeted him.

“It is a difficult question, I must admit,” he said, when I had told him of my position; and while I went on collecting what things I should require, wondering more and more how I was to get away, he sat down before the fire, and with his chin upon his chest, deliberated with himself.

“Caspar,” said he at length; and I looked up, eager to know whether he had any suggestion to make.

“You shall come with me on board *The Penguin*, and lie in hiding until I can manage to get you away. There are plenty of dark corners in my craft, that will hold even you, giant as you seem, compared to me; and I will wager that a score of Spaniards, ferret-eyed as any of the Inquisitors, will not find you. When I see a fitting opportunity, I will set you ashore at some spot whence you can take your way to the Prince, who will welcome such as you. What say you? And how long before you can quit the house?”

“In ten minutes, Master Ogier,” I responded, thankful beyond expression for the repeated kindnesses of the loyal-hearted mariner, who never weighed personal risk when a countryman could be served.

“Another?” said the sailor, who sat in a wherry awaiting the ship’s master, and putting his question in the most matter-of-fact way, as I went down the steps at the quay, with my bundle under my arm.

“Yes, Matthew, and a recruit this time for the Prince,” said Ogier, stepping after me into the boat.

“Then I warrant you the Spaniards shall not get hold of him so long as he is in our care.” And dropping the

chain which he held in his hand while he stepped in, so as to keep the boat well in against the quay side, the sailor picked up the oars, and pulled out to *The Penguin* with a lusty will, whistling as he did so, just as though it was nothing out of the ordinary to trick the Spaniards.

Having got on board, I followed Ogier down the ladder into the hold, stooping as I went, so as to avoid the beams that showed up by means of the smoky lantern that swayed backwards and forwards with the slow movement of the vessel. There was the wash of the bilge water at every roll. Men were snoring in their hammocks, and three sailors were about to take their turn on watch, which was already due.

“Another?” said one of them, as I passed by, just as the man in the boat had done. When I turned to look at them standing there with their hands thrust into their breeches’ pockets, I saw a grim look of satisfaction on their faces, as if they thoroughly enjoyed every opportunity of getting a countryman out of the clutches of the Spaniards.

Ogier returned the same answer that he had given to the man in the boat, and the sailors, after looking at me approvingly, helped to remove some casks that were lying about. That done, the master slid back a panel in the ship’s side, and disclosed an opening barely large enough to take me and my bundle.

“Now, Master Ursulens, you will be safe there, even should the Familiars come down into the hold and search for you. See for yourself.” And so saying, he closed up the place, and bade me look at it. No one could have told that the door was other than a part of the great beams it stood in a line with.

“Pardon me for saying it, my friend,” said Ogier, with

a laugh, "but a better person than yourself has been in that hole."

"And who might that be?" I asked eagerly.

"None other than the Prince himself. He came to Antwerp on board my ship, and once, when the Spaniards came hither to see whether I had anybody in hiding, we clapped him in there, and no one was any the wiser."

The men who were standing near enjoyed this immensely, and laughed boisterously at the thought of having baulked the Duke of Alva, who was in Antwerp at the time when the search was made.

"Then if the Prince was there, I can make shift to be comfortable enough even in a worse place."

"That was well said," muttered one of the men with an approving chuckle. And so saying, he stalked to the ladder, and climbed on deck, followed by the other two.

"Must I stay here all the time?" I asked; for the prospect of being stifled up there, and squeezed between the hard timbers that barely allowed me space to breathe, and none to move in, was not the pleasantest.

"Oh no," said Ogier. "But there's your place, when anyone comes to look for you. Put your bundle in, so that it may tell no tales."

I was tired, however, and lay down in the dark cupboard. Assuring me that if any danger threatened he would send a man down to arouse me, Bertrand Ogier left me lying there, with the panel wide open. The sense of safety, and the sound of the waters beating against the ship's side, lulled me off to a sleep that lasted many hours.

CHAPTER XI.

IN HIDING.

It was broad daylight when I awoke, and, seeing one of the sailors in the hold, I called to him. He did not display any surprise, and evidently the news had gone the round of the crew, that I was in hiding on board *The Penguin*.

“What is your pleasure?” he asked, on hearing me, and coming towards the stuffy crib in which I lay.

“Go and ask the captain whether I may venture on deck for a breath of pure air, after I have had something to satisfy my hunger.”

The sailor was a man of few words, and with a gruff but by no means ill-natured response, he disappeared up the ladder. Before he had been gone many minutes Bertrand Ogier came down with a cheery word for me.

“Tired of hiding so soon, Master Ursulens? Well, dress yourself, and by that time the steward, if he will only bestir himself, will have a savoury breakfast, which you will enjoy the more, having the knowledge that no harm can come to you. - But Müller said that you wanted a breath of fresh air. You can have the air, but I will not answer for its freshness. There is a dense fog out this morning, and Antwerp is not in view; but even such a cheerless outlook will be a change for a time at any rate.”

And so thought I, for the atmosphere below decks has always seemed to me to be rank poison and a disease-breeder.

Dressing quickly, I was ready for the breakfast which the steward served on the head of an upturned barrel, while I sat on a smaller one that was placed beside it. It was a primitive meal, and I enjoyed it, if for nothing more than its novelty, although the sailor took it as quite an everyday thing, that a stranger should be there.

But before I had finished, I received news that took the relish off. Bertrand Ogier had sent a man on shore, in spite of the fog, and he had gone to my home to hear whether those I had left behind had any news to tell. He came back in hot haste, with a message from my father, saying that the Familiars had been to the house, had searched every nook and corner, even turning over the beds, to see if I was in hiding. Don Cristobal came with them, but waited in the street; and as they left the house, angry by reason of their fruitless errand, Gertrude heard the Spaniard suggest that the gates should be visited to discover whether I had gone out of the city, and, failing in these inquiries, that the ships should be searched.

"He shall be found if he is within the walls of Antwerp, or in the harbour anywhere," exclaimed Don Cristobal, with expressive words that were habitual to the Spanish grandees, although my sister's ears tingled at them, and her face flushed.

When the sailor went to the shop, ostensibly to make a purchase, the Inquisitors had been gone an hour, perhaps more, and hearing this, the man, jealous for all that concerned the safety of his countrymen, scarcely waited to hear the whole message, but, under cover of the fog, hastened back to the quay, and so came on board.

"Come, my men, clear that food away, and do you,

Master Caspar, get into your hiding-place. Müller, look around," cried Ogier, as he closed the panel after me; "see whether anything lies about likely to tell tales. Yes. See that sword! Brace it about your waist, Master Caspar," he added, opening the panel for a moment to give it to me. "Now, men, look alive! Roll those casks against this door, and fling that coil of rope close by!"

And then came endless bumpings, and the lifting of great weights, a rush and scramble that must have converted the hold into a very different place to what it had appeared to me when I had breakfasted there. But even in the midst of the hurry a man called down the hatchway:

"Captain, a boat has just come out of the fog, and is close by, waiting for a ladder to be thrown down." And in the silence that succeeded this announcement, I heard the man say, "And they have three Familiars and a Spanish grandee in her."

The only thing I heard after this was a hurried scramble up the ladder, and then silence in the hold, save for the continuous slapping of the bilge water, but overhead could be heard the dim scampering of feet, as if the men were engaged in their usual task, arranging on deck the goods that were to be landed as soon as the fog should lift.

Some while passed, and as no one came into the hold to tell me whether the way was clear, I lay where I was almost afraid to move hand or foot, and scarce venturing to breathe lest I should miss any sound that would tell me how things were going on. The time could not have been long, but it was never-ending to me, lying there in suspense. Death and liberty seemed to be before me as on either extremity of the scale beam, and it was a

growing wonder as to which way the beam would incline. Shut up in the darkness, Time's wheels were clogged, and minutes became hours, wherein I had leisure to anticipate the horrors that would await me, if my hiding-place were discovered. Again and again I thought I heard the Familiars coming; but no. Then the terrors of death came on me afresh. It was to me as though the fabled sword was overhead, hanging by the merest thread which a faint breath might sever.

This waiting grew at last to be intolerable. I put my hand to my brow. It was moist by reason of this long-drawn-out horror of uncertainty, and I should have hailed the grim sight of the cowled creatures, who would then decide my fate, rather than endure this torture of doubt any longer.

But the anxious waiting came to its climax when I heard Bertrand Ogier's voice, and then the sound of men coming down the ladder into the hold. Some of them were not sea-farers, for they descended slowly and cautiously. But once on the firm floor they were alert as ever, and one of their number issued his orders with a decision which showed that he was accustomed to be obeyed.

"Clear away those goods from the side of the ship, that we may see whether anyone lurks behind them," said this man. I knew the voice at once as belonging to Don Cristobal.

"As you will, my lord," answered Ogier, with a resumption of respect and alacrity which I could not but think was well calculated to remove suspicion. "I shall only be too glad to show you that you have no reason to doubt me. Now, my men, pull away those barrels, and hold the light, Müller, so that the officers of the Holy House may see that everything is as it should be."

I was greatly startled at the thought of the door of my hiding-place being thus exposed, and feared as much for the consequences to Ogier and his crew for harbouring a fugitive, as for myself. I had hands ready for a fight, and as for those who sought me, it would cost them dear before they succeeded in taking me to the prison from whence we had already rescued the wife of Walter de Swarte.

Before long I was brought very near to having a fight, or to tamely surrender. One by one the things that made up the heap before my hiding-place were moved, and Don Cristobal gave expression to his impatience and disappointment when no sign was given of my presence.

"If he be on board this ship we will have him," he exclaimed angrily. "Bring yonder sledge-hammer and beat against the ship's sides, so that we may hear if there be any token of hollow places."

"Stand aside and give me the hammer," shouted Ogier, with well-simulated anger. "I should have thought, my masters, that my long service on the sea, and the many errands I have faithfully done for the Spanish authorities, would have saved me from suspicion, and proved me heedful of the proclamation against harbouring fugitives. And surely, too, you know me for a faithful Catholic!"

The asperity in his voice was so well assumed, that I think his unwelcome visitors were reassured, up to a certain point; but it was not in a Spaniard to trust a Netherlander completely.

"Let me hear you sound the sides of the ship, Master Ogier. Try that spot above the coils of rope, for it seems to me to be far too thick to be solid timber."

Where Don Cristobal pointed I cannot say, but the

perspiration started from every pore of my body; and, growing desperate, I drew a dagger from my belt, ready to plunge it into the breast of the first one who attempted to drag me from my hiding-place. A respite came, however, for the master-mariner could be heard crossing the hold with heavy tread. When the footsteps ceased, there followed a tremendous blow and the sound as of the splintering of timber, but with no result in the way of revealing any recess for hiding.

"Nothing there, my masters," cried Ogier, still respectfully. "Would you have me try elsewhere?"

"Yes. Try that spot which seems to be as likely as any," answered Don Cristobal, who was himself trying the ship's sides with the pommel of his sword. I could hear this, but I could also hear Ogier coming direct to the spot where I lay. The hammer came with a sounding crash upon the timber an inch or two below the sliding panel, which shook with the force of the blow. The great beam jarred beneath me, for I was lying on it, and the concussion gave me a prickly sensation that comes sometimes with any sudden shock.

The ordeal was over. No word was spoken, but I heard the footsteps of men passing away to some other part of the hold, where a further order was given, followed by another crash, and then another, with a like result.

"Come, we will search another ship," said Don Cristobal, in an angry tone. "I felt sure that we should find him here."

Presently the hold was empty, and no sound could be heard, save the faint wash of the waters, and the trampling footsteps on the deck above.

"That was a narrow squeak, Master Caspar," said Ogier a few minutes later, when the door slid back, and he invited me to come out and stretch my legs. "If you

care to do so, you may go on deck and see the vultures that are on the outlook for prey. I know not," he added, as he followed me, "into whose hands I would rather fall,—the Spanish don's, or the tormentors of the Inquisition."

Wasting no time, I scrambled up the ladder, and lying prone upon the deck, looked through one of the scupper-holes. The fog had lifted somewhat, so that I could see the wherry pulling for a ship that was about to weigh anchor; and as it drew alongside, a ladder was lowered, and the black-robed Familiars, with their richly-dressed companion, climbed on board.

When night came, the darkness was intense. To ply a boat under such circumstances was as difficult as when the harbour had been overshadowed by the mist. Every sound could be heard, and among them, while nothing could be seen, came the beat of the oars in the water, as a boat here and there sought to find its way from ship to shore.

"What say you to our taking you by boat to Lillo, Master Caspar?" said Ogier, coming into the deckhouse, where I tried to while away the time by reading a musty book on the art of navigation.

"I am ready now," I exclaimed, eagerly, jumping to my feet. "When can we start?"

"At once, if you will. All that has to be done is to drop into the boat alongside, and pull out of the harbour."

"Then I will fetch my sword, and what little money I have," I responded; and going to my hiding-place, I drew out the little bundle that contained a change of raiment, and a small roll of golden florins.

"You mentioned something about money," said Ogier, when I re-entered the cabin. "Do not think me inquisi-

tive, but would you mind telling me how much you have?"

My face flushed at the question. Before the Blood Council had interfered with my father's concerns, I had always plenty of money about me; but now I had begun to feel the first grip of poverty.

"Twenty ducats," I answered, hanging my head. "I can make shift with that much until I get to the Prince's camp."

"True. But would it not be well to have something to spare? A horse, too, would be useful on your journey, and in the camp."

I knew this full well, but answered, despairingly, that I must needs get to the camp how I could, and start my career with the humblest recruit.

Bertrand Ogier shook his head.

"That will not do. You shall pay me again when you can, but meanwhile take this for your equipment." So saying, he thrust into my hand a purse, which, as he declared, contained a hundred ducats. "When a man is without money he has too often to climb to fortune by the back stairs, and I would not have the son of Master Ursulens do that. Start boldly. Go into the presence of the Prince of Orange with your head up, and let him take you as you deserve to be taken—as a gentleman of his bodyguard."

There was no man from whom I would accept money so readily, and setting aside all false pride, since I was in need, and had no room to be proud, I took the gold.

Shortly afterwards, I was seated in the boat, with the head turned to the entrance of the harbour, ready to be carried down the broad Scheldt to Lillo, from whence I might find my way to the Prince. When the word was quietly given, and the two sailors pulled away with

muffled oars, Ogier gave me God-speed, and I started forth on a career on which I met with experiences that even the most credulous in these quieter days would be slow to accept as true. But the times were such that startling experiences were rather the rule than the exception. What with intrigue and tyranny, desperate struggles for liberty, and the wild lawlessness that abounded, I went forth with a tremor in my heart. I cast a regretful look behind me, where the city lay in darkness, save for the smoking street lanterns that cast their dim light here and there. Somewhere in that blackness was the home where I was born. Before me lay the unknown, and my heart was full of anxious wonder as to what it had in store. But now that I look back on what befell me, I think again how fortunate it is that the future is veiled to us; for otherwise my spirit would have broken at the outset.

But this was no time for regret. Present and extreme danger brought me to the point of forgetfulness of everything, save this determined endeavour to escape. The passage down the broad, deep Scheldt towards the sea was as perilous as the night journeys through the streets of Antwerp. It was patent to the Spanish authorities that those who wished to escape from the city, and from the clutches of the Inquisitors, would try the waterway in preference to the gates, which could only be passed in the daytime, when one's face could be scanned by the warders and others who were on the watch for possible fugitives. Consequently, the river was patrolled night and day by boats, crossing and re-crossing from bank to bank, in order to intercept any craft that had its head turned to the sea. If we met such to-night, our chances of escape were small, for it was certain that anyone searching the boat would see

that I was no sailor, and the journey would end in my being lodged in a dungeon.

Pulling with muffled oars we made no sound, and if we spoke at all, it was in whispers, so that nothing betrayed our presence in the black night. More than once the noisy creaking of oars in the thole-pins of a boat warned us that we were nearing danger, and when we heard the snatches of some Spanish ballad, we sheered off silently into the darkness, blessing the singers for giving timely notice of their proximity. There was plenty of room to sheer off in, for the river, which was sixteen hundred feet broad where it rolled past Antwerp, grew broader with every mile below the city.

But all our precautions failed to get us past the patrols without having a very close and undesirable acquaintance. We had just pulled towards the right bank to escape a noisy crew that, judging by the sounds, were rowing wildly hither and thither in the stream, when one of my companions gave the word to pull ahead, full speed. We had gone about a hundred yards, when there was a crash, and then loud cries and curses.

For a moment we were helpless, for the sudden stoppage in our full career threw the two sailors on their backs, oars in mid-air, while I, seated in the stern, was hurled forwards, and fell prone across the sailor nearest to me. There we were, a mixed-up company, each one struggling to regain his old position, and hindering his fellow from doing anything effectual. Had it not been for our danger, we should have burst into laughter; but the oaths and curses of the men into whose craft we had run were unmistakeably Spanish, and consequently our danger was extreme. We got righted at last, and without a moment's delay, my companions sought to pull off into the friendly darkness.

It was too late, however, for even as we began to move, we felt that the boat was held, either with a hook or men's hands, and we were drawing the Spaniards along with us.

It was too dark to see where we were being held, but sliding my hand along the gunwale, I came in contact with something. It was a man's hand, holding on tenaciously to us. There was no time to draw sword or dagger, so I resorted to a trick I had often practised as a boy, and finding that I could not loosen the man's grip, I bored my knuckles into the back of the hand with all the force I could command. The fellow winced, and with an oath, drew back, leaving the boat free.

"Pull!" I shouted; and the little craft, no longer held to the other, bounded off into the darkness, whence we could hear blasphemous curses which were seldom equalled, even in the roughest quarters of Antwerp.

Before long we had left the angry Spaniards behind, and rested in mid-stream, while the sailors regained their breath after such a spurt. Then we found ourselves in a strange plight. The man in the bow chanced to put his hand down to pick up his cap, which had fallen off when the collision occurred, and discovered that the water was coming in quickly through a crevice caused by the springing of one of the planks in the boat's bottom. This was a real misfortune, for we were scarcely likely to keep afloat long enough to reach Lillo, which was full seven miles down the stream. Still, we could do what was in our power, and while the men pulled, I bailed out the water with my cap.

Hard as I worked, the waters gained upon me. I was wet with perspiration caused by my exertions, but the waters crept up over my ankles, and it seemed at last that the boat was really settling down. Several times

the men drew in their oars, and bailed with me; but even with three of us working vigorously like this, we made no headway. It became a certainty at last that any further progress was impossible, and we drew into the northern bank of the river, where the gleaming of some distant lights indicated the presence of a house.

Fortunately for us, the moon, just then, began to rise, and the pale light dispelled the darkness that had been so friendly hitherto. By its aid we saw, close at hand, a great fringe of rushes into which we could draw the boat, so as to hide her from the view of any who might be passing up or down the stream; and fastening her head to the root of a willow-tree, we stepped out on to the bank, to consider what next we should do.

A stranger to the ways of the Netherlands would have hesitated; but we, who knew the country well, were sure that the occupant would be no Spaniard. Few of that hated race ventured to live in secluded spots, although their countrymen were masters of the land; for the cruelties practised on the people led to the natural fear that reprisals would be resorted to, in the case of any who were venturesome enough to dwell in a place far removed from a Spanish garrison. Some had been sufficiently bold to take up their abode in a spot where their countrymen were few and far between; but they paid for their temerity; and had the canals or rivers been effectively dragged, many a heavily-weighted Spanish body would have been found, in the breast of which could have been seen the fatal mark of the broad Dutch dagger, which told its tale of retribution.

Bearing all this in mind, and remembering, too, that we were three well-armed men, we advanced towards the house, intending to ask for the loan of a boat, or for shelter. The dwelling stood well back from the river,

and while we approached cautiously, looking to our footing on the soft, wet land, which shook under our tread, we occasionally lost sight of the twinkling lights that gleamed so welcomingly. Sometimes we stumbled over tree-roots, or slipped on the treacherous ground; yet we went steadily on, and presently, lit up by the faint moonlight, the house stood before us. It was an inn, lying a little off the highway that led from Antwerp to Bergen-op-Zoom, and through the open doorway we could look down a long passage that ended in a great kitchen, where a huge fire was blazing on the hearth.

Chilled as we were, the sight was a welcome one; but we drew well into the shadows cast by long rows of limes and poplars that ranged along the road. A troop of Spanish horse had halted for refreshment, and the landlord, with one or two tapsters, were busily running in and out among the soldiers with steaming jugs of ale, and responding to the clamorous demands of the impatient ones with such good grace as they were master of. The cold gleam of steel, as the moonlight fell upon the Spaniards' arms and armour, was a striking contrast to the sight of snorting horses that stood about the door, where the ruddy glow of the great fire at the end of the passage showed them up in warm relief. It was a pleasant sight enough to the average onlooker; but to us it betokened danger, which we sought to avoid as far as possible, and until the soldiers should pass on, we were not free from immediate danger.

After a while everyone appeared to be satisfied. The landlord and tapsters stood in the doorway with a pile of empty jugs at their feet, while the officer in charge of the troop gave the word of command, the soldiers gathered up their reins, and, amid a great clattering of hoofs, rode on towards Antwerp.

The tapsters stooped to pick up some of the jugs, and carried them in, but their master, who lingered at the door, shook his fist after the Spaniards in impotent silence, and thereby told us his story as plainly as with words. It was the old tale of Spanish injustice and tyranny. The soldiers, having drawn up before the inn, had called for what they wanted, and having been satisfied, rode on without a thought of payment. The landlord was powerless in the matter. Had he refused them, or had he clamoured for payment, the brutal soldiers would have thought nothing of running their cold steel through his body, or of burning the house about his ears.

The clatter of the hoofs had died away before we ventured across the road, which was now lying white in the moonlight. When we reached the doorway, we walked down the passage boldly, and entered the kitchen. One of the sailors brought a bench, which stood under the window, close up to the fireside, and there we sat, warming our outstretched feet, while one of the tapsters, in response to my desire, placed some supper on the table. The keen air of the river had sharpened our appetites, and we needed no persuasion to do justice to the substantial meal that was set before us.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CUPBOARD UNDER THE STAIRS.

THE landlord of *The Dutchman*, as the inn was called, was a strange-looking creature, whose large head, covered with bushy hair, was set upon a body that might well have been a boy's. Not only so, but the arms themselves were by no means in keeping with the body, but were so short that he could scarce fold them. Nature had succeeded in producing a physical oddity, for at the end of these short arms, the elbows and wrists of each of which were so close as to leave scarcely any forearm, were hands that might have belonged to a giant. The feet kept the hands good company in point of size, while there was little to boast of in the way of thighs.

The ludicrous appearance which he presented was enhanced by his having on him the same style of dress which was in vogue among the fishermen of the country, —tight breeches, a long-tailed coat of blue cloth, and his feet shod with heavy wooden shoes, that added to their giant size.

As the little man came in briskly, I looked at him, and was amazed. At first I was inclined to laugh; then there was the temptation to loathing, for this was surely a monstrosity. But I did neither; for, as the red glow of the fire fell on his big face, I saw that it was a kindly

one. It was even pleasant to look upon, and had it appeared in such a manner that the body had been hidden, I should have thought it a face to be proud of. The voice, when he spoke, was nothing out of the ordinary in point of loudness of tone, save that it was somewhat hollow, as though, coming from so small a body, it had somewhat lost itself in so large a mouth.

"Good evening, masters," said he, coming up to the fireside, and turning from one to the other with a friendly air, after scrutinising each face.

"Good evening, landlord," was the simultaneous response. As he said no more, but gazed at us as though he would try to read into our wants, and discover, without asking, what our business was, I broke in upon the silence with a question.

"Can you mend boats, landlord?"

"That depends on how much the boats are broken."

"True. But our boat is smashed in the bows. We got into collision, and were like to sink, so we came here to dry our feet, and get a meal, as well as to find someone, if possible, to mend the boat sufficiently to enable us to go down the stream before daylight."

"We will go and look at the boat," said Simon Tynpel, for such the landlord's name turned out to be. Taking down a lantern from a shelf, he lighted it, and bade us follow him. When we came to the river, however, he shook his head doubtfully. The boat was sunk amid the rushes, the bow barely showing above the water, and only held thus far out of it by reason of the painter having been lashed to a tree root.

"Lift it, and let me look," said Simon; and as the two sailors hauled the boat far enough out of the river to show the smashed portion, he added: "I may mend it to-morrow, but can do nothing for you to-night."

“Then, landlord, can you find us a safe hiding-place, if we lodge with you till to-morrow evening?” said I, venturing greatly, and trusting to his patriotism.

He looked first at me, and then at the sailors, and as the lantern light fell on his face, I saw that he smiled knowingly.

“If I mistake not, I know your face, and your name is Ursulens,” said he.

“How do you know that?” I asked quickly, feeling for the moment somewhat uncomfortable.

“How do I know that?” he responded, chuckling. “Many a time have I bought goods at your father’s shop.” And then he added, with sudden seriousness, “Aye, and Simon Tympel—as men call me—honours no man more than he does the man who has been so shamefully robbed by the Blood Council.”

“Thank you for those kind words, Master Tympel,” I exclaimed, taking the little man’s great hand in mine, and shaking it energetically. If he had a queer body, his was a good heart; but even had he played me false, I think I could have found it possible to forgive him for honouring so true a man as my father was.”

“But about this hiding,” said he, even while we held each other’s hand. “What does it mean?”

“The Inquisitors are after me!” was my answer, almost given in a whisper.

“After you?” he said, looking up into my face, and with a certain awe in his voice. “After you? And were they not content to make the father pay so great a price, but his son’s blood must also be claimed? Please God, if I can serve you I will do so. Let us go hence, for it is not well to be out of doors when the sleuth-hounds are after one. At such times it is best to be within four walls, and with a roof overhead.”

So saying, the landlord led the way to the inn, swinging the lantern in such a manner as to light up the road, and show the obstacles to be avoided.

“As for these sailors, it does not matter,” he observed when we once more stood in the kitchen. “They may sleep as carelessly as they choose, for many a score of their sort have slept at the inn, and gone off at day-break boldly, either by road or river. When daylight comes the boat shall be mended, and they can go back to their ship. As for you, Master Ursulens, I will think out a way of escape for you, which will be much safer than your going to Lillo. Sit down by the fire, my men,” he added; and beckoning to me to follow, he led the way to a dark room that opened off the passage. Beyond it, towards the front door, was another apartment, which I had cause to remember before I left the shelter of *The Dutchman*.

The place into which queer little Simon Tympel led me was used by him for storing all manner of things in. I should find it difficult to enumerate what goods could be found in that room, for it appeared to me that everything a man wanted, and much that had been discarded, was there. Harness, old casks, all sorts of obsolete arms, pedlars’ baskets and wallets stored with goods of varying value; flasks of wine, toys, and ornaments; tools used for farming, fishing-nets, two or three great bales of wool, a couple of old casques, and a cuirass that had seen some service when worn by a man many sizes larger than Simon—all these were there. But why endeavour to name all that the room contained? It was in very deed a lumber-room where everything that was done with, and things that might turn in useful some day, were flung in, in one indiscriminate heap.

I gazed around curiously, and saw a room boarded

from floor to ceiling; and as I looked, I wondered where there could be any possible corner to hide in, especially since those who hunted for me would be certain to turn over all this rubbish, to see whether I was beneath. But I was not kept waiting very long. Pointing to a large cask, Simon asked me to place it on a spot which he indicated, and when that was done, to put a smaller one on the top. I did as he desired, asking myself what this might mean. His next request was that I would mount, and without waiting to ask the reason, I stood on the top of the smaller cask, with my head and shoulders bent against the ceiling.

Looking about me, my mind was more and more exercised as to what the meaning of this might be. Simon Tympel was as cool as could be, and in no hurry, while his face was serious; so that this was no trifling.

"Press your hand on the panel close by your left hand," exclaimed the landlord, seeing me waiting.

"This one?"

"No, the next, that way," he answered, waving his short arm to the left.

When I pressed hard, I felt the panel move inwards, showing an opening just large enough to admit my head.

"Put your left hand behind the boards, and you will find a bolt. Lift it, and pull outwards."

When the woodwork moved, I crawled into a recess that would afford two men sufficient space to lie down in. Overhead was the under portion of a staircase, and I comprehended instantly that a safer hiding-place could scarcely be conceived.

"I think you will be secure there, Master Ursulens," said Simon, when I gave expression to my satisfaction. "The only worry is, that you will have to be alone so

long, and in darkness, save for any gleam of light that may come between the planks that form the ceiling of the room beneath. As for company, there will be none for you unless anyone should go into that room. But whatever you do, I pray you be cautious. An unfortunate scraping of the foot, or any unwary movement might betray you, and I could not answer for your escape after that."

"Have no fear, Master Tympel," I answered, content with any place that afforded security. "The boards are hard, but not so bad to lie on as the cold stones of a Spanish dungeon. There is a box here, I can use as a pillow, and all that I shall want is something to eat——"

"That you shall have without fail," interrupted Simon. "And as for the box, it is one I want no one to know of. I have trusted you, since I am certain that you will not betray my confidence. If you did, the savings of a lifetime would soon be gone, if once the Spaniards knew of them."

"Now, Master Tympel, do not have a second thought," was my light answer, for he looked anxious. "I will be secret as the grave, and even should the Inquisitors get hold of me, they shall not know of your treasure."

While I spoke, we heard sounds as of horses pulling up at the inn door, and a loud call came for the landlord. The voice had a familiar ring about it, but for the time I could not bring to mind the owner. Something instinctively told me that danger was afoot; and as Simon Tympel trotted out of the lumber-room, and his great feet, shod with wooden shoes, clattered on the stones of the passage, I quietly closed up the entrance to my hiding-place, and waited in silence, hoping that this new arrival betokened no fresh peril. I could not check

the growing fear that I was being pursued, although it was very improbable that any one could have known that I was outside of Antwerp. But the watch-dogs of the Inquisition were likewise veritable bloodhounds, whose keen scent enabled them to run their victims to earth in a manner, and with a certainty, horrible to contemplate.

With the door closed tightly, I should have been in total darkness, had it not been for the spaces between the boards on which I lay; and through these the light came sparingly from the room below. A knot of the wood had fallen out, and that served to give me a still better view of whatever went on below; But at present the apartment was empty. It was spotlessly clean,—a veritable Dutch inn-parlour, where cleanliness has always been proverbial. A fire blazed in the great fireplace, and its light played on wall and furniture, showing among other articles a table covered with a clean white sheet of cotton,—a thing that showed me at a glance that Simon Tympel often received travellers of quality. A couple of chairs were drawn up to the table, a settle stood within easy reach of the fireplace, and other chairs were ranged against the walls, handy for use when wanted. The stone floor was sanded, and what with curtained windows, flower-pots ranged on the sills, curiously shaped pieces of china, and other ornaments on the walls, there was no need to wonder that Simon Tympel's inn should be held in good repute for many a mile round.

I had time to note all this, for around me there was nothing to distract my attention. But after a while my interest was aroused by the opening of the door, and the entrance of two men, both attired in the garb of Spaniards. One was a short burly man, by no means

out of the ordinary run, save for the fact that he was elegantly dressed, and moved with an easy grace that betokened a life in the higher circles of Spanish society. He was a stranger to me.

But the other,—my breath came and went for a few moments in short gasps, when I saw him. Anger and fear were in conflict with one another. It was Don Cristobal de la Fuente, who had so shamefully set the Blood Council in motion to accomplish the ruin of my father, and had, in a sense, robbed me of the ability to marry the girl who had promised to be my wife. When he entered the room with the easy insolence that characterised the Spaniard of high degree, my fingers itched to be about his throat, and had I been able to get at him just then, he would have stood small chance of going away from *The Dutchman* alive. But if revenge is sweet, it must needs be curbed at times, for I had others to think of besides myself, and a better opportunity might yet come, if I would but be patient. Necessity kept me silent that night, and my lot was to listen to what might be said.

The two men sat down, and called for a meal, which was set before them by Simon himself without delay. As the little man hurried about his task, the Spaniards amused themselves at his expense; but evidently he had grown hardened after so many years, and took but small notice of what was said. Only once did he seem to resent their words, and when they had expressed themselves in two or three shamefully coarse sentences, he fired up, clapping a pewter-pot on the table with sudden energy and fierceness, and exclaiming:

“Why do you taunt me for what it pleased God to make of me?”

“Steady, Simon. We take no sharp words from

Dutchmen," said the Spaniard whom Don Cristobal had addressed once or twice as Francisco de Lafrá.

But the landlord was not to be silenced thus, for the insult had stung him sharply.

"Nor will I take an insult, when it is blasphemous into the bargain."

"Let the little man alone, Francisco," said Don Cristobal. "I want my supper badly, and if you say much more, the fiery Simon may turn us out into the road supperless."

The men laughed boisterously at this, and Simon, not caring to press his resentment too far, completed the arrangement of the table.

Little was said by either of the Spaniards during the supper time, but when the table had been cleared, two huge flagons of wine were brought, the door was closed, and the two men, turning towards the fire, began to talk. Seasoned drinkers though these Spaniards were, the choice wine with which the landlord had supplied them soon unloosed their tongues, and little thinking that they were being watched, they spoke with perfect freedom.

For a time the topic of conversation was the perversity of the Netherlanders in general, and the gradual but certain loss to the King's Exchequer, in consequence of the exodus of skilled artisans, and the policy of the chief traders in stopping the production of cloths and the like, and so spoiling the revenue. From that they went on to talk of the measures adopted for breaking the rebellious spirit; and quite naturally the conversation drifted to recent doings in the city of Antwerp. I listened with the keenest interest, but passed from interest to intense excitement when Don Cristobal unexpectedly mentioned my own name.

"I have some scores to pay off, Francisco, and one to a certain Master Caspar Ursulens, whose father recently appeared before the Council of Troubles."

"Yes, that was a good haul for the King, was it not?"

"Two hundred and fifty thousand ryksdaalers, and every farthing of it was paid," was Don Cristobal's reply.

"And yet I always understood that Goswyn Ursulens was a good Catholic," said Francisco de Lafra. "That should have afforded him security, so long as there are so many heretics with well-filled coffers."

"Quite so. But I may tell you, Francisco, that money is so urgently needed just now, that we must needs get it in the quickest way. The army is growing mutinous for want of pay, and I do not wonder at it. My uncle, the Grand Commander, told me but yesterday, that the King was pursuing such a niggardly policy, that he would not send money from Madrid, in spite of all his pleadings. Some of the men have not been paid the smallest coin for the last three years, and many a brave fellow is hungry up to famine point, because King Philip neither sends money nor food."

"And clothing as well, it seems to me, is needed, Don Cristobal," said Francisco, when his companion paused to raise the wine-flagon to his lips.

"Clothing, did you say?" asked Don Cristobal, when he settled back into his chair, smacking his lips with satisfaction, after that deep draught of Simon Tympel's choicest wine.

"Yes. A day or two since I saw a company of Pedro de Rojas' footmen at Bergen-op-Zoom, and the majority of them wore jerkins all in rags, like any tramping beggar's, while not a few hobbled along with bare feet, since they had no shoes worthy to wear."

“That is quite true, Francisco, and when you have been in this country a few days longer, you will find that they are a fair sample of what is to be seen everywhere in the Netherlands.”

“And do you not fear that ill will come of it?” said the other.

“Ill? How could anything short of it be expected? The soldiers are growing mutinous, and clamouring for their wages. From sheer want of food they have lately begun to empty every house they come across on their marches, so that their track is like that of an army of locusts. Of course, that means trouble from the other quarters. The accursed Dutchmen are fretting under the depredations of the soldiery, and for aught one can tell, they may any day fraternise with the army, promise them big pay, and buy them to drive out the Government.

“That is serious, Don Cristobal. Does the Grand Commander know all that?”

“Yes.”

“Then why not use the money that comes from those who are haled before the Council of Troubles?”

“Ah! there’s the rub, friend,” answered Don Cristobal, lowering his voice somewhat; “but while the soldiers go without their pay, so does my kinsman,—and so do I,” he added.

“And what then?”

“Simply this, for instance, that the money which was wrung out of Goswyn Ursulens is set in one of the lower prison cells of the Holy House, and there it will lie in security until the Grand Commander can find time and opportunity to get it out of the country to his his own palace in Spain.”

The heavy drinking of *The Dutchman’s* wine had

loosened Don Cristobal's tongue to some purpose, and he had confided in Francisco de Lafra to an extent that he would not have done in his sober moments. The stranger looked up quickly, and an expression was on his face that betokened astonishment, but he did not speak. Very little more was said after this, for the wine-flagons were empty, and time was going. The two cavaliers had still some distance to go, and the hour being late, they deemed it best to start without further delay. Calling to Simon Tympel, they asked him how much they owed for the meal and wine

"Two ducats, my lord," was the little man's ready reply, "and cheap at that, since you had the best wine in my cellar."

"Two ducats?" said Don Cristobal, with a nonchalance that set my blood boiling. "Well, when next we come this way, we will patronise your inn, and drink your wine, which is too good to be lying idle in the cellar. Fare you well."

"But will you not pay me?" cried Simon, his broad face lengthening at the prospect of having been duped a second time that night by Spaniards.

"Pay you?" answered Don Cristobal, with easy insolence. "Why should a Spaniard pay for what is his own?"

And so saying, he quitted the room, followed by his companion, who, as I learnt later, quietly, and unseen by the other, slipped two golden coins into the landlord's hand, giving him a look, when he did so, as if to bid the little man be silent, and say nothing in the way of thanks.

A few minutes later the door of the inn was closed with a loud bang, and Simon Tympel came into the lumber-room to bid me descend from my hiding-place,

and find a more comfortable spot to lie in. But not knowing how the Familiars might ferret out my whereabouts, I stipulated that Simon should make me up a bed of straw in the lumber-room, so that if, by any chance, I should be disturbed, I might readily get into the safe concealment which the cupboard under the stairs afforded me.

I was too tired to tell the landlord what I had heard, and as he drew the door together, and locked it, I threw myself upon my bed, and was soon asleep. But I was not too weary, before I lost myself in slumber, to consider the fact that I knew where my father's treasure was ; and in my bosom was the key that would open the doors of the Holy House in which it lay.

CHAPTER XIII.

BACK TO ANTWERP.

A SHORT sleep sufficed, and it must have been at a very early hour in the morning that I awoke. Almost my first thoughts reverted to the conversation I had overheard, and as I considered it in all its bearings, a bold scheme began to frame itself, which might result in the restoration of my father's wealth, but in the event of any false step, and consequent failure, would throw me into the hands of the very men from whom I had been endeavouring to escape.

One thing did not surprise me—the news that the soldiers of the Spanish army were showing signs of mutiny. It had been often spoken of at home; indeed it was the common property of the Netherlanders, as well as of their foreign masters. A stranger might have thought that it augured well for my countrymen that the soldiers should show signs of throwing off their allegiance. As a matter of fact, it was promising to do us more deadly damage than any that had yet come to us.

But as for this scheme which I considered while lying there in the darkness, it was dangerous beyond anything that words can express; for it was nothing less than to return to Antwerp, enter the Holy House, and bring

away the money-chest that had been handed over to the care of the messenger from the Blood Council. The key, I considered, had opened the doors once to enable us to rescue Matilda de Swarte. Why should it not serve me in regaining the money of which my father had been so scandalously robbed?

When Simon unlocked the door to call me to breakfast, I detained him while I showed him the master-key, and told him of my plan. At first he begged me to dismiss it from my mind, but seeing that I was persistent, declared that he would help as far as possible, if I would wait a day or two, so as to give him time to consider the best method to pursue.

“I have plenty of friends in Antwerp in whose houses you could lie in hiding, and who, if you are disposed to pay them well, will be glad to help you in anything that will despoil the Spaniards. But say no more just now, and come to breakfast.”

The landlord did not wait for any further words, but led the way to the kitchen, where a meal was awaiting me that I did full justice to. The sailors were already up and out, and I could hear them working at the boat, the sounds of the thud and clank of hammers on wood and metal coming distinctly through the open window. Simon had shut the door and bolted it, in case some unexpected arrival might add to my jeopardy; and as soon as I had broken my fast, he walked me back again to the lumber-room, so that he could throw open the inn for the purpose of serving any travellers that might make an early call. When I passed from the kitchen, into which the bright morning sun was pouring, and where I had breathed the fresh, clean air that came in at the open window, and heard the gay songs of birds, and the contented lowing of the cattle, I went with no

very willing step into the darkness and stuffy atmosphere of the chamber where I had slept.

"Stay there, Master Caspar, as patiently as you can, and I will think the matter over, if you really will not be dissuaded."

"I will try it, Master Tympel, since I know where the treasure lies. Bethink you of the loss that has brought my father from wealth to penury, or nearly so."

"Yes, I do not forget that; nor do I forget that the treasure may be purchased at too great a cost."

He left me to my thoughts, and went about his daily tasks with a face as serene as usual, but his big brain was busied in the matter I had brought before him.

"The sailors have gone up the river," said he, when he came to me two or three hours later.

"But I wanted to give them something for their trouble, Simon."

"Do not worry about that. I gave them a ducat each, and they went off in high spirits."

"Then I must pay you, Simon," said I.

"Nay, Master Caspar. I do not know how much money you have about you, but I am sure of this, that you will need all you have if your daring scheme is to be carried out. Let the payment stand over until the thing is done. Now for my plan."

"I am eager to hear it," said I, waiting as patiently as I could.

"I am going to Antwerp with butter, eggs, and the like, and shall start in half-an-hour. If you do not mind donning a countryman's garb, you can accompany me, for I have three pack-horses, and the Spaniards might well suppose them to be more than one can manage. What say you?"

“But the suit?” said I, following up his question with another. “Where can I get such a thing?”

“What a man he is for wondering and speculating,” exclaimed Simon cheerily. “As if I had not thought of that! I have two or three suits to offer you, and you can have your choice.” And so saying, he opened a cupboard, and drew out a bundle which contained two complete changes, even to boots and cap. He stooped and picked up two or three articles from the ground, and handed them to me for inspection.

“More than one notable Dutchman has worn that suit, Master Caspar, and the mud on it will spare you from the suspicion of wearing what you are not used to. If it were spick and span new, as the saying goes, we should have the heresy-hunters inquiring into your antecedents; and what then, think you?”

“The dungeon for a certainty, my good Simon,” I answered; and without staying to offer any objection to the disguise, I doffed my handsome suit, and before long, stood arrayed, a veritable countryman for aught that even my own mother would know, if she had met me in the road.

“That will do excellently well,” exclaimed the little man, standing off at some distance to look at me, so as to get the general effect, as he said. “When the good Prince of Orange went into Antwerp in that very suit —”

“What!” I cried, somewhat taken aback, and interrupting him. “Did the Prince disguise himself thus?”

“Yes, in very deed he did, and when his business was done, he got out of Antwerp by being stowed away somewhere in Bertrand Ogier’s ship’s hold.”

“I remember the master of *The Penguin* telling me

so, Simon. And since the Prince, for whom every Spaniard in the land was looking, got away, it is a good omen for my own safety. What say you to that?"

Simon Tympel cocked his great head aside, and pushing out his lips, and lifting his eyebrows, admitted that there might be something in that. And then he sagely added:—

"I will tell you what I think, Master Caspar, when I see you safely back here again, and dressed as one in your station should be. But now to business. The horses will be ready in ten minutes, so see to it that you have that master-key, and your money, and your weapons stowed safely somewhere about you, and out of sight."

By the time that Simon came to the door with the pack-horses, I was ready, and walked up the passage with as clownish a gait as I could command, only, however, to be received with a loud shout of laughter from the landlord, and a reminder that I had something to learn before I could hope to deceive a genuine countryman.

"I must needs give you a lesson in walking while we are on our way to Antwerp, Master Caspar, and as it is anything but a cheerful day, you may congratulate yourself that we shall not meet many people, and certainly few Spaniards among them, since they are mostly fine-weather birds."

The morning had dawned brightly, the sun dispelling the mists, and lighting up the land, making everything glad. But when I stood upon the threshold of the inn, and looked about me, the landscape was hidden in dense fog. The moisture-laden wind blew in from the sea, and bathed the country in an atmosphere of vapour, so that nothing could be seen many yards ahead.

"How dismal," I observed, shrugging my shoulders, and shivering as the moist air seemed to settle about one like a cold wet sheet.

"Dismal, did you say?" responded the diminutive landlord. "Nothing could be better for our purpose. Not even the Familiars of the Inquisition could find us if we stood five yards away, so that you might well be thankful."

"I am," said I, shivering again.

The road lay close to the winding Scheldt, and passed over what had once been *schorren*, or sand-banks, which in the days before the building of the dikes, lay uncovered as the tide went out. Here and there we trod the beaten path across the marshes warily, and more than once descended into the *mæres*, or lakes, which the industry of man had recovered from the sea. It was imperative that we should go cautiously, for in the fog-enveloped country such as we were passing through, it was easy to turn aside, and fall into the black waters of the canals that intersected the land in all directions.

So wretched was the day, that even the light-hearted Simon grew somewhat quieter than usual; but now and again, as if to drive care to the winds, he pursed up his lips, and whistled a tune that had been common, so he said, before the silence of terror fell upon the land.

"I do not like the days upon which we have fallen," said he, cheerily; "but why we should display the white feather to these Spaniards I cannot see."

We went on, mile after mile, slowly twining in and out, and picking our way as best we could, never erring, by reason of the quick wit of the little landlord, who declared that he could find his way from *The Dutchman* to the city in the darkest night.

Within three miles of Antwerp the fog lifted again,

so that we could see the flat landscape far and near. Finding that no Spanish soldiers were in sight, Simon Tympel began to sing some of the ballads which men sang in the Netherlands when it was certain there was no Spaniard near to hear it. Some of these I had heard, but one was startlingly expressive, and as Simon sang it lustily, I looked round anxiously, lest he might be overheard by any who served the King of Spain.

“Master Caspar, have you ever heard the *Ghent Paternoster*?” he had asked.

“No,” I answered; I have heard of it, but do not even know the words.”

“Then listen,” said he; and forthwith he began the ballad in which the exasperated Flemings expressed their hatred for the Duke of Alva.

“Our devil who dost in Brussels dwell,
 Curst be thy name in earth and hell :
 Thy kingdom speedily pass away,
 Which hath blasted and blighted us many a day
 Thy will never more be done,
 In heaven above, nor under the sun ;
 Thou takest daily our daily bread ;
 Our wives or children lie starving or dead.
 No man’s trepasses thou forgivest ;
 Revenge is the food on which thou livest.
 Thou ledest all men into temptation ;
 Unto evil thou hast delivered this nation.
 Our Father, in heaven which art,
 Grant that this hellish devil may soon depart—
 And with him his Council false and bloody,
 Who make murder and rapine their daily study—
 And all his savage war-dogs of Spain,
 Oh, send them back to the Devil, their father again.

Amen.”*

* The song is taken from Van Vloten’s *Nederlandische Geschiedzangen*, but the translation is by Motley, and is found in his *Rise of the Dutch Republic*.

"What say you to that, Master Caspar?" asked Simon, when he had finished.

"It is more blasphemous than I had thought, although I had been told that it was too shameful to be on the lips of any countryman of mine," I answered, somewhat sternly.

"Blasphemous? Well, I think you are right; but when one considers the devilry of these Spaniards, and of Alva in particular, there be few in the land who do not *think* the words, although they will not sully their lips with them. And where the difference lies between the thought and the words, I cannot see. Do you not think that Alva was the devil in human form?" exclaimed Simon, turning round, with a hand on his horses's flank, so as to look me full in the face.

"He was," I answered.

"Then why not pray for his discomfiture?"

"That is right enough, Master Tympel, but I do not like these parodies, especially on the sublimest prayer that ever fell from the lips of the Divine One."

"That's true, I will admit. But bethink you, Master Caspar, the Spaniards be such very devils that I find it hard not to pray for deliverance from them; and thus I use the first words that come to hand."

And so saying, the landlord turned away and sang another ballad, which did not jar upon me like the first, and I joined in it with right good will.

But we grew more silent as we approached the environs of Antwerp, where soldiers and peasants were numerous, and where it behoved us to be on the alert.

It was some time after noon when we halted at the North Gate, and answered the questions of the warders stationed there. The replies being satisfactory, we passed on. I confess that when I saw Don Cristobal

standing near, it required all my self-possession, and chilling as the raw air was, yet my face and ears burned. When I told Simon, while we were going down the street, he declared that it was not a thing to be surprised at.

“How could you be otherwise than hot when in proximity with one who has dealings with the very powers of hell?”

It was plain speaking, but doubtless Simon Tympel had good reason for his words; for Don Cristobal had proved to many that he was as cruel as any Spaniard that stood on the soil of the Netherlands.

We caught sight here and there, as we rode through the city, of signs of some unwonted excitement, but did not venture to question anyone as to the cause. Coming at last to a standstill before the door of an inn, Simon lodged his horses in the stable, and stowed away his market produce until such time as he had disposed of me.

“May I not go home for an hour or two, Simon?” I asked.

“Certainly, if you want to run into the arms of your pursuers,” he replied in a cheerful manner. “I thought your scheme a mad one, but there were some good points about it; whereas, if you want it to end in a tragedy, the best way of bringing about that desirable event would be to go at once,” he added, with keen sarcasm in his face and voice.

“As you will,” I said reluctantly, owning that he was right.

Without delaying more than was necessary, we went out into the street again, passing down the Nordenstrasse, where my home lay. As we went by I looked up to the window, and saw my mother and Gertrude. They

glanced at me when we passed, but did not recognise me. If they thought of me at all, they supposed me to be on board *The Penguin*, or possibly on the waters of the German Ocean, bound for England. The countryman that looked up curiously, was but doing what others of his class were wont to do, when they visited the fine old city, where everything aroused their wonder, and caused them to stare about with widely-opened eyes and mouths. I thought that a smile swept across Gertrude's face when she caught sight of my strange companion. Perhaps she knew him as one who frequented the city, conspicuous among all others by reason of his queer figure. But as for me, I was simply a stalwart fellow, whose place was in the fields, rather than in the streets of Antwerp.

After a while, Simon turned down a narrow street that was strangely familiar, and when he passed a strongly-built door, over which a cross and mitre were carved in the stonework, my heart beat more quickly, and my nerves were somewhat unsteadied for the time. The door was that through which Walter de Swarte and I had gone, when we achieved the rescue of his wife. I fairly gasped as I halted involuntary, but my companion caught my hand, and bade me be careful.

"The very walls have eyes, and ears as well, in that accursed place," he muttered; and while he spoke he halted at a door nearly opposite that one which led into the Holy House.

Knocking boldly—for it was well to do what we had to do openly, so as to avoid suspicion—we waited, and heard sounds which told us that someone was working at a handloom. They did not cease at once, so that Simon had to knock still louder, whereupon a woman's face appeared at the window for a moment; but almost

immediately afterwards the door was opened, and the buxom body bade us come in, and be welcome. To my astonishment, she flung her arms about Simon's neck, and kissed him heartily, while he was not slow to return her greeting. I could not understand this at all, until, the kissing done, Kenan Verreyck, as she was named, exclaimed:—

“Come in, my brother, and bring your comrade with you.”

We stepped across the threshold at once, and Kenan, having shut the door, led the way to a room where everything fairly shone with the incessant scouring and scrubbing and washing, that proved the housewife to be a thorough-going Dutchwoman.

As we stood inside, Simon looked at his big feet, and then at mine, and with a shrug of the shoulders, and a twinkle of mischief in his eyes, he exclaimed:—

“Take us to your workshop, Kenan. We dare not sit down here, with the dirt of a seven miles' tramp across the bogs upon our boots.”

“Nonsense, Simon,” said the mistress of the house. “It is but little that you care about my floor, since you rarely scrub your shoes at home. But come along. The mud will wash off—easier a thousand times than Spanish finger marks,” she added, with a kind of afterthought.

The sudden change from her light-hearted banter to a sad tone, struck me greatly; but I learnt afterwards that her husband had been drawn from his loom, and lodged within the walls of the gloomy prison on the other side of the way. She did not allow the shadow to rest upon her face, however. She was one of those brave-hearted philosophers, of which the Netherlands boasted so many, who believe that what has been done is irrevocable, and that however much of sadness she

might feel in solitude, it is not well to suffer the sorrow to depress others.

Turning to her brother, therefore, she put her hands on his shoulders, and laughingly forced him into a low easy chair before which he was standing, and the little man, nothing loth, fell back into it with ready willingness, taking his sister's hand, and kissing it fondly.

"You silly little man," she said, cheerily, looking down upon the dwarfish creature as though he were something to be proud of; "why don't you give your caresses to other women, as well as to your sister?"

"I do not throw away my favours, Kenan," Simon answered, throwing his head against the high-backed chair, and rubbing his big hands with a vigour that bespoke the fact that the idea amused him wonderfully. "The ladies round about *The Dutchman*, and in Antwerp, also, are far too forward. Give them a little license, and they will take great liberties. I have to keep the lovely creatures at a distance, I can assure you, for so many of them would like to have charge of the keys of the inn, and play the part of landlady there."

Kenan Verreyck laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks, and stooped once more to kiss her brother. Then, having assured me that I was welcome, she began to bustle about, laying the table with what good things her scanty larder could afford. It was not much, for she was very poor, and had to toil hard at the loom in order to win small earnings. Her brother whispered to me, when she left the room for a few minutes, that although she loved him so, she was desperately proud, and would not suffer him to give, or even lend her anything.

"I have begged her to come to *The Dutchman*, and be its landlady, but she cannot bear to leave this house where she came to live when the great trouble of her life

befell her." And the little man sighed. But he cleared his face of the cloud that had come upon it, when Kenan entered the room with a small jar of strong waters, and setting it on the table, bade me and her brother draw up, and begin to eat.

When the meal was nearly over, Simon turned to me.

"Shall I tell Kenan what your business is, and your name?"

"Do as you please, Master Tynpel," I answered; and with this permission, the landlord of *The Dutchman* told the story that I have already set down on paper, and ended by asking whether his sister would lodge me in her house, while I made my attempt to recover my father's money-chest.

I cannot picture her surprise. Her large blue eyes were fixed upon me, and her lips parted, half in horror at the adventure I had contemplated, and yet in admiration at the manner in which I had played my part, in snatching a victim from the Holy House.

"Will you lodge Master Caspar, Kenan?"

For a little while she was silent, as if revolving in her mind the infinite risk alike for herself and me. But in the end her pent-up hatred for the Inquisitors overcame all other considerations, and giving me her hand in token of her readiness, she exclaimed passionately:

"I am with you in the task, even with the penalty of death threatening me. The accursed Inquisitors took from me the best husband that ever walked God's earth, and, for aught I know, killed him by excessive torture. If I can do something—I care not how small a thing it is—to spite them for what they have done to me and mine, I will do it, even though I must needs die."

Then, overwhelmed by sad memories, she hid her face in her hands, and wept.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEARCH FOR THE TREASURE.

IT was growing dark when Simon Tympel passed out of the city, and returned to the inn where he had sheltered me; and I, still dressed in my countryman's garb, having stood back in the shadows, and seen the last of his horses pass the gates, turned round, and went my way towards the home of Kenan Verreyck.

That way led along the Westernstrasse, and as I entered it, I heard the loud clattering of horses' feet, and the jingling of armour. Drawing aside into a doorway, to avoid being run down by the Spaniards, to whom Flemish life was cheap, I glanced at the leading figure in the company of Spanish cavaliers. He was not one who would have been singled out of a crowd, as a man likely to be chosen to take charge of a country that was convulsed with passionate hatred against Spain, and all that pertained to it. But this man, with long face, prominent nose, and pale complexion, was Don Luis de Requesens, the Grand Commander of Castile, now the representative of Philip the Second, King of Spain. With him rode his kinsman, Don Cristobal.

As Don Luis dashed by, I saw that his face was full of consternation; so also were the faces of those who accompanied him. The usual escort of soldiers was not with

him, which made me wonder ; for the Grand Commander never ventured from his palace without a strong body-guard. Something unusual was afoot, and as the Spaniards disappeared, I turned to a townsman, who had likewise taken his stand beside me, and asked him if he knew what was transpiring.

“ Mischief for Antwerp, I fear,” he answered, and then made as if he would pass on.

“ But tell me, I pray you, what it is,” said I, laying a restraining hand upon his shoulder. “ The Grand Commander looked distressed as he rode by.”

“ And well he might. You must have heard of the mutiny of the army ?” he said, looking at me incredulously.

“ No,” I responded, astonished at the bare suggestion. I had completely forgotten that part of the conversation I had overheard, while in hiding at *The Dutchman*, and even now the thing did not come to my mind.

“ Then where can you have been, that you have not heard of it, when it is the common talk of the city, and I doubt not, throughout the whole land ?”

“ Not the common talk in the countryside, from whence I have but just come,” said I.

The man looked at me keenly, up and down.

“ You wear the garb of a countryman, my friend,” he said, in a low voice ; “ but let me warn you not to speak like a well-to-do citizen, if you come into contact with any Spaniards.”

The blood rushed into my face, for I felt it to be burning, and I thanked God, in my heart, that one of my own people had made the discovery, and not any of the creatures of Spain.

“ I thank you for your timely word,” I answered. “ But about this mutiny. What do you mean ? I had

heard that the soldiers were discontented by reason of their arrears, but the bare whisper of mutiny has not reached me in the quiet place where I have been staying."

Then it flashed into my mind, that I had heard Don Cristobal telling Francisco de Lafra of the clamouring of the soldiers for their pay, so long deferred, and then I added :

" But wait ! Now I call to mind having heard that the soldiers were growing discontented, and threatening to mutiny. Is that the cause of the Grand Commander's consternation ? "

" It is ; and cause enough, also, there is to make the citizens of Antwerp too anxious to sleep to-night. Six-and-a-half millions of ducats are due to the men, and it has been openly said that Don Luis has not a single guilder with which to pay them. They have heard of this, and are marching on Antwerp to see the Grand Commander, and force him to find the money."

" And what may that mean ? " I interrupted. It was almost an idle question, for when the man replied, his words were quite in keeping with my own idea.

" It means that the citizens of Antwerp must find enough to satisfy the mutinous army, or run the risk of having the city sacked ; and from that may the good Lord spare us, for we have seen trouble enough without that added horror," said the man. And with these words he turned away.

Going back to Kenan Verreyck's house, I entered, and went to the room which she had set apart as my sleeping chamber. The room she first offered me was at the back, and looked into a stable-yard, opening into a street which broke off from the main one close by. This fact I noted carefully, as likely to be of some service if I should be hard pressed at any time. But what I wanted was a

room, from the window of which I could watch the door of the Holy House, and Kenan, eager to advance my plan as far as possible, gave up her own room to me; and from its window I could see all who passed in and out, without being seen.

Looking out, I saw the bare forbidding walls of the prison, with no sign of window in them, and so high that the most daring and desperate prisoner would not venture to drop from the top into the alley. For three long hours I watched and waited, but not a living soul passed, save once, when the *clapers-mans* went down to the extreme end of the place, swinging his lantern as he went, to see that no one lurked about, intent on mischief. He saw nothing, and retraced his steps, halting for a moment, however, to scan the prison door, and see that it was secure. That done, he sauntered on into the street, and out of sight.

This visit of the watchman caused me no small amount of consternation, for there was no knowing whether he might not come down again at the very moment when I should sally out of the house, with the intention of finding my way into the prison vaults which Don Cristobal had mentioned, while I lay in hiding at *The Dutchman*. But the resolution to achieve the thing on which my heart was bent did not fail, even with this added danger confronting me. I had begun, and I would carry it through.

The great bell of the Cathedral chimed out the hour of ten, and I heard the sound as it floated over the quiet city. Trimming a dark lantern which Kenan Verreyck had lent to me, and seeing to my weapons being within easy reach, I went down the stairs, and stepped into the open air. Not a sound could be heard. The city was wrapped in slumber. There were stars overhead, but no

moon shone, and looking up and down the alley, nothing met my gaze but impenetrable blackness, save where the massive walls stood out indistinctly against the night sky.

Drawing the door after me, I hurried across to the spot which I had been watching intently for the last three hours. As I had expected, it was fastened when I laid my hand upon it, and with my heart beating quickly, I pulled the master key from my bosom. But as I was about to put it into the lock, I heard the steady beat of sandals coming in my direction, and looking round quickly, saw the forms of two Inquisitors. With a muttered exclamation of horror, I hurried on tiptoe back to the sheltering shadows of the door from which I had but just emerged, and there waited and watched. The two men came on with slow steps, but not another sound indicated their presence. Reaching the entrance they halted, and after talking for a moment or two in low voices, one of them thrust a key into the lock, and the door rolled back in silence. When they passed in they closed it after them, and I stood alone again, and irresolute.

It was plain that nothing could be done that night, and I might just as well go to my bed. Yet some irresistible impulse drew me across to the place once more, if only to have a look at the door, and become as familiar with it as possible. When I came to it, and suffered the lantern light to flash, a cry of amazement almost escaped my lips, but I smothered it in time. The two Familiars, evidently pre-occupied with the topic on which they conversed, had failed to fasten the door securely. The one who held the key had turned it as he thrust the door together, but the door had not gone into its place against the stone. When I put my hand upon

it, incredulous as to the possibility of such carelessness, and wondering whether I was dreaming all this, the door rolled back, and before me was the grim staircase I had walked down in Walter de Swarte's company.

Covering the light, I waited and listened; but there was silence, save the stifled noise of a clanking chain, as some poor prisoner moved. But where he lay I could not tell.

With the way thus open, I was loth to turn back without having made a venture, in order to discover what might be before me, even if I did no more; and yielding to the impulse that was yet affecting me with unabated force, I thrust the door into its place, and went down the stone steps, until I stood in the middle of the vaulted chamber.

And now I heard voices.

Startled by this fresh danger, and looking about, I saw an open doorway, close to the bottom of the steps I had just descended. Not far away, and approaching slowly, their lamps swinging in their hands, were the two men I had already seen in the street. They were too near for me to attempt to reach the stairs; therefore I retreated sideways, with outstretched hands, so as not to strike against anything that might be in the way. As good fortune had it—good fortune? was it not more than that?—my hands came in contact with the open door of one of the cells, and within this place, unless the men should come into it, I might stand in hiding. Laying a hand upon my dagger, to be in readiness for all emergencies, I waited, wondering what next would befall.

The men entered the vaulted chamber, and halted close to the spot where I had but just now been standing, and they talked without reserve. I listened keenly to what they said, not missing a single word.

“There are but two cells empty here, Fray Garcia,” said one of them; “and when they are full, which I doubt not will be to-morrow, or the next day, if we be fortunate in our search, we shall begin to fill the fourth set of cells in the corridor we have just left.”

“But why have the cells in that set been left empty, Morcillo?” said Garcia.

“That question shows that you have been but a short time in this Holy House. Don Luis de Requesens has confided some of his personal wealth to our keeping, and since it consists of goods as well as money, it takes up space which, unfortunately, we were able to afford him. I would have seen every cell occupied, for we should then be nearer to stamping out this accursed heresy.”

“You say well,” responded Fray Garcia, who was evidently a new-comer, and yet a superior officer of the Inquisition, judging from the deferential tone in which Morcillo spoke to him. “But come,” he added; “we must needs attend the meeting that is called in the Chamber of Council, and we have but a few minutes to spare.” Then turning round, he looked at the door that closed the corridor. “Shall we not shut this?” he added.

“There is no need, Fray Garcia.”

The two men passed on to the doorway through which the Secuestrador and his companions had come when we rescued Matilda de Swarte. The jingle of the bunch of keys reached my ears, and the door before which the Familiars stood rolled back, and gave me a view of another long corridor, dimly lighted with smoking lamps. This, as I learnt long afterwards, contained chambers in which the Inquisitors slept, and therefore accounted for the presence of lights, while the other passages were in darkness.

When the door slammed together after them, and was locked, I began to consider what next I should do. This much I felt certain of, that a better opportunity would never offer itself, for if the Inquisitors were attending the meeting in the Chamber of Council, the risks would be less to-night than on any other occasion.

"I will go in God's name, and with his help," I muttered; and I felt that I could do this, for it was surely just that I should attempt to regain what had been wrested from my father by the cowardly exercise of Might against Right.

Quitting the cell, I went across the foot of the staircase, using my lantern after I had assured myself that no one could be about. There was no sound, save the occasional cry of some poor prisoner, or the clanking of fetters as a sleeper moved about on his bed of straw, restless, and undergoing afresh, perhaps, in his dreams, the torment of the previous day. Had I my will, I would have unlocked the doors and set them free; but I dared not do that. The risk was too great, and I already had enough on hand.

I was startled just as I had begun to move forward on the further quest, and with the sweat starting from every pore, retreated from this fresh danger. The beat of sandals echoed along the corridor before me, and in a moment or two the lantern lights came into sight, showing the approach of five or six Inquisitors, some of them robed in white and black, and others in the forbidding garb of Familiars. Groping my way back to the cell in which I had been hiding, I waited, trembling with excitement, yet resolute not to be taken alive if they discovered me.

The men, however, had no thought for any in this vaulted chamber. They came forward steadily, crossed

the stone floor, and only halted while one of their number unlocked the door through which Morcillo and Fray Garcia had passed.

“Shall I lock this door, Father?” said one of the party, who had halted at the end of the corridor along which I had intended to proceed.

“Yes, my son,” answered one who was clothed in white, and wore a large and broad-brimmed hat upon his head. “No others, save prisoners, are in that part of the Holy House now.”

My heart bounded with hope when I heard that the way was clear. I had little doubt as to my being able to re-open the door, for the master-key, so Walter de Swarte had told me, would turn every lock in the place. I waited, therefore, with patience, while the men went out of the chamber leisurely, lingering for the man who was locking up the corridor. That done, he crossed the floor quickly, and before long I stood once more in darkness.

I did not move until the sound of the footfalls died away. Then going cautiously to the door, I threw the lantern light upon it, and thrust in the key. It went round in the lock with a slight jar, but the bolt shot back, and the door fell open before the pressure of my hand. Reassured by what I had heard, I went along the passage, on either side of which were doors. On each there was a distinctive mark; on this door, the Roman figure I., and underneath it the smaller numeral 1; on the next was the same figure I., but under it a figure 2; and so the numbers went on up to 10. Then came a change. The next ten doors were marked II., and the distinctive numbers varying in each case.

But when I came to II. the passage ended abruptly. What might the other doors in this same corridor have

upon them? It was with a sense of relief that I found the mark III. on the first door; and retracing my steps, going silently and quickly, I went past the doors 1, 2, 3, and so on, till I came to number 10. The next was marked $\frac{IV.}{I.}$. It was the beginning of the fourth set of cells that Morcillo had declared contained the treasure of Don Luis de Requesens; Don Cristobal, too, had told Francisca de Lafra that my father's money-chest was in one of the cells of the Holy House.

I now grew excited and eager almost beyond control. Placing the key in the lock of the first door of set IV., I turned it, and thrust the door wide open. The cell was empty, but feeling sure that I was on the right quest, I did not feel disappointed; yet, since time was precious, and my peril unspeakable, I was anxious to get away with as little delay as possible. Number 2 was empty also. Number 3 was occupied. A bed of soddened straw, made filthier by crawling vermin, like others I had seen when first I came into these horror-filled vaults, lay in the corner, and on it was a man whose clothes were in rags, and whose limbs showed that in places the hot pincers had torn the skin and flesh away.

As the light fell on him, it was plain to see that the man's face was full of fear, the eyes nearly starting from their sockets; and then, as if unable any longer to endure the glare of the lantern after such a long season of darkness, the prisoner covered his face with his poor, scarred hands, which were yet red and scorching after a recent visit of those fiends that held him here a prisoner.

"What do you want with me?" he cried. "Begone, and let me at least recover from my last infliction!"

"Softly, friend!" I almost whispered. "You shall go free, if you will but be silent."

“What!” he exclaimed, leaping to his feet. “Say that once more! but do not trifle with me, or I shall go mad! Did you say you would set me free?”

“I did,” I answered, touched to the very heart. “I have business in the next cell, and then shall leave this dreadful place, and go into the streets. You shall go with me. But whatever else you do, be silent, and come at once. A sound may lead to discovery, and escape will then be impossible.”

The glad news was too much for him, and the poor fellow fell back upon his bed, almost senseless, and there lay, exclaiming:

“O God! freedom at last! I shall see the glorious light again! I shall see her dear face once more!” And he sat and rocked himself to and fro, repeating the self-same words again and again, in a delirium of joy.

“Come, friend,” said I, stooping and touching him on the shoulder. “Time is very precious. Pull yourself together, and follow after me as soon as you feel able. I am going to the next chamber, where I hope to find what I have come into this prison for.” And saying these words, I turned to quit the cell.

“Ah, but I will come with you! I will not stay in this accursed place alone!” he said, once more rising to his feet, and laying an unsteady hand upon my arm.

“This way, then,” I responded gently, and since he trembled so, I put my strong arm around his poor body, and led him into the corridor. “Sit there, where you may see me, and when I move away, keep close by me,” I added.

He sat on the bare stones, like an obedient child. And yet, to look at him, he was a big stalwart fellow,—a man who at one time must have possessed an iron will and giant strength.

Going to the next cell, and entering quickly, for time was passing with startling rapidity, I flashed my lantern as I stepped in, and saw that I had not come in vain. On the floor lay two or three chests, any one of them too much for a man to lift, and one was my father's. I knew it well, for on the lid was the name, inscribed in letters of brass—GOSWYN URSULENS—and the brass straps that bound it bore the monogram.

I stooped to see if it was empty, but its great weight assured me that the treasure was within. As I did so, I heard a sound behind me, and turning quickly, saw that the prisoner had followed me, and was chuckling at something which he held in his hand. It was a dagger. He had seen it on the floor, and snatched at it. When he looked up at me, I saw a dangerous gleam in his eyes, and thought for the moment that he had gone mad, and purposed to use the weapon on me; but, speaking with indifference, I asked him why he seemed so pleased.

“I saw this lying on the floor. It shall win me liberty! for though a score of those black-robed devils should find me now, they shall never take me back to my cell again!”

“That is well; but there would be two daggers against them.” And I showed him my own weapon, as it lay concealed beneath my jerkin. “But we must waste no time,” I continued. “Do you think, friend, that you have strength to help me bear this chest away?”

“Strength? try me! I verily believe I could bear it away unaided, now that I am going forth into the fresh air again.” Saying this, he stooped, and lifted up one end by the brass handle with an ease that astonished me. He had appeared so weak, that but a few minutes before I feared that I should have to carry him in my arms. A supernatural strength had come to his aid.

“Then let us go forth,” said I. “Take that handle, and I will take this one. Now, are you ready?”

“Yes.”

And we lifted the heavy chest, which taxed my own strength to its utmost limit. Had the treasure been all in gold, we could not have moved it, but the immense value of the precious stones within lightened the weight considerably. Passing out of the cell we went slowly down the corridor. Reaching the vaulted chamber, we turned aside, and came to the foot of the steps, up which it seemed too great a task to carry such a burden.

“One step at a time,” said I, resolute not to be beaten; and with prodigious toil, while the very veins seemed to stand out like whip-cord on our brows, and I thought that the blood would start from my nostrils, we dragged the load of wealth up, step by step, never staying to rest until we got to the topmost step of all. I may never find strength again in this world for such a task, and the more I have thought about the achievement since, the more have I wondered.

“Stay one moment, while I look down the alley, and see that the way is clear,” said I, as we stood panting and exhausted, and brushing the sweat drops from our faces.

“Then be quick!” said my companion. “I shall go mad if there is much delay.”

Opening the door, I looked up and down, yet all was silent; but even as I turned to take the chest in hand again, the great bell chimed out the hour. Lifting the burden, we made light of it, and hurrying across the narrow way, laid it on the doorstep of Kenan Verreyck’s house. Before long we had it safely within the passage, and the door was made secure behind us.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CELLAR.

KNOWING that the window in the lower room was safely shuttered, I went in and lighted a lamp, so that we might sit a while and rest. When, however, I returned to the passage, I found that my companion lay senseless on the floor. I spoke, but he made no response, and lifting him bodily, I carried him into the room, and laid him on the couch. There I tried all the means that I could think of to restore him to consciousness, but he lay still, scarcely breathing,—more like one of the dead.

Not knowing what more to do, I mounted the stairs, and knocking on the door of the room where my hostess was sleeping, told her, when she asked my business, that I had been to the Holy House, secured the treasure, and brought away one of the prisoners, who lay unconscious, in spite of all my efforts.

“I will come down in a minute or two,” she answered; and she was as good as her word, for before long she was with me.

But what followed filled me with amazement. She came down the stairs with a flask of strong waters in her hand, and placing it on the table, turned to give her attention to the prostrate man. As she did so, and

gazed with quiet interest on the senseless one, ready in her kind-heartedness to do the work of a Good Samaritan, no matter to whom, so long as it was to a needy one, she gasped. For a moment she seemed to choke. She placed her hand upon her heart, as if to still its beating. Then, with outstretched hands, and a cry, she fell upon her knees beside the couch, and flung her arms about the man. For a time words left her, and she simply knelt there, nestling her head on the senseless one's bosom.

I stood near, and marvelled. Who was this man whom I had brought hither? I asked myself; but when the suspicion crossed my mind, I knew at once that it was true. The power of speech came back to Kenan Verreyck, and she cried, just as a mother would to a little child, with a world of love in every word:

“My husband! my loved one! Oh, have they tortured you to death?”

And then she passed from words to action. She chafed his hands tenderly, passing over the unhealed wounds with a gentleness that was almost more than human, and placed the cordial within his lips, calling on him to awake, to speak, to look,—to know that he had come out of hell, and was in the heaven where a true wife's love was found.

What followed I did not wait to see. Her husband gave signs of returning consciousness, and I felt that it would be better that I should be away; for when they should begin to speak, one to the other, it would be intrusion to remain. Leaving the room quietly, I went to my own chamber, to wait until I could return again.

An hour later Kenan came to me.

“Master Ursulens, he is asleep.”

“And doing well?” I asked.

“Yes, thank God. Oh! he knew me as soon as he opened his eyes!”

She said no more, but sitting on the bedside, wept. It was a flood of tears that spoke of her unspeakable joy.

I sat at the table before her, and waited; for it was not a time when words would be of much service. Quietness, just then, was the better way of showing sympathy.

Presently the tears ceased, and she looked up into my face.

“I suppose you wonder, Master Ursulens, that he should come here, and not know that this was home?”

“I did so wonder, Mistress Verreyck.”

“Ah! when they took him from me, I came to this house, which was void at the time, and dwelt here, so that I might be near him. Although I could not see him, I knew that if he lived, he was nearer to me, and such a thought often served to abate my anguish. And now you have saved him, and brought him to me. How can I thank you?”

So saying, she rose, and coming forward, knelt before me, and rested her folded hands upon my knees.

“Oh, Master Ursulens,” she exclaimed, “I thank you from my very soul. You have brought me my husband.”

The thought was more than she could bear. After a look of ecstasy, she became dazed. She reeled even as she knelt, and with a half-smothered cry—“My husband!”—fell sideways, and lay senseless at my feet.

Before I went to rest, a thought came to me, and acting upon it, I stole to the house door, gazed up and down, and seeing nothing in the dense darkness, walked stealthily across to the door of the Holy House. It was

still ajar, so that no one had passed in or out. Placing the key in the lock, I turned back the bolt, drew the door well up to the stone jambs, and giving the key a twist, made the entrance secure. After that I felt more at ease. It might be long before the chest would be missed, and none would think that it had been brought away through that doorway. As for the disappearance of Nicholas Verreyck, they would surely never dream that he was in the house opposite.

It was barely daybreak when I awoke, and stealing down the stairs, so as not to awaken the sleepers, I managed to get the money chest into the parlour, wondering, when the effort ended, how two men had succeeded in carrying it so far. It only served to show what may be done in the energy of desperation. Drawing back the shutters to let in the daylight, I noticed with satisfaction, and yet with untold surprise, that the key was securely fastened to one of the handles; and without delay I severed the cord with my dagger, and opened the chest. When the lid was thrown back, I saw that my errand had not been in vain. The rolls of gold and silver were there, and to guard against possible deception, I unrolled the paper wrappings of one or two of them, to look at the shining coins. There were also the soft coverings of the precious stones, and these, too, I looked at eagerly. But there was more than the Council of Troubles had wrested from my father. A case of embossed leather lay upon the top of all, and opening it, I was dazzled with an array of diamonds,—a tiara fit for a princess, and a string of pearls that might well have rested upon the bosom of a queen. I had no knowledge of the full value of these costly gems, but I felt assured that they were worth many thousands of golden ducats.

When I saw the sparkling treasure, I almost shouted

aloud with joy, to think, as I expressed it, that I had so spoiled the Egyptians. The Council of Troubles had sought to ruin us, but we had obtained our own again, and much besides.

But now came the question as to how all this wealth was to be removed. It dawned upon me—and my forehead grew damp at the very thought—that the Inquisitors would know that Kenan Verreyck dwelt in this house, and missing her husband, would search for him in her home. Then would follow the discovery not only of the escaped prisoner, but of the wealth for which I had risked so much. Such horror did this thought awaken, that I went upstairs at once, and arousing the sleepers, told them of my fears. A hunted look came into Nicholas Verreyck's face, but Kenan, who was already up and dressed, showed little fear.

“Be at rest, Master Ursulens. I have thought of that. See here!” And she drew me to the window. “Under yonder stable is a cellar, but I doubt if any living man—save one—knows of its existence. The old landlord of this house, who is now dead, showed it to me, and pointed out a spot in the kitchen beneath the room in which we now are, where there was a secret entrance to the same. He knew that at any time the Familiars might come to bear me to the prison, and told me how I might avoid them.”

Turning to her husband, she bade him dress himself at once, in clothes which she had brought with her, when she came hither. She had not cared to part with them, although she scarcely hoped to see her husband again in this world.

While he dressed, I followed her down the stairs into the kitchen. A settle stood in the corner, and drawing it away, we saw nothing but the bare wall, whitewashed,

and without a sign of any opening. Nor indeed was there one; but underfoot, hidden completely by the wooden bench, was a stone, no different from all the others in the floor. There was a rough place on one of the edges, large enough for one's finger to fit into; but to remove suspicion, there were other rough places like it on the stones around, and thus it attracted no attention.

Going on her knees, Kenan put her thumb to the spot, and getting it under the roughly-chipped edge, drew the thumb upwards. With the lifting hand came, without much effort, the stone slab itself. It was so nicely balanced, that a child could have moved it. Below, as I knelt at her side, and peered down into the darkness, I saw some steps of stone.

"Down there, Master Ursulens, we shall be in safe hiding. We will not stay to explore it now, for, seeing that I have my husband, it would be well to get away from this house without delay."

"I will carry down what I have brought from the Holy House, while you see to your sick one, Mistress Verreyck," said I, rising from my knees, and going into the parlour.

When I attempted to lift the chest, I wondered more than ever, how we had succeeded in moving it. It lay a dead weight beyond my strength, and I began to consider what should be done.

"The chest must go down empty," said Kenan, who had followed me, and saw my difficulty. "Take a lantern down into the cellar, and as much of the money as you can carry. This basket will serve you well for that purpose;" and she drew a strong one from beneath the couch.

Then bidding me lose no time, she went to her husband.

Filling the basket with the rolls of coin and diamonds, I carried the costly load into the dark chamber, and laying the contents on the floor, returned for another. Again and again I made my journey, while Kenan, seating her husband upon the settle, went up and down the steps, carrying into our hiding-place such provisions as the house contained. That done, and the last load having gone, and even the chest itself, we sat down to the morning meal, in readiness to be gone at a moment's notice. I have often thought of that last meal of the fugitives from Egypt in the olden days,—how they sat to it with girded loins, awaiting the summons. It was to me a similar scene, seated at the table, listening while we ate, as if for the summons to be gone; but with a difference. With us at any moment there might come the challenge at the door, and failing a response, the forcible entry of the dread Familiars.

In my eagerness to know whether anything was stirring, I went to my bedchamber, when the breakfast had ended, to look across to that door of which I held the key. It was closed, looking black and forbidding as ever, and not a soul was in sight. When, however, I opened the window to let in some air, I heard sounds far away that seemed to tell of tumult. Had it been dark, I would have gone forth, trusting to my countryman's disguise; but it was now broad day-light, and I did not care to run the risk. Better, thought I, to remain in ignorance till nightfall, than buy knowledge at the price of detection.

We spent the day in suspense, but never once, so far as I saw from constant watching, did that iron-bound door open. Now and again there came shouts from the distant streets, and occasionally, by placing my head against the window, and looking slantwise up the alley,

I saw the street into which the narrow passage opened. But where, as a usual thing, the people of the city passed and re-passed continually, bent on the business that concerned them, now there was no sign of life. The sound of the roll of drums, and the steady tramp of soldiers came at times on the air, but I could see nothing of what was going on. The tramping would cease, and loud shouts would come,—what the shouts were I could not tell,—and then the tramping began again.

As soon as it was dusk, I crept forth in my countryman's garb, intent on two things,—one, to see what was happening in Antwerp; the other, to go to my father's house, and tell him what I had done.

Street after street was deserted, save for roystering bands of soldiers, and when I saw the brutal way in which one or two venturesome citizens were treated by them, I withdrew from the main streets, and went along side alleys and retired ways. Thus, without molestation I reached the threshold of the old home, and tried the door. It was locked. Again and again I knocked, and presently a head was thrust out of an upper window, and my sister's voice came timidly, asking who I was, and desiring to know my business.

"It is urgent! Let me see Master or Mistress Ursulens without delay," I cried, making an awkward attempt to disguise my voice.

Gertrude drew in her head at once, and presently I heard the bolts drawn back. Then the door was opened a little, the chain that was hung across preventing it from going farther.

"Who are you?" came my sister's question.

"I am Caspar! Open at once!" was my whispered answer.

Another moment passed, the chain fell against the

stone jambs, the door swung open, and as I crossed the threshold, my sister's arms were flung about my neck.

"We thought you were on your way to England, Casper," said she, in a half-frightened voice.

"So I purposed; but great things have happened, sister, since I left home. Where is father?"

"Upstairs."

"Then bolt the door, and come after me, for I have much to tell."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MUTINY.

THERE was little need for those last words, for my sister had bolted and chained the door, and was with me when I set foot on the topmost stair, holding my hand, and taking me to the room I knew so well. My parents were standing, with a startled look upon their faces, thinking that it was, perhaps, a ruse on the part of the Spanish authorities, in order to get into the house easily. I had wondered, while I went up the stairs, whether they would know me in my disguise, and as I stood in the door, Gertrude being hidden behind me in the black passage, the two dear ones looked at me questioningly.

“What is your business, sir?” said my father, sternly.

I looked from him to my mother, and the light was shining full upon me. Then I knew from her countenance that my disguise was perfect, since even my own mother did not know me until I spoke in my natural voice.

“Mother!” I exclaimed, going into the room with outstretched hands.

“It is my son!” she cried; and so saying, she ran forward, and took me to her bosom, to kiss and fondle me, as she had done many and many a time in the old days.

But this could not go on for long, for time was precious, and our peril great. After the first glad greetings, we sat at the fireside, and I told them all that had happened from the moment when I said farewell, down to the hour of reunion.

"We will kneel and thank God for your safety, my son," said my father; "and also for his goodness in restoring our lost treasure." Then we knelt at the table, and my father prayed. When we rose from our knees, I questioned him as to what I had seen on my journey home, and why the streets were so deserted.

"Do you not know, my son?"

"I could not know, for I have been in close hiding all the day."

"I can quite believe it," was my father's response to this, and forthwith he told of the danger that threatened Antwerp.

After the battle of Mookerheyde, the Spanish soldiers did what they had often done before,—they mutinied. They had gone so long without pay, that their patience had reached its utmost limit, and now they refused to do any more fighting, or any more duty, until some of the arrears were cleared. Driving their officers, high and low, out of the camp, they chose a leader whom they called the Eletto, whose position was certainly a remarkable one. For while he was supreme, and had the power of life or death, he could not exercise his power if the soldiers took it into their heads to object. As soon as this officer was appointed, with his councillors and other officials, word was given, and the army, three or four thousand strong, marched upon Antwerp quickly, knowing that the Grand Commander was there, and that the great city was full of riches.

The soldiers had been as good as their word when

they threatened to enter Antwerp. That very morning, while Kenan Verreyck and I were carrying the treasure into hiding, Don Luis de Requesens had come to the city gates, to make a final offer to the men. When I had seen him riding down the Westernstrasse the night before, he had just received news of the close approach of the mutineers, and had met the deputies that had come from the Eletto, in order to make terms with them. What he said was told to the soldiers who were encamping a league away, but the Sergeant-Major, who had come with the mutineers, and was the Eletto's mouth-piece, told him bluntly that unless better words were sent at daybreak, the Eletto would order the troops to march into Antwerp, where they would wait a while, and then help themselves.

Don Luis sent no further word to the army, for he had not one stiver in his treasure box, save that private wealth that was lodged in the cellar of the Holy House. Consequently, when the Sergeant-Major appeared again, he had to return to camp without so much as seeing the Grand Commander. Three hours later, the soldiers who had charge of the gates, no better off in the matter of wages than the mutineers, threw them wide open, and the Eletto, with his councillors, marched in amid tremendous shouts, followed by the soldiers. They drew up in the great square before the Town Hall, where the Broad Council of the city was meeting, even thus early, Spaniard and Netherlander alike realising that a crisis had come, which might end in a fearful massacre, if the anger of the soldiers should be aroused.

Lancelot Bocholt, our neighbour on the opposite side of the street, had stolen out to see what was stirring, when the shouts came across the city, and he saw Don Luis, with Don Cristobal at his side, come forth and approach

the Eletto, who demanded of the Grand Commander what his business might be. The man spoke with all the insolence of a common soldier, who could dare to be defiant by reason of the strength behind him. The Grand Commander's pale face flushed with anger at the lack of courtesy, and the coarse jests with which he was received; but he kept a strong hand upon himself, and heard what the mutineers desired.

"I expect a Spanish fleet in the Scheldt next week, laden with treasure and arms, and then you shall be paid to the last guilder," he cried, his voice ringing across the square.

But the words were greeted with derisive laughter.

"We were told that a year ago," the soldiers cried.

Again the Grand Commander besought the Eletto to withdraw, and renewed his promise solemnly; but, as by some concerted action, the shout rose from more than three thousand throats:

"Dineros y non palabras." ("Dollars, not speeches.")

"Then, soldiers, I must needs return to the Broad Council, and see whether it will find the money, since the King of Spain has sent you none;" and turning on his heel, the proud Spanish grandee went into the Town Hall.

What happened there was not known to the citizens generally, save this,—that Don Luis de Requesens told the Councillors, who were all Netherlanders, that he must have four hundred thousand golden crowns out of the city treasury, and with small delay.

The refusal came point blank, for the stout-hearted members were resolute not to pay down one single coin to get the Spanish Viceroy out of difficulties. When Don Luis went once more to the soldiers, and told them

what the reply of the Broad Council was, they received the news with shouts of laughter. The Eletto turned and looked at his men, and catching their humour, told Don Luis that having waited so long, they would do no more fighting, but would make themselves comfortable in the city, and feast at the citizen's charges. Having no grudge against the Grand Commander, the Spaniards did him no harm, but, calmly ignoring his presence, took possession of the city, and joined by the garrison, simply did what pleased them, taking it for granted that the people of Antwerp would soon grow tired, and find the money, so as to be rid of them.

The soldiers took the most likely steps for bringing about such a desirable consummation ; for all who could be spared from garrison duty went throughout the city, and entering the wealthiest houses, settled in them, and demanded entertainment equal to that which the owners themselves were accustomed to.

This was the story that greeted me, and I was filled with impotent anger. For what could we do? Fortunately the quiet life my father led, the unpretentious appearance of the house, and the fact that he had been impoverished by The Council of Troubles—a fact which was the common property of the city, and therefore known to the garrison—combined to relieve him of the odious presence of the Spaniards.

Still, while my father had escaped the visit of the soldiers, he was in the direst jeopardy. When I had heard of the mutiny, our thoughts reverted to the peril that was imminent. How long a time might pass before the treasure would be missed, no one could say ; but, seeing that many hours had gone, there was the natural fear that Don Luis might send to the Holy House, to be assured that the money was safe. On discovering

that it was gone, what would be more natural than to suppose that the original owner had had a hand in its disappearance? And in such a case, who could tell how speedily messengers might be sent to the very house in which we were at that moment talking, to search for it? Two things were then most probable,—one, that my father would be taken to prison until he satisfied Don Luis as to the whereabouts of the treasure; and the other, that the sleuth-hounds of the Inquisition, whom the mutineers would never meddle with, would penetrate my disguise, and bring me to unspeakable torture, and then to death, in return for the things they would lay to my charge.

This much was certain to each of us, and my mother expressed it in words, “We must go from this house at once.”

“That is true,” said my father; “but where shall we go?”

Consternation was on every face, when such a question was put, for who could, or would receive us? If we went to the house of an opulent citizen, we should find some soldiers there, possibly in furious revelry, and making day and night one long banquet. That such was the case, we had good reason to know later on; and Master Meteren, my father’s friend, told us in later days, that the mutinous Spaniards more than lived on the fat of the land. Said he: “Nothing was too good for them, in their own estimation, and the demands they made were simply astounding. The servants were on the move the whole day long, attending to their orders for chickens and hares, capons and rabbits, sauces, spices, sweetmeats, and fruits whose prices were great because they were out of season. The wine cellars were broken in upon, and all the liquor they contained consumed.

The mutineers not only feasted their dogs, but washed their horses' feet in choice wines and scented waters!"

No rich man's house, therefore, would do for us, so that we must needs seek shelter in some humble place. And that was what we did. It was Gertrude who suggested that we should go to the house of Barbara Oliver, the widow of a man who, before his death, had been one of my father's workmen. Ever since the husband had done with this world's troubles, Barbara had been a pensioner of my father's, and was so now, in spite of the fact that our wealth had been snatched away so shamefully. The house, moreover, was not far removed from the dwelling of Kenan Verreyck.

Before many minutes had gone, we were ready to start, my father taking what money he had, and my mother and sister carrying such valuables as the short time permitted them to collect. Then, with heavy cloaks and hoods that hid them completely from the inquisitive gaze of passers-by, they stood with me at the front door, awaiting the arrival of my father, who was donning the garb of a workman, so as to avoid identification. He came at last, and we stepped into the street, where, before pulling the door after us, we paused to listen.

"Hark!" said Gertrude.

"What is it?" we whispered, for her sharp ears detected sounds that had escaped our notice.

"The steady tramp of men, and coming, too, from the quarter to which we wish to go."

We listened intently. Away in the distance was a glow of light that illuminated the sky, caused by the huge bonfire that the soldiers had set ablaze in the square that fronted the Town Hall, where the Eletto and his staff were quartered. And from that direction

came the loud shouts of drunken soldiery, who had been drinking deeply of the wine that was found in the cellars of their unwilling hosts. Now and again, too, came the scream of a woman who had fallen into their clutches; but her screams were of no avail, since none dared to attempt her rescue, lest fire and rapine should follow in the city, as well as certain death for those who interfered.

To go that way was madness. To turn the other way was equally as impossible. For as we listened, there came to our ears, what my sister had already heard,—the measured tramp of soldiers. Even as we looked, we saw, far down the street, a body of men, whose arms gleamed as the light of a hanging lantern fell on them.

Here was peril in very deed. We dared not go that way, for throughout the stretch of that long street there was no alley down which we could escape, and wait in hiding till they had passed.

“Let us try the lane at the back of the house,” said I; and turning round, we re-entered the shop, quietly bolted and barred the entrance, passed through the workshop, and thence out at the door by which the artisans were wont to enter when they came to work. Pulling the door after us softly, we hastened, yet with all caution, down the lane, until we came to the open gate of a stable-yard, past which the path took a sudden turn to the left. We took the turn ourselves, without a moment’s halt, when, to our horror, we saw the lamps of three Familiars, a hundred yards, or thereabouts, in front. The men were coming in our direction.

“Into the stable-yard,” whispered my father, going himself into the place, and holding the gate in readiness to close it when the last of us had entered. Hurrying my mother and Gertrude in, I followed, and then we

put the door together, and waited. The dull thud of the sandals was heard upon the beaten way, until the men came directly opposite the gate behind which we were hiding.

“How far down the lane does Goswyn Ursulens dwell?” asked one.

It was a question that made us sick with dread. Not only was the loss discovered, but my father was suspected; and more than that, the Inquisitors, and not The Council of Troubles, were now to deal with him. But we stood in silence, scarce breathing, and waited to hear the reply.

“About a hundred yards down, there are two doors close to each other. The farther one leads into the workshops of Goswyn Ursulens.”

As the answer came, the dull tread commenced again, and grew less and less distinct. There was not a moment to be lost, and opening the gate, we slipped out and ran on with as little sound as possible, my father grasping mother by the arm, while Gertrude put her hand in mine.

We did not venture into the streets more than we could help, for we knew not what risks we should run. Sometimes we were compelled to do so, and ran along in the darkness until we came to an alley that served our purpose, and down it we hastened into some quieter way. But we came at last to the house for which we had been making, the road to which had been so beset with perils. Knocking softly on the window, through which the light of a candle came, we waited. The curtain was drawn back, and the face appeared of one that tried to discover who her late callers were. But she could not see anyone, since her own stout body kept back the light that would otherwise have fallen on us.

“Let us in, Barbara,” said my sister, putting her lips to the key-hole, so that her voice might reach the ears of the woman into whose hands we were committing ourselves.

Whether the widow knew the voice, or not, I cannot say; but she dropped the blind into its place, and came to the door.

“Who is it?” she inquired.

“Gertrude Ursulens! Quick! Let us in!”

The door was opened without further delay, and we stepped into the dark passage. I was the last to enter, and closed the door after me.

“Is it really Gertrude?” exclaimed the widow, startled to find that several persons were at her door.

“Yes, Barbara. Here are my father, and mother, and brother. We are in deadly peril, for the Inquisitors have gone to the house to find us. Can you keep us in hiding?”

“With God’s help I will,” was the response. “Come forward, Master Ursulens, but fasten the door, please.” And so saying, Mistress Oliver went into the room that led off the dark passage.

Although she was poor, dependent, indeed, on my father’s bounty, the house was scrupulously clean, and the white floor and shining furniture showed that squalor and poverty had no intimacy here. But this was no time for taking note of such things. Our hearts were palpitating with the thought that we were being hunted, and the wonder grew, whether, while we might escape the more sluggish city-guard, we could evade the keen-scented Inquisitors.

“They will not come hither,” exclaimed Barbara Oliver, as if she divined our thoughts. “I am too good a Catholic for them to have me in suspicion; and only

this very morning, a Sister came to tell me that the Bishop had placed me on his alms' list. I will find you safe hiding if you do not disdain a little discomfort, Mistress Ursulens," added the old woman, with a low and respectful curtsey to my mother.

"That is kind indeed, Barbara," my father responded. "And if we make our escape from the city, you shall have no further care in this life."

"I would do it though I had to spend my days in poverty, for all the kindnesses of the past, Master Ursulens," was the ready answer. "You cared for me in my sorrow, and my debt is one I can never repay." And as she spoke, Barbara looked up, and her eyes were dim with tears. "But come," she added. "There is no time for words."

Taking up the candle, careful that no shadows should fall upon the blind, she led the way to an outhouse in the garden, where, among the lumber, we might find safe hiding.

CHAPTER XVII.

GELEYN DE MULER'S STABLE.

As soon as I saw that the hiding-place was a secure one, I resolved to go to the house where Kenan Verreyck dwelt, and discover whether that good woman was willing to receive us into the safer hiding of the cellar, where the treasure lay. Telling my father so, and agreeing upon a certain signal with Barbara, in case I should return during the night, I set forth.

The distance was short, but it was dangerous, since I knew not what had happened after I had quitted Kenan's home. If the treasure had been missed, so also Kenan's husband had been. Without a doubt the Inquisitors knew that the woman dwelt in this home, drawn there by a longing to be as near as possible to the husband she had lost ; and finding that his cell was empty, they would naturally search for him where they thought to find the wife.

I approached the house cautiously, but the alley was as still and deserted as ever. A cold perspiration came upon my body when I found the street door open, and looking up the stairs, saw, in the room before me, two Familiars, one of whom held the light, while the other was busy sounding the walls with his knuckles, as if to discover whether there was any secret lurking-place.

At first I thought I would return to Barbara Oliver, and come here later in the night; but the next movement of the Familiars changed that intention. They came out on to the landing, and halting there for a moment, felt the walls. I could hear, in the painful stillness, their hands smoothing over the roughened surface, on the search for some crack, or other indication of a place of concealment.

“Nothing there,” said one. And with these words he passed on to the room where I had slept, followed by his companion.

What was now my best course, I debated with myself, —to go away, and return again, or seize this opportunity, go into the room at the back of the house, and get into the cellar before the men had time to descend the stairs? I resolved on the latter course, and stepping softly along the passage, entered the kitchen. The darkness was intense, but I groped my way to the corner where the stone lay, thinking that the settle stood out a little from the wall, even as I had left it. But I stumbled against it where I thought to find an open space, and the noise was magnified in the stillness of the night.

Pausing to listen for the movements of the men overhead, I heard them cross the narrow landing rapidly, and stop at the top of the stairs, as if to hear any further sound. Judging from the slow tread that followed, I suppose they came down a few steps, and halted again, while the light of their lanterns shone along the passage. To hear such sounds as these was horrible, and my flesh seemed to creep.

“We left the door open,” said the same man who had spoken before. “Go down the passage, Carlos, and close it, lest anyone should come in.”

The heavy tread of a Familiar followed, and as I

looked with startled eyes through the open door of the kitchen, and saw, first the light of the approaching lantern, increasing in brilliancy at every step, and then the black form of the man who had descended pass by, to go along the passage to the front door, which he put together and bolted, I thought that now I was trapped in very deed. Still I was glad that the door was closed, for if it came to the worst, no one could enter to aid these men, who should have their full work cut out for them before I would yield. While the man came down the stairs, I drew my dagger, a keen one, and a long one, that would go with precision into the heart of any man who laid hands upon me.

"Turn the key," came from him who still stood on the stairs.

"Yes, Morcillo," was the response. And this was followed by the beat of the sandal on the floor.

"Shall I look into the lower rooms, Morcillo?" said this same man, halting at the kitchen door.

"No, Carlos. Let us get through with our search, for I would fain be back into the Holy House, to know how the messengers have fared in their errand to Goswyn Ursulens."

My heart leapt within, and left me breathless at these ominous words, but I thanked God that those who had gone to search for him would find my father gone. And then the peril, which was so immediate, passed, and the man went up the stairs with steady step, leaving me in the darkness again.

Lifting one end of the settle with the utmost care, I moved it out from the wall, sufficiently far to allow me to raise the stone. Then going on my knees, I felt on the floor for the thumb-hold, and finding it, slowly raised the slab of stone. That done, I went down the

steps slowly and softly, and drew the stone after me, until it fell quietly into its place.

“Who is it?” came a whisper in the darkness.

“Caspar Ursulens,” I answered. “Can you not show a light, Mistress?”

Instantly the hidden light was uncapped, and I saw my hostess and her husband, he with his wounds bandaged, and lying on the floor. Before him the wife had spread a white cloth, on which a meal was set, that might well tempt even this sick one.

When I sat down with them, and partook of the meal, I told of all that had passed that night, each one listening with rapt attention.

“You must bring your dear ones here, Master Caspar,” said Kenan, when I had ended my story.

“But if I do that,” I answered, “where can we get food? We may have to wait many days before we can slip out of the city.”

“We can pass in and out by the stable door,” responded Kenan. “The stable-man and his wife are the only ones besides myself, who know of this place. They dwell in the loft, and having suffered themselves by losing their only child, who died in yonder place of horrors, they may be depended on to afford us their aid. More than once we have passed to and fro by this secret way, and if danger threatened them at any time, they would come hither, and rely on me to find them food. I will go to them now, and see what they can do.”

Saying this she took the lantern in her hand. Following her across the floor, I saw a flight of steps similar to those by which we had descended to our hiding-place. The steps were ended at the top by a flat stone, which moved as my companion pressed upwards, and when the stone rolled back, we found ourselves

looking into a dimly-lighted stable, where the shining hind-quarters of three or four well-groomed horses could be seen, as they lay upon the fresh new straw.

“Shall I come with you?” I whispered, as Kenan mounted the last step and reached the stable floor, which was lined with smooth flags.

“No, Master Caspar. Stay where you are, for I must needs go forward, and find Geleyn de Muler first, and tell him how we are situated.” And saying this, she passed on to the wooden steps that led up to the loft where De Muler lived.

A quarter of an hour passed, the only sounds being the breathing and occasional snort, or restless movement of the horses that lay asleep; and overhead a dull murmur of voices. Then the light came again, and Kenan, followed by a stalwart groom, descended the steps. To avoid the need for any speech in the stable, I retreated to the cellar, where I awaited their arrival.

“This is Geleyn de Muler, Master Ursulens,” said Kenan, whose face was bright with content, and thus assured me in advance that her errand had ended successfully.

I liked the man’s honest face. The cheeks were sunken, doubtless by reason of his cares and sorrows; but his brave, bold look showed me that with him on our side we had much to fill us with content and confidence. He was blue-eyed, yellow-haired, and sturdy; bronzed, too, by his frequent riding in the country round—a man whom it was a pleasure to look upon.

Without waiting for me to say anything, he spoke.

“Mistress Verreyck has told me about you, Master Ursulens, and I have come myself to say that I am at your service. If you can get your father and mother here——”

"And my sister, too," I added.

"Yes, Master Ursulens, and your sister. I had forgotten that there were three of them. If you can get them here by entering from the alley that runs down by the Holy House, I will engage to get you food. And when an opportunity offers, I will see what can be done to get you all outside the city. But I am poor, and must needs ask you for full payment for the food I have to buy."

"You shall have it, Master de Muler, and many a golden ducat besides, when once we can get away," I replied gratefully, and giving his hand a grip that told of my thankfulness for his help.

"I want nothing more than what I may have to stand out of pocket," said De Muler, earnestly. "I know your face and I know your name; but it is enough for me that the blood-hounds of the Holy House are after you. I would risk everything, even my life, to cheat the fiends yonder of their prey!" he added with a fervour that showed how deep and sincere his hatred was. "God help me to do something to spoil their schemes!" he exclaimed. "They robbed me of my little bird, my blue-eyed, bonnie Martha!" And the face grew stern, and the eyes filled with tears.

It was enough. I was safe in this man's hands, and I told him so.

"Safe? Safe, did you say? I would snatch the veriest beggar on God's earth out of their clutches, if opportunity offered," he cried.

I drew out my purse, and gave him a few ryksdaalers, so that when the morning came he might buy in some food for us.

He was about to turn away, when I laid my hand upon his arm, to detain him.

"You said, Master de Muler, that it would be well for my parents to enter by way of Mistress Verreyck's front door. But what if the Familiars take possession of the house? Then it is impossible. They were prowling about when I came in by that way just now."

"I forgot that," the stableman answered, after a pause. "If you will come with me, I will show you how you can approach my stable, and if you think fit to bring them here to-night, I will be in waiting to open the door. You must knock thus." And so saying, he showed me the sort of signal that he would answer.

While he was speaking, a loud knocking came upon the stable door in the street, and hastening up the steps, he went to see what the summons meant, bidding me lower the stone into its place after he had gone. As for myself, I stood with the stone partly drawn downwards, but open wide enough to see and hear what was passing.

"Who goes there?" cried Geleyn.

"Spanish soldiers, who must needs stable their horses here," came the quick response.

Without a word the stableman flung open the door, and looked out.

"How many have you?" he asked, flashing the lantern's light into the street, as if to see who the visitors were that came so late.

"A dozen," came the answer. "How many can you accommodate?"

"Not more than four. I have already four horses here, and the stable will not hold more than eight. If you choose to leave four here, they shall be well looked after," answered Geleyn de Muler, making a virtue of necessity.

"Come now, that is the right sort of answer," said the

sergeant in charge. "Hither, Sauchez, with four, and let us hasten on, for I want to enjoy myself to-night."

"Have you brought your corn with you, sergeant?" said De Muler, after the clatter of the horses had ended, and they stood at the empty mangers, into which the hungry creatures looked expectantly.

"Nay, Master Netherlander, that is for you to find. But see that you stint them not, or this stable might be burned about your ears," the soldier answered, with a menace in his voice that was unmistakable.

"All right! but you'll give me a few guilders when you take your horses away?" De Muler asked, resolved to keep the Spaniards in good humour, although this was a burden he did not care to bear.

The sergeant turned on his heel with a laugh, and gave the order to proceed. Then the remaining horses clattered out of the stable-yard unwillingly enough, without a doubt, since they had done sufficient for one day. As the last horse passed out, Geleyn de Muler crossed the yard, and slammed the gates together, returning with a scowl upon his face.

Still, he was a lover of good horse-flesh, and when he looked at the superb chargers that had been billeted upon him, he did not vent his anger upon them, as some might have done.

"I'd rather be without you, but you are all very beautiful creatures," he said, going from one to another, and smoothing them on the flanks in turn. "But tired, I'll warrant, and hungry too."

He went to the corn bin, the cover of which fell back against the wall with a noisy clatter that the horses understood, for they pricked up their ears, and expressed their satisfaction with sundry snorts and whinnies. Before long there was the loud munching of oats, and the

crisp rustle of dry hay, as the tired chargers satisfied their hunger.

"Can I help you, Master de Muler?" said I, coming from my place of concealment, seeing that the door was safely fastened.

"It is not for such as you to be doing the drudgery of stable work, Master Ursulens," answered the stableman, dubiously, half disposed to accept the offer, since there were horses to clean down, that had been tramping within the last hour along roads which were thick with slush.

"For the time being, my friend, I am a countryman, as my garb declares, and you must needs accept my aid," I exclaimed, picking up a bucket, and going to the water-tank.

"As you will, and thank you too," was the grateful response. And for the next hour we were working and scrubbing away, ending our task by strewing clean straw in the stalls. That being done, we stood and looked about us for a little while.

"If you think I might slip out unseen, I will go and bring my parents, Master de Muler; for I do not think that Barbara Oliver's house is safe as a hiding-place for long."

"Very well, Master Ursulens. Then I will wait here, in readiness to let you in. Don't forget. Three knocks,—thus."

The streets were silent when I went out, and with cautious tread, I kept within the shadows as much as possible. Some of the street lanterns were burning low, for the watchmen, thinking more of the doings of the soldiery than of duty, had not given them much attention. I blessed their negligence, for this was so much in my favour. Two streets of moderate length had to be traversed, and in the third was the house where

Barbara Oliver dwelt. I came to it without seeing a single individual,—almost without hearing a sound, save the distant shouts of soldiers, who were holding high revelry, regardless of the hour.

Standing at Barbara's door, I gave the signal agreed upon, and before many minutes had passed, Gertrude and I, followed by my father and mother, were hastening along with stealthy tread. The streets were still silent, and not a living soul passed until we drew near to De Muler's stable. Then we heard the clatter of a horse's feet, and the sound ceased when the animal's master halted at De Muler's gate.

Drawing into a doorway where the black shadows were deep, so as to completely hide us, we waited to see what this meant. The man called for admittance, which De Muler responded to by opening the gate, and asking what was afoot.

"Are you sure you cannot manage to squeeze this horse in somewhere?" asked the new-comer. "The sergeant has left me to do what I can with him, and the poor creature is tired to death.

"I haven't an inch of room here, but take him yonder—ten doors down on the other side. The man who lives there has room, if you care to rouse him out of bed. But see that the horse has a good feed before you leave him, for Juan Gil is hard-fisted, and will not give the poor animal a single oat more than he can help."

"Juan Gil? That sounds like a Spanish name," said the soldier, somewhat doubtfully.

"What matter? You don't want to be tramping the streets all night, do you?"

"No!" cried the Spaniard, with an oath. "I'd take the horse to the devil, if only I could be quit of him, and join in the merry-making yonder."

And so saying, the man took the bridle, and led the charger away.

We waited where we were until we heard the horse's feet passing through Juan Gil's gateway. Then crossing the street, I gave the knocks on which we had agreed, and before many more minutes had passed, we were all safely sheltered in the secret chamber beneath the stable.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRANSPORT OF THE TREASURE.

SINCE Geleyn de Muler had so many horses to look after, no one thought it strange that he should employ a strongly built and capable young countryman to help him in grooming the creatures that had been entrusted to his care. Whenever the sergeant came round to see how the animals were faring, he gave me a gruff morning greeting, which I returned with as much easy-going indifference as I could command. It would have been madness to carry my heart on my sleeve; for since my very life depended upon a bit of dissimulation, it was well to look on as stolidly as possible, while the soldier walked from stall to stall to see how the horses were being tended.

Sometimes, indeed, I went with De Muler, when he took the horses out for an airing, and for exercise, and so much did the stableman win the confidence of the sergeant, that the Spaniard gave him an order for passing the gates, so that the chargers might have a scamper along the banks of the Scheldt.

During these rides we more than once met the landlord of *The Dutchman*, and learnt from him how things were going on in the country. Knowing that he was the very soul of honour, and could be trusted, I arranged with him to dispose of our treasure, for the conveyance

of which he hit upon a crafty plan. The soldiers were too intent on drunken revelries at night, and at other times too comfortable between fine linen sheets which the unhappy burghers' wives were compelled to provide them with, to trouble themselves about horses, or drill, or any other thing that pertained to the every-day occupation of Spanish troops. Nothing that the Eletto said had any effect upon them, and when on one occasion he ventured to punish a soldier for some unusual and inexcusable breach of discipline, the troops met together in the Town Hall square, and expressed their indignation by deposing the military dictator, and choosing another in his stead. The new Eletto, knowing that his drunken soldiery would brook no interference, simply allowed matters to take their course, and only punished those who were obnoxious to their fellows—a course of action which, I am bound to say, showed that he had his head screwed on the right way, as all the soldiers declared roundly, and continually.

Simon Tynpel, knowing this, agreed to meet us with a pack-horse at a farmhouse that stood in the bed of a polder, well out of sight of the walls of Antwerp, and on whose level swards we galloped the horses in our charge. The sergeant insisted upon the chargers going out full-saddled, and in that lay the practicability of our scheme, although it was fraught with danger, since discovery might come any day. We packed the holsters, not with pistols, but with rolls of gold and silver, filling our pockets likewise with as much as we could dispose of. Then, riding to the farm where Simon met us, we consigned the precious parcels to his care, stowing them safely in the bottom of the panniers, and covering the rolls with cabbages, or anything else that was reasonable and handy.

This went on for several days, and the rolls remaining in the brass-bound chest that lay in the cellar were very few indeed. Another journey, and the whole of the treasure would be safely stored in Simon Tympel's lumber-room.

It was a glorious morning when we saddled the horses; and having filled the holsters with the last rolls of gold, Geleyn de Muler and I mounted, and rode as usual to the city gates, each of us with a horse attached by a rein to our own saddles. So many journeys without any mishap at all had conspired to make us confident and careless, so that we approached the warders with an indifference that might well prevent anything like suspicion.

"Halt!" cried one of them.

We drew up, in obedience to the demand, and the man went into the watch-house, returning a moment later with the sergeant, who greeted us in a way that was usual with him, forgetful, evidently, that we were but Netherlanders.

"Good morning, my men!" he cried. "I want you, De Muler, so your man can go with the horses, and this soldier here will bear him company."

"Will your business hold until I return?" said Geleyn, with the greatest nonchalance, so that none could have suspected that he had any other motive than the mere desire to have a scamper across the greensward, which in many places was yet white with frost that glistened in the glad morning sun.

"That it will not," answered the sergeant, sharply. "Don Cristobal wants to see you about those horses you have in your stable,—why, I do not know; but I dare say he has some very good reasons. You will find him at the Bishop's palace if you set off at once, and failing him there, well, the servants will best know

where he may have gone. But his orders were imperative, and I do not care to cross him."

"I thought that the soldiers had no regard for the Grand Commander, nor for any of his officers," said De Muler, with assumed indifference that sat on him so naturally, that I wondered whether he really cared about our mission ending well or ill.

"That may be," said the other, with a laugh. "Possibly we do not care a jot for any of them; but let me tell you, we are not dead yet, and the Grand Commander and this Don Cristobal may some day be able to do us some nasty turns if we push matters too far; especially since it is rumoured that the Broad Council decided last night to grant the four hundred thousand crowns they refused to Don Luis when we entered the city a month ago. And between you and me, I shall not be sorry," he added in a lower tone, "for I thoroughly hate this sort of life, and would ten times rather be cutting your countrymen's throats, than aping the life of shopkeepers and the like."

Seeing that there was no escape, De Muler yielded with as good grace as possible. It was best to do so under such circumstances, for to kick against the pricks of Spanish tyranny was nothing less than madness. As the officer strolled off, my companion contrived to speak to me, while he looked to the strap of my saddle, as if to be sure that all was in order.

"Master Ursulens," he said, in a low voice that none could hear, "rather than let this soldier who goes with you discover the gold, or be enabled to tell his officers, kill him! If you do not, they will torture both you and me to extort our secret. And then, supposing that torture should wring out the secret, what of those whom we hold dear, who are at my home?"

“They shall have nothing to rue from anything that I may say,” I answered softly, but with the resolution of one who was face to face with danger, and would not be overcome by it, if any stout deed could bring about escape.

“True. But remember this,—better that one should die than eight of us!”

“He shall die first,” I responded, pressing my teeth together with an energy that made them ache.

“Have you arms?”

“A dagger, and a pistol hidden inside my jerkin,” said I, looking round to see whether any noticed that we were talking together. But everybody was indifferent, save the sergeant, who, having turned round, called out sharply, when he saw that De Muler was still on his horse.

“Come, get off that horse, and let the trooper jump into the saddle. You are slow enough in all conscience. One would think you cared more for the ride than for a walk to the Bishop’s palace.”

“You are not far wrong, sergeant,” cried Geleyn, with a laugh that disarmed suspicion. “A scamper along the river banks is preferable any day to a solemn confabulation, either with the Bishop or the Grand Commander’s nephew.”

And so saying, he dismounted, and gave the reins to the trooper, a strong fellow, who was every whit as tall and stoutly made as I was. I looked at him as he settled himself in his saddle, and gathered up the reins,—a sullen-faced, sulky fellow, who did not bid fair to be very good company. More than once he swore at his ill-luck in having to go on duty when he wanted to be off on pleasure; and the sergeant came in for a full share of the curses he indulged in freely.

But I took no notice of him, and turned my attention to the river, where boats manned by Spanish sailors were plying to and fro. Out in the very centre of the broad stream lay, drawn up in a long line, huge Spanish warships—twenty-two of them—under the command of Haemstede, one of the Spanish Vice-Admirals. The largest ship in the Beggars' fleet could not compare with the smallest in this Spanish squadron. They had come up the river to escape Admiral Boisot, who, some time before, had inflicted a crushing defeat on Haemstede, sinking some of the ships, and capturing several rich galleons that were bringing much-needed gold and war material for the Grand Commander. Not content with this victory, the Beggars had harassed the beaten Spaniards so much, that they came up to Antwerp, to find shelter in close proximity to the citadel, whose guns commanded the river, and might well be supposed to keep off the most venturesome enemy.

We had gone a couple of miles without exchanging a word with each other, when, quitting the river, I turned towards a plantation, behind which there was an open stretch of country that afforded admirable galloping ground for the horses. The splendid creatures seemed to know that they were brought here for this, and before long, having given them rein, they were tearing madly over the turf, which flew in all directions, as their iron hoofs cut sharply into it.

Then, having had their fill of this delight, they settled down again to a steady trot, until we came into the shelter of the trees hard by the farm-house where Simon Tympel awaited my arrival. But what could I do? This man would see me take the packets of coin from the holsters, and some very disagreeable questions would follow, and consequences which I could not

foresee. I made up my mind to return to Antwerp without any attempt to see Simon, leaving the precious packages in the holster. With this intention I led the way towards the plantation, thus to reach the beaten track to the city.

Hitherto the trooper had followed sullenly, unmoved by the beauties of the morning, and doubtless thinking of the riot and revelry he had been forced to quit at the bidding of his sergeant. But as the horses scampered down the broad green space between the trees, the man suddenly pulled up, with an exclamation of surprise. Turning round quickly, the hot blood mounted to my forehead, and my cheeks were warm at what I saw. The trooper had in his hand a roll of gold, which he was slowly unwrapping, and expressing the wonder while he did so, as to what lucky find he had made. When the golden coins showed themselves, and sparkled in the light that glinted through the young spring foliage, he slapped his thigh, and declared himself a lucky dog.

"I beg your pardon, friend," said I, drawing my horse nearer to the soldier. "That roll of coin is mine."

"What!" cried the trooper, with an incredulous look upon his face. "Yours? a paltry Hollander, and a groom into the bargain, to own a roll of golden ducats?"

And he laughed with a scorn that made me long to grip him by the collar, and hurl him to the ground. While he spoke he put his hand into the holster again, and found another, and yet a third.

The fellow was amazed, and blessed his good fortune. Had it not been for his insolence as well, I might have explained away the lucky find; but turning towards me, he bade me dive into my own holsters, and see whether there were other packages there also.

“Not so fast, Master Trooper,” said I, trying to be cool. “Let us talk over those rolls that you have in your own hands. They are mine.”

“Yours? So you said. Well, we will say they *were* yours. But now, Master Hollander, they are mine. Come now,” he added, insolently, “dive into those holsters, and let me see what other treasures you may have.”

I sat solidly, and looked him full in the face, wondering what I could do. I did not want to hurt this man. But suppose that when he went back to Antwerp, he should tell the story; inquiries would be made, and my arrest was certain. I knew what that meant. My disguise would be torn off, and I should stand revealed as Caspar Ursulens. On and on went my thoughts, coursing through my mind with lightning speed, and in a brief space, I saw the torture dungeon, a confession wrung from me, the same thing, perhaps, nay, certainly done to Geleyn de Muler, and those whom I loved. It was horrible! and when I looked up from this fearful day-dream, and saw the trooper staring at me, a shiver passed throughout my body.

Seeing that I did not move, the soldier swore at me roundly, and even as the torrent of oaths was falling from his lips, brought his charger against mine, so that his feet dashed against my leg, and struck my spur into my own horse's flanks. The animal, startled with the sudden pain, reared madly, and as he swerved round, while I sought to retain my seat, he brought his forefeet full into the face of the Spaniard, who threw up his hands, and tumbled backward to the ground. He fell in such a manner, that his head came with a crash upon the sod, and the body rolled over, and lay still.

When I had quieted my charger, I looked at the

Spaniard, waiting for him to rise, but he did not move. Dismounting, and fastening my horse to a branch, I went to the trooper, and knelt at his side. The man was dead. As I lifted him by the shoulders, his head fell over, limp and loose, showing me that in his fall he had broken his neck.

Rising to my feet, I stood with folded arms, and gazed down at him, wondering.

"I ought to regret this," I said, presently, and half aloud, "and yet I do not. He would have had to die, or the dear ones now in hiding would be in still greater peril. His blood is not on my own hands, as it would have been if we had fought. And had I died in the combat, instead of my opponent, there was just as great suffering in store for those in hiding, as if I had been carried back a prisoner to Antwerp."

When the dreadful possibilities passed through my mind, I could not help unfolding my arms and clasping my hands, while I thanked God that I was no murderer, and yet was free.

But what about this dead man? The coins that had been in his hands lay scattered on the green grass, and I stooped to pick them up, replacing the rolls in the holsters, and putting the loose money into my own pocket. The time thus taken up afforded me an opportunity to think. If the trooper lay where he was, someone would find him, word would be carried to the city, and soon it would be known that I was the last in this man's company. What would follow it was easy to foresee. I should be hunted down; but who could say what mischief might ensue?

"The body must be got rid of," I said to myself.

Then I looked around. Fifty yards away was a canal, the water of which was deep. I made up my mind to

throw him in there, and stooping down first to take the soldier's sword, and such arms as might be useful to me, I lifted the dead man and sought to carry him thither. He was very big, much more bulky than myself, and the weight of his armour, too, added so much to the burden, that I could only carry him a few feet, and then was forced to set him down. After that I contented myself with dragging the body on and on, until the canal side was reached, and my burden was rolled into the water. The distance from the ledge to the water itself was very small—a few inches only—so that there was little splash, and the dead trooper disappeared.

Springing to my feet, not waiting to see the water settle into its wonted stillness, I went back to where the horses stood. The two that had been in charge of the soldier had wandered on a little space, cropping the fresh green grass, but they gave me no trouble. Leading them back to the others, I mounted, and set off at a smart canter for the farm where Simon Tynpel was awaiting me. My charges needed no guiding hand as we scampered into the open ground, for they seemed to know that we were bound as usual for the stable, where a feed of corn awaited them. When we drew up outside the stable door, the little landlord of *The Dutchman* come trotting out with his morning greeting.

“How now, Master Caspar!” he exclaimed, when he saw that I was alone. “Where is De Muler?”

“In Antwerp — But ask no questions for a few moments. Take these, and stow them in your panniers.”

Simon said no more, but took the various packages, put them into a safe resting-place, and stood, looking up into my face with no small wonder, as I dismounted, and stood at my horse's head.

“ You are in a brown study this morning, my friend,” he said presently, when he found that I did not speak. “ Is all well with the friends at home ? ”

“ All well, Simon, if I can get away from this place quickly, and into safe hiding,” I whispered, stooping to reach his ear. “ Take me to a quiet place where we are certain to be alone.”

“ Then come this way,” said Simon, with a swift and inquiring glance into my face ; and so saying, he trotted on before me, his big wooden shoes coming down loudly on the paving stones of the path that led across the farm-yard.

“ Now we are alone,” he exclaimed, halting in the middle of a field. “ What is the trouble, my young master ? ” he asked, his big, kind face showing the utmost anxiety. “ Do not keep me in suspense, I implore you,” he added, when I hesitated for a moment or two.

“ I will not, Master Tynpel. I will begin from the beginning.” And so saying, I told him all that had happened since I left Geleyn de Muler’s stable.

When I had finished, the little man looked up at me, half anxiously, half approvingly.

“ That’s bad enough, but it might have been ten times worse. All that remains is to get away from here into a safe place, for you dare not show yourself in Antwerp. Suppose you take these horses across the canal, and set them adrift. They will have plenty to eat, and will not be likely to wander into the public way.”

“ I should like to take one of them, Simon, but I suppose you would call that stealing ? ”

“ Well, not exactly, seeing that they are Spanish property which has been bought with Flemish gold. Take the horse that has the least conspicuous marks

upon him,—that black one, I should say. There are scores like him, whereas that bay, with the white fetlock and the spot on his forehead, would be known at once. We will get rid of the harness, and I will find you some in my lumber-room,—and a change of clothing as well,” my companion added, looking at me critically. He was as cool as if we were a thousand miles from Antwerp, and had no need to think of danger.

We went back to the stable where the horses, without having been led thither, were standing at the mangers, munching the oats as well as their steel bits would allow. Taking off the bridles, and throwing them down on the stable floor in a heap, Simon suffered the creatures to enjoy their meal, which he had always provided for them during this transport of the treasure.

“Seeing that they have brought such a precious burden, they deserve something in return,” he would observe.

“And now for all these trappings. They may come in useful some day,” said Simon, whilst he unbuckled the girth-strap, and threw the last saddle to the ground. “They must not stay here, and it would be a sin to destroy them. There is a dry pit in yonder barn, covered with firewood and the like, and no one knows of its presence, save the farmer, his wife, and myself. Oom keeps quiet on the matter, in case he should want to get into hiding at any time, but he told me about it. Pick up what you can carry, and let us get it put away.”

So saying, Tympel took as much as his hands could hold, while I picked up two saddles and followed him. Clearing away a great pile of timber, which had been brought in to serve for the house-wife’s cooking, we saw

a trap-door, and opening it, dropped the saddles into the darkness, returning for the remainder. This done, telling me to stay where I was, and drop down into the cellar if any danger threatened, he went to the stable. There I heard him talking to the farmer, who had just come in, his wife and sons being busy in the fields. What he said I did not hear, but in a little while some horses' feet clattered on the stones outside, and looking through the window, I saw Tympel and Oom leading three of the steeds round to the back of the house.

They were away half-an-hour, or thereabouts, and then Simon called to me to come without delay, since time was going fast. I gave him a lift on to his own horse, and he rode forward at a good pace. Leaping on the bare back of the horse that was called Padilla, and which I appropriated without much compunction, I rode after the landlord, guiding the charger with a stable bridle which the farmer gave me. The beautiful creature fell into the new humour pleasantly enough, while I trotted him alongside Simon Tympel's shaggy mare. As for Simon, he whistled and sang as though the Spaniards no longer troubled him.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SPANISH LADY.

My greatest worry, at this unexpected turn of affairs, was the impossibility of returning to Antwerp, and consequently my absolute inability to make any arrangements for the escape of those who were in hiding beneath Geleyn de Muler's stable. The thought of my impotence and their danger was so depressing, that Simon's hilarity irritated me beyond expression, and at last I implored him to be silent.

"But why, Master Ursulens?" he asked, his big broad face full of surprise, as if he thought that trouble need never make a man gloomy.

"I cannot think while you shout and sing like that."

"Think? What do you want to think about while you are in God's free air, when everything in Nature is so full of gladness and of song? I cannot be silent when the earth is so gay."

"Do you call that gaiety which is transpiring in the city behind us?" I asked, in an irritated tone. "What are the songs of birds to me when parents and sister and friends are in peril of their lives?"

"They are safe enough, Master Ursulens," cried Tympel, his face broadening into a confident smile. And then he added: "Did you not leave them in God's hands?"

Dear little man, and good to boot! His body was warped and distorted, but his soul was shaped in the truest mould, and his face rebuked me. Without another word, I tried hard to settle down into content and confidence. Doubtless my face showed serenity, for when he looked at me presently, he nodded approval, and went on with his cheery chatter, or his songs. But down in my own heart was a perplexing care that would not be ignored.

It was fully noon when we drew up in the stable-yard of *The Dutchman*, and as good fortune would have it, the inn was empty, save for one of the tapsters, who lay the whole length of the settle in the kitchen, snoring lustily. Holding up his finger, Simon crossed the sanded floor cautiously, while I followed with no less care, until we came to the lumber-room. Unlocking the door, of which he had the key in readiness, he whispered as I entered:

“No one saw you enter, so we will change the countryman into a respectable burgher who may readily expect lodgment and attention, and none shall be the wiser. If you care to listen, you will hear the blows of hammers out yonder, which show that the other men are busy, and do not know that I brought anyone in with me. Now let me see. I have a soldier’s suit on that shelf, but you wont care for that. I can dress you as a Flemish peasant, and here is the suit which will about fit such a burly fellow as you are. Or you can don the garb of the Boschkerlen, only you are rather too big to be one of the Men of the Woods, as we call those broom-makers. Here is a pedlar’s suit. What say you to that? Let me try it for length.” And shaking the contents of the bundle on to the floor, he picked up the breeches, and held them against me, to measure. They were the right

size, and that reminded him that the man he bought them of, was a big fellow like myself, who, being hard up for ready cash, disposed of his spare suit for a trifle.

“That will do admirably, if I can but fit up my horse with panniers in which to carry my wares,” said I.

“Leave that to me. I have enough to serve you, so far as appearances go; for if you care to venture, say to the Isle of Bommel, where the Prince of Orange is, you need not halt to sell anything at the cottages.”

“You are doubly kind, Master Tympel,” I responded gratefully. “As for my future plans, we will talk them over; but meanwhile I will discard this country suit, and turn pedlar.”

“Do so, then, while I go and stop that fellow’s snoring, and bring in the pack that holds your treasure.”

Before long he was shouting in the ears of the tapster with a voice that made me wonder where such a little body could store so much sound. Then the sleeper awoke, and going across the kitchen with an unsteady gait, and yawning loudly, he followed after his master.

By the time Simon returned, I was in full travelling order, even to the short-handled whip that pedlars used. Half-an-hour later, while the house was empty—for the tapster had been sent on an errand to get him out of the way—Padilla, my beautiful war-steed, was provided with the ragged harness of a pack-horse, while the packman’s boxes lay in the passage, ready to be opened if anyone desired to see what I had on sale.

This had not long been done when a Spanish cavalier and his lady, with some attendants, drew up at the door, and called for wine. Seeing me standing in the passage, making, for appearance’ sake, a bow to men whom I would rather have served with my sword, the lady demanded to see my wares.

“With pleasure, señora,” I exclaimed; and drawing out the heavy load to the door-stone, I threw open the box, and bade her tell me what I could show her.

“I know not, so you must needs display what you have, master pedlar. I want no peasant’s trash,” she added, when I took up a pair of wooden shoes. Short and impatient words escaped her lips, as one article after another followed, only fit for peasants with whom I might traffick in the villages; but her attention was fixed at last when I began to take out of the pack such things as were more to her liking.

“Here is a belt, señora, fit for a Spanish grandee, and this is a purse that might hold many a ducat. Here you see a musical pipe; here a belt and dagger, a pair of slippers, a hood and gloves. Would you like a mirror, señora? Or silken hose? I have here a lady’s head-dress, such as the women of quality wear in the Flemish towns, and while you may not care to wear it yourself, it might interest the ladies of Spain when you return to your native land.”

“Stay, master pedlar, I will look a little more closely at that head-dress.” And as she spoke, I gave into her hand for inspection a woman’s head-gear then in vogue, covered with thin and beautifully-engraved plates of gold wrought in divers shapes. It was very rich, and very valuable, such as my own mother wore; such, too, as I had seen Dorothy’s mother wear, when Don Cristobal was visiting the Burgomaster’s palace.

“That is very beautiful if it be of true gold,” said the lady. “What is your price?”

“It is gold of the best quality, señora, and should be sold for a hundred ducats.”

“A hundred ducats! What say you, my lord?” she added, speaking to her companion, whose face had been

carelessly turned from me when the little cavalcade first rode up to the inn door. But as she appealed to this bravely dressed grandee, I looked up to see him, and to hear what he had to say. To my discomfort, the Spaniard was none other than Don Cristobal de la Fuente. At first I feared that he would recognise me; but I was beneath his notice, for this man cared too little for what he called Flemish cattle, to scrutinise the face of a common pedlar. Instead of answering at once, he turned the head-dress round and round, while the señora waited impatiently.

“Come, my lord, do you not think that your wife may wear such a bit of head-gear as that, when at the Court of Madrid?”

The words set my heart beating madly. Instantly I thought of all that had transpired in the past, of his having asked of Van der Fabry the hand of his daughter Dorothy, the maiden I loved as I loved my own soul. It was in marriage that he asked for her!

I sought to quieten the storm that was within, by supposing that Don Cristobal had married a Spanish lady since then; but that thought was soon dispelled; for when the lady purchased the head-dress, she turned to one in the group,—a dark-haired, dark-skinned, black-eyed boy of seven, and asked him what he would like to have.

“What would you like your father to buy for you, Carlos?”

“That gold-headed whip, mother,” was the child’s answer.

“Will you buy our little Carlos such a costly thing as that, Cristobal?”

“What would he do with it?” asked Don Cristobal, drinking off the cup of wine that Simon had brought out to him.

"I would use it on my pony, father," said the boy. Oh, pray let me have it, it is so beautiful, and I have no whip as yet."

"Then you may have it, Carlos; but see to it that you do not beat Sesso too hard, or he may rear and throw you."

"Throw me?" cried the child, reaching out for the whip, and bringing it with cruel force upon the little Arab steed, which, startled by the unexpected blow, reared, and would have thrown his rider. But the boy held his seat securely.

"There, father, what say you to that?" cried Carlos, as he quieted the pony.

I looked from the father to the boy. There were in them both the same thin lips and cruel mouth, that had no thought of pain in others, as this little incident declared. It showed me the more what a scoundrel this Don Cristobal was, for the child was, without a doubt, the son of the man who had asked for Dorothy in marriage.

My passion was almost master of me, and should have been had we only met alone, when, face to face, I could have chastised him for daring to lift his eyes to one whose ruin was nought to him. As it was, I took the money which one of the company handed to me, and then drew back to replace the goods that lay strewn about the door of the inn.

"That man shall die rather than have my own sweet Dorothy," I said to myself, as I knelt beside the pack, and began to put the various articles into it.

When, later on, I went into the kitchen, calling to the tapster to bring in my pack, I flung myself into the settle, and began to think.

"Let me but devise some way of getting my parents

and Gertrude out of Antwerp, and see them into safe keeping, and I will away to England. Then, Burgomaster or no Burgomaster, his daughter shall be mine, and safe from the clutches of that Spanish lord. And when the opportunity comes, he shall pay heavily for harbouring such shameful thoughts concerning her."

CHAPTER XX.

THE RANSOM OF ANTWERP.

IT had been my intention to start away at dawn on the following day, so as to put as much space between me and Antwerp as possible; but this meeting with Don Cristobal, added to the fact that neither he nor any other had recognised me, induced me to fall in with Simon Tympel's suggestion, that I should stay a day or two at the inn. Possibly I might be able then, he said, to formulate some plan that would end in bringing my friends out of the city; and as for myself, there was the same hiding-place at my disposal which I had used before.

While I loitered round, my thoughts were busy, but apparently to little purpose. I had not courage enough to go into Antwerp by the city gates, although it was quite the customary thing for peasants, and farmers, and pedlars, and petty traders to go in and out, even while the mutinous army held the place. Food was just as necessary as ever, alike to friend or foe, and the soldiers were as much in need of what the country people could supply, as any of the citizens. Consequently, there was a continuous stream of peasants who carried into Antwerp the produce of their orchards and pasture lands. Scores of pack-horses went past the door of

The Dutchman, laden with potatoes, mangcorn bread—the rye bread of the Netherlands—flax, the fruits in season, bundles of hay, sacks of wheat, and much besides that came off the farms in the district.

“You could go in with the crowd,” said Simon, “and no one would be any the wiser. Come with me, for I want to dispose of these roots and fodder.”

“No, Simon,” I answered. “I have no fancy, just yet, for putting my head into the noose, as I am likely to do, since that Spaniard has not turned up to answer at the roll-call. I will stay where I am to think of my plans while you are gone.”

“As you will. Settle down comfortably, ask for what you want, and if any trouble threatens, you know what to do.”

While Simon was away I saw to the comfort of my horse, Padilla, and after I had given him an airing, taking care to see that no one was about who was likely to know him, I wandered to the river-side to while away the hours until the landlord of *The Dutchman* should return. I was glad that he had gone, for he could assure Geleyn de Muler that I was safe, and get to know how things were faring with those who lay in hiding.

The Scheldt was fairly clear, an occasional barque going out with the sluggish tide, or a fisherman's boat plying in mid-stream. Overhead there was sometimes the loud beating of wings, and looking up, one saw a clumsy stork flying by, intent on finding another feeding-ground. Then would come, from time to time, the sea-gulls, that skimmed along the surface of the waters, occasionally diving beneath them for small fishes, which they brought up in their slender beaks.

On the other side of the broad and majestic river was a hamlet, whose houses shone in the bright sunshine,

their white woodwork giving them a pleasant look, while the sun came back dazzlingly from the spotless windows. Behind these again lay the brickfields; but the brick-kilns, with their queer balconies and black roofs, lay idle. There was rather need for pulling down than to build up while the Spaniards held the land.

All this was pleasant to look upon, had there not been other things to call for one's attention. Time went, while I pondered on the possibilities of rescue for those who were dwelling in De Muler's stable. But thought lagged. My ingenuity was not equal to this dire emergency. It was sunset when I rose from my seat at the base of a willow-tree, whose graceful branches drooped nearly to the water's edge. When I drew near to the inn, I heard Simon's voice trolling out that favourite ballad of his—*The Ghent Paternoster*; but when he caught sight of me, he broke off in the middle, knowing that I did not care for it. He beckoned to me; whereupon looking carefully about, and seeing that the way was clear, I walked across the open space, and stood at his side.

"Everything goes well, Master Caspar," he said, speaking in a low tone, lest there should be anyone within hearing. "I will tell you all about it when I am having my dinner, which I want sadly."

So saying, he turned to the stable, towards which the pack-horses went most willingly, while I strolled down the passage into the kitchen, and awaited his arrival.

When Simon came in, he sat down to a steaming dish of vegetable broth, which he made short work of, and another quickly disappeared; but during this time he would not speak, although he saw how impatient I was to hear the news. It pleased him at last, however, to speak, and this is what he had to tell:

He had gone up to the city gate and entered without hindrance. Then having disposed of his produce, which found a ready buyer, he left his horses at an inn, and went to Geleyn de Muler's stable. He found the stableman busily grooming his own horses, but, for a reason which Simon knew as well as anyone, the other four stalls were empty.

"Where are the Spaniards' horses, De Muler?" he asked, in all simplicity.

"That is best known, Master Tympel, to the trooper who went out with them in Master Ursulens' company, and I would give something to know what had become of them," was the answer.

"Then what would you say if I told you that one horse is in my stable, the other three wandering somewhere in the polders, and the Spaniard lying quietly at the bottom of the canal, with a broken neck?"

"I would know first," said De Muler, "what has come of the young master."

"He is safe and sound, my good friend, a veritable pedlar who has already done a stroke of business with no less a personage than Don Cristobal de la Fuente, whom every Antwerpian knows too well. What say you to that?"

"What say I to that? Why, I thank the good Lord with all my heart," answered De Muler fervently, and he begged Simon to tell what he knew.

The landlord was going on to give the complete conversation between himself and the stableman, but I cut him short, and begged him to tell me how the fugitives fared,—for such indeed they were.

"Set your mind at rest, Master Ursulens. I saw them, and told them everything, and bade them be patient, for in due course you would devise some means

for their escape. They sent you their blessing and their love, saying that they would await your time."

That was enough. So long as I knew that they were safe, I was willing to lean back in the settle, and suffer Simon to wag his tongue to his heart's content. And he did so to some purpose, although at first I paid no heed to what he said.

But after a while I was all attention, for he had that to tell me which was well worth hearing. When he had left my parents he took his way to the Town Hall Square, where a strange sight was to be seen. The soldiers were there, crowding the open space, counting gold in a frenzy of delight. The men who before had cursed the citizens, now called them right good fellows, and Don Luis de Requesens, who had been the butt of their wit, and the recipient of curses that made one's flesh creep to hear them, was now the idol of the soldiery.

"What did it mean?" I asked, when Simon paused for breath; for voracious eating and fast talking combined to render him breathless, and the little man had to put down his knife and fork, and lean back a while.

"It meant," he said, presently "that the Broad Council, eager to get rid of the mutineers who were exhausting the patience of the citizens, found the 400,000 crowns, so that the Grand Commander was able to pay the soldiers almost in full. It was the first money some of the men had handled for nearly three years, and the majority of them were delirious with joy."

"And what followed?"

"The maddest sight you ever saw. The money which the Broad Council found was not sufficient to satisfy all demands, and Don Luis contracted a loan of cloth and other goods, to an enormous value, and so made up

the deficiency with these. Each soldier received a ticket, and went with it to various shops to purchase what they fancied. The month of revelry had not mended their rags, and most of them had clothing scarce fit enough to cover the nakedness of their limbs. But now they came out of the shops and warehouses clad in finery that beggars all description. I saw one tall fellow who aped the Burgomaster in his dress, and over his shoulders hung a chain of gold. The long cloak, however, fell back as he walked, showing his bare legs peeping out at the gaps in his hosen. Then another came strutting along, and you knew it was a man by reason of his shaggy beard. He was tall and slim, and had taken it into his head to wear a woman's dress, such as they use in England, so I was told. The lower part of his body was hidden with petticoats that stood out over the hips a foot or more, while from his neck came an interminable stomacher, from each side of which an enormous farthingale jutted out horizontally, while a huge ruff was round his neck, standing up like a peacock's tail. You never saw such a sight, Master Ursulens, when this lean-faced soldier walked along the streets with mincing steps, while his comrades roared with laughter as he passed.

“ Gradually the men came out into the streets, dressed as the fancy took them, and went to the Place of the Meer, where, under orders from the Eletto, the purveyors of the city had provided a meal that was fit for the richest dons. The banquet, for such it well deserved to be called, did not last long, for the men were eager to get to the gambling-tables, from which, for well-nigh three years, they had been kept back for want of money. Some cleared the banquet-tables with a sweep of the hand, and costly dishes and vases were smashed as they

fell upon the stones. Others, for want of room, laid hands upon the drums, and used them as tables for gambling away the gold for which they had toiled, and marched, and fought, and murdered. As I came away, some of the men, inflamed with wine, and casting all restraint aside, were passing from rough good-nature and hilarity into mad anger, when others won their gold and left them penniless. Hard by where I stood, one, who had lost all, and had even bartered the velvet suit he wore, sprang to his feet with a cry of disappointment. He glared a moment at the winner; then, drawing a dagger from his belt, plunged the weapon into the other's heart before anyone could hinder him. God grant that Antwerp may not suffer for this mad revelry!" exclaimed Simon, as he rose from the table and left me.

Now and again, as opportunity offered during the evening, Simon told me more and more of what he had seen in the city, so that when I went to bed, I was too anxious to sleep. I thought of those who were dear to me, and of all my fellow citizens; for who could tell where this frenzy of the Spanish troops would end? A rash act on the part of a burgher, or a drunken suggestion of a soldier, would serve to turn Antwerp into a shambles, in comparison with which even King Philip's pious butcheries would be as naught. Many a time during the night I got out of bed, and went to the window to look in direction of the city. My fear of rapine and fire caused me to gaze towards Antwerp, to see whether there was any glow in the sky; but all was dark, and I went back again to bed, thankful that as yet the worst had not come.

As morning approached I fell asleep, but was awakened in broad daylight by a loud knocking at the door of my chamber.

"Who calls?" I cried.

"Simon Tympel. Rouse yourself and dress, Master Caspar. Then come out into the open, and you shall see a sight that will set your heart beating."

I leapt out of bed and dressed with such haste, that I was soon standing on the threshold of *The Dutchman*, wondering where the landlord was. There was nothing that I could see out of the ordinary—no sounds that told of disturbance—merely the morning songs of birds that had begun the business of the day. Impatient at Simon's absence, I tramped up and down the passage, pausing now and again at the door to watch the flight of lapwings, or listen for any sign of the landlord's whereabouts, since he did not answer to my calls.

He came in sight at last, appearing among the trees that lay towards the river, and when he saw me he waved his hand for me to come. I dashed across the road, and over the greensward that was wet with dew, and stood beside him.

"What is it?" I exclaimed.

"Come and see," he answered, turning round, and hurrying through the woodland, until he pulled up on the river's bank.

"There! What say you to that?" Simon cried, pointing across the waters.

As I looked, I saw what did in all reality set my heart beating, and I no longer wondered at my companion's excitement. Coming up the broad Scheldt, slowly, and with the tide, was a fleet—some thirty ships, or thereabouts, each one flying the flag of the Beggars, and the banner of the Prince of Orange. It was a brave sight, but one that filled me with anxiety. Did the Admiral know that the Spanish fleet was in Antwerp harbour, and that 4000 Spanish troops were in the city,

ready to line the dikes, and batter his ships with their great guns?

There was a wherry fastened to a tree close by, and without waiting to tell Simon my intentions, I hurried to it, loosened the painter, and stepped in. But Simon, quick to divine my intentions, and flinging himself full length on the wet grass, grasped the gunwale, and held on to the boat.

"What are you going to do?" he asked

"Row out to the Admiral's ship, and tell him that the Spanish fleet is in the harbour. Admiral Boisot may not know," I answered.

"That's right enough; but where are your oars?"

I looked into the boat, and laughed, even in my anxiety, for they were not there.

"Jump out, Master Caspar, and run to the lumber-room. You will find them there in the corner behind the door. You will go at a greater speed than I can."

Leaping out, while Simon took hold of the rope to keep the boat from drifting into the stream, I ran to *The Dutchman*, heedless of some peasants who were standing about the door, wondering why there was no one about, to serve them with their morning cup of beer, and presently I came out with the oars on my shoulder.

"Where is Simon?" shouted one, as I dashed across the road.

"Down by the river," I called back, without halting, and in a short time Simon and I were pulling for the ship that carried the Admiral's colours. Boisot was on the deck when we climbed aboard, but did not know me in my new disguise. He stared at us in amazement, and more especially at the odd little figure at my side.

"You do not know us, Admiral?" I asked.

"No."

“ This is Simon Tynpel, landlord of *The Dutchman*, and I am Caspar Ursulens, son of Goswyn Ursulens, your old friend at Antwerp.”

He looked at me keenly, and then, grasping my hand, shook it warmly. That not being enough, he drew me to his bosom and kissed me fondly,—a strange thing for one of such a fiery temperament and warlike spirit do. Then I called to mind his tenderness and his embrace when we had first met.

“ What does this disguise mean ? ” he asked, as he let me go. “ Mischief ? ”

“ Scarcely mischief on my part, but plenty of mischief on the part of the Spaniards, for my life is in jeopardy. But I came not to talk of that, but to warn you that the Spanish Admiral Haemstede is in Antwerp harbour with twenty-two ships of war, and that the mutinous army of Spain still holds the city.”

“ So I heard,” Boisot answered, and a pleasant smile passed across his war-worn face. “ It was kind of you, Master Caspar, and had I not known, you would have done me real service. I take it just the same, and when I see the Prince I will tell him how you sought to serve me.”

My face flushed with pleasure. He might very well have received stale news churlishly, but he added quickly :

“ You can even serve me now, since you doubtless know how the Spaniard has disposed his fleet.”

I told the old warrior all I knew, alike concerning the fleet and army, and answered his many questions as best I could,—not an easy thing to do, seeing that I was nothing of a seaman. But I made him understand, as I pointed out the position of the fleet on the chart that was spread out on the cabin table.

“That will do admirably, Master Caspar,” he exclaimed at last. “Now I have them, and they shall not escape me this time, as they did at Bergen. What say you?” he added, a few moments later, after he had made some marks upon the chart; “will you go with me into the fight?”

“I will with pleasure,” I answered, delighted to have the chance of repaying, in part, the mischiefs that the Spaniards had done to me and mine.

“Then go to my steward, and bid him provide you with an outfit that beseems a Beggar of the Sea. It will suit you better than a pedlar’s garb.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIGHT IN THE HARBOUR.

THE decks were already cleared for action, and every Beggar ready for the fight when Simon and I clambered on board *The Red Hound*, as the Admiral's flagship was called. When I came out of the cabin, wearing for the first time the garb of the sea-patriots of the Netherlands, I found that Simon was gone ashore, and that the ships, aided by breeze and tide, were far up the river. Every man was standing at his post, and there was a little group about the main mast, ready to haul up signals to the other ships in the fleet.

While we were approaching the city, Admiral Boisot asked me how my parents sped, and I told him the whole story.

"And where does De Muler's stable lie?" he asked.

"A hundred yards behind the Town Hall, and not far removed from the quay."

"And would you know the short ways to the place?" he asked, carelessly.

"In the blackest night," I answered.

He said no more, and I wondered why he asked. But there was no room left now for further thought of this sort.

"Pass the word for prayers throughout the fleet," cried

the Admiral, as we saw in the distance, across the neck of land that marked the winding of the Scheldt, a forest of masts from each of which there fluttered the flag of Spain. Before many minutes had passed, the men on board *The Red Hound* were on their knees, and the chaplain reading one of Marot's hymns. It would have been sung, according to custom, but the Admiral desired that we should take the Spaniards by surprise, and the voices of so many sturdy sea-warriors would have given timely notice of our approach. Then came the prayer in which all joined in low tones, and that ended, the men rose from their knees, ready for the daring venture. There was even then a hush, so that the waters could be heard as they beat against the vessel, and the sails and cordage flapped and strained while the ships went forward before the breeze.

No one on board the Spanish ships had noticed our advance, for it was the usual thing for ships to pass in and out of port with the rising and outgoing tides. But as *The Red Hound* rounded the point, well ahead of the other ships of the Beggars' fleet, the Admiral ran up the signal for a fight at close quarters, to be begun as soon as he should give the word.

By this time, however, our presence had been discovered, and the Spanish Admiral made such preparations as he could for the conflict that had been forced upon him so unexpectedly. We could see the Spaniards on board the great warships running to and fro in frantic haste, seeking to clear the decks, and place themselves in position for a desperate fight. Had they been well led, the result would have been different perhaps; but opposed to such a dashing leader as Boisot had always proved himself to be, there was everything to shake the nerve of the Spaniards.

As we drew nearer, *The Red Hound* forging ahead in splendid manner, the Beggars' Admiral gave the order: "Run up the signal to keep close to the left bank, so as to place the Spanish ships between us and the garrison troops."

This being done, the ship led on, the men on board (heedless of the shower of shot from the Spanish ships as she passed) raising a mighty cheer. Reserving our fire, we went forward until we came opposite to the galleon that carried the flag of Admiral Haemstede. When *The Red Hound* got into position, she poured in a terrific broadside, the timbers of the giant sides of the *Salvador* splintering as the shots struck her. Before the noise of *The Red Hound's* guns had died away, the Beggars who were aloft fired upon the Spaniards that crowded on the deck, and wrought endless mischief and confusion among them. Boisot had placed picked men in the rigging, and every shot seemed to tell; for immediately after the volley we heard the yells and shrieks of wounded men.

A second broadside followed, and yet another, each of which was returned; but while our own shots smashed into the galleon, and made her shiver and tremble, we had but few casualties on board *The Red Hound*. Two men in our rigging were brought down with musket balls, and fell with a sickening crash upon the deck, where they lay dead, while one who stood at the wheel had his head shot clean off with a ball from one of the Spaniards' great guns. But otherwise, for a time, we escaped wonderfully. The danger, however, soon became greater. Spanish shot smashed into our timbers, causing the ship to quiver from bow to stern, tearing into the sails, breaking off yard-arms, and doing much damage.

By the time we had poured in our third broadside, the

active little ships of the Beggars' squadron had come into action, some passing the flagship to engage the Spaniards farther down the line; and soon there was a perfect storm of shot and shell, and a long-continued babel of screams, and shrieks, and Spanish curses, while the Beggars became hoarse with exultant cries, as one galleon after another displayed signals of distress. But for the increasing volume of the cheers of our own men, we had little idea how matters were progressing, for the smoke became so dense as to hide all else from our view, save the ships in our immediate neighbourhood.

But Boisot was in no sense disconcerted. His face was flushed, and his eyes gleamed as he watched the effect of the battering shots from the guns of his ship. While the fight was raging, he paused in his walk to and fro, and stood at my side; but my attention was fixed on a Spaniard in the *Salvador's* rigging. He was levelling his arquebuse full on Boisot.

"Stoop, Admiral!" I cried.

He heard me, and ducked his head instantly, not waiting to question at such a time. A shot crashed into the mast, hard by the spot where we were standing. Had the brave old seaman not moved, the ball must have gone through his brain. But he displayed wonderful pluck, and turned to look at the splintered wood with a nonchalance that was astounding.

"I thank you most sincerely, Master Ursulens, for that timely warning," said he. "It was most providential that I took you on board. Now we will get to closer quarters, and board the enemy."

But even while he was speaking, one of the Beggars standing near had seen what the Spaniard had done, and, levelling his own arquebuse, fired. The Spaniard threw up his hands, and, toppling over, got entangled in

the rigging, where he hung head downwards for a moment or two. Then his body slid into the river, and we hurried forward to see the splash of the waters. I could not help wondering, as we looked over the side, that in the midst of so much carnage and turmoil we should have such thought for trifles.

Presently we came alongside, and then realised how great the odds against us really were. *The Red Hound* seemed to be but a dog standing by the side of a huge elephant; for, while our own ships lay low in the waters, the towering poops of the Spanish vessels gave them the appearance of floating castles. But the Beggars had no thought for differences like these. They climbed up the sides of the ships with lusty cheers, swarming on to the decks, where a fierce hand-to-hand fight began. When I stood on the deck, helped thither by the men who crowded up behind, aided by others in their turn, it seemed to me that the Spaniards had lost all heart for fighting, and cowered behind anything that would afford them shelter. The Beggars, with exultant faces, and an absolute fearlessness that was amazing, bore down upon them, led by Boisot, whose sword laid many a Spaniard low. Once the Admiral fell, for the deck was slippery with blood, but his men were about him in an instant, and raised him to his feet.

There is, however, little need for me to tell the story of the fight. The Beggars fought as they had ever done, with a pluck and resolution that overcame all resistance, until the deck resembled a shambles, and Spaniards lay dead by scores. My countrymen had faced death so many times that it had no dread for them. Their first, their last, their every thought from the time they took their oath, was what should prompt every true patriot,—to secure their country's freedom, even though the pur-

chase of it should include their own lives. It was wonderful how these men were animated with the unswerving resolution to offer themselves on the altar for their country's weal. The spirit of self-sacrifice possessed them absolutely, and they had before them the glorious example, not only of their captains, but of the leader of us all—the Prince of Orange. He had forfeited everything for the common cause—wealth, friends, position, comfort, and I know not what besides. And if that were so, who should hang back ?

So it came about that the fight in the harbour of Antwerp ended in a splendid victory for us. The Spanish flags were hauled down ; the Spanish Admiral, whose bravery was beyond question, had no alternative but to surrender, for he lay sorely wounded on the deck. While he lay there, he sought to escape the disgrace of capture, and tried to shoot himself. As I saw him raise the pistol to his head, I struck the weapon down with my sword. It exploded, and the shot entered the brain of a man who stood near the wheel, and the poor fellow fell dead.

Boisot, when Haemstede had given up his sword, issued orders for *The Red Hound* to pass along the line behind our other ships, to see how matters were going, and to render help where necessary ; but, seeing that the captains held their own, he suffered them to fight after their own fashion. As the fresh breeze caused the smoke to drift away, we could see, here and there, the Spanish flag hauled down, and the Prince's banner take its place, until, when the fight had waged a couple of hours, or it may have been more, we counted fourteen galleons that had changed hands. The others managed to escape, and got directly under the heavy guns of Fort Callo, where they were so secure, that Boisot, having enough on hand

to look after his prizes, did not attempt to dislodge them.

The Spanish prisoners were not so many as one would have thought for. Terrified at the prospect of reprisals for their wanton cruelties, many of the enemy, rather than fall into the Beggars' hands, jumped overboard, and, as they did so, many of us ran to the ship's side and looked over to see how they fared. The wild leap proved in most cases to be their destruction, for the majority of them, weighted with armour and not being able to swim, sank after a short struggle.

A mighty shout rang along the line, when the din of battle ceased, and the smoke had cleared away, showing how complete the victory had been. There was still great peril, however, from the guns that were ranged against us in the forts, and on the dikes along which the Spanish soldiers stood. But Boisot, grasping the situation, ranged the prisoners along the decks of the captured ships, which he kept between his own vessels and the dikes. There was then no danger, since the Spaniards dared not fire, lest they should kill their countrymen. After that the Beggars turned the great guns of the warships against the soldiers on shore, and, charging them with grape-shot, did terrific damage with the repeated broadsides that swept the Spanish lines. All that the enemy could do was to draw out of range and look on, infuriated, but helpless.

The day was well on when the fight was over, but by the time that noon had come, our men were busy overhauling their prizes, and taking away what was valuable. As we walked between the decks we saw that we had made a rich haul. There were small arms in abundance, pistols, carabines, petronels, dragons, arquebuses, pikes, and swords. We also found gorgets, gauntlets, steel caps,

clothing for the ragged and disreputable-looking soldiers who had once been the pride of Europe, and were so now in point of valour. It was a magnificent prize, to say nothing of the great guns, and a quantity of shot and powder which came in most opportunely. But the men's eyes gleamed when the treasure-chests were hauled out of their hiding-places, and, on being broken open, proved to be full of Spanish dollars, enough to serve the Prince's wants in his wars for the next six months. Not one man appropriated a coin for his own use, for every one had his country's good at heart, and none asked for prize-money. I wondered much that so great a quantity of money should be on board, seeing that the soldiers were in mutiny; but the Admiral suggested that the Grand Commander had bade Haemstede keep it on board, so that the citizens of Antwerp—who had already made many of the men compulsory presents of rich suits, some of satin and velvet, and some of cloth of gold—should pay the Spaniards instead, and thus save this money.

One disappointment was in store. The fleet was sadly in want of food, and the captains hoped to find a great quantity on board the Spanish ships; but when the stores were overhauled there was intense disgust. The biscuit was weevily and mouldy, the salt beef and pork had become rancid, the cheese was half putrid, the wine was sour and muddy, while the water in the casks was foul enough to lay every man on board low with dysentery. Indeed, when our men went into the holds of the galleons, they found scores too ill to move.

Boisot and the captains assembled to consider what should be done in order to obtain a fresh supply of food, and some suggested that a strong force should be landed at nightfall, to take sufficient from the warehouses on the quay.

“But that means robbery of our own countrymen, since they keep the stores,” exclaimed Boisot.

“There need be no robbery, Admiral,” said one of the captains. “We have plenty of treasure, and in each case we can send the traders an equivalent in money for what we take. That could be done secretly, and in a way that we may devise later.”

“That is well, Kapell, and it shall be as you suggest. At nightfall I will land a thousand men, having others in readiness to support them, and then take what we need.”

The council broke up shortly after, having made the necessary arrangements. As the last captain got down to his boat I went to the state cabin, and asked to speak with the Admiral alone.

“What is your will, Master Caspar?” he inquired.

“Could you spare a score of men, when we go ashore, to bring my parents on board?”

“To be sure I will, lad, and ten score if needs be, for they shall no longer live in fear of falling into the hands of those Spanish devils. Leave the matter with me to arrange, but be ready for the venture when the time comes.”

Grasping the Admiral by the hand, I thanked him heartily.

“How could I do otherwise, when you have dared so much?” he exclaimed. “And think, lad; I have told no man on earth before. When your mother was a girl, tender and beautiful, I loved her, aye, as I loved my very life. But she never knew, and while I was at sea your father married her. Ah, well! it was something to know that she was happy! To see her thus was next best to calling her my own, for to make her glad would be everything to me. She shall be free from jeopardy this

very night, or I will die. But never tell her what I have said." And, as he spoke these last words, his eyes grew dim with tenderness. Now I understood why he had looked at me so strangely when I first saw him, and why he had borne himself so affectionately towards me.

To distract the Spaniards when night came on, and keep them away from the city as much as possible, the Admiral ordered a furious cannonade, levelling the guns at Fort Callo, and the dikes where the soldiers were ranged in impotent helplessness, by reason of the rows of Spanish sailors still standing on the decks in full view. Then, while the din of artillery was heard, some of the men, armed to the teeth, went over the side, dropped into the boats, and pulled swiftly across the harbour to the quay. I was in the foremost boat, and when the last man had descended, word was given, and the sailors pulled ashore. The boat slipped through the water swiftly, with a loud ripple in the bows, followed by many another craft, in one of which the Admiral had taken his seat.

Not a word was spoken until we came to the quay-side, where the men landed in silence, and slowly formed into line. Before us, looming up in the darkness, were the great storehouses that contained the provisions the Beggars stood in need of. The business in hand was to carry such provisions as the patriots could find to the ships; but, as for mine, it was to go to the dear ones and bring them off in safety.

"Caspar," said Boisot, before many minutes had passed, "Captain Kapell has charge of the provisioning party, Let us away at once to find your mother. You know the streets, so lead on." And giving the word of command in a low voice, he moved forward at my side, followed by a number of men.

None would have suspected that a thousand Beggars of the Sea, and more, were moving about on the quay that night, so admirably had every arrangement been made. What sounds the men made were covered by the furious cannonade in the harbour, and the Spaniards had too much on hand out on the dikes to think of what was going on elsewhere.

But our expedition so far away from this busy scene was fraught with danger. A hundred men, going forward with steady tramp, were not likely to go far without attracting attention, for every step, taking them farther and farther away from the tumult of that night's battle, became more and more distinct. This much, however, was in our favour, that troops were constantly parading the streets under ordinary circumstances, alike on foot or horseback, so that it was no new thing that men should hear the tramping of a big force. Yet, although the Spaniards were out on the dikes, who could tell how many remained within the city gates, as a precaution lest the citizens might rise to aid the Beggars?

We marched as silently as we could along the narrow winding streets, seeing sometimes a hand drawing back a blind, or opening a shutter to discover what this tramping meant,—whether it was the coming of friend or foe. But no one molested us. I halted at last before [the place where Geleyn de Muler dwelt, and leaving the Admiral outside, crossed the yard, and beat upon the door, giving the accustomed knock. It was answered almost instantly, for De Muler stood in the open doorway, blocking it up, and looking at me in astonishment, as the light of the lantern which he carried fell upon my face.

“Master Caspar!” he exclaimed. “How came you

here? I thought you were in hiding at Simon Tympel's house."

"So I was, Geleyn; but I am here now. Do not hinder me. A hundred Beggars of the Sea are outside yonder gate, come to rescue my mother and the rest, and you also, if you care to come. Stand aside, for time is precious."

While I spoke I heard footsteps behind me, and glancing back, saw that it was the Admiral. The old warrior was impatient, and came in after me.

"Quick, Caspar," he said, in a hurried voice. "Time is very precious." And while he spoke, he gave me a push forward, pressing on closely behind.

Raising the trap-door in the stable floor, we hastened down the steps, aided by the light which De Muler carried. Then, lest those in hiding should be startled by the sounds and signs of haste, I called aloud:

"Mother, do not be frightened! It is I!"

When we came to the foot of the steps, and stood upon the floor of the cellar, we found that the noise had caused all save one to stand on foot in terror, and they were in the attitude of eager listening. But my timely words had re-assured them. Without even waiting to kiss either my mother or my sister, I said again:

"Come at once! The Beggars of the Sea are in the street outside, and would save you. Time presses, and we must be gone. Leave everything! I added, as one sought to snatch this thing in hand, and another that.

"Alas! I cannot come!" said one in a weak voice, and I recognised it as belonging to Nicholas Verreyck. During my absence he had fallen back in strength, in spite of all the tender care that his wife lavished on him.

"No, Master Caspar, he cannot walk, so leave us here," said Kenan.

“Who is that?” said the Admiral, coming hastily forward, and looking at the sick man lying on the straw bed at his feet.

“It is Nicholas Verreyck, of whom I told you,—the prisoner I rescued from the dungeon of the Holy House.”

“Then let us carry him,” answered the old seaman, stooping as he spoke, and taking the helpless one by the shoulders.

“Stand aside, Admiral,” said De Muler. “I will carry him in my arms.” And so saying, and with our help, he lifted the poor man from the floor, and went before us slowly up the steps.

“Thank God for the blessed air of the outside world again,” exclaimed my mother, as we stood in the midst of the armed men, who had come to the rescue.

While she spoke, the word was given, and the march back to the quay began. Half a dozen men hurried on in front, to see if the way was clear, and otherwise to bring us word, so as to guard against any surprise. Once a Beggar hurried back to say that he heard the trample of horses in a street to the left, but before long another came up to say that it was evidently the city watch that was passing. No other danger threatened, and before long we stood on the quay, amid the sailors, who were rolling out casks of beef and biscuit, or carrying sacks of flour,—anything that was likely to be welcome to men that had of late been on short allowance.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SAFE-CONDUCT.

I WILL not attempt to describe the joy of the rescued ones when they found themselves safely on board *The Red Hound*. The cannonade was proceeding as the little company of fugitives was got on board ; but when the Admiral was safely on his ship again, and the provisioning party fairly on its way across the waters of the harbour, he passed the signal for firing to cease. Shortly after this there was not merely quietness on board *The Red Hound* and the other vessels, but the soldiers on the dikes, incapable of finding any opportunity for returning the fire, lest they should slay their own countrymen, retired within the walls of the city, where, to their intense disgust, they discovered that the Admiral had duped them, while carrying out his plan for provisioning the fleet.

But that was not the only thing that wrought them to a pitch of fury. The Spanish prisoners were lowered into their own boats—the sick ones going first—and told to pull at once to the dikes, bearing this message for the Grand Commander, that if the soldiers dared to fire a single shot, either while the Beggars' fleet was in port, or while it dropped down the river to the sea, the

Spanish Admiral and his captains should be run up to the yard-arm without delay.

Then followed a conflagration, the like of which had never been seen in the harbour of my native city. Barrels of pitch had been found in some of the galleons, and these were poured over the decks, ropes, sails, and spars, while quantities of gunpowder were also placed down at certain spots. At a given signal the Beggars' fleet weighed anchor, small parties of sailors staying on the galleons until a trumpet's notes came ringing through the night. Then the ships were set on fire, the Dutch sailors dropped into their boats, and pulled away. In a few minutes the whole of the Spanish fleet was in flames, Admiral Haemstede and his captains standing on the poop of *The Red Hound*, watching the sight with undisguised anger.

As the flames burst forth upon the Spanish flag-ship first of all, Haemstede stepped forward, his fist clenched, his feet beating angrily on the deck, and fire and distraction in his eyes. I do not wonder at it. He had small cause to love the Beggars, for they had beaten him in every fight. His fleet had gradually diminished, and the twenty-two vessels alone remained to him. Now this was the end of it all.

It was a marvellous sight,—the blazing galleons anchored in mid-stream, and wrapped in flames from hull to mast-head. When the fire had fairly gripped the decks, bursting through port-holes and from cabin-windows, it ran swiftly up the spars and cordage to swallow the flags that yet floated in the breeze. Shouts of impotent rage came from the dikes, where, in the glare that lighted all the country round, we saw the soldiers who yet lingered there, or stood along the battlements of the forts. The air, too, was filled with the

roar of the flames, the crash of falling masts, and the hissing of red-hot anchors and chains that rolled over the burning sides of the ships, and plunged, amid clouds of steam, into the waters. The wind blew from us across the fleet, and carried blazing fragments and dense volumes of smoke over the city. As the hot smoke rolled along the waters to the dikes, the soldiers turned and fled, so as to escape from the scorching heat, and the heavy, suffocating pall that began to settle over them. From time to time there came a terrific explosion. A ship had been shattered to pieces, and flaming spars and sails and timbers hurtled through the air, some to fall into the quenching waters, others to lay a soldier low, who had escaped the perils of the previous fight. As our fleet went down with the tide, the tragic spectacle was hidden from our view, and we saw nothing but the red glow among the ragged clouds, which drifted swiftly across the sky.

Safe from molestation, Admiral Boisot dropped anchor opposite the spot where *The Dutchman* stood, and when he had bid me go to rest, since he would tell me his plans on the morrow, I went below. A long time had passed since I slept with such content; and when the morning came, and I stood on the deck, I could have shouted for very light-heartedness. As I looked over the ship's side, and then across the waters at the green country, I opened my mouth and panted. I seemed to breathe a different air, for now that I was on board *The Red Hound*, with her head turned to the sea, there was a taste of liberty in it.

Yes, and already some of the sweets of love. For in the land that Bertrand Ogier often called Bonnie England, dwelt the loveliest girl in all the world, whose heart I knew was mine. The brackish waters of the

Scheldt sparkled in the sun, and flowed away to the ocean, on whose stormy waters I longed to find myself tossing, since every bound of the ship would bring me nearer to Dorothy. And then began my delightful dream of the happy meeting. I was no longer a penniless young fellow, who had a way to win in the world before I could ask the fair maiden to come and share my home with me. In the inn yonder, whose gables peeped from among the trees, lay a store of gold, sufficient surely to buy back Van der Fabry to a more friendly way of thinking; and if he still remained obdurate, then, since I should be able to give her a comfortable home, Dorothy should be my wife against his will.

So happy was I with anticipations such as these, that I did not heed the bustle of the Beggars who were busy swabbing the decks, removing the stains of yesterday's conflict, or repairing the damage done to masts and sails. While the water splashed about the ship, they sang, with lusty vigour, songs that would not be welcome to the Spanish captains who were sulking in the cabins. But what cared the sailors for that? It was scarcely to be thought that men who had suffered so much should consider the feelings of their tyrants.

But all this noise and bustle and roistering merriment did not disturb me, save when a sailor occasionally asked me to move a little farther off, so that the men could clean the spot where I was standing. Their jollity was reflected in a sense by my own light-heartedness. Even the birds were gay beyond their wont, so I fancied, when I had time to draw my thoughts away from England, and look about me. The sea-gulls were busy and noisy on the sand-dunes that had been left dry by the receding tide, and now and again I saw an otter splash into the river for a passing fish.

"You look happy, my son," said a sweet voice, and turning round, I saw my mother.

"Happy, mother? I am. Happier than I have been for many a long day, for you are safe, and the other dear ones." And so saying, I took her into my arms, and kissed her until she asked for time to breathe.

She stood panting, yet her eyes beamed with laughter.

"What sort of kisses will you give Dorothy when you see her?" said someone at my elbow,—my sister, Gertrude, whom I took into my arms at once, and kissed again and again.

"Like those, my pretty sister," I said, at last.

"No better than those?" she said, roguishly. "Are sisters' kisses and lovers' all the same in quality?"

"Yes, Gertrude—all the same, with a difference!" And we laughed joyously.

But the gladness had to give place to stern realities. A sailor came and said that the Admiral would like to see me. With a pleasant nod, I turned and walked across to the deckhouse in which Boisot was sitting at his table.

"Good morning, Caspar," said he, briskly, looking up from the papers he had been examining. "I have just given orders for bringing your father's treasure on board, since it will be safer in London, whither we are now bound, than in Simon Tympel's care. The little man is the very soul of honesty, but any day the Spaniards may burn his house about his ears, and then good-bye to this hard-won wealth, should it be there."

"It will serve us well in England, Admiral," said I, when I had thanked him for his thoughtfulness.

As I spoke, a strange look came into his face, as if in sudden recollection.

"I forgot until you spoke of England, so that I am

afraid the suggestion I have to make will not be welcome."

"What have you forgotten?" I asked.

"That Dorothy Fabry is across the seas, and that you are anxious to see her."

"I am!" I exclaimed. "I have been dreaming of her all night, Admiral, and thinking about her ever since I woke this morning," I added, without reserve.

A look of regret passed across the old sailor's face, as he leaned his chin in his hand, and his elbow on the table. For a few moments he was silent.

"You spoke of a suggestion that would not be welcome," I said, after a while, breaking in upon his thoughts.

"That is true, Caspar; but the longing you have to see your sweetheart, gives me no encouragement to tell you of it."

"I should like to hear it, nevertheless, Admiral."

"Then I will tell you; but your hand shall be quite free in the matter. There is urgent need for a messenger to go to the Prince of Orange, and as you have a horse at *The Dutchman*, plenty of courage, and the ability to fight, if needs be, I had it in my mind to ask you to be the messenger."

There was a chill at my heart, for here was anticipated joy opposed by the claims of duty. To lose that joy which had been the subject of my dreams was real pain to me. Yet to choose pleasure, and set duty aside, was to prove me unworthy of being numbered with the patriots I had esteemed as heroes ever since my boyhood. Was I capable of admiring the principle of patriotism in others, but not prepared to follow it out myself? I had spoken much, in one discussion and another, of the blessed contagion of self-sacrifice. It was so easy to *say*

these things, but brought up to the decision-point, I found myself shrinking.

I had turned away, and looked towards the cabin window, from whence I could see the flow of waters, passing on towards the land I longed to see. But looking round again in much perplexity of mind, I saw the stern face of the old commander, softened and kind, as if he would not press me. Somehow, that decided me at once.

"I will go to the Prince," I exclaimed.

"Nobly said, Caspar," he responded, holding out his hand to me. "I can see that it has been a battle between love and duty; but be sure of this, that the true path is always that in which duty is to be found."

"So I once heard Pastor Morny say," said I, bracing myself to the task, which not only meant turning back from Dorothy, but undergoing danger that might end in death.

We sat and talked over my new enterprise for a full hour, Boisot giving me many instructions as to my journey and my errand.

"I will give you something that shall be a safeguard to you, Caspar," said he, presently.

"How so?" I enquired, incredulously; for the way, to a lonely traveller, could not fail to bristle with difficulties, even as a gooseberry bush does with thorns. I should do marvellously well if I got over my journey with a few scratches.

"You may well ask. But consider that I have on board *The Red Hound* a valiant Spanish Admiral, and more than a dozen of the bravest captains in the navy of the King of Spain. What if I lay your one life against theirs? You shall take this with you."

And so saying, Boisot wrote upon a sheet of parchment that lay near, these words:—

“To all whom it may concern, greeting. Master Caspar Ursulens of Antwerp, travels with my safe conduct thus,—That since I have on board my flag-ship, ‘The Red Hound,’ Admiral Haemstede of the Spanish navy, and the captains of his fleet, whose names are stated hereunder, and whom I now hold as prisoners of war.

I hereby declare, that should the said Master Caspar Ursulens, my messenger, suffer let or hindrance, or be injured, or slain, while in the discharge of his errand on my behalf, or should anyone seek to force from him the nature of his errand, I will hang the aforesaid Admiral, and the captains named hereunder, on the yard-arm of my ship, and take further reprisals, such as shall seem fit to me.

*Signed on board my flagship ‘The Red Hound,’
on this third day of June, One thousand five
hundred and seventy-four.*

ADMIRAL BOISOT.”

Then followed the names of the various captains.

This done, the Admiral affixed his seal, which was well known to the Spanish authorities who had cause to remember it well, and more than sufficient reason to believe that his threats were never idle ones.

With such a document in my possession there was no need for disguise. None within reach of Antwerp were likely to treat it lightly, lest the Admiral should return, and take such a revenge as would do the Spaniards endless harm. Out of the apparently inexhaustible store at Simon Tympel’s inn, I found full equipment alike for myself and my good steed Padilla, who greeted me with many tokens of pleasure when I entered the stable. My month’s experience as groom for Geleyn de Muler had sufficed to begin a friendship between this beautiful creature and myself, which only ended when he lay down one day—not long ago—and died from sheer weight of years.

My mother and sister were somewhat tearful at my departure, but my father bade me keep up a brave heart, and when my errand was accomplished, come over to England, where I might find a home—and he suggested, with a smile, by way of encouragement—a home of my own, with a beautiful wife to grace it as mistress. I left them as the creaking pulleys deposited on the deck a chest that contained the treasure, and jumping into the boat that lay alongside, went into *The Dutchman*, clothed myself in the suit that Simon had waiting for me, sprang into my saddle, and started on my journey.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A GOOD SAMARITAN.

THE Netherlands do not take up much space, as countries go, and had the roads been clear and free from danger, I might, with such a horse as Padilla, have easily gone from one end of the land to the other in a few days. But this was altogether out of the question. I had a safe-conduct which many would respect, but others might be disposed to treat it with contempt, especially the common soldiers, who had no great love for the officers of the fleet and army, and would have thought it a fine joke for a dozen of them to swing on the yard-arm. Consequently, I proceeded with great caution. At times I rode a few miles, and then had to wait for hours in hiding, owing to the frequent appearance of companies of horsemen, who were scouring the country to cut off communications between one city and another.

In this journey, therefore, many days went by, each full of hazard, and necessitating slow progress because of the constant need for hiding in out-of-the-way places. There was always considerable uncertainty as to where the Prince of Orange might be. Some thought he was at the Isle of Bommel, gathering together his forces for the relief of Leyden, which was undergoing a second

siege. Others said they had heard that he was in Leyden itself. Yet again I was confidently told that the Prince was at Rotterdam, collecting a fleet with which to advance up to the very gates of the distressed city, and ready, when his force was large enough, to pierce the dikes, and let in the waters upon the country, so as to drown the besiegers.

“But would not that be madness?” I exclaimed, when my host—a farmer—told me of this at the supper table.

“How madness, my master?” asked the man, laying down his knife, and looking me in the face.

“Bethink you of the infinite toil of centuries in beating back the ocean, and so reclaiming the land. To let in the waters upon the fields would be ruin. It would turn the polders into a great sea again. Your cattle would have no grazing ground, and might perchance be drowned.”

“True,” said my host, nodding his head slowly. “But better a drowned land than a lost land! And would it not be a lost land to give it over to the brutal keeping of those Spanish devils?”

“Yes, that is true,” said I. “But how would you do when you had drowned out the Spaniards?”

“Drive back the sea again. We have won the land from the ocean once, and with our willing hands we can build the dikes again, and the windmills which would still be standing would pump out the water.”

That was the saying everywhere. All thought of surrender to Spain was at an end. It was now to be liberty or death.

The conflicting information as to the Prince’s whereabouts lost me a great deal of time; for while on my way to Utrecht, or travelling towards Rotterdam, I

would hear that the Prince of Orange was somewhere else, so that I had to retrace my steps frequently. On that account many of the roads grew to be very familiar.

Strangely enough, however, I had not on a single occasion any need to show my safe-conduct. Many a time I came desperately near to doing so, but Padilla, fleet as the wind, bore me beyond the reach of those who sometimes started in pursuit. On one such occasion, just as it was growing dusk, we were hard pressed, and for full three miles could not shake off those who gave chase until we darted into the shelter of a wood, where all trace of us was lost to those who followed. When we emerged on the farther side, I saw the horsemen dashing out of the forest, and along a road to the left, which they evidently thought we had taken. Resolute to lose no time, I shook Padilla's rein, and choosing a road to the right, that was sheltered by trees, which hid me from all observation from my pursuers, we galloped on.

But even now my troubles were not over. There had been much rain of late, and it was still pouring down. The rain, falling on the soft soil, had made the roads very treacherous. Padilla was still bounding on, when suddenly he slipped, and fell, throwing me with a crash against a boulder at the wayside. How long I lay there I do not know, but when I recovered consciousness, I saw by the dim moonlight, that my horse was standing near, looking at me with a sort of dumb concern. Happily it was no longer raining, and the moonlight showed up our surroundings distinctly. I tried to move, but the mere movement brought me so much pain that I was compelled to lie helpless in the muddy way, passing from one swoon to another.

While lying in this way, unable to think or act, I

heard a woman's voice, pleasant and kind, and opening my eyes, and looking up, saw someone bending over me.

"Young master, what are you lying here for? Are you hurt?"

"Yes," I answered, my head throbbing with pain, and with a sense of faintness brought on by loss of blood from the wound in my head.

"Then come into my cottage, if you can get so far," she said kindly. And tenderly, as a woman only knows how, she helped me to rise, and by slow and easy stages, but with much resting between whiles, she led me to her house, which stood among the trees some little distance from the roadside, Padilla following us mutely. Then seating me on the settle before a cheerful fire, she dressed my wound, and gave me food.

"Stay there a while, my son, and I will see to your horse, that followed close behind us. I hear him now, snorting at the door. There is room in the stable for him, and I will soon give him a warm mash, and a bundle of straw to lie upon."

"I fear, my good friend," said I, "that he must have hurt himself when he fell."

"Don't trouble about him. I am used to horses, and will make him comfortable."

And with these words, my kind hostess bade me eat what she had set before me. Left to myself, I thought of this good soul's kindness to me. I was hungry, worn, weary, full of pain, and anxious, too, about Padilla. But the good woman soon returned, and set my mind at rest, by assuring me that my horse was none the worse for his fall, beyond a few scratches on the off shoulder; but these she had washed and dressed. He was more hungry than hurt, she added, and was munching away contentedly at the corn in his manger when she left him.

After that she listened to the story of my day's adventures, and bade me be free of care, for few ever passed that way, and none were ever likely to molest a woman who lived in such a humble little cottage. Half-an-hour later I went to the bed where she herself always slept; and seeing that I was much shaken by the fall, my hostess watched at my side, in spite of my protests, until I fell into a sound and untroubled sleep.

The next morning she refused to allow me to stir from the bed, but sat with me, mending my clothes, which were torn with the fall. When I remonstrated with her, declaring that I could manage to take the journey, she answered:

"It will be time enough to get up when the day has well worn; and you are quite unfit to travel to-day. What use do you suppose you would be, if it should chance that you had to fight to keep the Prince's letter?"

That was unanswerable, and I threw myself back on my pillow contentedly.

She sat by my side all through the day, more or less, only quitting the room to look after Padilla and her own horse, which carried her into the neighbouring towns and villages. And as I lay there, I began to tell her some of the things that had happened in Antwerp. When I mentioned the name of the city, she glanced up, with an eager look upon her face, but did not speak. But when I chanced to tell her of the prisoner I had found in the dungeons of the Holy House, and named him as the husband of Kenan Verreyck, she rose to her feet with a start. Laying her hand upon her bosom, as if to still the wild beating of her heart, she asked me what his name was.

"Nicholas Verreyck," I answered, wondering at her agitation.

“Then it is my own good son whom you have saved!” she cried, and throwing her arms about me, she kissed me again, and yet again.

“Ah, Master Ursulens, he left my home to escape the tormentors, and since then I have heard nothing of him. He dared not send me word, but thought that if he could hide in some great city, he might be safer. He was a silk-weaver, and wrought at the loom in that room. But when his work was done he spent his time in other service. He was one of the field-preachers, a man of eloquence, whom hundreds, yes, and thousands, went to listen to, as in the secluded corners of the country he expounded God’s Word. His wife was full as good as he, and would go with him, to die if needs be, so long as she might be near to him, if harm should come. Ah! now I thank God with all my soul, that he is free, and in safe asylum in the realm of the great Protestant Queen!”

And falling on her knees at my bedside, she poured out her prayer of thanksgiving, while the tears streamed down the careworn cheeks.

“They may do as they please with me, my dear boy!” she exclaimed, as she rose to her feet. “Since he is safe—the best son a mother ever had—I have no care.”

The news created a fresh bond between us, and gave me another friend whom I never lost sight of while she was in this world. It was doubly gratifying to me to know that I had come to a home where I could lessen the everyday care and anxiety that came of lack of news and long separation.

The second day found me too stiff and ill to venture on my journey, and it was not until the fifth morning that I answered to the call of duty, and started forth with more certain knowledge of the Prince’s where-

abouts. Even then Mistress Verreyck was unwilling that I should go, and entreated me to stay a little longer.

“I can rest, kind friend, when my work is done,” I said to this good Samaritan, who refused to take a single coin for all her care.

Slowly mounting in the saddle, and bidding the good soul farewell, taking with me a parting message for her son, if ever I should meet him in England, I rode away in the grey morning light, while a drizzling rain was fast closing in the whole landscape with mist.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PICTURE ON THE WALL.

IT was afternoon when I rode into Rotterdam, all bespattered with mud after such a journey, and as I crossed the bridge, and halted at the gate, I demanded a guide to take me to the Prince. On showing my despatch for him, bearing the seal of Admiral Boisot—a passport everywhere among the Flemings—a man was sent with me at once to point out the way.

Although I knew Holland well, I had never been to Rotterdam before, and consequently I gazed about me with keen interest. There were canals and bridges everywhere, the waterways being lined with trees, and the paths they sheltered becoming thus a pleasant promenade. I had thought many of the houses of Antwerp quaint, but the gabled buildings here were such as to surprise me, so far did some of them overhang their foundations. These peculiarities, however, had their conveniences, for while it was still raining, the citizens were passing to and fro with little or no discomfort, since the projecting houses kept off the rain. Smartly dressed young ladies were able to walk up and down the narrow winding streets without any fear of injuring their spotless linen.

Having passed by the Groote Market, an open space

where the peasants gathered to dispose of their farm produce, we turned down by one of the canals, until we came to a quiet spot where a row of giant elms on either side, sheltered a pathway that broke off at right angles from the canal side, and broad enough for three horse-men to ride abreast. This continued through an iron gateway into a large garden with broad greensward, that lay in front of a plain red-brick building. It was heavily built, with two projecting wings and a central porch. The porchway itself was broad,—sufficiently so to allow a state coach to pass in, while over it were carved in white stone, that looked conspicuous on the red brick, the arms of the Prince of Orange.

Dismounting, and leaving Padilla in the care of the man who had been my guide, I crossed the threshold, and stood within a great hall, large enough to accommodate a hundred men at table. Indeed there were signs of the recent meal as I entered. The servants were busily engaged in clearing away the platters and flagons, or sweeping off the crumbs and pieces of bread that had been left there by the members of the household.

Around the walls hung pieces of old armour, and tattered flags, telling not merely of age but of fierce combats. Arms of every sort in use, and such, too, as were obsolete, were ranged around,—arquebuses, javelins, pikes, broadswords, pistols, poniards, and matchlocks, many of them trophies from hard-fought battlefields. There were other things, however, which testified to the fact that the man of war was likewise a lover of the chase. On a marble pedestal lay a magnificent stuffed heron, that was represented as expiring before the vigorous attack of a falcon. This, and many another trophy showed that the knightly sport of falconry had an intense fascination for William the Silent.

But other than this there was little to show the high rank of the man who was dwelling here. For truth to tell, the Prince, who had once lavished his enormous income in maintaining almost regal state, keeping servants that might well have been deemed numerous enough for a king, and a bodyguard that included nobles of high degree, to say nothing of the costly banquets and tournaments, and the like, that he provided, was now spending his wealth for his country's weal, and to such an extent that he had little left that he could call his own. Many a burgher in Antwerp had more spending money, even after the heavy demands of the Spaniards had been met, and thousands were surrounded with greater luxuries.

That this was so I saw before long; for while I stood in the hall, and gazed around, a young man of gentle birth came to me, and asked what my business was.

"I desire to see the Prince," I answered. "My business is of the first importance," I added, when I saw by his face that my reply was scarce sufficient.

"I crave your pardon, but the Prince has bid me say to all who wish to see him, that he can only give audience to such as show good cause."

"My errand is a pressing one, but beyond that I can say no more." And speaking thus, I showed the package which contained the message from Boisot, whose seal was attached to it.

"It is sufficient," was the quiet response. "Give me your name, and I will go and tell the Prince."

So saying, Master Ninove, as he proved to be, having been told my name, crossed the hall, and drawing back a curtain, rang a silver bell that rested on a table there. Presently he disappeared, but before long returned again to say that the Prince would see me. I could not help

noticing, however, that Master Ninove looked me up and down, as though he considered my bespattered garments out of place with one who desired to have audience with the uncrowned King of Holland.

“ You think me unfit to see the Prince in this garb, and with these mud stains upon me ? ” I said, pleasantly. “ The fact is, I have travelled far, and my errand is too pressing to admit of further delay. ”

“ I trust that it is not evil tidings that you bear ? ” he asked anxiously, as if he were jealous of anything being said to the Prince that would add to his cares. So, indeed, were all who served that remarkable man. They loved him so, that they would have suffered much themselves to save him pain. To set Ninove’s mind at rest, I answered quickly :

“ On the contrary, I am the bearer of good news. ”

A moment later I stood in the presence of the Prince of Orange. I had never seen him before, but this first glance confirmed all that I had ever heard about him. When I entered the room he rose from the table at which he had been writing, and stood before me silently, as if waiting to hear my errand. But my message halted while I looked at my Prince. He was known to us all as a man of forty-two years of age, and I expected to see someone in the prime of manhood. Instead of that, I saw a tall slim man, with shoulders somewhat bent, by reason of his weight of care ; his hair and pointed beard and heavy moustache that should have been dark-brown in colour, were prematurely grey. His face was furrowed, and the hair gone back from his naturally high forehead. But as he looked me full in the face, there was keen intelligence alike in his large brown eyes, and that handsome face, which the lines of care intensified.

While he was careful over his household expenses out of sheer necessity, the Prince never set aside his love of splendid apparel. On this occasion he wore a doublet of dove grey embossed velvet, puffed with grey silk, and slashed with silver-wrought bands. The trunks of silk were strapped with grey velvet, studded with steel cabochons. On the table to his right hand lay a cuirass and gorget of damascened steel. About the neck was a costly collar of lace, and a thin chain of gold, to which was attached a jewelled Maltese cross. The sword-belt was wrought with silver, and a gold-hilted dagger, richly chased, was suspended from it.

In looking at the Prince, I had forgotten that he was waiting for me to speak, and he gently reminded me of this by his question :

“Your business, Master Ursulens ?”

“I crave pardon, your Highness,” said I, my face growing hot at the thought of having been thus forgetful. “Admiral Boisot bade me bring you this package, and but for necessary caution, and an accident that delayed me on the road, I should have delivered it much earlier.”

He did not speak, but took the letter from me, and opening it, read it through. His face, pale with anxiety when he tore open the despatch, brightened as he read, and when he had perused the letter twice, he laid it on the table, exclaiming as he did so :

“Thank God ! My sailors have served me to some purpose. And as for you, Master Ursulens, the brave old Admiral tells me that you fought well at the capture of the Spanish fleet, and denied yourself greatly, in order to bring this message. I will see you again.”

Ringling a bell that was at hand, the Prince waited, looking at me earnestly meanwhile, as if to read my

character from my face. When the gentleman-in-waiting entered, he bade him see that I was well tended, and comfortably lodged, and that a fitting change of raiment was found for me.

“And bear in mind, Master Ninove,” he added, “that this young gentleman has done me good service, and deserves well of us all.”

With a heart that beat quickly with pleasure, I quitted the apartment, and followed Master Ninove, who led the way to a chamber where he bade me wait a while to rest. Leaving me so that he might give orders for a new suit to be brought in place of my torn and mud-covered dress, he returned after a while with a tradesman from the town, who brought several suits for me to choose from, and that being done, I was left alone to have a bath, and to dress myself. When I opened the door, in readiness to go to the hall, I found a page in waiting, who, looking at me approvingly, alike, I suppose, for my bigness, and the change in my appearance, begged me to follow him to a room where a meal was ready. As he left me, he mentioned the fact that Master Ninove would be pleased to walk with me through Rotterdam, if I so desired.

“Tell him that it will be a great pleasure,” I answered; and then sat down to a meal to which I did full justice.

When Master Ninove and I sallied out into the town, the rain had ceased, and the sun was doing its best to shine through the clouds that were loth to clear away. What I saw in our walk I scarce remember now, save this,—that the news of the Admiral’s victory over the Spaniards having become known, the people were talking about it excitedly. Wherever my companion led me, he had to tell what he knew to those who greeted him, and many a question did I answer as to the com-

pleteness of the victory, when Master Ninove said that I was the messenger that brought the letter from the fleet.

But all this grew embarrassing, so that we beat a retreat along the canal, and made for a quiet spot where we could look out on the country, and talk without fear of disturbance. I liked Master Ninove, and before long we were talking of all that had transpired, quite as if we were old friends, so that in that conversation I learnt a great deal about the Prince and his plans. But I also learnt of his danger. Again and again there had been attempts made to assassinate him, so that he never went out without an escort, and nightly an armed man stood outside his bedroom door.

I took note of this in my mind, so that when I went to bed that night, I was not surprised to see a stalwart sentinel on guard at the door next to that by which I entered my own room. As Master Ninove showed me in, and set the lamp upon the table, he said that the Prince had slept there till very recently, but had gone to the next room for a change.

I looked around the chamber in which I was to sleep. It was an apartment of some size, and handsomely furnished. The bedstead was of solid and elaborately carved oak, whose four posts supported a massive canopy from which fell curtains that would close me in when I lay down; but I did not care to be shut in thus, and drew back the bed curtains, so that I should be free to look about the room. The bed coverlet was a marvel of workmanship—the work of John Rostel of Brussels—wrought in dark-grey silk, and adorned with the arms of the Prince of Orange. The walls were covered with old pictures and tapestries which, said Ninove, ere he left me, were wrought by the hand of the daughter and

heiress of the Count of Flanders, two hundred years before, and presented by her to one of the Prince's ancestors. As I looked at one of the pictures, I had no thought for anything else in the room,—not even the polished and carved oaken panels, the heavy furniture, and the costly piece of carpet spread in the centre of the floor. It sent a cold shiver through me, and I did not wonder when Ninove, bidding me good-night, and expressing the hope that I should sleep soundly, added with a quiet laugh, that most people disliked the room, because the picture was not of a pleasant nature.

It certainly was not. The scene portrayed was the assassination of some prince,—I know not what his name was. The prince himself lay in a bed not unlike that in which I was to lie for the night; and coming through a secret door in the panelling, were two men with drawn daggers and masked faces. But one other was already at the bedside. A naked dagger, gleaming in the moonlight that streamed through the uncurtained window, was in his uplifted hand, the man himself being in the very act of bringing the weapon down into the heart of the sleeper.

“I would not have lodged you in this room, which is said to be haunted, Master Ursulens, but it is the only vacant one we have,” said Ninove, when he saw me shudder as I looked at that picture on the wall. It was wrought, not with brush, but threads, with a skill that had made the figures appear to be living men, and with a brilliancy and boldness of colouring, that equalled the morbid conception of the designer.

The colours were so brilliant, in spite of the picture's age, that while I undressed, I could not keep my eyes away from it. When the light was put out, and I lay down, the moon fell on the tapestry, so that it showed

up with just as much vividness. I closed my eyes, only, however, to open them again, and look once more upon the ghastly scene. Then, to shut it out, I dropped the curtain on that side of the bed; but not liking to have any part of a strange room hidden from me, in case I should awake in the night, I got up and fastened back the hangings again.

Tired though I was, I lay on, unable to sleep, thinking of one thing and another, but invariably coming back to that picture on the wall. Gradually a sense of discomfort and insecurity possessed me, and reaching out of bed, I took up the dagger that lay on the table close by, and put it under the pillow. Then again I tried to settle down to sleep, resorting to all the devices I could think of to dispel my wakefulness.

When it was full midnight, I rose from the bed with much impatience, and dressed, simply for the mere occupation this afforded me, fastening my sword-belt about my waist, and thrusting my dagger into its wonted place.

That done, I went over to the window and looked out for a long time on the garden, which was flooded with the moonlight. Beyond the lime trees were the houses of the city, tall and quaint and curious, with here and there the tower of some church or public building. In one spot I could see the tops of the masts of ships that waited in the quay, and then again to my right, the garden was bounded by a waterway, of which there were so many in Rotterdam. This waterway at length attracted my close attention. One side of it lay in deep shadow, by reason of the trees that had been planted there.

I had at first looked on listlessly, but was all alert when a boat shot out of the shadows with two men in it. A few minutes later the boat went back again quickly,

with only one man. I thought but little of this, for in so large a household, it might well be some belated servant or a messenger, and the return of the boatman was the most reasonable thing in the world.

A quarter of an hour must have passed, and I had made up my mind to go to bed again, having forgotten the men in the boat. I stepped away from the window, and stood by the curtains to undress, when I heard the sharp click of a lock or latch, I knew not which. Halting at this unwonted sound, I listened, hearing presently the faintest grating, as of a partly rusted hinge being opened gently. Looking round the room swiftly, my eyes fell on the hanging tapestry. It was moving, ever so slowly. My hand went to the hilt of the sword at my side, and I stood alert, wondering what was in store for me. Was it fancy, or reality? The room was said to be haunted. Was this a part of the experience of others, whereby the chamber had obtained this undesirable character? If so, I would stand up to the adventure, whatever it was, and know whether the disturber was flesh and blood like myself. So thinking, I drew my sword without a sound, and stood in readiness.

All this had been done quickly, and even as the weapon left its scabbard, a man's head appeared well in the moonlight, and then his shoulders, followed by his whole body. The intruder was a big fellow, one who in a struggle would tax my strength, and in his hand was a drawn dagger.

Leaving the secret entrance open, he came on tiptoe across the floor to the bed. Wondering what this meant, I watched, hidden from view by the heavy curtains near which I was standing. As he came nearer, I drew back noiselessly, so as to get well into the folds, and stood, scarcely breathing, lest my presence should be discovered.

Glancing in all directions, the man went to the bedside, and looked in on the very spot where I had been lying. His dagger was so held that he could raise it instantly, to bring it down again upon his victim. There he stood, little more than a yard away from me. A thrust from my sword, and it would go clean through him; but I held back and watched. He peered all over the bed, and even drew aside the hangings that cast a heavy shadow over the pillows; but finding the bed empty, he turned round with a savage oath, as if he feared an attack from behind.

"Where can that devil prince be gone?" he exclaimed, in a low, but emphatic tone. "He has slept there this very night. Yes, the bed itself is warm," he added, as he thrust his hand in between the sheets. "He must be here somewhere." And holding his dagger in a posture, half in defence, in case anyone should strike at him, and half in readiness to strike out if danger threatened, he turned, so that we stood face to face.

He did not see me, however, for the moonlight fell full upon him, and he could not tell what was in the shadows. Possibly the thought came that his victim was hidden in the bed curtains, and he struck into them viciously.

That was enough for me. The man meant murder, and the murder of our Prince, so that he should have but little mercy at my hands. As he drew back his weapon, he turned as though he would repeat the thrust in the very spot where I was standing.

"You scoundrel!" I cried, in a voice loud enough to be heard in the passage outside. "You would-be murderer! drop your dagger instantly, or I will run you through!"

The fellow started back at my words, that came so

unexpectedly. Then realising the peril of discovery, he leaped forward, with his arm uplifted, and the gleaming dagger in readiness for a plunge. But I was prepared for this, and as he moved towards me, I cut at his arm with deadly force and swiftness. The sword met him at the wrist, and the hand and dagger fell upon the floor. Forgetful of everything in his pain, the man screamed with agony; but the next moment the door of my sleeping-chamber burst open, and the man-at-arms who had been standing on guard in the passage outside, entered.

“Beware!” I cried. “Here is an assassin.”

In that brief space of time the man had turned, and darting across the room, sought to reach the secret door; but the man-at-arms was there to meet him. He had seen the fellow standing before me, saw, too, the door in the panelling standing ajar, and with quick thought divined it all. The assassin ran right into his arms as the soldier, blundering against the open door, slammed it together.

But although the man was maimed, he was not yet beaten. He knew that death was his, if he did not escape, and with his uninjured hand he whipped out a second dagger from his belt. He had already flung his hand back, so as to bring it round again, and drive the blade into the soldier's side, but I caught his wrist, and with a backward thrust, wrenched the weapon from his grasp. A few minutes later the man lay helpless on the floor, bound hand and foot, with nothing free save his handless arm, and his tongue with which he cursed us freely.

The noise had disturbed the Prince, whose chamber was next to mine, and he entered soon after the soldier had tied the last knot in the scarf that bound the would-be murderer.

“What is this?” he asked, calmly, standing within the room, and looking on the strange scene.

“A fellow came hither, your Highness intending to slay you, but was evidently mistaken as to the room in which you slept,” said I.

“Yes,” cried the man, spitting on the Prince, whom he recognised instantly. “And may all the devils of hell confound and wreak their fury on you, body and soul!”

“Silence, you hell-hound!” cried the soldier, exasperated at the man’s words, and more so by his contempt. And unable to control himself, he kicked with his heavy boot, so that the fellow lay cowed and quiet.

“You should never kick a helpless man, Antony,” said the Prince, reprovingly.

“A man, your Highness? No, I never would! But one who would murder my master shall have no mercy from me!” the soldier responded, hot anger blazing in his heart; and heedless of his Prince’s chiding, he brought his heavy foot again upon the fellow at his feet.

The Prince turned away, touched by the man-at-arms’ fidelity, and beckoned to me to follow him.

“Go, Master Ursulens, and fetch some men from the hall below, that they may put this prisoner into safe keeping.”

Cowed by his pain, and hoping possibly to win his liberty if he made full confession, the man next morning declared that he had been hired by Don Cristobal to enter the house by the secret way, and assassinate the Prince of Orange.

“But how shall I know that you tell me truly?” asked the Prince.

“By reading that,” exclaimed the man. And he drew

from his doublet a paper on which was writing that the Prince knew full well.

“The writing is done by the hand of one who writes like Don Cristobal——”

“It is his own writing,” interrupted the man. “He asked me when we met at Bergen to come to Rotterdam, and promised me five hundred golden ducats if I would follow out his wishes. He told me he would send me written instructions as to how to get to the room where you were said to sleep, and next morning half the money came, and that paper.”

It was as the man declared. The Prince handed me the letter with Don Cristobal's signature, and it contained a full description of the garden, the secret way, and the manner of opening the tapestry door.

“The Prince sleeps there whenever he stays in Rotterdam,” the writer added. “Strike hard, and I will double your reward if you slay him.”

The Prince debated with himself what he should do with the prisoner. The man was worthy of death, he said, but he had done no murder after all, and it went against his wish to hang a man merely for his intentions. He walked to and fro in the hall, where the Spaniard was being examined, and at last sat down in the great chair from whence he was wont to deliver judgment.

“I would ask your Highness to suffer this matter to be decided by the judges, and not by yourself,” said a Flemish noble standing near.

“But my lord, they will hang the man.”

“They will do what is just, Prince. It is not meet that you should be worried thus. Let the man go before the Court of Justice, and be tried on his merits.”

Others joined in to the same effect, and the Spaniard was marched off to prison again. When the trial came

off next day, the judgment was death. And strange to say, while the office of executioner was held in abhorrence, and the executioner himself deemed an outcast, a full hundred of the men in the Prince's household came forward, and begged to be allowed to carry out the sentence.

Nor was it to be wondered at. The hearts of the Netherlanders were drawn out after this extraordinary man, the Prince of Orange, and the men, women, and even little children loved him tenderly. They would have died for him. For here was the man that the crisis in the nation's history demanded. He came as a deliverer, making his people's cares his own. Never did one find a country more distracted and sorrow laden, than when the Prince took up the quarrel. And as time went on, he displayed a capacity equal to the occasion, and his spirit not only bound his countrymen to himself, but inspired them to work out their glorious destiny. I knew a time—and not far distant from the day when he so nearly came on death at Rotterdam—when the people fell upon their knees in the streets, and hailed him as their great deliverer. And yet, with all his victories and self-abnegation behind him, he turned to the crowds that wept, and so displayed their love:

“My children,” said he, “do not go on your knees to me, but to Him who gave me opportunity for standing with you against the accursed tyranny that desolated your homes, and made your hearts so sad. To Him, but not to man, be all the praise.”

And so saying, the Prince passed on to the Church, where, in his people's name, he returned thanks for so many great deliverances.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BURGOMASTER.

THREE or four months passed by, during which the Prince used me freely, sending me in all directions to inquire how matters were progressing, and to bring him word as to the situation of the Spanish forces. One journey was singularly hazardous, being practically an errand into the lion's mouth itself, since it meant going to Brussels with despatches for the Grand Commander.

My heart quailed. I was young, and life was full of promise; but what if I should be treated as others had been, and instead of being received as an accredited envoy, be thrust into a dungeon, or hanged at the city gate? But my pride would not suffer me to decline the task, which was shorn of much of its danger when the Prince assured me that in his despatches he laid stress upon the fact that he held Admirals Bossu and Haemstede, and many of their captains as hostages for my personal safety, and that of Master Ninove, who was to accompany me.

Of the journey, and the manner of my reception I have nothing to say, startling as they proved to be; but my visit to Brussels brought me news of Dorothy.

While we were riding down the street that led past the Church of St. Gudule, I chanced to look up, and

saw a face I knew full well. Yet I could scarce believe my own eyes.

"Can it be Mistress Fabry?" I exclaimed, pulling up Padilla suddenly.

"Yes, Caspar, if it be really my dear boy whom I see," said the Burgomaster's wife, her face all smiles, as she leaned out of the open window. It made my heart dance to see her, for it was next best to having a sight of Dorothy. And here, too, was the chance of news, and an opportunity, perhaps, of telling of my changed fortunes, and with it I confidently hoped, a renewal of the Burgomaster's approval.

"May I return to you when I have put my horse into safe quarters?" I asked.

"Do, Caspar, for I shall be delighted to have a talk with you."

"And the Burgomaster?"

This I said with some anxiety, for much as I longed to speak with him, I did not want a scene again, such as had marked our last meeting.

"He is not at home just now."

Hearing this, I raised my cap, and trotted down the street to seek Councillor Maas, who would find quarters for Ninove and myself. This was done without much trouble, and before long, Padilla was munching oats to his heart's content, while Ninove was looking to his horse's comfort, and making arrangements for our lodging. In less than an hour I had brushed off the stains of travel, and was on my way up the street to find the house where the Burgomaster was staying.

He was not at home when I arrived, so that Mistress Fabry was able to tell me all about Dorothy and her doings. She even showed me the letters the dear girl had written, and one which her father had not been

allowed to read, made my face glow, and my heart to throb as it had not done for many a day. It was a letter for the private eye of her mother, and it told the story of what had taken place between us in the deck-house of *The Red Hound*, when she promised to marry me.

"It makes me very sad," she wrote, "to know that Caspar is become so poor, and that my father has broken off his promise. But, mother, I love him more than I ever did. I loved him when we were boy and girl together, when we exchanged vows in our childish way. But that passed, and now it is all so different. He is to me my brave ideal of manhood, stalwart and handsome, but better still, a man on whom I can cast my whole self, and know that he will safeguard me in these trying days. Yes, mother, and more than that. He is one whom I love beyond all others in this world,—how much I cannot tell you; for if I began to tell you the whole of what I feel, my pen would fail, and so would words. As for this Don Cristobal, I would rather die than marry him."

Those words were never meant for me to read, but Mistress Fabry wanted to put new courage into my heart; for doubtless she saw what was yet before me. And something of what was confronting me was revealed before long. The letter was placed in safe keeping, and we went on with our pleasant talk for a full quarter of the hour, when we heard footsteps on the stairs.

"It is my husband," said Mistress Fabry.

"Now, wife, would you not be pleased to know that Don Cristobal is in Brussels?" exclaimed the Burgomaster, coming into the room with the easy manner of one who is at home, and not noticing that a visitor was there.

"My dear," said his wife, with a quick glance at me, as if to bid me beware, and not suffer my temper to get the better of my discretion, "here is Master Caspar Ursulens come to see us."

"Who?" he cried, swinging round, and gazing at me in blank astonishment. "Ah, sir!" he went on when he could find words, "how dare you come into my house, when I forbade you ever to cross my threshold?" And the words came with an angry emphasis that augured ill for our interview ending pleasantly.

"I came, Van der Fabry, because your wife bade me do so," I answered, as calmly as possible, although, what with the mention of Don Cristobal, and the discouraging greeting, I was greatly disturbed.

"That is true, Matthew," said Mistress Fabry. "I was looking out of the window when I heard the clatter of horses' feet upon the stones, and who should one of the riders be but this dear lad."

Van der Fabry looked at his wife, and an angry scowl was on his face. It was easy to see that he liked not this talk as though the old friendship still existed.

"Why do you speak as though you were glad to see him?" he cried, with an emphasis that was almost savage in its intensity.

"Because I *am* glad," she answered. "Why should I not be? He was always pleasing to me, even in his babyhood, and I love the lad as much as ever, Matthew."

She looked her husband in the face boldly, in spite of his wrath. A red spot burnt in her cheek, and it seemed to indicate that she would not be silenced by his unreasoning hate and tyranny.

For a moment or two there was silence, and I seized the opportunity for speech.

"Van der Fabry, I came hither, as I have told you,

because your wife bade me do so. I pray you be not angry, for if my presence is distasteful, I can but go away."

"It is distasteful," exclaimed the Burgomaster, breaking in upon my words.

"I feared so," I answered, quietly, striving hard to keep my temper. "But let me say a word or two before I go. You once promised that I should marry Dorothy."

"I withdrew my promise," was the angry interruption.

"Then, Van der Fabry, as you say, you withdrew it. But you named the reason,—that I was nothing better than a beggar. It is not so now. My father has recovered his wealth——"

"By shameful theft!" burst in the Burgomaster, whose face had now gone white with passion. "Some one—and I doubt not that it was yourself—some one entered the dungeons of the Holy House of Antwerp, and stole the chest that contained a store of wealth that belonged to the Grand Commander."

"Say, rather," I answered quietly, although it cost me a tremendous effort to be calm, "that the wealth belonged to the man who now holds it—my own father, sir." And I looked him in the face steadily, to see what he would say to that.

"I care not what you say. It was robbery."

"Robbery? And what was that act that brought my father from wealth to comparative poverty?" I exclaimed, hotly. His shameful unreasonableness, and his disloyalty in thus siding with our tyrants was more than I could endure, to say nothing of this intolerable insult. But I was standing close by Dorothy's mother, who took my hand in hers.

"Softly, my lad. Hot words will not avail you," I heard her say, in little more than a whisper.

"Take your hands away from him!" cried Van der Fabry, angrily. "Would you side with this man against your own husband."

"No, Matthew. If you were in the right, I would stand by you to the death; but this is unjust and cruel. You promised our daughter's hand to him, and then withdrew the promise because he was poor. Suppose he took the money with his own hand out of the cellars of the Holy House, who had a greater claim to it? He was in the right, and therefore he shall not be cast off by me. Tell him, Matthew, that since he is no longer poor, and can maintain a home in fitting state, even for our daughter, he may marry Dorothy when he will."

"You must be mad, Margaret," the Burgomaster added, almost beside himself with anger. "He shall not marry her though he could buy the whole city, for I have promised Dorothy to Don Cristobal, and you know that."

"Yes, I know it, and have sorrowed about it night and day," said Mistress Fabry, her eyes gleaming with tears, alike at her husband's unreasonable anger, and his infatuation.

Resolved to fight my cause with the keenest weapon I possessed, I made use of what I knew.

"Van der Fabry," said I, slowly and coldly, so that every word should tell, "your daughter cannot marry Don Cristobal,——"

"Cannot?" he interrupted; "but she *shall*!"

"She cannot, I say. Cannot! Don Cristobal is already married. I have seen his wife. I have spoken to her. I have seen his child. And if you will but give me time, I will prove my words."

He looked at me aghast. His face was pale, his lips

bloodless; his eyes almost protruded with astonishment and terror as he gazed at me. And then he trembled.

“Don Cristobal married?” he cried. “You cannot mean what you say!”

“I mean what I say, Van der Fabry, every word of it; and were Don Cristobal here, I would charge him with it to his face.”

The ashen face began to colour slowly. Then it became blood-red.

“Master Ursulens, you must be a great liar, or Don Cristobal is an unmitigated scoundrel,” he exclaimed, after a long silence, sinking into a chair, and throwing his hands across the table helplessly.

“Don Cristobal is an unmitigated scoundrel,” I answered calmly. “He wants Dorothy for his own foul purposes,—perhaps to gain possession of her wealth, and then he will throw her aside. I tell you, Van der Fabry, before God, and by all that I hold most dear, that I have seen his wife. I have heard her—a proud Spanish lady, exceedingly beautiful—call him husband. I have heard her boy call Don Cristobal father. And all this since you turned me from your door in Antwerp.”

The Burgomaster sat silently, his head sunk upon his breast, his face working with emotion. It seemed strange, that the man, a few minutes before ablaze with passion, almost ready to strike me for daring to love his daughter, should now be helpless and broken. It was strange, too, that he should display such passion because I sought to win his daughter's hand. It all appeared so blind and unreasoning, that I could not understand. A charitable thought pressed in upon me after a while. Was it possible that he sided so strenuously with Don Cristobal lest, refusing, he should find himself deprived

of wealth, like my own father? If so, it might explain that passionate eagerness to be rid of me.

Thinking thus, I stood and gazed at him, but did not speak.

"Leave me, Master Ursulens. I will speak to Don Cristobal," said the Burgomaster, presently.

Mistress Fabry quietly waved her hand, in token that I should do as he desired. But when I turned to go away, she followed me to the top of the stairs, and whispered:

"Do not come again until I send for you. And should you leave before I do so, I will send you a message to the Prince's camp."

I stooped and kissed her hand, and went down the stairs without a word. As I walked along the street, with head bent down, I began to think that after all, the Burgomaster might learn the truth, and I should yet have his full and free consent to marry Dorothy.

But I received no message, and left Brussels without a sign.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON AN ENGLISH ROAD.

I MUST pass by the many stirring events of the winter, and come to one early spring morning, when the Prince sent for me. I lost but little time in going to him.

“Master Ursulens, I want you to go to London with several important letters, some of them bearing on the mission of those Spanish Envoys who were here not long since; and I have every belief that you will serve me better in this matter than anyone else I can think of. Master Ninove will bear you company, since he knows the road you will take on landing in England.”

What I felt I cannot here express, and when my master saw the glad look upon my face, he smiled.

“You will see Mistress Dorothy Fabry in the capital of the English Queen, and I trust you will find her well,” he added, pleasantly.

Two days latter, Ninove and I went to the ship that was chartered by the Prince to carry us across the sea. Padilla, and Buren, Ninove's horse were got on board after many coaxings, for they had no great fancy for leaving the solid land; but they settled down to the inevitable at last. Then we cast off, and were soon tossing about on the stormy waters of the North Sea. Once we met a couple of Spanish war-ships, and as we flew the

flag of the Prince of Orange, they bore down upon us. The captain, however, showed them that they were no match for us in point of speed; and long before sundown we were alone again, with no sign of life, save the sea-fowl that sought for food among the chopping waves, or darted for the refuse which the cook flung over the ship's side.

Many a time in that short voyage did I look ahead, to catch a glimpse of the land where Dorothy had found refuge. It came into sight in the bright morning, showing a long low streak upon the horizon, which grew more and more distinct, as the ship bounded forwards.

"That is England, Master Ursulens," said Ninove, who had often been across the sea.

There was a joyous feeling within me, when the ship, having sailed into the broad estuary called the Wash, anchored in the Lynn Deeps, on the Norfolk coast. A huge flat-bottomed boat came alongside, and then Padilla was slung over into it, kicking and plunging as the hoist held him in mid-air. Buren, no less objecting to the new sensation, stood at his side before we cast off for the shore, which lay at some distance across the shallow waters.

But before nine o'clock of the morning, we were on our way, taking the road across the fens to Peterborough. One might have thought himself in Holland, and I said so to Ninove; but he reminded me that we were in the Fen district, which the sea had invaded, as it had done with our native land. The road led by many windings among marshes which some were trying to drain, but as it seemed to me, with little chance of success. Now and again we saw the great arms of a wind-mill whirling round in the stiff breeze that swept across the boggy land,

driving the machinery by which it was sought to pump out the waters.

Yet it was delightful, with the fresh spring breeze and the bright sunshine, to ride on and on, Padilla and Buren, used to the waterways of Holland, picking their way in and out, and in no sense disturbed by the sudden rushes of flocks of wild duck, that hastened to escape us. More than once we halted to watch them settle down with noisy screams on a broad stretch of water, looking very handsome while the sun shone on the rich glossy green of their heads and necks, the snowy white about their collars, and the velvet black of their curly tails. Numberless teal, too, were there, to share in the abundant supply of fish that were everywhere. It was all delightful, since the threading road on which we travelled led on and on towards London, where Dorothy dwelt.

Such a heavy road did not permit us to reach Peterborough that day, although it lay but thirty miles or thereabouts from the spot where we had landed. The sun was already going down when we drew up at a hamlet, where we learnt that the great town was full ten miles away. But we found a pleasant inn, and there got lodgings for the night.

When we had travelled out of the Fen district, we began to see the real beauties of England. Here and there the road lay through great forests, where mighty oaks spread out branches just ready to burst into leaf, or giant beech-trees, under whose shelter we sometimes saw some rough-looking gipsies encamping,—a wild race from the East, for whom there was no room in Holland, and who were therefore new to me. The dusky-visaged men, unkempt and dirty, peered at us when we rode by, rising on their elbows, as if they would see whether they could

measure strength with us. But we were armed to the teeth, our swords at hand, and loose in their scabbards, while the gleaming butts of our pistols showed out of the holsters. The odds were against them, in spite of the fact that they were ten to two, for with quarter-staves only they could scarcely contend with well-tempered steel, and two war-chargers that could also fight.

There were rough doings in the land, although it was declared that the Maiden Queen knew how to rule. At the inns which lined the road on which we travelled, none—not even the countrymen that laboured on the neighbouring farms—made way for the highest in the land, whom we sometimes saw there, waiting to be served.

“Let him take his turn, and bring me my flagon of beer first, Simon, since I came first,” shouted one fellow, whose boots were covered with the clay in which he had been digging throughout the morning. This was at the inn where we drew up for a meal one noon-day.

“But it is my lord of Rutland,” said the tapster, who had passed the man, and was carrying a cup of wine to a nobleman who waited outside, surrounded by a dozen followers in livery and badges.

“What care I for that? Who is my lord of Rutland that he should be thought so big? Is not my groat worth as much as his?” And when the tapster passed on, and waited on his lordship outside, the fellow sat and grumbled, and swore that the day would come when an honest man would have his due, and stand shoulder to shoulder with the haughtiest. This sort of thing surprised me greatly, for it was not so in Holland.

That self-same afternoon we had cause to know that this country clown was only one among thousands. Many a time we came across companies of wild-looking, desperate men, who went about the country, destroying

the houses of the well-to-do, forcing their way into stables and shippens, where they ham-strung the poor horses, maimed the cattle, and set fire to the farm-produce, doing many murderous things besides. I had thought of happy England, but we saw many lawless deeds done in that ride to London.

We were nearing the great city where the Queen dwelt, when we saw a small crowd gathered around three mounted travellers. The men of the mob were armed with heavy sticks, short knives,—anything they could lay hands on, and were in fierce combat. One of the travellers was a serving man who was fighting fiercely, and the second was a burly fellow, richly dressed, and wielding his sword lustily, while by his side was a lady who did what she could in self defence, by laying out right and left with her heavy riding whip, bringing it down with stinging force upon the faces and hands of her assailants.

“Come, Ninove,” I cried. “Here is rough work, and we must needs be in it to see fair play.”

Shaking Padilla’s rein, I galloped forward with drawn sword, followed by my comrade. Even while I had been speaking we saw one of the crowd bring down a club with fearful force upon the servant’s head. Blood spurted from the poor man’s forehead, and reeling in his saddle, he fell, only to be trampled upon by the cowardly assailants, who now turned their attention to his master.

“How now!” I shouted, in the Flemish tongue, forgetful that I was in the midst of an English-speaking mob. “Do you fight men at such odds as these?”

Not understanding what I said, some of the men—scowling, unwashed vagabonds, mendicants who had more than once been flogged at the cart’s tail, and were outlawed, perhaps, by reason of their crimes—turned round

and dealt us furious blows that taxed our skill to ward them off. Two fellows had already laid hands upon the lady, and were pulling her down from her saddle, while three were hewing away at the exhausted rider by her side.

“Look to the lady, Ninove,” I shouted, spurring Padilla while I spoke. The noble war-steed plunged past those who had turned their attention to us, into the thick of the fight, striking such as were in his way to the earth, while Buren was no less active with his iron hoofs.

When we reached the rider, I saw his face for the first time, and to my astonishment it was none other than Van der Fabry, the Burgomaster of Antwerp. A quick glance beyond him showed that the lady was his wife. I had come into the fray as one who did not care to witness a cowardly and brutal attack on travellers at such odds; but now my hand gathered strength, and it went hard with those who were in my way. I was too late to ward off one blow that came with a crash upon the Burgomaster’s head, but the man that struck him was next moment screaming with pain, and my sword wet with his blood. The Burgomaster sat, dazed and helpless in his saddle, barely capable of keeping his seat, but Padilla, responding to my touch, swerved round and cleared a space which the other vagabonds, who had not been maimed, dared not again intrude upon.

Seeing that Ninove was hard beset, since he was striving to keep Mistress Fabry in her saddle, and fight as well, I shook Padilla’s rein again, and the good horse rode down the fellows who were in the act of dragging my comrade out of his seat. One still held on, but my sword caused him to fall back with a scream of pain.

By this time, however, two of our assailants had hung on to my right boot.

“Hands off!” I shouted; but they both held on grimly, while one raised a broad-bladed knife, as though he would plunge it into the imprisoned limb. But quicker than he, I gave my sword a downward plunge, and a backward pull. The blade went in, and came out of the fellow’s arm, and then, drawing back my heavy boot, I dashed it into the face of the man who still held on. He groaned as the boot crashed in upon him, and throwing up his hands, fell back upon the sod, and lay still. Ninove was now at liberty to give attention to Mistress Fabry, so that I could turn to the Burgomaster. Some were meditating another attack upon him, but when they saw Padilla wheel round, they ran off into the shelter of the forest close by.

Dismounting, and knowing that our horses would stand when left alone, we helped the rescued ones to dismount. There was no time for any greeting, for the Burgomaster demanded all our care. He sat in the saddle, scarce conscious, by reason of the rough treatment he had received. Leaving Mistress Fabry a moment or two, since she was not much hurt, Ninove came to my assistance, and we lifted him down. He lay heavily in our arms, as we lowered him, and carried him to a tree close by.

“Help Mistress Fabry to dismount,” said I to Ninove, when I saw that the Burgomaster lay back against the tree trunk, senseless, and bleeding freely.

Once or twice, while we knelt at his side, aiding Mrs Fabry to bind her husband’s wound, a heavy stone fell with a thud upon the ground close by—flung by the miscreants who were sheltering among the trees, and when one struck Ninove on the leg, he ran to Buren’s side, and snatched his pistols from the holsters. While he turned, a man was in the act of throwing some

other missile, and levelling the pistol at him, Ninove pulled the trigger. There was a flash, a loud report and a scream; and the fellow, followed by the others, went limping away, so that we saw no more of them.

After a time the Burgomaster opened his eyes, and looked around. When he saw me kneeling at his side, with a wine flask in my hand, he gazed at me with much astonishment.

“Am I dreaming, or is this Caspar Ursulens?” he asked.

“It is he, Matthew. But for his timely arrival, and the brave fight which he and this young gentleman made on our behalf, we had both been dead,” exclaimed the Burgomaster’s wife.

“Then Caspar, and you, sir, I thank you both most heartily.”

No more was said for a little while, but the first to break the silence was the Burgomaster.

“I owe my life to you, Caspar; and that astonishes me, since you had much reason to leave me to my fate. Did you know that it was I who needed help?”

“I knew it, Van der Fabry, when I caught sight of your face.”

“And yet you ventured so much for me! Since I last saw you, Caspar, my thoughts concerning you have undergone a change, and now I think you more than worthy of my confidence. Come, take my hand, and forgive me for my churlish treatment. I did you much wrong, and I am sorry for it.”

I took his outstretched hand, and begged him to say no more.

“No more? Nay, but I have a great deal to say. You told me of Don Cristobal, but I would not believe you. He came to me soon after you left us at Brussels, and swore that he loved my daughter.

“‘But you are married already, Don Cristobal,’ I said, as if to test him.

“For a moment he looked somewhat confounded, but placing his hand upon the crucifix that hung from his neck, he swore that he was free to marry Dorothy. And that contented me, so that I thought the more unkindly of you. But not long after that, I chanced to meet a Spanish lady of high degree, and she asked me if I had seen her husband, who had been in the habit, so she heard, of visiting me.

“‘What is your husband’s name, señora?’” I inquired.

“‘Don Cristobal de la Fuente. I want him sorely, for our boy is ill, dying, I fear.’

“I gave an answer, I do not now remember what, and saw her pass on her way. From that day to this I have not set eyes on that Spanish nobleman, for I am told he was gone to Madrid. But if I do——”

Van der Fabry paused, for he was weak from the fierce treatment he had received. His hands clenched, however, and his face became crimson with anger.

“So now forgive me, Caspar,” he added presently. “And when you see Dorothy, who is in London where your own mother is, you may marry her as soon as you please. What say you, wife?”

“I have always desired it, Matthew,” said Mistress Fabry, who answered my delighted look by putting her arms about my neck, and kissing me tenderly.

How happy everything seemed on that glad spring day. The larks sang high up against the blue sky, while the sparrows rose in flight out of the fields hard by. The birds were whistling in the hawthorn hedges, that were already beginning to show out the white points of May blossom. From the forest came the wood-pigeons, flying across the open land to a copse that was far away.

Even a butterfly was fluttering in the sunshine. Everything was beautiful save the gruesome sight of those who lay stark and still upon the road, having paid the heavy price of lawlessness. But nothing in all nature was so blithe as I. While I helped Ninove to lift the Burgo-master into his saddle again, and assist the poor serving-man to mount, I could have laughed boisterously; and it was as much as I could do when we rode along slowly, in search of the nearest inn, to keep my gladness within bounds. The earth was gay, but oh! my heart was gladder still! For soon the sweet face of Dorothy would be before me, and I was wondering whether I should kiss it first, or tell her what her father said.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GOOD QUEEN BESS.

TWO or three days of rest at the inn close by did much towards restoring Van der Fabry, but the blow which battered his poor head left him so dazed, that to ride into London on horseback was impossible. The leech who had been called in to attend the two injured men, suggested that we should obtain a horse litter, so that by slow travelling we might get the Burgomaster to his home in the great city. The landlord, communicative and obliging in proportion to the profit he was likely to make out of the transaction, was not too ready to remember where such a litter could be found, since Van der Fabry, in spite of the pain in his bruised head, was disposed to drive a hard bargain. But as soon as I had him to myself in the great kitchen, and asked him frankly for what sum he thought he could get the thing we wanted, his memory recovered at once, and the litter was found in the stable. The ostlers, also, hitherto slow of foot, became active enough when I set a crown upon the table, and bade the inn-keeper supply them with some march-ale, which was usually reserved for the "quality" who stayed there, and was not often tasted by those of humbler degree.

Consequently, by ten o'clock of the following morning,

we lifted the Burgomaster into the litter, which was well lined with cushions to save him as much as possible from jarrings and joltings; and leaving the man-servant to be tended well, and with him also a purse that would enable him to pay for what he had—which made the landlord kindly-disposed at once—we started on our way.

From the very first I had formed a poor opinion of the roads of England—so different to those of Holland, which usually ran along the sides of the canals; but that slow progress towards London with a sick man on our hands, gave me the more time to think them execrable. Once or twice we came across a carriage stuck fast in ruts so deep, that they almost brought the axle-trees in contact with the road itself. Even the combined efforts of four sturdy horses were scarcely sufficient to get the lumbering vehicle on to a bit of level ground again. It was a remarkable thing in point of appearance, and looked not unlike a four-post bedstead on wheels. As the clumsy thing rolled out of the place where it had stuck fast, the lady who reclined in it on cushions was jolted about so much, that one thought every bone in her body would be shaken out of joint.

“I am thankful that we did not put the Burgomaster into one of those things,” said Mistress Fabry, when we passed on again, after Ninove and I had dismounted to help the swearing and disheartened drivers. As it was, even with the easier litter, Van der Fabry was much tossed and tumbled about.

The way led across heaths and commons, and through bits of forest land, without a hedge anywhere within two hundred feet on either side; and when I questioned a worthy yeoman as to the reason for this, he seemed surprised.

“Do you mean to say that you do not know, sir?”

“No, friend, or I would not have asked you.”

“Do you not see that if the trees and hedges had been left they would have given fair hiding-place for the tramping scoundrels who make it their business in life to waylay honest travellers?”

“I thank you, Master yeoman, but we hail from Holland, and these things are new to us.”

The idea of robbers explained the rarity of lonely travellers upon the way. Little parties of eight or ten, all well-armed, passed us, and most of them looked at us with some surprise, since there were but the Burgo-master, helpless in the litter, Mistress Fabry, Ninove, and myself, besides the two men who had charge of the hired horses.

“Methinks you are over bold, my masters,” said a sturdy merchant, who came up with eight others from behind.

“Why, sir?” asked Ninove.

“There be so many thieves and robbers on the way as you draw near to London—gangs of a score at times—that one’s life is in jeopardy if there be not plenty of well-armed companions,” was the answer. “Look yonder! Such were robbers of the sort we dread.” And the merchant pointed to a group of trees from which dangled the bodies of three men, who had been hung by the sheriff not long before.

“We would fain travel with you,” said Mistress Fabry, “but my husband has been so bruised and battered by a troop of vagabonds that we dare not go faster.”

“And I would fain stay with you, madam, but I have need to be in London shortly.” And making a salute, the man galloped his horse along the uneven track, in order to overtake his companions who had not slackened their pace.

These were drawbacks. But when we thought of that priceless boon that Englishmen possessed, religious liberty and the absence of tyranny, and the fact also that the workman was in a prosperous condition, and could feed his pigs, ducks, and geese on the common free of charge, and enjoy a hundred other privileges, these things seemed but light mischief, and we looked upon England as a country in which it was a privilege to live.

But the country, with its perilous travelling, was left behind us, and the feet of our tired horses clattered on the round stones that paved the London streets. Fortunately the men who had come with us knew the way to East Chepe, where the Burgomaster lodged, and they led us up and down the many narrow thoroughfares of the great city, which was quite the size of Antwerp. The streets were full of interest, and in place of anxious faces, such as one constantly met in the Netherlands, here were gay and roistering companies, handsomely-dressed men and women who stayed to give each other greeting, people lounging at their doorways, to call out pleasant words to passers-by, pedlars returning with right good will the banter and scoffings of prentices, who stood before the open windows of their shops, and shouted unceasingly—when not otherwise engaged—the names of the wares which their masters sold. It was the same, whether we passed a purveyor of meat, or an armourer's shop. Even the jewellers had their lads outside—strapping fellows, clothed mostly in round slops, with legs clad in white cloth stockings, and feet shod with stout leathern boots, while the coats of blue, and the velvet caps stuck jauntily on their heads, gave them a picturesque appearance.

But think of the din they made, drowning even the

clatter of the horses' iron shoes upon the stones, with their shoutings one against another!

"What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack? Prime shin of beef, madam?"

"Gay bits of silver, golden brooches, fair mistress?"

"What d'ye lack? a sword, madam?"

And then a loud laugh, as some old housewife looked round indignantly at such an inquiry.

"A rod for thy back, Master Insolence!" was the sharp reply which turned the laugh. And on went the cries again, the louder for the temporary lull.

"This way, madam! a pair of spectacles!"

"Nay, come hither! a gown of blue cloth, fit for a lady at Court, whence, belike, you have just come! Ho! what d'ye lack?"

We were turning into Chepeside, when there was a braying of trumpets, and looking down the street, we saw a company of horsemen.

"The Queen!" shouted the prentices, ceasing their clamour, and drawing themselves up with their backs against the shop boards, where the goods they sought to sell were ranged. "The Queen! God bless her!" came the shout along the street, and the trade cries died down as the trumpets rang out their calls, that betokened the coming of Royalty. From the side streets hurried scores of prentices, who had left their shops to take care of themselves, while workmen, many of them with tools in hand, came out to have a sight of the Queen. They heeded not the grime upon their faces, nor the uncourtly leathern apron, for the monarch, realising how much she owed to her artisans for her country's prosperity, was ever pleased to see them thus; better pleased, indeed, than when they were in their holiday attire.

Drawing back in a line along the top of the street

from which we were just passing into Chepeside, we waited to see the display of Royalty. How different was everything here to what it had been in Antwerp, when the representatives of King Philip passed by. Then there were oaths and curses beneath the breath—expressions of hate that were appalling in their earnestness and heat, against the tyrant and his servitors.

But not so here. There was plenty of horse-play while the crowd was waiting, but no disloyalty. "The Good Queen Bess," as the roughest workman called her, was the darling of the people, and not one in the hastily-gathered crowd but would have fought for her to the death.

Men and youths were still pushing and elbowing their way into a good place for witnessing the pageant, when the leaders of the royal party were level with us.

First came a score of gentlemen, walking three abreast, with plenty of room between, and whose attire bespoke some wealth, and no small love of fashion. Their hosen, some of silk, others of satin, or velvet, or damask, or other precious stuffs, reached beneath the knee to the gartering place, where they were tied with silken points. They wore the long peas-cod-bellied doublet, stuffed with bombast, and made of costly material, of grograin, camlet, satin, or silk, according to individual fancy, and slashed, jagged, cut, and pinched, with lace of divers colours, regardless of all cost. Over these again were cloaks of all hues, short, and scarcely reaching to the girdlestead, all faced with broad strips of gold lace, and lined in no less costly manner, with velvet or taffeta, as we saw when the light breeze blew them open. The head-gear was in keeping with this, but of all shapes, some broad-crowned and flat, some with rich feathers by way of ornament, some standing up on the crown a quarter of

a yard, with a little bow of jewelled ribbon at the point. These gentlemen walked on with bare rapiers, the sheaths of which hung at their sides.

Then came six trumpeters, from whose silver clarions were heard the blasts that told of the coming of Elizabeth. The men were mounted on milk-white steeds that pranced as proudly as though they bore the Queen herself.

After them came a score of horsemen, whose chargers were caparisoned richly, their trappings being of white silk, on which was displayed the Lion of England. In their hands the horsemen carried swords, which gleamed in the sun-rays that shone into the narrow street. Following these were as many esquires, while close behind was the body-guard—a hundred archers with armour that reached to the hip, and over this blue velvet doublets, adorned with lace of gold, and golden lions, surmounted with the initials of the monarch—E.R.

And then the Queen.

She rode a grey Arab steed, and was gorgeously attired in turquoise blue velvet, wrought with pearls over white satin, with rich embroidery in pearls and silver, and wearing a cap of white silken muslin. I cannot say that her Majesty was strikingly beautiful; but there was a pleasing look in her face, and the kindly glances of her bright blue eyes, as she turned this way and that, to acknowledge the plaudits of the citizens of every grade, did more to make her queenly and popular than any beauty could have done.

“God bless your Majesty!” cried the stalwart men to our right and left, waving their caps in the air, and cheering again and again with deafening persistency. “The Good Queen Bess!” shouted one in the crowd, and the hundreds around re-echoed the cry, while the

Queen herself, turning to the ladies about her, said something, and laughed gaily, only to bring renewed tokens of loyalty from the bystanders.

But the Queen passed on, and others in the procession came after her. Among them were her ladies, and behind these, again, many of the lords of the royal household. In their midst rode the Spanish ambassador, whose dusky face formed a striking contrast to the fair-skinned attendants of the English monarch. He rode side by side with the envoy of Henry the Third, who had not long before ascended the Throne of France.

There was a sudden change of feeling when the crowd recognised the representative of the King of Spain. The Spanish monarch was exceedingly unpopular in England, and the hostility of the people betrayed this. From cheers the spectators passed to execration, and the hard words that were used, and the shaking of fists, and menacing faces that were to be seen on all hands, showed that the pretence of peace between the English Queen and the Court of Spain, was ignored by the people. The ambassador's countenance betrayed no perturbation, in spite of these emphatic expressions of ill-will.

These representatives of foreign courts had little interest for me, but there was one who followed them, the sight of whom made my heart beat harder, and my breath come faster.

"Look, Mistress Fabry," I exclaimed, laying my hand on her arm, as if I would attract her attention, and point out this sinister-looking Spaniard to her, but she, too, had seen him.

"Yes, my boy, I see him — that scoundrel, Don Cristobal! I had no idea that he was in England."

He did not see us, and as the procession halted for a few moments, so that he was close to the spot where we

were standing, I had plenty of opportunity to assure myself that it was no mistake. He was as handsome and haughty as ever—one of the best-dressed men in that gay throng of lords, English and foreign. I need not stay to describe his costume, save to state that he wore a scarlet gold-embroidered sword-belt, from which hung a Damascus sword, which I hoped would be pitted sooner or later against my own, so that I might have full opportunity of repaying him for the many wrongs he had done to me and mine.

While I gazed at him with feelings of anger that were inexpressible, I watched the direction in which he was gazing, the more so because he turned pale, and appeared to be much disturbed. Out of the window of a house opposite there leaned a lady, whose face was familiar to me. I looked keenly, and then began to remember who this dark-eyed beauty was, and where I had seen her. It was none other than the señora who had halted at the door of *The Dutchman*, and had purchased various things from my pedlar's pack. She was the wife of Don Cristobal, and was looking at him with eyes that flashed with anger, before which the Spaniard's own eyes fell. Beside her, gazing out of the same window, was the boy for whom she had purchased the costly toys, and he, catching sight of the cavalier, cried out, loudly enough for all around to hear:—

“ My father ! Don Cristobal ! Look this way ! ”

The Spanish ambassador had been looking straight before him, taking no interest in his surroundings, and not even exchanging words with the Frenchman at his side ; but hearing the childish voice, he turned.

Seeing the little fellow gesticulating, he spoke to Don Cristobal, but the grandee, frowning, shook his head. Then another blast of trumpets came ringing down the

street, and the procession moved onward. As it was passing I saw, close behind Don Cristobal, another Spaniard whose face I thought I knew, but where I had seen it before I could not tell. It was a kindly face, but there was on it now a thoughtful look, as if the words of the boy had set him thinking. But he rode on with the others, and I saw him no more that day.

Looking to the lady, I noticed that she stood back from the window. Then, as if unable to control her emotion, she hid her face in her hands, and wept bitterly, while the boy, running to her side, sought to comfort her.

The crowd soon cleared away, and we followed our guides. When I gave a last look, the weeping woman had not moved, and the child stood by in mute sympathy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOROTHY MISSING.

RIDING along East Chepe some distance, we turned down a narrow street, where many handsome houses were built, and presently drew up before one which Mistress Fabry declared was that in which she dwelt. One of the men, at her request, pulled the bell chain that hung outside. Before long the door was opened, and old Martin, whom I had known as door-keeper at the Burgomaster's palace, appeared, his lined face full of hope when he saw his mistress.

"Have you brought back Mistress Dorothy?" he asked.

"What do you mean by that, Martin?" cried his mistress. "Is she not here?"

"No, mistress. She went out yesterday morning to do some shopping in East Chepe, and has not been seen since, nor have we found her, although we have sought high and low."

What the others felt I cannot tell. I only know that the mother turned pale, and that a frightened look came into her face, while the stern visage of the Burgomaster underwent a change, and his voice trembled as he put one or two questions to Martin. Then, forgetful of his weakness, he sprang from his litter, and hurried into

the house, leaving us to come in how we chose. When I had assisted Mistress Fabry to dismount, taking the purse she gave me to pay the charges for the litter, I passed in as the men went away, to hear what could be said about this new trouble. My brain was all afire, and I felt sick with dread as to the meaning of this disappearance.

When I hurried up the steps and entered the hall, Dorothy's mother and Ninove were standing there, eagerly talking with Martin, who told them all he knew, while I could hear the heavy stumbling footsteps of the Burgomaster, who was going from room to room, opening one door after another, and calling in loving words for his daughter. He came down at last to where we stood, looking as we felt—helpless and heart-broken.

"She is gone," said this stern-faced, hard man, his lips trembling as he spoke, and tears began to roll down his cheeks. "My darling child! my Dorothy! where are you?" And unable to stand longer, by reason of his weakness, he staggered, and would have fallen, but I took him into my arms.

"Carry him to his room," said his wife, looking to me appealingly, and when I lifted him, heavy though he was, and carried him up the stairs, she led the way. Before long we had him undressed, and in his bed, where he lay in silent grief.

"Caspar," said he, presently, "find my Dorothy for me."

"I will," I answered, "even though my life shall pay for her recovery. Do you lie there in comfort, and I will go at once to search for her."

"Would to God I had not been weakened like this, and so rendered helpless," said he, pressing my hand. "I acted cruelly to you and to my child, Caspar; but

please God, when she comes back to me, I will more than make amends."

"Do not think of it, sir," was my reply, for the Burgo-master, crushed in body, was even more bruised in spirit by this misfortune. It was pitiful to see his sorrow,—the more pronounced because so unexpected in one who seemed so hard. I thought better of him than when he asked my forgiveness on the country road; for now I saw how truly he loved his daughter, and how, perhaps, there was some excuse for his desire to see that she was not brought to share a poor man's poverty.

Bidding him lie quietly, and promising to let him know from time to time how the search went on, I left the room, and going down the stairs, sought for Martin to hear what could be told about Dorothy.

"She went out before noon yesterday, Master Ursulens, to buy some trinkets, since it would shortly be the birthday of her mother. She gave me a pleasant nod, and I closed the door upon her when she passed away. She did not return in the afternoon, and as the dusk came on I grew anxious. When it was quite dark I went to your father's house, but she had not been there. From thence I went to all whom I could think of, where she and her parents had been known to call, but none had seen her. I came back here, and finding that she had not returned, went again to your father. He and his man-servant, and three or four neighbours, who knew Mistress Dorothy—for many Flemings live in that street—went with me. We searched everywhere; went to the captain of the city-guard, who aided us, and sent men to help in the search; but it was all of no avail. Your father and I have wandered up and down the city making inquiries in every possible place, but returned for rest and food at daybreak, after a fruitless search."

What could I do? I had never been in London before. It was a great city, with more than a hundred thousand people in it, and to look for one among so many appeared a hopeless task. My feelings rose to a pitch of desperation, as I thought of all that I had heard concerning the dangers that beset the citizens in the hours of darkness. It was common knowledge, far and wide, that murder was not infrequent in the streets, that men came out of the hot-beds of evil in the city, and as the darkness covered the river, stepped into their light boats, and plied up and down to watch for any who were likely to have money about them. Not long before, so Martin told me, with cold comfort, a gentleman had been found in one of the bye-streets one morning, his body gashed in several places, and his pockets rifled of their contents. It was generally known, too, that thieves and ruffians of all descriptions received so much aid and sympathy from the lower orders of the people, that even watchmen were afraid to venture into their haunts, lest their own lives should be forfeit.

I thought I should go mad when all this came to my mind, for who could say what awful fate had overtaken Dorothy?

“Come with me, Martin, and show me where my father dwells,” I cried, opening the hall door, and hurrying down the steps, where I waited impatiently while the old man got down his cap from the peg, and donned his cloak. While he was doing this, Ninove asked permission to go with me. Martin, talking all the time, showed the way, leaving us at last at the door, which was opened before we had time to ring the bell. Gertrude had seen me from the window, coming down the street, and was there to greet me with every token of affection. Then taking my hand, she led me up the stairs, calling as she went :

“Mother, Caspar is come!”

I must pass by that meeting. There was joy in it, for those dear ones were safe, and dwelling—as they deserved to do—in the lap of luxury, since their recovered wealth was safely stored in the cellars of the Italian bankers, who did business in Lombard Street. But the talk soon passed on to the disappearance of Dorothy; and my father—like poor old Martin—yet looked weary after his night of anxious searching through the streets. I had not the heart to ask him to go with me, and renew the search. But while we sat and talked, someone came into the hall, and Gertrude, thinking that news had come, went to see who it was.

“It is Master Ogier!” she exclaimed, and hearing what she said, I sprang to my feet, saying—

“Here is someone who will act as my guide in London!”

Before many moments had passed, the master of *The Penguin* and I were shaking hands heartily. He looked beyond me, however, and seeing the anxious looks upon the faces of those who had stood to greet him, asked whether anything had gone wrong. I told him what had happened, and when I had finished, he went to the window, and looked out thoughtfully.

“I think I can throw some light upon that matter,” said he, presently, turning round and facing us.

“How so?” I cried, hope springing up at once.

“I saw Don Cristobal this morning, and while I know of nothing, it looks to me as most likely that he could tell us of her whereabouts.”

I had not thought of this, but when he spoke, the probabilities seemed very great indeed, and more so when I told him of what I had seen in Chepeside, and also at the door of the *The Dutchman*.

After another long silence, the master-mariner spoke again.

“Shall I tell you what I think? You say that Don Cristobal turned pale, and appeared disturbed when he saw the señora in the window. You may depend upon it that he has discarded her, that she has followed him to England, resolved to assert her rights as his wife, and that her presence here in London is unwelcome. Indeed, I can tell you more than that. It was commonly reported in the Netherlands that his wife had died, and doubtless the Spanish ambassador, hearing the boy’s cry, turned to ask Don Cristobal who the little fellow was. But let that go. This much appears certain to me, that the Spanish don knows where Dorothy is, and either means to force her into marriage, which, of course, will be only such in name, or to hold her as hostage for a great sum of money from the Burgomaster, who by a bit of clever diplomacy managed to get his wealth out of Antwerp, and reach London. And now comes the question—Where is she? The only possible way of finding out is to watch Don Cristobal, and should he enter any house other than his own, get into it in some way, and into his own house also, if we find nothing there. But that means peril.”

By this time the sun had set, and the shades of evening were fast deepening. Nothing could be done until a late hour had come, for the Spanish ambassador and his attendants were to dine that night with the Earl of Leicester. Then we might follow Don Cristobal, on leaving, and note his movements, after which we should be guided by circumstances.

But the waiting proved irksome, and I asked Bertrand Ogier to go out with me to look around, in case anything might transpire.

“With pleasure,” said he, rising from his seat, and buckling on his sword-belt as he did so. “This I do by way of precaution, since the streets of London do not bear a very good character, when darkness has set in. Not only so, but I think you had better do the same, and put a pair of pistols into your belt. I never go without them myself.”

Following his example, we were soon in readiness to set forth, Master Ninove also coming with us. At first we wandered about aimlessly, going to the riverside, and watching the black waters roll seawards, now and again hearing a cry from some wherry-man who plied his craft from one bank to another, and shouted aloud to avoid collision with others who were pulling hither and thither. Once we heard a loud scream, and then came silence; but what that cry meant, none could tell. Some woman, doubtless, in trouble; the city thieves, perhaps, rifling her pockets, or forcing her in some way to part with what she had, as a penalty for venturing into the streets when darkness reigned.

Truly, if England had so many blessings to be thankful for, I liked not this lawlessness and insecurity. Yet even that was better than the intolerable cruelties of the Spanish tyrants at home, for one could always strike a blow in self-defence—a thing we scarcely dared to do in Antwerp.

We had wandered on and on, now halting to see a fair lady go by in a litter, with a well-armed body of serving-men to act as escort and torch-bearers; then standing aside as the watchman went past us, bawling out the hour; or drawing back, in readiness for a possible scuffle, when a gang of roughs, ragged, unclean, noisy, and brutal, hurried along, bent on some mischief, incendiary or otherwise. Now and again there was a

squabble, a foot-pad trying to levy black-mail on a wayfarer, and in such instances we used our fists to good purpose, settling the quarrel to the great discomfort of the would-be plunderer.

It so chanced that we found a couple of sturdy rogues kneeling on someone who lay in the road; one rifling his pockets, while the other held the victim's hands to his sides, so as to prevent him from struggling or acting in any way in self-defence. They were so busy with this task that they did not hear us coming; but seeing them, we rushed forward, and with fists and boots—for the scoundrels deserved no considerations of fair treatment—we made them cry for mercy. While the fellows lay on the ground, rolling into the gutter to escape our blows, and shielding themselves as they could with their hands, we loosened our belts, and belaboured them until our hands were tired. They got up when we ceased, and limped off, rubbing their bruises woefully, and swearing roundly. They had cause, I wot, to curse us for many a day to come.

The man whom they had waylaid and assaulted so viciously, had by this time risen to his feet, and waited to thank us for our timely interference; but when we saw his face by the light of the street lamp, I cried in surprise:

“Walter de Swarte! My dear friend, what good fortune it was that brought us here!”

The next moment, Ogier and I were shaking him by the hand vigorously. When our first greetings were over, and we had introduced De Swarte to Ninove, we acted as escort to him, and saw him safely home.

“You will come in and see my wife?” said he. “There are one or two others in the house who are known to you, Master Ursulens.”

"We can spare an hour, and then we must be going," said Bertrand Ogier, answering for us; and before long we were greeting, not only Matilda de Swarte, but Nicholas Verreyck and his wife Kenan, who had entered the service of their countryman.

When the first salutations were over, and we sat down to talk, I told them what was uppermost in our minds, and Nicholas Verreyck, still weak from the tortures he had undergone in The Holy House at Antwerp, surprised us.

"I think I can tell you something that may be useful," said he. "Just as it was growing dusk, I was walking by Newgate jail, and saw a richly-ornamented carriage, from the canopy of which were suspended embroidered curtains, drawn together so closely that no one could look inside. It was so handsome that I stopped to look at it, admiring its carved woodwork, yet considering what discomfort it must be to ride within, even with cushions spread, seeing that the driver's face shook with the jarring and jolting as the carriage moved.

"The horses went slowly, and having nothing on hand at the time, I sauntered after them, merely prompted by idle curiosity. A hundred yards or so had been passed when the carriage drew up before a house just at the moment when a body of prentices came down a narrow alley, shouting 'Prentices! clubs! St Paul's to the rescue!' These were followed by a stronger body still, and around the carriage they surged and fought, dealing blows with their stout bats, or clubs, in such merciless fashion, that very soon half a dozen young fellows lay helpless and senseless on the stones.

"Not caring to join in the *mélée*, I got between the vehicle and the house, and there, somewhat in shelter, I stood, a silent spectator of what was going on. The

curtains of the carriage were drawn aside, and a richly-dressed cavalier stepped out; but as he did so, my face blanched with terror, for who should he be but Don Cristobal de la Fuente, the kinsman of the Grand Commander.

"Shrinking back out of sight, I stood behind one or two others, who had also drawn in to the wall to be out of the way of mischief. I was weak-minded, perhaps, in doing this, for in England I had nothing to fear from him. The driver and another man jumped down from the seat, one going to the horses' heads, since they were restive with all the shouting and turmoil, but the other hurrying to the door. He pulled the bell, and then stood by Don Cristobal's side, as if to await further orders. When the door opened, Don Cristobal himself drew back the curtain, and invited a lady to step out.

"But what happened just then I do not know, for there was a shout from all quarters—'The City Watch!' then a great scramble, prentices rushing by, some crawling under the carriage, and others even overturning me and those close by, with the unexpected rush. When I got on my feet again, the mob was down the street, the vehicle was empty, the driver was climbing up to his seat, and the house door closed with a heavy bang."

"And did you not see the lady?" I exclaimed, when Verreyck had ended.

"No, Master Ursulens. When the curtains were drawn back, they still hid her face from me, but I knew it was a lady by the dress that I caught sight of."

"Could you lead us to the house, Master Verreyck?" asked Bertrand Ogier, presently, after a painful silence had followed.

"Yes, I will take you to see it now, if you will," the other answered; and when we accepted his offer, he took up his cap, and stood ready to show the way.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DOÑA CRISTOBAL.

THE road to this house near Newgate prison led down Chepeside, past the place where I had seen the Doña Cristobal that very morning. As we went by, I looked up to the window, but all was in darkness. I could not dismiss from my mind, as we hurried on, the picture of the beautiful Spanish lady in tears, and the scowl of the high-born Spaniard whom she claimed as her husband.

“If I can but settle accounts with Don Cristobal,” I muttered to myself, “I will give him reason also to regret his treatment of this poor woman.”

But we walked on, passing now and again a fashionable, who, having spent the evening with a friend at a tavern, and drunk more than was good for him, was being helped homewards by a page, who carried a lantern in his hand to light the way. For this, however, I had no care. My only thought was of Dorothy, and I had not the slightest doubt that it was she whom Nicholas Verreyck had seen hidden behind the curtains of the carriage.

At last we halted before a handsome mansion which had surely not been standing long, it looked so newly-built. The door stood within a richly-carved porchway, while the house itself, which was of brick, stretched to

right and left, with two wings, one at either end, the windows of which were filled in with richly-coloured glass, through which the dim light came from within. The lower windows were barred, or shuttered,—a needful precaution where thieves were bold. Following along the high wall that ranged on either side for fully fifty yards, and over which some trees spread their branches, we turned down a narrow lane. Here the wall formed the boundary again, and was only broken by a doorway that led into the garden. The bottom end was similar, so that the space enclosed was about a hundred yards square.

Now came the question as to what was to be done. It was most unlikely that any servant would admit five men at night; yet it was a great risk to run for one or two only to venture within, seeing that we had no idea as to how many men-servants might be there. Yet what was our peril compared to Dorothy's? and as we stood in a group, whispering, I said so, and vowed that I would not leave the house until I knew whether she was there or not.

Our plans at last were agreed upon. Ninove and I were to try and obtain entrance, while the others were to stay in hiding among the dense shadows opposite, and pull the bell lustily if any danger threatened. On the other hand, if we needed help inside, we might contrive to let them know. Having assured ourselves that their place of hiding was a secure one, Ninove and I went up to the house, and rang the bell.

A lusty man-servant opened the door, and demanded our business.

“We desire to see Don Cristobal de la Fuente.”

“He will not be home for full two hours,” responded the porter, less surly in his tone than he had been

before, possibly because he saw that we bore the appearance of well-to-do Flemish merchants.

"Two hours! That is a long time, and yet it is imperative that we should see him. I pray you let us come in, and wait for his return," said I.

The man demurred.

"Why not come again two hours hence?"

"Bethink you, my friend," I answered. "We have but just arrived in London, and if the city watch found us loitering about a rich man's house, they might believe us thieves, and lodge us in yonder prison."

Still the man demurred.

"You are strangers, and it is scarcely conceivable that I should admit you at such an hour."

"Let us wait in one of yonder rooms," said I, pointing to a door across the hall; for we were now over the threshold. And as I spoke, I drew from my belt a golden ducat, and held it out to the man.

"As you will, sirs; but be sure you tell my lord, when he comes home, that I was loth to admit you, until you had assured me that your business was pressing." And so saying, he drew back for us to enter, and closed and barred the door after we had passed in.

There was something about us that reassured him, when he looked us up and down. We bore the stamp of Flemish gentlemen, and nothing could by any means make him suppose that we were bent on robbery.

"Come hither, sirs," the porter said, leading the way across the hall; and throwing open a door, he bade us step into a handsomely-furnished room. The walls around were hung with arras beautifully woven, displaying scenes in rural England, such as we had witnessed during our ride to London. The wainscots round the apartment were of polished oak, richly carved, and a

massive table stood along the wall, laden with costly plate, some of it of gold, but mostly choicely-chased silver. Over the great fire-place was a steel mirror, and ranged along the walls were beautifully carved stools, and high-backed chairs. The floor itself had a small piece of carpet spread the whole length of the hearth, but nothing else covered the boards, which were of dark oak, on which it was no easy thing to keep one's footing.

While we stood within the room and looked around, the porter grew more friendly, and began to explain this thing and that, and went so far as to tell us that the house belonged to Lord Hardwicke, who had lent it to Don Cristobal during his sojourn in England. From one thing we passed on to another, and finding that the man was willing to talk, and answered questions readily, I broke in presently with this:

"Is there not a lady here?"

"There is," was the unsuspecting reply. "My lord brought her here somewhat unexpectedly this very day, at sundown."

I looked at Ninove, who divined the thought in my own mind, for he spoke at once, before I had time to say anything.

"Could we not see her, and tell her our business? Time is precious with us, and you say that Don Cristobal will not be home these two hours."

"I could ask her," answered the porter.

"Do, my good fellow, and if she will see us, there is another golden ducat ready for you."

The man's eyes glistened, and he was gone instantly, returning before long to say that her ladyship would see us without delay.

My heart was beating quickly as we crossed the hall, for I fully expected that in a few moments I should be

face to face with Dorothy. Once with her in my care, not all the servants of the household should hinder me from carrying her away. When we halted at the door to which the porter led us, I was in such a state of eager excitement, that I could hardly restrain myself from opening it, and rushing in. But the man knocked, and waited.

“Come in!” said someone in a sweet voice which I did not recognise; but the door was thick, and that might account for the alteration of tone. The porter, hearing the words, threw back the only barrier that separated us, and stepping past him quickly, I looked around the room for Dorothy. Then I stood still, sick at heart by reason of my disappointment.

A lady sat back on a couch, looking eagerly at us, as if she wondered what the object of our visit was. She wore the English dress of the period, knowing doubtless that the English people had great ill-will for anything Spanish. The robe was of turquoise and gold brocade, the front richly wrought with gold, and the sleeves of blue satin, with over-sleeves of gold and blue brocade. About her shapely neck she wore a collar and ruffles of lace. Her fingers were decked with costly rings, and a bracelet of gold, set with precious jewels, rested on her left wrist.

She was truly queenly, and beautiful beyond description. But since she was not the one I had hoped to see, nor the woman I loved, her beauty, though it was riper, had no charm for me. She was none other than Doña Cristobal, whom I had seen weeping in the window of the house in Chepeside.

She saw the look of disappointment on my face, and must have guessed that I had hoped to see someone else, for almost before I had time to speak, she exclaimed:

“I can see, sir, that you thought to meet another lady, or I am much mistaken.” And as she spoke, the look of inquiry had changed to one of sad quietude.

“It is so, señora,” I responded; and an impulse came not to hide the real purport of my visit. “I came here, hoping to see one who has strangely disappeared, and I had reason to believe that Don Cristobal had brought her here.”

“With her consent?” exclaimed the señora, her dark eyes flashing with jealousy.

“Nay, señora, not with her consent. If she had been here, it had been altogether against her will. She came to England to escape the Inquisitors of Antwerp, and was my promised wife. But Don Cristobal sought her hand also, and her father, deeming him of higher rank, and a better match, consented to her marriage with him.”

“What!” cried Doña Cristobal, springing to her feet, her dark face aflame with passion, while she held her hand to her heart, as if to still its beating. “This woman promised to Don Cristobal?” And the words came between her panting breathings slowly and painfully. “You must be mad!” she added, as if she sought to deceive herself as to the Spanish don’s unfaithfulness.

“Pardon me, señora. Every word is true. I knew some time ago that you were Don Cristobal’s lawful wife——”

“I am!” she interrupted, falling back into her seat, her eyes fixed upon me, and her soft hands clasped together tightly. “I am his wife,” she repeated, “and upstairs, in his bed, lies our child, the lawful heir to our joint estates. Yet you say that Don Cristobal sought the hand of this lady, who was your own promised wife!”

Jealousy and sorrow struggled for the mastery with this poor woman, and sorrow won its way. Tears started

from her eyes, and seeing that her grief was very great, I did not speak. Ninove stood by me, looking on in sympathetic silence, while my own eyes grow misty as I watched and waited. Presently she succeeded in controlling her emotion, and was able to speak.

“You said that you knew that I was Don Cristobal’s lawful wife. How did you know it?”

“You will think it strange, señora, when I answer your question,” I responded. “A few months ago you drew up at a country inn not many miles from Antwerp. At the time, I was seeking to escape from the Familiars, and, dressed in the guise of a pedlar, I sold you some trinkets for your child,—he whom I saw with you to-day in a window in Chepeside.”

She looked up quickly.

“I remember that day well—too well. I had just before met my husband at Lillo, and sought to go with him to Antwerp. He was most unwilling to take me, but I insisted. We halted, however, at a village outside the city, and during the night he forced me to go on board a ship, and carried me away to Spain, to a quiet castle on the coast. The place was mine before we were married, and he practically made it my prison, forbidding me to leave it until he gave me permission. The consequences with which he threatened me if I disregarded him were terrible; but I have rebelled, and have come hither to the capital of the English Queen, resolute to claim my rights,” she exclaimed, passion again getting the mastery. “Now I see why he deserted me, and why he wished me to live in retirement,—that he might have his way with this promised wife of yours!”

She was going on to say yet more, but stopped suddenly, for the bell in the great hall rang out loudly. I looked at Ninove, and he at me. We had agreed that

Bertrand Ogier should give this warning if any mischief threatened. Danger was evidently afoot, and it was well that we should get away; and seeing that Dorothy was not here, we turned to go.

“Forgive us for our intrusion, señora,” I said. “With your permission we will retire.”

And bowing low to the Doña Cristobal, we left her.

CHAPTER XXX.

A PRISONER.

WHEN we drew the door after us and stepped into the hall, the porter, in much confusion, begged us to enter the room into which he had first shown us, lest it should be his master who had returned earlier than he had been expected. Doing as the man desired, we hurried in, but kept the door slightly ajar, so as to discover whether it was an alarm from our companions, or some caller merely. In the first case we should have gone out regardless of the porter; in the other event we should have waited quietly until the way was clear.

But to my surprise I heard the voice of Don Cristobal, and whispered the fact to Ninove.

"Then let us be ready for a fight, if needs be," he answered. "If the odds are heavy, we will get across the hall as best we can, and while you stand on guard, I will get the door open, and call our comrades in."

I nodded approval, and listened eagerly for what might follow. The street door swung together, and the bolt was shot in to make it secure against intruders. To be ready for emergencies, in case anyone should enter, we drew into the middle of the room, looking to our weapons, to have them in readiness. The sound of footsteps in the hall could be distinctly heard, but they

were those of one man only. The voice, however, I knew full well,—Don Cristobal's.

“Where is the señora?” he said, as we halted.

‘In the blue chamber, my lord,” answered the porter. “Shall I lead the way and announce you?”

“No. I will take some wine first. Bring it hither.” And as the Spanish don said these words, he walked leisurely across the hall, his footsteps telling us that he was approaching the very room in which we were hiding. A moment later the door opened, and Don Cristobal entered carelessly, singing to himself the strains of some light Italian air just then in vogue among the fashionables. He did not even look in our direction, until he nearly reached the wall. Then turning, as if to walk back again, he looked up and saw that he was not alone.

“Who are you?” he cried, standing still, and looking at us in amazement, for the presence of two men was unexpected, since the man had not said anything concerning us. A sudden thought evidently came to his mind, and he looked still more scrutinisingly into our faces. Then, with an oath, he clapped his hand on his sword, while we, not to be taken at a disadvantage, did the same.

“There is little need to ask who I am, Don Cristobal,” said I, resolute now to run all risks, and force this man to tell me of Dorothy's whereabouts. Whispering to Ninove, I bade him go into the hall, and intercepting the porter, persuade or force him to open the door, and that done, to call in our friends who were outside. It was a sudden impulse, and it was well I yielded to it.

As Ninove left the room, he drew the door after him, and Cristobal and I were left together.

“Now, Don Cristobal, we are alone, so that I may

put the question which you can answer. Where is Mistress Dorothy Fabry?"

"What is that to you?" said he, with insolent disdain.

"It is everything to me."

"Then let it be so, Master Ursulens, and kindly leave my house at once."

I looked at him, and with slow deliberation repeated my question: "Where is Mistress Dorothy Fabry?"

"What is that to you?" he said again, and with an added curse for my insolence and interference.

"I repeat, Don Cristobal, that it is everything to me, and if you do not tell me, I will put a bullet into your head." And so saying, I drew from my belt a wheel-lock pistol.

He laughed, but it was apparent that he was uneasy. Whether my cool confidence disturbed him, I cannot say, but his face changed, and grew pale. Had he simply to meet me with his sword, he might not have cared, for he did not know the capacity I had for fighting with that weapon. But a pistol is deadly, and makes a dispute very one-sided, when a man stands before you with it at full cock.

Seeing that I was determined, he dropped his insolence, and we began to debate on level terms,—man with man, and not as always hitherto, Spanish don with Flemish citizen.

"You assume, Master Ursulens, that I know of the whereabouts of Mistress Dorothy. I do not. But suppose I do know, is she not my promised wife?"

It was a hit in the dark on his part, since he did not know how much I knew; and putting a bold face on the matter, he sought to befool me in this way. But I knew too much to be cajoled thus, and my next words startled him, for they came, sharp and crisp:

“So long as Doña Cristobal lives, the Burgomaster’s daughter could never be your wife!”

“What do you know of any Doña Cristobal?” he cried, turning pale again, and yet with defiance in his tone.

“I have seen her in yonder room! I have seen her with you in the Netherlands! I saw her in the window of a house in Chepeside this morning, when you rode by in the Queen’s procession, and your little son was at her side! And I swear, Don Cristobal, that she shall be a widow, and your boy fatherless, if you do not tell me where the maiden is for whom I am searching.”

I had spoken so earnestly that I forgot the need for precaution, and placed the pistol on the table. He saw what I had done, and was on me in a moment. Then we were in deadly grip together, he seeking to draw his dagger as he held me by the throat, while I, on my part, grappled with him fiercely, and rained blows upon his face with my fist. He was compelled to shield his face as best he could, and, therefore, had to use his right hand for that purpose. In point of physical strength, I had an immense advantage, and soon it began to tell. The struggle went on without a word, almost without a sound, save the dull thud of my fist upon his face. Presently he sought to leap backwards, so as to be free from the blows I hurled at him mercilessly. As he did so, I sprang forward to maintain my hold; but, in doing so, my foot slipped upon the polished floor, and I fell with a crash, striking my head against the sharp corner of the table.

For a few moments I lay unconscious. The blow had stunned me, and left me at the mercy of the Spaniard.

It was but a passing swoon, and, when I opened my eyes, I saw Don Cristobal standing by, his face bleeding

from the blows with which I had assailed him, while Bertrand Ogier was handling a wheel-lock pistol, standing on guard, as it were, and Ninove with his back to the door to keep the porter from giving any alarm. Not that the man cared much. Judging by the look on his face, he had no great sympathy with his bruised and bleeding master; but, for appearance' sake, he had made a show of attempting to defend him when the others rushed into the room to see what the commotion was. This much was certain, that none of my comrades were any the worse for any blows the porter gave them.

Walter de Swarte and Nicholas Verreyck were on their knees beside me, anxious to know the extent of my injuries; but, when I opened my eyes, I was soon able to get on my feet again, none the worse for the struggle, save this, that my head was bleeding somewhat freely, where it had struck the table in falling. The mischief was quickly remedied by binding my head with a silken scarf, and I was ready once more to come to some decisive issue with the Spanish don.

“Have you found out where Mistress Dorothy is staying?” said the master-mariner.

“No, Master Ogier. This Spaniard pretends that he does not know.”

“Then we must find some way of making him recall a little more distinctly what he has done within the last two days. And this, Don Cristobal, you may be sure of, that you go no more free, either in your home, or into the streets of London, till you tell us where Mistress Dorothy Fabry is.”

The Spaniard looked at each one of us in turn. My temporary disablement had given him time to recover himself somewhat, and he treated the master-mariner's words with contempt.

“Gregorio, ring that bell, and loudly, so that I may have these men flung into the street.”

“If he does, I shall put a bullet into his head,” said Ogier, coolly, and he took up the bell that lay within easy reach of the porter, giving it to Verreyck, and bidding him put it in the fireplace, out of the way. That done, while he kept a strict watch on the two Spaniards, he spoke again.

“Now, gentlemen, time is precious. I am going to give Don Cristobal opportunity to decide, and if, at the end of my third question, he refuses to tell us where the young lady is, we shall gag him, bind his arms, do the same for the porter, so as to keep him quiet, and then take them both to my ship, *The Penguin*, which is anchored in the river not far from here. Now, my lord, I pray you tell us where you have hidden Mistress Dorothy Fabry.”

Don Cristobal maintained a sullen silence.

A second time the question came, but there was no reply.

“This is the last time, Don Cristobal, and if you do not answer, you will go with us. But mark you, should you make any sound to attract attention, I will not answer for your life. Now, my lord, where is Mistress Dorothy Fabry?”

The Spanish don looked at each one of us in turn, as if to discover any token of uncertainty, but the faces of all were stern and unyielding. The prospect, however, did not break down his obstinacy, and he turned his back upon us with a curse.

“Then, my lord, you must come with us; for if we cannot recover the young lady, she at least shall not be troubled by you. Come, gentlemen, help me to prepare Don Cristobal for his journey to *The Penguin*, but

Master Ninove, do you please guard the door, and keep an eye on the porter, who, if quiet, shall be treated gently."

So saying, he flung his belt deftly over the head of the don, and strapped his arms tightly down to his sides. The Spaniard saw that resistance might be fatal, and, therefore, offered none. A minute or two later, he not only stood bound, but gagged.

The porter's own girdle served to make him secure, and he, too, was soon as helpless as his master.

"Now we must go," said Ogier, looking carefully to see that everything was secure. Arranging the order of our going, he led the way into the hall, having looked out cautiously to be assured that the place was clear.

While I drew the bolt, Ninove took down a cap from one of the pegs in the hall, and placed it on the nobleman's head. Verreyck did the same for Gregorio, and we stepped out into the silent street.

Everything favoured us. The moon had not yet risen, so that none could see that two of our number played the part of prisoners. We crossed the road, went swiftly past the prison, turned down into Old Bailey, choosing the side of the street farthest from the prison, and, from thence, by many an alley, and with much caution, we came to the river, where the dark waters rolled on swiftly to the sea. Here and there a stray foot-passenger had halted as he heard the steady tramp of men, and since we carried no lights, as the city watch would have done, he avoided possible mischief by a quick retreat. But as for the city watch itself, they did not come our way, so that we brought our prisoners to the water's edge without hindrance.

"Boat ahoy!" cried Ogier, and, as his voice rang

across the river, a couple of wherries pulled up to the spot where we were standing.

“Here you are, master!” cried a boatman, hoarsely.

“Nay, this is the better boat!” cried the second man, as his craft ran in between the other and ourselves.

“First come, first served, my friend,” said the master-mariner. But here’s a groat for you, all the same, so sheer off at once.”

The man, quite content, and hearing another call lower down, pulled off without delay, shouting loudly that he was coming. And as he was lost in the darkness, and the swish of the oars grew fainter, we stepped into the wherry close at hand, and were quickly pulled into mid-stream, where *The Penguin* lay at anchor.

Before long, Don Cristobal and the porter were in safe keeping on board the very ship which the former had searched in vain, when, with the Familiars, he sought to carry me a prisoner to the Holy House.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SCUFFLE IN FLEET STREET.

DON Cristobal was as resolute in his refusal to tell of Dorothy's whereabouts when on board Ogier's ship, as in his own house; and, while we questioned him, he stood before us in sullen silence. Nothing that we could say, no threats, no promises—I had almost said no entreaties—induced him to make any response whatever, save once, and then we knew that our efforts to obtain information from him would be useless.

“ You may do as you please with me, but torture, and even the certainty of death, shall not compel me to satisfy you. Do your worst, but you shall never know from me where the maiden is in hiding.”

Seeing to the prisoner's security, and placing a well-armed man on guard at the cabin door, we left him, Bertrand Ogier remaining on board his ship, while the rest of us returned to our respective homes.

The next morning, according to arrangement, we were once more on board *The Penguin*, but all to no purpose. The haughty Spaniard treated us with a disdain that made us long to chastise him; but he was a prisoner, and helpless, so that we had no care to be cowardly. He should have fair play so far as we could exercise it, although he in no sense deserved it, since he had acted

such a shameful part with regard to Dorothy. While he sat on the locker, careless and sarcastic, treating us with contempt, it was hard to keep hands off him.

Finding him obdurate, we went ashore and pursued our search throughout the day, but left off at night greatly discouraged, and completely worn out with our fruitless efforts. Feeling desperate, I went after supper to *The Penguin* to see once more whether the prisoner would obtain his liberty by parting with the information, but he received me with scorn and insults that maddened me. This I passed by, however, as I could; but when he said something so wantonly insulting to the reputation of one so pure as Dorothy, I restrained myself no longer, but struck him in the face with all the force that anger lent me, and left him lying senseless on the cabin floor.

Saying nothing to anyone, save to tell the man at the door to look well to the safe-guarding of his prisoner, I strode across the deck, and, dropping into the wherry, bade the waterman pull me ashore.

Quitting the riverside, I walked homewards moodily, heedless of all passers-by, sick at heart, too, by reason of my inability to discover the whereabouts of my lady-love. Was she dead? No, that could scarcely be, for since Don Cristobal could not marry her, he sought either to make her his mistress, or to wrest a great sum of money from her father, as the price of her liberty. But while she was surely alive, the question constantly recurred—What discomfort was she undergoing? Was she being treated kindly? Was she safe from harm from those in whose hands she had been entrusted?

I had reached Fleet Street not far away from my father's house, when I heard sounds of a scuffle; and, looking up quickly, saw half a dozen fellows, who, on

closer acquaintance, proved to be veritable jail-birds, with ragged clothing, unclean skin, and a hang-dog look on their faces. They were hustling a gentleman against the wall, and pressing him so closely that he had no opportunity of using the keen blade of his sword which he had succeeded in drawing from its sheath. One scoundrel was tearing away his jewelled collar, and the costly chain of gold that hung about his neck, while the others were attempting to get at his pockets, so as to extract his purse and any other valuables. But he fought right valiantly, dealing blows with the handle of his sword, which, gripped tightly in his fist, came down with tremendous force on the faces of his assailants.

Running forward, and drawing my sword as I ran, I shouted for the city watch, thereby hoping also to put courage into the heart of the victim of the attack from these footpads. But I was too late to save him from serious injury. One of the men, furious at the brave resistance, and smarting from a terrific blow in his face with the heavy pommel, drew a knife from his belt, and, watching his opportunity, sought to drive it into his victim's heart. Fortunately, the other saw his intention, and shifted as the blade descended, but could not avoid it altogether, for it plunged into his shoulder, and the arm hung useless.

By this time I came up, and took part in the scuffle. I had seen that last stroke, so cowardly and murderous, for the fight went on under a lamp that hung out from a window overhead. The fellow had drawn his knife back, and was coolly wiping it on his breeches, when, taking my sword by the blade, and lifting it in mid-air, I brought it down upon his head with such force, that the rascal fell with a groan upon the stones, and lay there as one dead. Shouting again for the city watch, I

brought the sword down upon another, who, taken from the rear, loosed his grip upon the stranger's neck, and tumbled across his companion.

Assailed from behind, the men turned to see what danger threatened them, and, not liking their looks as they faced me, I quickly grasped the sword by its hilt, and made as though I would charge them. The sight of a stalwart fellow like myself, with a keen blade glittering, as I held it ready for action, and the fact also that two of their number lay senseless at my feet, dismayed them, and they turned to run. Two of them ran into the arms of the city watch that came round the corner of the street at that moment, and were held fast, but the others escaped.

I would have chased them, but for the fact that the stranger was in a sorry plight. He stood against the wall, well nigh senseless from the brutal treatment he had received, for, what with the grip on his throat, the blows on his face, and the knife wound in his shoulder there was room to wonder that he had been able to stand at all.

I caught him in my arms as he reeled and was about to fall, and, letting him down gently to the doorstep close by, begged one of the watch to fetch a leech. One lived not far away, and, as he came to where we stood, I bade him follow me, while I threw my strong arms about the wounded stranger, and, with the aid of a watchman, helped him down the side street to my father's house. It was not more than four doors round the corner, and very soon he was lying on a couch, and being examined by the leech.

As he lay there, dazed and bleeding, Gertrude and my mother at hand, ready to be of use, I was startled to find that the stranger was none other than Francisco de

Lafra, whom I had twice before seen in Don Cristobal's company. It was a kind and handsome face, and while the leech dressed his wounds, I called to mind his kindly treatment of the little landlord of *The Dutchman*, when the Grand Commander's nephew had quitted the inn without making payment for what he had drunk that night. I remembered, also, his thoughtful look when Doña Cristobal and her boy appeared at the window not long before. From that I passed to another thought,— Was it possible that this Spanish gentleman could throw any light on Dorothy's whereabouts?

I was compelled to be patient for that night, the leech declaring that the wounded man must sleep. The couch was the best sleeping-place, and De Lafra was made comfortable there. Then drinking a sleeping-draught, he lay silent, and was soon asleep, while I sat by to watch, and tend him if he should have need of anything.

It was day-dawn when he awoke and looked around him. The sun was beginning to peer in faintly, lighting up the room in which he lay, so that he saw everything distinctly. Then he turned to me, bewildered at my presence by his side, and wondering no doubt where he was. He gazed at me inquiringly, but I did not give him time to speak.

“ You wonder where you are, Señor de Lafra ? ”

“ I do,” he answered; but a twinge of pain in his shoulder when he moved, served to remind him of what had taken place the night before.

“ Ah! I remember. Some rascals hustled me in the street, and treated me badly. But if I mistake not, you were the gentleman who came to my assistance. Was it so ? ”

“ It was, señor,” I responded quietly, “ and this is my

father's house," I added. "You were brought hither, as we were close by, and the leech, having dressed your wounds, gave you a sleeping-draught."

"Then, my friend, I owe my life to you, which I deem doubly generous on your part, since, by your face and accent, you appear to be a Netherlander. And Netherlanders, God knows, have good reason to hold Spaniards in abhorrence rather than in love. Pray let me take your hand."

I did so, and then, since he was now wide awake, and much better after his night's sleep, we began to talk.

"May I learn your name? he asked, as we dropped each other's hand.

"I am Caspar Ursulens of Antwerp."

He turned and looked at me in some surprise.

"I have heard your name before. Were you not known to the Burgomaster of the city?"

"I was, señor, as you may well believe, when I tell you that I was promised the hand of his daughter Dorothy in marriage," I answered, the blood throbbing through my veins by reason of this, that I could in the most natural way bring round our conversation to this topic of the missing one.

"What!" exclaimed De Lafra, turning sharply; but the sudden movement gave him great pain, and a sharp cry escaped his lips in consequence. But he was eager now. "You say, Master Ursulens, that Mistress Dorothy Fabry was promised to you. That could not well be, for the Burgomaster promised his daughter to Don Cristobal de la Fuente, if you know him?"

"Know him?" said I, bitterly. "I have cause to hate him as I hate no other man on earth. He has carried Dorothy Fabry away, and we cannot find her, although we have searched for her in all directions."

De Lafra looked at me in great surprise, and thought a while.

“You will think it strange when I say that while I sympathise with you in her disappearance, I see nothing to be surprised at that the maiden’s whereabouts are not known.”

I turned at these words, my face burning with anger ; but he held up his hand, as if to bid me be silent.

“Let me explain myself, Master Ursulens. Mistress Dorothy would not have anything to do with him, so Don Cristobal carried her away that he might marry her, with or without her will, since she was promised to him.”

“You are quite mistaken, señor,” I broke in, quickly. “The promise was made to him by the Burgomaster, but he withdrew it angrily, and rightly too, when he discovered that Don Cristobal’s wife was living.”

“You astonish me. She is dead!” cried De Lafra, and the look upon his face showed me that he spoke sincerely, and that he honestly believed what he said.

“Pardon me,” I answered. “She is not dead. A day or two since I saw her in the window of a house in Chepeside, when the Queen passed by, and her little boy called out to his father.”

“Yes, I know that ; but the lady, whose face I did not see, was the boy’s nurse, so Don Cristobal assured me.”

“It is not so, señor. I have since seen Doña Cristobal in the house where Don Cristobal lives, near to Newgate Prison. And what is more, I have spoken to her. Let me tell you my story, señor,” said I, when I saw a red spot growing on his cheek.

“Do, I pray you,” he responded, settling into an easy attitude, as it pained him to be sitting as he had been.

Then I told him all that had happened up to the hour

when I was on my way home, and had saved him from the footpads in Fleet Street. I did not say, however, where we had placed our prisoner.

He had listened quietly to the story of the search, and of my interview with Doña Cristobal; but when I finished, he spoke such words that I almost leaped from my seat. This much I did—I laid my hand on his, and gazed into his eyes eagerly, to see if he meant what he said.

“I have reason to believe that the maiden is in the very house where you had your interview with Doña Cristobal.”

“You cannot mean it!” I exclaimed, when I could find speech.

“I mean every word, Master Ursulens. Don Cristobal told me that he meant to have her, with or without her consent, and would take her to his house, since she was in London. She has disappeared, and it seems to me that having kept his word in one thing, he has kept it in the other. Depend upon it, she is in that house. And as for Don Cristobal, he is a scoundrel who shall answer to me when I am well enough to fight him.”

Seeing that De Lafra was better, I left him, so that I might snatch two or three hours' sleep in my own room. I met Gertrude on the stairs. She was on her way to see whether she could do anything either for me, or for the stranger I had been watching through the night; but when she heard that he was doing well, and wanted nothing, she went back to her own chamber.

It was past the breakfast hour when I awoke, and, dressing quickly, I went downstairs to partake of the morning meal which had been served in true English style. After what I had heard from Francisco de Lafra I was in better spirits, and as I ate heartily of the shred

pie, and veal and capon that were on the table, my cheerfulness tended to surprise Gertrude, who was attending to my wants.

"You seem to have heard good news, Caspar," said she, as she was sitting close by.

"You are right, my dear sister," I answered, taking the flagon of spiced ale, which the Londoners called huff-cap, and drinking what remained of it. "I have heard what fills me with hope, and, God willing, I intend to find Dorothy to-day!"

She looked at me with some astonishment in her face, and pausing in the midst of cutting me a slice of the delicious wheaten bread which the London bakers made so appetising, she asked me what I knew. Then I told her, and kissed her fondly for the pleasure she displayed.

"What do you intend to do, Caspar?"

"To pay Doña Cristobal a visit as soon as I leave this table."

"And what if she knows nothing?"

"Then I will search the house until I have gone through every room. I do not think that her ladyship knows of Dorothy's presence there, for she was practically a prisoner in her husband's home, and, if I judge aright, was to be kept there out of everyone's way until she could be disposed of."

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN THE WEST WING.

WHEN I had finished my breakfast, I went to see how De Lafra was feeling after his night of rest, and was glad to find him much better than I could have hoped for. Indeed, he scarcely gave me time to inquire, when he asked me whether I intended to search for the lost maiden that day.

“This very hour, señor.”

“I would that I could go with you,” said he. “I have been trying to discover what chances there were of my doing so, but I cannot manage to get on my feet. Even if I went in a litter, I should be in the way; but if you will allow me, I will give you a hint that might be of service. I have heard Don Cristobal say that he had rooms in the west wing of his house, whence no cries could be heard, and which were supposed by the servants generally to be mere lumber-rooms. It is easy to imagine in such a case, that the two ladies might be in the mansion, and neither one of them know anything of the other’s proximity. The thing, then, is to search those rooms, and it has occurred to me that Gregorio the porter, whom you have carried on board *The Penguin*, might know something, and for a reasonable sum of money will sell his secret.”

“I will go at once and see him,” I said, when the Spaniard had ended; and calling my sister in to attend to him, since he appeared to be very exhausted, I took my purse, buckled on my sword, saw to my pistols being duly loaded, and sallied forth to renew my endeavours to discover the missing one.

Ninove went with me, and we started for the Burgomaster’s home, with the faint hope that some news had reached him. But nothing had been heard, and Dorothy’s friends were more than ever in an agony of suspense. To put them into better spirits, I told them of my adventure in Fleet Street, and then of what I had heard from Francisco de Lafra.

“Why not go to the authorities at once?” asked the Burgomaster. “They might give you a warrant to search the house.”

“Yes, I could do that; but I will first try the porter, who is on board *The Penguin*, and failing him, we can do as you suggest. But there are so many forms to be gone through, that it will be midnight again before we get them to move. I have thought of that; but at the English Court, much as the Spaniards are hated by the people in this country, there is a desire not to fall out with Spain, because the English Queen does not want a war just now. It might end in help; but it is just as likely to end in refusal, and even in our being prevented from entering Don Cristobal’s house at all.”

Bidding them hope, and await our return, Ninove and I went to Walter de Swarte’s home, and he wanted no persuasion to go with us when I told him our plans. Nicholas Verreyck would have come, but as in his present state of health he might be a hindrance, we left him to look after his daily affairs.

Our way led past the great Church of St Paul’s, and,

going along the narrow streets, which were almost blocked by the fashionables who lounged about the taverns or perused the books at the stalls, we saw much of what London life in the daytime was like, as compared with that which might be seen when night set in. Even thus early in the morning we could hear the rattle of the dice-box, for the fashionable gentlemen and many of the ladies of England were great gamblers. Others, the wives and daughters of the well-to-do business men, were standing at their doors, chatting to acquaintances, and sometimes slyly throwing a kiss to a favoured one.

We paid but small heed to all this, however, and pressed on until we reached the river-side, where we found a boatman who pulled us out to *The Penguin*, that was still lying in mid-stream.

"How now, Captain?" I cried, as we stood on the deck, and saw Ogier coming forward to give us greeting. "You look somewhat flustered."

"Do I?" said the master-mariner, with a short laugh. "Well, to speak truly, I have had some trouble with Don Cristobal, and that poor porter, Gregorio, will have cause to remember this morning for some little time to come."

"What has happened, then?"

"Don Cristobal pretended to have some need to see the man, and suspecting nothing, I sent him into the cabin. He was there half an hour, perhaps, when we heard some one screaming for help; going in, I found Gregorio on the floor, and his master doing his best to throttle him. When the Spanish don saw me enter, he gave the man a terrific blow, enough to kill him I should have thought, and then turned on me. But he found me one too many for him, and is quiet now."

The master of the ship shrugged his shoulders, and chuckled with satisfaction, adding:

“I wanted some excuse for serving him out, and this offered itself most opportunely.”

Going to the cabin I saw Don Cristobal lying back against the locker, his dress disarranged, his face bleeding, and himself almost unconscious. On the floor was Gregorio, a pitiable sight, and when one saw how brutally the Spanish don had treated him, all pity one might have had for the nobleman died out, and one wished that Ogier had been more severe. A couple of sailors knelt at the porter's side, endeavouring to staunch the blood that ran freely from his mouth and forehead, and in their rough way they sought to comfort the poor fellow.

Seeing us enter, he looked up reproachfully.

“By the Holy Virgin,” he exclaimed, in short gasps, “I would that I had shut the door against you that night, for I have had nothing but trouble since.”

“It was an accident, my friend,” I answered, sorry for the ill-fortune of an unoffending servant. “The master of the ship treated you kindly, and made you comfortable while he held you a prisoner, and when your master asked for you, he had no idea that any mischief was meditated.”

“That may be,” was Gregorio's response. “But what if I am maimed for life? To-morrow was to have been my marriage-day, but who would marry me now, beaten and battered like this? And how can I be wed while you keep me a prisoner here?” And more out of disappointment than from pain, the poor fellow began to weep.

Under other circumstances one might have smiled, but things were too serious here, and we sought to do what we could to bind up the man's wounds, and put him into better heart. A good draught of muscadine restored his spirits considerably, and he was content to listen to what I had to say.

“You will do now, Gregorio; and what is more, I think you may even yet be able to marry,—to-morrow, if your sweetheart does not mind your bruised face.”

“How so?” he exclaimed, incredulously.

“To begin with, if you fall in with my wishes, you shall have two hundred golden ducats to commence housekeeping, and have your liberty this very day.”

“You trifle with me,” cried the man, forgetting his pain in the thought of receiving so large a sum of money.

“Tell me this first,” said I, willing to delay a few moments, while I gave the man time to realise the full meaning of his good fortune, “will the ducats make amends to your sweetheart for all those bruises?”

“I should think so!” Gregorio answered, eagerly. “Teresa loves me, doubtless, but I think the sight of a heap of gold like that would overcome the other drawbacks.” And then, bruised as he was, the porter tried to smile knowingly. “But you trifle with me!” he said, looking serious again.

“Nay, Gregorio, I do not. I was never more in earnest. Listen, and let me tell you what you are to do for the two hundred ducats. Your master, Don Cristobal, has carried away a Flemish lady, and she is lodged in his mansion, where we saw you——”

“How did you know that?” the porter interrupted, with much astonishment in his face.

“Never mind, Gregorio. What I want of you is, that you should come with us, show us the room in which Mistress Dorothy Fabry is concealed, and as soon as the lady is in the hall with me, you shall have the money and your freedom.”

“Can I trust you?” he cried.

“Trust me? Here are some ducats—twenty of them

—and you shall have them now, if you are willing to come with me.”

The man's face and his question showed me that he could help us, and he expressed his willingness to go at once.

“But I do not like to go through the streets like this,” he said, looking down on his handsome but blood-stained doublet woefully.

“We will find you something here,” volunteered Ogier, who had stood by listening.

“Then let us be off, for I have done with that master of mine for ever,” exclaimed Gregorio, rising to his feet painfully, and spitting on Don Cristobal, in token of his fierce resentment of the treatment he had received. The Spanish don took no notice of him, for he lay back untended, and still unconscious, or nearly so.

“I will come with you,” said the master-mariner, as we moved to the ship's side, and before long we were standing on the river bank in eager consultation. Gregorio was so battered that he would certainly attract attention while going through the streets, and we wondered how we could get him to Don Cristobal's mansion without doing this. A horse-litter chanced to pass by at the time, and the men in charge were looking out for a hire. This was the very thing we wanted, and the porter was soon within its shelter, and passing along the by-ways of London in a manner that was beyond his previous experience.

As the litter men went leisurely, so as not to shake the man more than they could help—for it caused him no small pain to move—we sauntered along, keeping an eye on the litter, but assuming an air of indifference concerning it. More than once, however, I caught sight of Gregorio peeping out furtively, as if he feared that we had deserted him.

I called Ninove's attention to it, and we had a quiet laugh together.

When we reached the house, the door opened in response to a loud ring, and the man who acted as porter, stood on the threshold to demand our business.

"We have brought back Gregorio, who has got into mischief," said Ogier, and the man, suspecting nothing, suffered us to enter with the wounded Spaniard, who told the other to close the door, and leave him to his usual duties. The man, nothing loth to forego duties that were distasteful, merely stayed to ask what mischief his fellow-servant had fallen into.

"Foot-pads," was the curt reply; and since there was evidently no great love lost between the two men, we were soon without the other's company.

"Lead the way at once, Gregorio," said I, impatient to be with Dorothy; and without waiting for him, I stepped across the hall.

"Stay," said the porter. "I must get the key, for since I had charge of her, it was entrusted to my care."

"And who fed her?" I asked.

"I did."

A cold perspiration broke out upon me when I heard this, and I grew sick with dread. The poor child had been shut up thus, alone, and without food, all through those long and weary hours since we had carried our two prisoners on board *The Penguin*, and little did we think that we were bringing her to starvation point during the porter's absence.

"Haste, then!" I cried; and when Gregorio led the way into the dining-room, where the key was hidden, I followed him, going to the sideboard, and taking from it a small silver flagon in which there was some wine.

This I would give her, for she would need it after her long fast.

"I am ready, my masters," said the porter, going out of the room slowly; and he led the way along a broad corridor that went towards the west wing. How my heart beat in that short, but to me never-ending walk! Door after door was passed by, and I anticipated that the next one would be that which we sought. Then we turned to the right, and went down some steps, where everything was in such darkness that we could not see our hands before us.

"I must get a light," said Gregorio, halting; and while he got the light, I thought to myself how horrible it must be to poor Dorothy, to be in darkness and loneliness as well as hunger.

"For God's sake, hasten!" I exclaimed. To me, in my impatience, the Spaniard's feet seemed to be of lead. Yet it was not unwillingness, but physical pain that made his pace so slow.

"Have patience, master," the man responded. "Every step is pain to me. The chamber where the maiden was first lodged we have already passed, but Don Cristobal, finding that she was resolute in her refusal to his wishes, brought her here, and she is now in the cell the third on the left."

"Then give me the key," I cried, and snatching it from his hand, I hastened forward, while Ninove, who was carrying the lamp, came after me swiftly.

"Throw the light on the door, Ninove, and let me see where to put the key into the lock." But as he held the light my hands trembled so, that my companion took the key from me, and thrust it into the keyhole. It turned with readiness, and the door fell open before the pressure of my hand. We were looking into a cell, dark as any

of those that were found in the Holy House at Antwerp, the only entrance for light being through a narrow slit that served as a window.

“Dorothy! my darling! Are you here?”

There was a movement on the straw inside, and then the sweet voice I had known of old.

“Who calls me?”

“I, Dorothy,—Caspar!” I answered, now in the cell, and kneeling at her side; for as Ninove brought the light nearer, I saw the dear one sitting there upon a bed of crisp, clean straw.

“Caspar? O God, how good!” she exclaimed, scarcely waiting for my answer, since the voice itself had told her who I was.

The others did not come in for a few moments. They lingered outside, so that she could give me of her heart’s love, with none to watch. She kissed me passionately, her lips lingering on mine, and her arms clinging to me tightly, lest I should leave her. But not one word more escaped her lips save this, “Thank God!” Then there was a silence that frightened me in the midst of all my joy.

“Speak, darling,” I exclaimed, as her arms fell loosely from my neck. But no response came.

“Come hither,” I cried to those who halted without, and as they entered, and Ninove stood with the lamp so that the light fell on that beautiful face, it was pale, as though death had come. She lay in my arms, still and helpless and heavy, as one that was dead.

Mad passion raged in my heart when I gazed into the face of this beloved one, whom I had found too late. I spoke fierce, hot words, full of implacable wrath against the man who had dared to deal with her so basely. It had been bad enough to have held her in captivity with

the best surroundings, for even sumptuous furniture, and gorgeous decorations would still make a prison shameful. But to lodge her here, in a place that was fitting for a felon, in order to force her into a base surrender, it was unspeakably cruel. The old saying in Scripture is—"Be ye angry, and sin not." I fear, then, that I sinned deeply as I gazed into that sweet face, for I prayed passionately for vengeance.

And yet the sense of sin did not possess me, and had he been standing near, I should have slain Don Cristobal as I would have slain a dog, and felt that it was just punishment. The sum total of his sins against me was a great one. He had been the means of bringing the best father and mother a man ever had, from affluence to penury. He had brought in discord between two families, and broken in upon our betrothal. He had destroyed the old home where the Ursulens had dwelt for full two centuries. He had set the Inquisitors, with all their horrors, on my track—he had sought my life. All this was hard to bear, and deserved the keenest punishment that could be meted out to one who knows naught of pity. But these were as nothing compared to his greatest sin of all,—that he had sought to force my darling into a marriage that was no marriage,—something that had unspeakable shame behind it, since he was already wedded to a beautiful woman of his own faith and country; and, laying violent hands on this sweet girl, had brought her to his home, not to place her in the lap of luxury, but to force her to yield to him by treating her as one might treat a felon.

What need is there to pursue the long list of this man's wrongs to me and mine? Everything was eclipsed by this thought of the shame he meant to heap on Dorothy, the purest-souled girl in the wide

world. And now she lay in my arms, giving no sign of life, not even a quiver in her frame.

“Dead!” I cried, in agony of spirit. “Dead! Oh, my Dorothy, I have come too late! too late!” And laying her on the straw, I sank down by her side, all dumb and shivering.

“Rouse yourself, Caspar,” said Walter de Swarte, presently, placing a kindly hand upon my shoulder; for after the first outburst of passion, I had fallen into a state of lethargy, while the others stood by in silent sympathy.

“But she is dead,” I answered, raising myself on my elbow.

“It would seem so, my friend; but it may be only a swoon that looks like death, brought on by a revulsion after her solitude and trouble. Rouse yourself, and see whether some of this wine will not revive her.” And De Swarte took from Ninove’s hand the flagon that I had brought with me.

“Give it to me,” I cried, a new hope springing up within; and kneeling once more at Dorothy’s side, and with a skill and gentleness that had their birth in love, I placed some of the rich reviving liquid within her lips.

“She is not dead,” I almost whispered, when, after what seemed long waiting, the dear one swallowed it. She took some more, and yet more,—then lay still again.

There was an anxious silence while we waited. Walter de Swarte knelt at my side, chafing her hands. Ninove and Bertrand Ogier stood by in sympathetic stillness, gazing eagerly on the pale face, while Gregorio himself, still racked with pain, was stooping, and watching with devouring look, the maiden whom, at Don Cristobal’s command, he had carried thither.

Moment followed moment. Even the crisp rustle of the straw ceased, and no sound came, save the faint passage of De Swarte's hand on Dorothy's soft skin. She lay so long and so still, that I began to despair, and was on the point of laying her down upon her prison bed, hopeless, thinking that that sign of life which had made us hope, was the last we should ever have, when her limbs began to quiver.

"Thank God!" I whispered. "Dorothy, my dear one, come back! come back!"

But an ominous stillness followed, and my hope died, more cruelly because of its vain awakening.

Many moments passed, and then her eyes opened, and met my own gaze. The sight put life into her. A quick shiver ran through her frame, and, with a loving exclamation, she threw her arms about my neck once more.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RIVALS.

I HAVE passed by what was said in that dark prison, when Dorothy looked around, and greeted us one by one. I lifted her in my arms, and carried her up the steps, making light of her weight, as though she had been a child. I pressed her to my heart, and thanked God again and again.

Ninove, with drawn sword, like the other two, went on in front, alert for danger if there should be any, while Ogier and De Swarte, placing Gregorio between them to guard against treachery, followed close behind. There was not much to fear, however, and we reached the corridor, and presently the hall, in safety.

But there we met with interruption. We had turned into the hall, when the door of that room in which I had had an interview with Doña Cristobal opened, and the Spanish lady herself appeared. She started back with a cry of fear when her eyes fell upon us, a company of armed men, with swords gleaming in the sun that shone through the richly-coloured windows. The cry of fear would doubtless have given place to one for help, had I not spoken.

“Have no fear, señora, but suffer me to tell my story.”

As I spoke, I stood before her with the precious burden yet in my arms,—more precious than that which I had found in the Holy House. I told her all that had happened from the moment I had left her, and, as the story proceeded, the look of fear that was on her face changed to one of passion.

“Let me see the maiden!” Doña Cristobal exclaimed, when I had ended my story; and she came to where I stood, and looked into Dorothy’s face. She was trembling, and I wondered what she would think of her beautiful rival. Had she expressed any hatred I could not have been surprised, for what woman could endure the thought of a rival, and yet be calm and generous? What she did only served to show how truly noble she was, and how unworthy of such a wife Don Cristobal had proved himself to be.

She looked on my darling’s face long and eagerly; then she stooped and kissed the pale lips and cheeks.

“I thought myself beautiful, my dear, but when I look on you, it is no wonder that you should prove my rival.”

“Not a willing one, señora,” answered Dorothy, softly, who had listened to the story, and gathered from my words a true idea of her ladyship’s position.

“I am sure of it, child, and for that reason I have kissed you, and kiss your fair cheeks again. Alas! my dear, I have had a sad life. I loved my husband, and thought myself beloved.” And, burying her face in her hands, she wept bitterly, and almost constrained us men around to join her.

Dorothy put out her hands, and drew her gently to herself, seeking to comfort her.

“Put me on my feet, Caspar,” she said.

“You cannot stand,” I remonstrated.

“ Oh, but I can. Try me.”

When I had done as she desired, forgetful of her own weakness, she flung her arms about the weeping lady's neck, and gave her all her loving sympathy, so that at last the tears were stayed.

“ Come hither, before you leave me,” said Doña Cristobal, turning to lead the way into her room. “ You must have food after so long a fast.” And, taking Dorothy by the hand, she walked with her into the chamber, bidding us follow.

It was a noble act. The generous heart prevailed over the jealousy that one might well feel towards a successful rival. Doña Cristobal proved herself a real woman in this, that she recognised in a sister the possession of a great gift, a charm, and a talent, of which she might well have supposed herself the only mistress. Dorothy, pure and noble in her womanhood like the other, responded with all her soul, without grudging, and gave her sympathy to one whose heart was sorely wounded. Much as I loved her, it was hard to say that either one of them displayed beyond the other the supreme beauty of womanhood; for, as I watched them, it seemed to me that they both revealed it equally in this tenderness towards each other.

Having at last made all arrangements for taking Dorothy home, I gave Gregorio the two hundred ducats. The man looked at them, and then at me, his face full of wonder.

“ Why do you look at me like that ?” I asked.

“ I thought, señor, that when you saw how shamefully Don Cristobal had served the maiden, you would refuse to abide by your agreement,” was the answer.

I looked at the Spaniard reprovingly.

“The Netherlanders, Gregorio, are not like the Spaniards, who think that promises are only made to be broken;” and, so saying, I turned away. There lay the secret of so much of the suffering in our country. The Spaniards had no regard for honour, and no thought for fidelity to promises, where my countrymen were concerned. Promise after promise, made the more binding by the most solemn oaths, had been set aside ruthlessly, so that in the end we looked upon their words as so much lying and deceit.

Turning to wish Doña Cristobal farewell, I found that she was hastily donning a cloak, as if to take a journey.

“Are you going for a ride, my lady?” I asked.

“I want to go with you, if you will take me. I dare not stay in this house alone, for who can say what my husband may do with me, should he return?” Her face was pale with apprehension as she said these words.

“He shall not return, señora, until we have full assurance that you are safe,” spoke up Bertrand Ogier. “If you wish it, we will find you a home where you will be out of danger, or we will send some of our friends, who will protect you.”

“Then I will stay where I am,” she answered. “Send someone as soon as you can—a lady, too, to bear me company—for I have great dread of being left alone, now that I see how this dear girl has been treated.”

“If I may be allowed, my lady, I will stay with you, and perhaps Master Ogier will remain also, until my wife can come to us,” said Walter de Swarte.

“I am agreeable,” broke in the master mariner, without waiting for another word.

“If you would,” responded Doña Cristobal, “I should

feel safe. It would afford me time to think of what could be done for my child and myself."

So it was settled. Our two friends stayed behind to guard against any mishap, while Dorothy, with Ninove and myself walking at her side, rode to her father's house in a horse-litter.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE QUEEN IN DANGER.

I HAVE not thought it necessary to describe the meeting between Dorothy and her parents, nor to tell of the delight of the serving men and women when they saw their young mistress once more safely sheltered in her father's house. When I lifted her in my arms, and carried her up the steps, and into the room where the Burgomaster and his wife were sitting disconsolate at a table, the substantial meal untasted, the joy was more than I can tell of, and, therefore, I must needs pass it by.

Anxious to tell my own people what had happened, I laid Dorothy on the couch, gave her a parting kiss, and left her to relate her own story. When I passed through the hall, the whole household was there, gathered around Master Ninove, who was telling how we had found the lost one. As I joined the group, to beg my companion to come home with me, they thronged about us both, and blessed us for the part we had played.

"We have not done more than anyone here would have done," I exclaimed, when it was possible to get a word in.

"I would have died for her," said old Martin, who

seemed to have aged considerably during the last few days of suspense.

We got away at last, and reached my father's house. My parents and Gertrude were in the room where Francisco de Lafra lay, and as we entered they eagerly asked for news. The joy was great when we hurriedly repeated the story of our day's adventures.

"And as for you, señor," said I, taking the Spaniard's hand in mine, "my gratitude to you is lifelong; for, but for your timely words, I should never have thought of searching for the missing maiden in the same house with Doña Cristobal."

"I thank God, Master Ursulens, that in some small degree I have been able to serve you in return for your generous help to me," responded the other. "By tradition, and I know not what besides, we ought to be enemies. Please God from henceforth, we are friends who may esteem each other the more, the better we understand one another."

It was a pleasant speech. The ring of reality was in it; and had there been any doubt, one had but to look into the Spaniard's face to see that the words were not empty compliment, but came from the heart. Divided as we were in interests, and antagonistic by reason of national prejudices, it was the more pleasing to feel that the chasm between us was bridged over. That shake of the hand, and the exchange of thanks took place a long time since, but our friendship has ripened into warm love that only goes to show how sad a thing it is, that the men of Spain and of the Netherlands should cherish such hateful thoughts towards each other.

With all this trouble on hand, I laid myself open to blame from those who, not having the pain to endure,

would fail to realise my dilemma on finding that Dorothy had so mysteriously disappeared. I had come to England, not primarily to see the girl I loved, but to wait upon the Queen, and deliver the despatches with which I had been entrusted by the Prince of Orange. Perhaps if I were to try, I could make out a good case for the delay, excused by the generous, still blamed by the sticklers for duty. All that I can plead—and what I did plead when I told the Prince of my delay—is, that human nature was strong within me, making me no better than other people, and, I hope, no worse; and seeing how great Dorothy's peril was, there was little blame that I should make her recovery my immediate care.

This by the way.

Only waiting to have a hearty meal after so long a fast, and receiving a promise from my father to arrange with De Swarte and Ogier for the safeguarding of Doña Cristobal, I set off with Ninove for St. James's Palace, where I hoped to have audience with Her Majesty, the Queen of England.

The way led through long, narrow streets, which were often blocked by reason of the traffic; but, after a while, we got away from the hubbub of the city, and walked into the open country, where the sounds of city life gave place to the quietude of broad, green meadows, studded with noble elms, broad-armed oak trees, and wide-spreading beeches. Here and there were thickets of thorns, great patches of heather that had yet to bloom, and bunches of gorse that would be golden later on.

Now and again, along the winding road through so much beauty, rode companies of cavaliers, their long, black shadows falling slantwise across the green expanse, showing that the day was hastening to a close.

Occasionally one saw a few straggling houses, and far away to the left the stately Abbey of Westminster, and the broad bosom of the Thames, whose waters gleamed like silver as the sun's rays fell on them. It was very beautiful, and when we drew near to the Palace, one could not conceive a more pleasing spot in which royalty could dwell.

We were a hundred yards away from the gateway of this royal abode, when a trumpet blast rang forth, and, looking in the direction from whence it came, we saw a cavalcade of knights and ladies cantering out of an avenue of elms, and making for the Palace. Somewhat in advance of this company rode a woman in solitary state, with a couple of richly-accoutred knights a yard or two behind. It was the Queen, and on her wrist a brown falcon rested.

We halted, ready to bow low as Her Majesty rode by. But when she approached us, and so passed a mighty spreading oak directly opposite the spot where we were standing, a man appeared from behind it, took rapid aim with a pistol, and fired. The bullet whizzed past our heads, and even brushed my cap away, while in its passage it grazed the forehead of the horse that bore the Queen. The startled creature reared, and would have thrown Her Majesty, had I not dashed forward and caught his rein. Meanwhile, Ninove darted past, and, drawing his dagger as he ran, went in pursuit of the fellow who had thus sought to murder the monarch. What happened in that mad chase I did not see for a while, because the frightened animal, to whose rein I clung, plunged onwards for a few yards, and in his mad terror and pain, lifted me from my feet, and drew me with him. But I held on, so that he presently stood still.

It was all the work of a moment or two, and when the horse halted, I looked up anxiously to see if the Queen was injured by the outspreading branches of the trees, among which the steed had carried us.

“Is your Majesty hurt in any way?” I asked, eagerly, as her attendants came dashing up to her side.

“No,” she answered, with a grateful smile for the service I had rendered. Her face was pale with excitement and, as she spoke, she turned to see what had become of Ninove, and the man he pursued. The fellow was making for the river at a tremendous pace, increased by reason of his fear of capture; but Ninove, lithe and active, was running him down. While he ran we could see the occasional flash of steel as the sun’s rays fell upon his dagger.

“Will he overtake him, Sir Walter?” said the Queen, watching the chase eagerly.

“Yes, your Majesty,” answered a handsome young cavalier, at whom Elizabeth had glanced hastily. “He gains on him at every yard, for the scoundrel has not so much endurance, and must give up speedily. Ah! see, your Majesty, the young gentleman has his hand on the fellow’s shoulder! Splendidly caught!” shouted the courtier, forgetful of the presence of royalty in the excitement of the moment.

“He is down!” cried the Queen, who had watched the chase with eager interest.

While this had been going on, my view had been intercepted by the horsemen that had gathered around their royal mistress, and not knowing who was down, and fearing lest it was Ninove, I dashed forward to be of service to my comrade. But now that I was in the open, and could look ahead, I saw that it was the fugitive that had come to grief; for even at the

moment Ninove was kneeling on him, seeking to pin his arms down to his side. The fellow, however, was of great strength, and struggled fiercely, endeavouring to keep his hands free, and whenever opportunity offered, dealing a heavy blow with his fists at Ninove's head, or face, or chest.

While I bounded forward, I heard the Queen's strong, clear voice, and she was speaking querulously.

"What, my lords! do ye loiter here, and suffer that brave gentleman to deal single-handed with a would-be murderer?"

When the Queen had spoken, there came the sound of galloping horses from behind. They flew past me in a moment or two, and, before many seconds had passed, were at the spot where my friend was struggling with the desperate man. What I saw made me quicken my pace, and a cry of consternation escaped my lips, while the horsemen shouted even as they dismounted hurriedly. The fellow had got at his dagger, and it was gleaming in the sunshine, as if he sought to drive it into Ninove's body. As the horsemen's feet touched the ground, there was a flash of steel, followed by a cry of pain, and Ninove fell across the man, lying still, while the same hand was raised to repeat the blow. Before the assassin could strike again, he was laid hold of, hand and foot, the dagger was snatched from his grip, and he was a prisoner.

I came up while the struggle was yet going on, and looked to my senseless comrade. Blood was oozing from a rent in his side, but how far the scoundrel had driven his weapon home, one could not tell. Far enough, perhaps, for life to escape, although I prayed devoutly, as I strove to staunch the flow, that it might not be a fatal stroke. While I slit up the doublet and all

that intervened, to get at the wound itself, one of the noblemen tore up his linen scarf, and, with a dexterity which showed that he had often done that sort of thing before, bound up the wound, and prevented any further loss of blood. Another poured some strong waters between Ninove's lips, and the spirit served to revive him.

My wounded comrade opened his eyes just as the Queen and her courtiers rode up; and, seeing that Ninove yet lived, she bade one of her attendants ride off to her Palace and bring a litter, so that he might be conveyed to a bed there, and be tended by her physician.

"Keep up a brave heart, young gentleman. It was a bold deed, and I have yet to thank you. I will see you and your friend again."

So saying, Her Majesty turned her horse's head, and after one more look of sympathetic concern, shook the rein, and rode on to St. James's, whither we presently, but slowly, followed her.

It was gone past sun-down when the physician, having examined the wound, pronounced it serious, but by no means likely to turn out fatal. Time, and such attention as Her Majesty commanded to be paid without stint, would restore Ninove to his wonted health again, and hearing this he lay in content, although he had no care he said, to be invalided with such a paltry wound.

"Do not say paltry, my young friend," said the venerable doctor. "It is serious, and will demand my utmost care; but, provided you are patient, I shall pull you through, and you will be yourself again."

Shortly after this I saw the Lord Chamberlain, and told him what had brought Ninove and myself into the neighbourhood of St. James's Palace.

"I will see Her Majesty, Master Ursulens," his lordship responded, when he had scrutinised my credentials.

“I have no doubt that she will give you early audience.” And, so saying, he left me while he sought the Queen.

It was as he had said, for he presently returned and bade me follow, while he led the way to the chamber where I was to be granted an interview.

Nothing that I had anywhere seen was so gorgeous as the apartment where the famous Maiden-Queen of England received me. The walls were covered on the lower portions with handsomely-carved and panelled wainscot, as high up as my shoulders, and above this were beautiful specimens of tapestry, portraying famous scenes in English history. As the evening was chill, Her Majesty was seated near a fire that blazed upon the hearth, which was enclosed by a large and massive chimney-piece, built of marble, and reaching up to the ceiling. The ceiling itself—save in the centre—was chastely wrought in plaster, the scrolls and foliage and flowers being delicately coloured. But in the centre a clever picture was painted, descriptive of the battle that gave the English throne to the Tudors.

The room itself was scantily yet richly furnished. There were two or three round tables, and on each was a golden stand in which wild flowers from the fields had their place. A heavy carpet covered the centre of the floor, and round the walls were high-backed chairs wrought in ebony and gold, a tall clock, and a side-board on which were costly articles of china, antique bronzes, intaglios, mosaics, and much besides.

All this I took in at a glance, for Her Majesty, when I entered, was talking seriously to a grey-headed courtier, who stood upon the rug that lay stretched before the fire. She looked round, however, and, seeing me standing just within the door, bade me advance.

“This is my brave young cavalier who prevented my

horse from bolting with me," she exclaimed, cheerily. "Why, he blushes like a boy," she added, looking into my face, and laughing pleasantly. I could not help thinking, even in spite of my nervousness, that the Queen's charm lay in her smile. But with all her affability, there was a look upon her face that showed her courtiers that she was not a woman to be trifled with, and one was made to feel that it was better to have her smile than her frown. Gazing at her, I felt that she was equal to the task of ruling over a turbulent and independent people. Around her stood half-a-dozen richly-dressed ladies, who watched keenly, as if to divine her least desire, and prepare to meet it without delay. The very toss of her head, the quick movement of her hand, the imperious glance of her eyes, all combined to explain what I had heard concerning her curt and ready resistance to any encroachments of her Parliament. She was a woman who was well able to curb the restless spirit of her people.

So far, however, as words and smiles went in this interview, she was most gracious. From her thanks to me for the part I had played, she passed to anxious inquiries as to how Ninove was progressing, and when I told her what the leech had said, she assured me that he should have all the care that her palace would permit; and that, I knew, was saying a great deal.

We then passed on to the special business that had brought me to England, and I stood a long hour in the royal presence, while Her Majesty debated the contents of the Prince's letter with two or three lords whose attendance she desired. Occasionally she turned and asked me questions as to events that were transpiring in the Netherlands; but otherwise they talked as though I had not been present.

“Master Ursulens,” exclaimed the Queen, graciously, at last, “we will consider this letter to us from your Prince, whom we most highly esteem, and will send for you when we have come to a decision.”

I was about to quit the royal presence when an old lord entered hastily.

“May it please your Majesty, I bring you some very startling information about that would-be murderer.”

“Say on, my lord,” exclaimed the Queen, turning to the courtier, who had evidently just entered the Palace in great haste.

“The fellow was put to the rack, your Majesty, and confessed that he was employed to kill you.”

“And who was the employer?” cried the Queen, her eyes flashing, and her stern thin lips closed together in anger, when she had put the question.

“Don Cristobal de la Fuente, one of the lords in waiting on the Spanish Ambassador, and nephew of Don Luis de Requesens, the Viceroy of the Netherlands.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the Queen, folding her fan together with an angry snap. “Those Spaniards are tired of me, and wish me gone! They will find that I yet live, and know how to punish those who dare to abuse my hospitality! These accursed Papists! They seek to sweep all Protestants off the face of the earth, but, by Heaven! they shall not succeed while Elizabeth is on the throne! Where is this Don Cristobal?”

“We have sought him at his house, but none there know of his whereabouts, and, truth to say, your Majesty, it was only this morning that the Ambassador complained of his absence, and his ignorance as to what he was doing.”

Elizabeth tapped her left hand with her fan, in angry impatience.

“My lord, he must be found. We will have no assassins prowling about in our capital. Make out a warrant for his committal to the Tower without delay, and see that he is lodged there soon.”

The courtier bowed low, but the look upon his face attracted the attention of his royal mistress.

“You appear embarrassed, my lord,” she exclaimed, querulously.

“I am, Your Majesty, for I do not know where this Spanish lord is to be found.”

An awkward silence followed.

“How now!” cried the Queen, presently, when I advanced towards her, and craved permission to speak. But I saw, to my concern, that she deemed my act an intrusion.

“Pardon me, your Majesty, but I know where this Don Cristobal is lodged, and with your gracious permission, I will show your messengers the way.”

“But how should you know,—a stranger to our city?” she asked, in no small surprise.

I told her in a few brief words what had happened since I came to London, and, while I spoke, anger and amusement strove for the mastery. At last the Queen burst into laughter.

“Excellently well done, Master Ursulens,” she cried. “The prisoner on board *The Penguin* shall be lodged in a safer place, where, I trow, he will not force the doors and bars. When we have time we will reckon with him. Bring me my pen, my lord, and I will sign the warrant for this man’s arrest.”

When the table was placed before her, and the order for arrest was drawn up, she signed it with that decision that all the world had reason to know was characteristic of the Virgin-Queen, who could keep turbulent lords in

order, and cause her enemies to hold her in something like wholesome fear.

“There! that is done! Let this Spaniard be lodged in the Tower without delay, and bring me word when that is done. And for you, Master Ursulens, I will see you to-morrow at noon concerning this letter from the Prince of Orange. It will go hard if I do not find some way of standing by those of the Protestant faith, since the Papists long to be rid of me.”

An hour later, a royal barge, having on board one of the officers of the Queen's household, and half a score of halberdiers, went down the Thames with the outgoing tide, and presently drew up alongside *The Penguin*. The halt was not a long one, but when it moved down the river again, the barge had another passenger,—Don Cristobal de la Fuente. Before any great time had elapsed the gates at the Traitors' Entrance rolled open, the boat shot in, and then began a gloomy procession to the Beauchamp Tower, in which the Spanish prisoner was safely lodged.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE KEY'S DESTINY.

THE next few days were happy ones for each of us, save the unfortunate Doña Cristobal, who, in spite of her husband's cruelty and unfaithfulness, could not forget how she had once loved him. But when she heard our story more fully, she calmed down, and waited to hear of his fate with dull apathy. She received the dread news of the execution that followed, with keen emotion, and refused to be comforted. Yet she had no word nor thought of blame for Ninove and myself, notwithstanding that we were the chief agents of her husband's arrest.

"He deserved it, and it was a dastardly act for which there can be no excuse."

Instead of confiscating his goods, the Queen sent for Doña Cristobal, and secured her in the possession of all the valuables in the house that had belonged to the dead man. She also made her welcome at Court, and did many things that showed how keen her sympathy was.

"The Queen of England is a true woman," said Cristobal's widow to us one morning, when Dorothy, now strong again, went with me to see her. "I shall stay in her capital, since she has desired it, and as I shall

have the company of your friends, I shall be even happier than in sunny Spain. For in my castles there, I have spent sad hours which I would fain forget."

Time is a great healer of sorrow, and two years later Doña Cristobal married her countryman, Francisco de Lafra, who was appointed by the King of Spain to represent the Spanish Court in England.

And as for ourselves?

It goes without saying, that all happiness came to Dorothy and myself. I returned for a few days to the Prince, bearing the answer of the Queen of England to the letter I had borne from him. But when he heard my story, he sent me once more to London, bidding me come back with Dorothy as my wife.

Much of our time after that glad event was spent in England. The Prince of Orange needed a representative in London, and, finding that I was in favour with the Queen, he appointed me to the post, the arrangement meeting with Her Majesty's approval. The work that had to be done was too much for one, so Ninove became my colleague, journeying to and fro, bearing despatches for our brave-hearted master, who was quickly breaking up the Spanish power in the Netherlands.

Many a time, however, in spite of our happiness in England, we turned longing eyes to Antwerp, which would always be home. But we dared not go there. One morning there came a letter from Lancelot Bockholt, who, when we lived in the Nordenstrasse, was our opposite neighbour. This letter was written from Leyden, and one passage in it ran thus:—

"You wonder, perhaps, why I write from Leyden, and not from my old home. The fact is, the old house in the Nordenstrasse is a heap of ruins, even as your own is. Two years ago the Spanish soldiers mutinied, and came to Antwerp, as you know. They

came again in greater numbers than before, and have used the citizens much more cruelly. For those devils—I cannot call them less—brought straw, and threw it blazing into the houses, whereby they set nine streets on fire, and burnt them with many rich and costly goods. They also rifled the people of all their jewels and silver ornaments, and took every coin they could lay hands on. For three days they tormented the citizens, putting men and maidens to unspeakable torture and shame, in order to compel them to say where the money-chests were hidden. It is declared, and I can fully believe it, that four thousand of our people were murdered,—as if we had not already suffered enough at the hands of the Spaniards! The money they took away with them is reckoned to be many tons of gold, to say nothing of the jewels, and all the loss by fire. Antwerp's reputation for wealth has cost her much."

After such a story as that, Ninove and I were not slow to strike when the fighting days came again. When events pressed hard, and hands were sorely needed, he and I went over, and fought in the desperate battles which ended in the evacuation of the country by the Spanish troops, and the full establishment of the Dutch Republic. We joined in the fights, but we also shared in the glories of triumph, and finally removed to Antwerp again, where no Spanish soldier dared to show himself. The fugitives, too, who had gone to England with my father, returned, and participated in the prosperity that once more belonged to that opulent city of my birth.

I remember one day especially after our final return. The Holy House was a hideous reminder to the people of Antwerp of the tyranny and cruelties that had now passed away. It was decreed by the Councillors that it should be dismantled, and I joined with those who helped to raze it to the ground. The Familiars had been hounded out of the city, for they had the audacity to linger there, and as the last one passed out of the Holy House, I went in with some of the Councillors. Door after door

was opened with that self same key which I had used in the recovery of our treasure, and in rescuing Matilda de Swarte and Nicholas Verreyck.

During those early and awful visits, I had trodden the long and gloomy corridors with deadly fear in my heart. Now I walked along them with a sense of exultation, and threw open one door after another, to set free any poor prisoner that yet remained.

The last one came forth; and then, to be rid of the Key of the Holy House, I took it to the harbour, and flung it into deep waters.

THE END.





