

THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE - VOLUME 5.

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Volume 5.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Days and weeks had passed, July was followed by sultry August, and that, too, was drawing to a close. The Spaniards still surrounded Leyden, and the city now completely resembled a prison. The soldiers and armed citizens did their duty wearily and sullenly, there was business enough at the town-hall, but the magistrates' work was sad and disagreeable; for no message of hope came from the Prince or the Estates, and everything to be considered referred to the increasing distress and the terrible follower of war, the plague, which had made its entry into Leyden with the famine. Moreover the number of malcontents weekly increased. The friends of the old order of affairs now raised their voices more and more loudly, and many a friend of liberty, who saw his family sickening, joined the Spanish sympathizers and demanded the surrender of the city. The children went to school and met in the playgrounds as before, but there was rarely a flash of the merry pertness of former days, and what had become of the boys' red cheeks and the round arms of the little girls? The poor drew their belts tighter, and the morsel of bread, distributed by the city to each individual, was no longer enough to quiet hunger and support life.

Junker Georg had long been living in Burgomaster Van der Werff's house.

On the morning of August 29th he returned home from an expedition, carrying a cross-bow in his hand, while a pouch hung over his shoulder. This time he did not go up-stairs, but sought Barbara in the kitchen. The widow received him with a friendly nod; her grey eyes sparkled as brightly as ever, but her round face had grown narrower and there was a sorrowful quiver about the sunken mouth.

"What do you bring to-day?" she asked the Junker. Georg thrust his hand into his game-bag and answered, smiling: "A fat snipe and four larks; you know."

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"Poor sparrows! But what sort of a creature can this be? Headless, legless, and carefully plucked! Junker, Junker, that's suspicious."

"It will do for the pan, and the name is of no consequence."

"Yet, yet; true, nobody knows on what he fattens, but the Lord didn't create every animal for the human stomach."

"That's just what I said. It's a short-billed snipe, a corvus, a real corvus."

"Corvus! Nonsense, I'm afraid of the thing—the little feathers under the wings. Good heavens! surely it isn't a raven?"

"It's a corvus, as I said. Put the bird in vinegar, roast it with seasoning and it will taste like a real snipe. Wild ducks are not to be found every day, as they were a short time ago, and sparrows are getting as scarce as roses in winter. Every boy is standing about with a cross-bow, and in the court-yards people are trying to catch them under sieves and with lime-twigs. They are going to be exterminated, but one or another is still spared. How is the little elf?"

"Don't call her that!" exclaimed the widow. "Give her her Christian name. She looks like this cloth, and since yesterday has refused to take the milk we daily procure for her at a heavy cost. Heaven knows what the end will be. Look at that cabbage-stalk. Half a stiver! and that miserable piece of bone! Once I should have thought it too poor for the dogs—and now! The whole household must be satisfied with it. For supper I shall boil ham-rind with wine and add a little porridge to it. And this for a giant like Peter! God only knows where he gets his strength; but he looks like his own shadow. Maria doesn't need anything more than a bird, but Adrian, poor fellow, often leaves the table with tears in his eyes, yet I know he has broken many a bit of bread from his thin slice for Bessie. It is pitiable. Yet the proverb says: 'Stretch yourself towards the ceiling, or your feet will freeze—'Necessity knows no law,' and 'Reserve to preserve.' Day before yesterday, like the rest, we again gave of the little we still possessed. To-morrow, everything beyond what is needed for the next fortnight, must be delivered up, and Peter won't allow us to keep even a bag of flour, but what will come then—merciful Heaven!—"

The widow sobbed aloud as she uttered the last words and continued, weeping: "Where do you get your strength? At your age this miserable scrap of meat is a mere drop of water on a red-hot stone."

"Herr Van Aken gives me what he can, in addition to my ration. I shall get through; but I witnessed a terrible sight to-day at the tailor's, who mends my clothes."

"Well?"

"Two of his children have starved to death."

"And the weaver's family opposite," added Barbara, weeping. "Such nice people! The young wife was confined four days ago, and this morning mother and child expired of weakness, expired, I tell you, like a lamp that has consumed its oil and must go out. At the cloth-maker Peterssohn's, the father and all five children have died of the plague. If that isn't pitiful!"

"Stop, stop!" said Georg, shuddering. "I must go to the court-yard to drill."

"What's the use of that! The Spaniards don't attack; they leave the work to the skeleton death. Your fencing gives an appetite, and the poor hollow herrings can scarcely stir their own limbs."

"Wrong, Frau Barbara, wrong," replied the young man. "The exercise and motion sustains them. Herr von Nordwyk knew what he was doing, when he asked me to drill them in the dead fencing-master's place."

"You're thinking of the ploughshare that doesn't rust. Perhaps you are right; but before you go to work, take a sip of this. Our wine is still the best. When people have something to do, at least they don't mutiny, like those poor fellows among the volunteers day before yesterday. Thank God, they are gone!"

While the widow was filling a glass, Wilhelm's mother came into the kitchen and greeted Barbara and the young nobleman. She carried under her shawl a small package clasped tightly to her bosom. Her breadth was still considerable, but the flesh, with which she had moved about so briskly a few months ago, now seemed to have become an oppressive burden.

She took the little bundle in her right hand, saying "I have something for your Bessie. My Wilhelm, good fellow—"

Here she paused and restored her gift to its old place. She had seen the Junker's plucked present, and continued in an altered tone: "So you already have a pigeon—so much the better! The city clerk's little girl is beginning to droop too. I'll see you to-morrow, if God wills."

She was about to go, but Georg stopped her, saying: "You are mistaken, my good lady. I shot that bird to-day, I'll confess now, Frau Barbara; my corvus is a wretched crow."

"I thought so," cried the widow. "Such an abomination!"

Yet she thrust her finger into the bird's breast, saying: "But there's meat on the creature."

"A crow!" cried Wilhelm's mother, clasping her hands. "True, dogs and cats are already hanging on many a spit and have wandered into many a pan. There is the pigeon."

Barbara unwrapped the bird as carefully, as if it might crumble under her fingers, gazing tenderly at it as she weighed it carefully in her hand; but the musician's mother said:

"It's the fourth one Wilhelm has killed, and he said it would have been a good flier. He intended it specially for your Bessie. Stuff it nicely with yellow paste, not too solid and a little sweetened. That is what children like, and it will agree with her, for it is cheerfully given. Put the little thing away. When we have known any creature, we feel sorry to see it dead."

"May God reward you!" cried Barbara, pressing the kind old hand. "Oh! these terrible times!"

"Yet there is still something to be thankful for."

"Of course, for it will be even worse in hell," replied the widow.

"Don't fall into sin," said the aged matron: "You have only one sick person in the house. Can I see Frau Maria?"

"She is in the workshops, taking the people a little meat from our store. Are you too so short of flour? Cows are still to be seen in the pastures, but the grain seems to have been actually swept away; there wasn't a peck in the market. Will you take a sip of wine too? Shall I call my sister-in-law?"

"I will seek her myself. The usury in the market is no longer to be endured. We can do nothing more there, but she is already bringing people to reason."

"The traders in the market?" asked Georg.

"Yes, Herr von Dornburg, yes. One wouldn't believe how much that delicate woman can accomplish. Day before yesterday, when we went about to learn how large a stock of provisions every house contains, people treated me and the others very rudely, many even turned us out of doors. But she went to the roughest, and the cellars and store-rooms opened before her, as the waves of the sea divided before the people of Israel. How she does it, Heaven knows, but the people can't refuse her."

Georg drew a long breath and left the kitchen. In the court-yard he found several city soldiers, volunteers and militia-men, with whom he went through exercises in fencing. Van der Werff placed it at his disposal for this purpose, and there certainly was no man in Leyden more

capable than the German of supplying worthy Allertssohn's place.

Barbara was not wrong. His pupils looked emaciated and miserable enough, but many of them had learned, in the dead man's school, to wield the sword well, and were heartily devoted to the profession.

In the centre of the court-yard stood a human figure, stuffed with tow and covered with leather, which bore on the left breast a bit of red paper in the shape of a heart. The more unskilful were obliged to thrust at this figure to train the hand and eye; the others stood face to face in pairs and fought under Georg's direction with blunt foils.

The Junker had felt very weak when he entered the kitchen, for the larger half of his ration of bread had been left at the unfortunate tailor's; but Barbara's wine had revived him and, rousing himself, he stepped briskly forth to meet his fencers. His doublet was quickly flung on a bench, his belt drawn tighter, and he soon stood in his white shirt-sleeves before the soldiers.

As soon as his first word of command was heard, Henrica's window closed with a bang. Formerly it had often been opened when the fencing drill began, and she had not even shrunk from occasionally clapping her hands and calling "bravo." This time had long since passed, it was weeks since she had bestowed a word or glance on the young noble. She had never made such advances to any man, would not have striven so hard to win a prince's favor! And he? At first he had been distant, then more and more assiduously avoided her. Her pride was deeply wounded. Her purpose of diverting his attention from Maria had long been forgotten, and moreover something—she knew not what had come between her and the young wife. Not a day elapsed in which he did not meet her, and this was a source of pleasure to Henrica, because she could show him that his presence was a matter of indifference, nay even unpleasant. Her imprisonment greatly depressed her, and she longed unutterably for the open country, the fields and the forest. Yet she never expressed a wish to leave the city, for—Georg was in Leyden, and every waking and dreaming thought was associated with him. She loved him to-day, loathed him tomorrow, and did both with all the ardor of her passionate heart. She often thought of her sister too, and uttered many prayers for her. To win the favor of Heaven by good works and escape ennui, she helped the Grey Sisters, who lived in a little old convent next to Herr Van der Werff's house, nurse the sick whole they had lovingly received, and even went with Sister Gonzaga to the houses of the Catholic citizens, to collect alms for the little hospital. But all this was done without joyous self-devotion, sometimes with extravagant zeal, sometimes lazily, and for days not at all. She had become excessively irritable, but after being unbearably arrogant one day, would seem sorrowful and ill at ease the next, though without asking the offended person's pardon.

The young girl now stood behind the closed window, watching Georg, who with a bold spring dashed at the leathern figure and ran the sword in his

right hand through the phantom's red heart.

The soldiers loudly expressed their admiration. Henrica's eye, also sparkled approvingly, but suddenly they lost their light, and she stepped farther back into the room, for Maria came out of the workshops in the court-yard and, with her gaze fixed on the ground, walked past the fencers.

The young wife had grown paler, but her clear blue eyes had gained a more confident, resolute expression. She had learned to go her own way, and sought and found arduous duties in the service of the city and the poor. She had remained conqueror in many a severe conflict of the heart, but the struggle was not yet over; she felt this whenever Georg's path crossed hers. As far as possible she avoided him, for she did not conceal from herself, that the attempt to live with him on the footing of a friend and brother, would mean nothing but the first step on the road to ruin for him and herself. That he was honestly aiding her by a strong effort at self-control, she gratefully felt, for she stood heart to heart with her husband on the ship of life. She wished no other guide; nay the thought of going to destruction with Peter had no terror to her. And yet, yet! Georg was like the magnetic mountain, that attracted her, and which she must avoid to save the vessel from sinking.

To-day she had been asking the different workmen how they fared, and witnessed scenes of the deepest misery.

The brave men knew that the surrender of the city might put an end to their distress, but wished to hold out for the sake of liberty and their religion, and endured their suffering as an inevitable misfortune.

In the entry of the house Maria met Wilhelm's mother, and promised her she would consult with Frau Van Hout that very day, concerning the extortion practised by the market-men. Then she went to poor Bessie, who sat, pale and weak, in a little chair. Her prettiest doll had been lying an hour in the same position on her lap. The child's little hands and will were too feeble to move the toy. Trautchen brought in a cup of new milk. The citizens were not yet wholly destitute of this, for a goodly number of cows still grazed outside the city walls under the protection of the cannon, but the child refused to drink and could only be induced, amid tears, to swallow a few drops.

While Maria was affectionately coaxing the little one, Peter entered the room. The tall man, the very model of a stately burgher, who paid careful heed to his outward appearance, now looked careless of his person. His brown hair hung over his forehead, his thick, closely-trimmed moustache straggled in thin lines over his cheeks, his doublet had grown too large, and his stockings did not fit snugly as usual, but hung in wrinkles on his powerful legs.

Greeting his wife with a careless wave of the hand, he approached the

child and gazed silently at it a long time with tender affection. Bessie turned her pretty little face towards him and tried to welcome him, but the smile died on her lips, and she again gazed listlessly at her doll, Peter stooped, raised her in his arms, called her by name and pressed his lips to her pale cheeks. The child gently stroked his beard and then said feebly:

"Put me down, dear father, I feel dizzy up here." The burgomaster, with tears in his eyes, put his darling carefully back in her little chair, then left the room and went to his study. Maria followed him and asked "Is there no message yet from the Prince or the estates?"

He silently shrugged his shoulders.

"But they will not, dare not forget us?" cried the young wife eagerly.

"We are perishing and they leave us to die," he answered in a hollow tone.

"No, no, they have pierced the dykes; I know they will help us."

"When it is too late. One thing follows another, misfortune is heaped on misfortune, and on whom do the curses of the starving people fall? On me, me, me alone."

"You are acting with the Prince's commissioner."

Peter smiled bitterly, saying: "He took to his bed yesterday. Bontius says it is the plague. I, I alone bear everything."

"We bear it with you," cried Maria. "First poverty, then hunger, as we promised."

"Better than that. The last grain was baked today. The bread is exhausted."

"We still have oxen and horses."

"We shall come to them day after to-morrow. It was determined: Two pounds with the bones to every four persons. Bread gone, cows gone, milk gone. And what will happen then? Mothers, infants, sick people! And our Bessie!"

The burgomaster pressed his hands on his temples and groaned aloud. But Maria said: "Courage, Peter, courage. Hold fast to one thing, don't let one thing go—hope."

"Hope, hope," he answered scornfully.

"To hope no longer," cried Maria, "means to despair. To despair means in our case to open the gates, to open the gates means—"

"Who is thinking of opening the gates? Who talks of surrender?" he vehemently interrupted. "We will still hold firm, still, still— There is the portfolio, take it to the messenger."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Bessie had eaten a piece of roast pigeon, the first morsel for several days, and there was as much rejoicing over it in the Van der Werff household, as if some great piece of good fortune had befallen the family. Adrian ran to the workshops and told the men, Peter went to the town-hall with a more upright bearing, and Maria, who was obliged to go out, undertook to tell Wilhelm's mother of the good results produced by her son's gift.

Tears ran down the old lady's flabby cheeks at the story and, kissing the burgomaster's wife, she exclaimed:

"Yes, Wilhelm, Wilhelm! If he were only at home now. But I'll call his father. Dear me, he is probably at the town-hall too. Hark, Frau Maria, hark—what's that?"

The ringing of bells and firing of cannon had interrupted her words; she hastily threw open the window, crying:

"From the Tower of Pancratius! No alarm-bell, firing and merry-ringing. Some joyful tidings have come. We need them! Ulrich, Ulrich! Come back at once and bring us the news. Dear Father in Heaven!

"Merciful God! Send the relief. If it were only that!"

The two women waited in great suspense. At last Wilhelm's brother Ulrich returned, saying that the messengers sent to Delft had succeeded in passing the enemy's ranks and brought with them a letter from the estates, which the city-clerk had read from the window of the town-hall. The representatives of the country praised the conduct and endurance of the citizens, and informed them that, in spite of the damage done to thousands of people, the dykes would be cut.

In fact, the water was already pouring over the land, and the messengers had seen the vessels appointed to bring relief. The country surrounding Leyden must soon be inundated, and the rising flood would force the Spanish army to retreat, "Better a drowned land than a lost land," was a saying that had been decisive in the execution of the violent measure

proposed, and those who had risked so much might be expected to shrink from no sacrifice to save Leyden.

The two women joyously shook hands with each other; the bells continued to ring merrily, and report after report of cannon made the window-panes rattle.

As twilight approached, Maria turned her steps towards home. It was long since her heart had been so light. The black tablets on the houses containing cases of plague did not look so sorrowful to-day, the emaciated faces seemed less pitiful than usual, for to them also help was approaching. The faithful endurance was to be rewarded, the cause of freedom would conquer.

She entered the "broad street" with winged steps. Thousands of citizens had flocked into it to see, hear, and learn what might be hoped, or what still gave cause for fear. Musicians had been stationed at the corners to play lively airs; the Beggars' song mingled with the pipes and trumpets and the cheers of enthusiastic men. But there were also throngs of well-dressed citizens and women, who loudly and fearlessly mocked at the gay music and exulting simpletons, who allowed themselves to be cajoled by empty promises. Where was the relief? What could the handful of Beggars—which at the utmost were all the troops the Prince could bring—do against King Philip's terrible military power, that surrounded Leyden? And the inundation of the country? The ground on which the city stood was too high for the water ever to reach it. The peasants had been injured, without benefitting the citizens. There was only one means of escape—to trust to the King's mercy.

"What is liberty to us?" shouted a brewer, who, like all his companions in business, had long since been deprived of his grain and forbidden to manufacture any fresh beer. "What will liberty be to us, when we're cold in death? Let whoever means well go the town-hall, and demand a surrender before it is too late."

"Surrender! The mercy of the King!" shouted the citizens.

"Life comes first, and then the question whether it shall be free or under Spanish rule, Calvinistical or Popish!" screamed a master-weaver. "I'll march to the town-hall with you."

"You are right, good people," said Burgomaster Baersdorp, who, clad in his costly fur-bordered cloak, was coming from the town-hall and had heard the last speaker's words. "But let me set you right. To-day the credulous are beginning to hope again, and the time for pressing your just desire is ill-chosen. Wait a few days and then, if the relief does not appear, urge your views. I'll speak for you, and with me many a good man in the magistracy. We have nothing to expect from Valdez, but gentleness and kindness. To rise against the King was from the first a wicked deed—to fight against famine, the plague and death is sin and

madness. May God be with you, men!"

"The burgomaster is sensible," cried a cloth-dyer.

"Van Swieten and Norden think as he does, but Meister Peter rules through the Prince's favor. If the Spaniards rescue us, his neck will be in danger, when they make their entrance into the city. So no matter who dies; he and his are living on the fat of the land and have plenty."

"There goes his wife," said a master-weaver, pointing to Maria. "How happy she looks! The leather business must be doing well. Holloa—Frau Van der Werff! Holloa! Remember me to your husband and tell him, his life may be valuable; but ours are not wisps of straw."

"Tell him, too," cried a cattle-dealer, who did not yet seem to have been specially injured by the general distress, "tell him oxen can be slaughtered, the more the better; but Leyden citizens—"

The cattle-dealer did not finish his sentence, for Herr Aquanus had seen from the Angulus what was happening to the burgomaster's wife, came out of the tavern into the street, and stepped into the midst of the malcontents.

"For shame!" he cried. "To assail a respectable lady in the street! Are these Leyden manners? Give me your hand, Frau Maria, and if I hear a single reviling word, I'll call the constables. I know you. The gallows Herr Van Bronkhorst had erected for men like you, is still standing by the Blue Stone. Which of you wants to inaugurate them?"

The men, to whom these words were addressed, were not the bravest of mortals, and not a syllable was heard, as Aquanus led the young wife into the tavern. The landlord's wife and daughter received her in their own rooms, which were separated from those occupied by guests of the inn, and begged her to make herself comfortable there until the crowd had dispersed. But Maria longed to reach home, and when she said she must go, Aquanus offered his company.

Georg von Dornburg was standing in the entry and stepped back with a respectful bow, but the innkeeper called to him, saying:

"There is much to be done to-day, for many a man will doubtless indulge himself in a glass of liquor after the good news. No offence, Frau Van der Werft; but the Junker will escort you home as safely as I—and you, Herr von Dornburg—"

"I am at your service," replied Georg, and went out into the street with the young wife.

For a time both walked side by side in silence, each fancying he or she could hear the beating of the other's heart. At last Georg, drawing a

long breath, said:

"Three long, long months have passed since my arrival here. Have I been brave, Maria?"

"Yes, Georg."

"But you cannot imagine what it has cost me to fetter this poor heart, stifle my words, and blind my eyes. Maria, it must once be said—"

"Never, never," she interrupted in a tone of earnest entreaty. "I know that you have struggled honestly, do not rob yourself of the victory now."

"Oh! hear me, Maria, this once hear me."

"What will it avail, if you oppress my soul with ardent words? I must not hear from any man that he loves me, and what I must not hear, you must not speak."

"Must not?" he asked in a tone of gentle reproach, then in a gloomy, bitter mood, continued: "You are right, perfectly right. Even speech is denied me. So life may run on like a leaden stream, and everything that grows and blossoms on its banks remain scentless and grey. The golden sunshine has hidden itself behind a mist, joy lies fainting in my heart, and all that once pleased me has grown stale and charmless. Do you recognize the happy youth of former days?"

"Seek cheerfulness again, seek it for my sake."

"Gone, gone," he murmured sadly. "You saw me in Delft, but you did not know me thoroughly. These eyes were like two mirrors of fortune in which every object was charmingly transfigured, and they were rewarded; for wherever they looked they met only friendly glances. This heart then embraced the whole world, and beat so quickly and joyously! I often did not know what to do with myself from sheer mirth and vivacity, and it seemed as if I must burst into a thousand pieces like an over-loaded firelock, only instead of scattering far and wide, mount straight up to Heaven. Those days were so happy, and yet so sad—I felt it ten times as much in Delft, when you were kind to me. And now, now? I still have wings, I still might fly, but here I creep like a snail—because it is your will."

"It is not my wish," replied Maria. "You are dear to me, that I may be permitted to confess—and to see you thus fills me with grief. But now—if I am dear to you, and I know you care for me—cease to torture me so cruelly. You are dear to me. I have said it, and it must be spoken, that everything may be clearly understood between us. You are dear to me, like the beautiful by-gone days of my youth, like pleasant dreams, like a noble song, in which we take delight, and which refreshes our

souls, whenever we hear or remember it—but more you are not, more you can never be. You are dear to me, and I wish you to remain so, but that you can only do by not breaking the oath you have sworn.”

”Sworn?” asked Georg. ”Sworn?”

”Yes, sworn,” interrupted Maria, checking her steps. ”On Peter’s breast, on the morning of his birthday—after the singing. You remember it well. At the time you took a solemn vow; I know it, know it no less surely, than that I myself swore faith to my husband at the altar. If you can give me the lie, do so.”

Georg shook his head, and answered with increasing warmth:

”You read my soul. Our hearts know each other like two faithful friends, as the earth knows her moon, the moon her earth. What is one without the other? Why must they be separated? Did you ever walk along a forest path? The tracks of two wheels run side by side and never touch. The axle holds them asunder, as our oath parts us.”

”Say rather—our honor.”

”As our honor parts us. But often in the woods we find a place where the road ends in a field or hill, and there the tracks cross and intersect each other, and in this hour I feel that my path has come to an end. I can go no farther, I cannot, or the horses will plunge into the thicket and the vehicle be shattered on the roots and stones.”

”And honor with it. Not a word more. Let us walk faster. See the lights in the windows. Everyone wants to show that he rejoices in the good news. Our house mustn’t remain dark either.”

”Don’t hurry so. Barbara will attend to it, and how soon we must part! Yet you said that I was dear to you.”

”Don’t torture me,” cried the young wife, with pathetic entreaty.

”I will not torture you, Maria, but you must hear me. I was in earnest, terrible earnest in the mute vow I swore, and have sought to release myself from it by death. You have heard how I rushed like a madman among the Spaniards, at the storming of the Boschhuizen fortification in July. Your bow, the blue bow from Delft, the knot of ribbons the color of the sky, fluttered on my left shoulder as I dashed upon swords and lances. I was not to die, and came out of the confusion uninjured. Oh! Maria, for the sake of this oath I have suffered unequalled torments. Release me from it, Maria, let me once, only once, freely confess—”

”Stop, Georg, stop,” pleaded the young wife. ”I will not, must not hear you—neither to-day, nor tomorrow, never, never, to all eternity!”

"Once, only once, I will, I must say to you, that I love you, that life and happiness, peace and honor—"

"Not one word more, Junker von Dornburg. There is our house. You are our guest, and if you address a single word like the last ones to your friend's wife—"

"Maria, Maria—oh, don't touch the knocker. How can you so unfeelingly destroy the whole happiness of a human being—"

The door had opened, and the burgomaster's wife crossed the threshold. Georg stood opposite to her, held out his hand as if beseeching aid, and murmured in a hollow tone:

"Cast forth to death and despair! Maria, Maria, why do you treat me thus?"

She laid her right hand in his, saying:

"That we may remain worthy of each other, Georg."

She forcibly withdrew her icy hand and entered the house; but he wandered for hours through the lighted streets like a drunken man, and at last threw himself, with a burning brain, upon his couch. A small volume, lightly stitched together, lay on a little table beside the bed. He seized it, and with trembling fingers wrote on its pages. The pencil often paused, and he frequently drew a long breath and gazed with dilated eyes into vacancy. At last he threw the book aside and watched anxiously for the morning.

CHAPTER XXX.

Just before sunrise Georg sprang from his couch, drew out his knapsack, and filled it with his few possessions; but this time the little book found no place with the other articles.

The musician Wilhelm also entered the court-yard at a very early-hour, just as the first workmen were going to the shops. The Junker saw him coming, and met him at the door.

The artist's face revealed few traces of the want he had endured, but his whole frame was trembling with excitement and his face changed color every moment, as he instantly, and in the utmost haste, told Georg the purpose of his early visit.

Shortly after the arrival of the city messengers, a Spanish envoy had

brought Burgomaster Van der Werff a letter written by Junker Nicolas Matanesse, containing nothing but the tidings, that Henrica's sister had reached Leyderdorp with Belotti and found shelter in the elder Baron Matanesse's farm-house. She was very ill, and longed to see her sister. The burgomaster had given this letter to the young lady, and Henrica hastened to the musician without delay, to entreat him to help her escape from the city and guide her to the Spanish lines. Wilhelm was undergoing a severe struggle. No sacrifice seemed too great to see Anna again, and what the messenger had accomplished, he too might succeed in doing. But ought he to aid the flight of the young girl detained as hostage by the council, deceive the sentinels at the gate, desert his post?

Since Henrica's request that Georg would escort her sister from Lugano to Holland, the young man had known everything that concerned the latter, and was also aware of the state of the musician's heart.

"I must, and yet I ought not," cried Wilhelm. "I have passed a terrible night; imagine yourself in my place, in the young lady's."

"Get a leave of absence until to-morrow," said Georg resolutely. "When it grows dark, I'll accompany Henrica with you. She must swear to return to the city in case of a surrender. As for me, I am no longer bound by any oath to serve the English flag. A month ago we received permission to enter the service of the Netherlands. It will only cost me a word with Captain Van der Laen, to be my own master."

"Thanks, thanks; but the young lady forbade me to ask your assistance."

"Folly, I shall go with you, and when our goal is reached, fight my way through to the Beggars. Our departure will not trouble the council, for, when Henrica and I are outside, there will be two eaters less in Leyden. The sky is grey; I hope we shall have a dark night. Captain Van Duivenvoorde commands the guard at the Hohenort Gate. He knows us both, and will let us pass. I'll speak to him. Is the farm-house far inside the village?"

"No, outside on the road to Leyden."

"Well then, we'll meet at Aquanus's tavern at four o'clock."

"But the young lady—"

"It will be time enough, if she learns at the gate who is to accompany her."

When Georg came to the tavern at the appointed hour, he learned that Henrica had received another letter from Nicolas. It had been given to the outposts by the Junker himself, and contained only the words "Until midnight, the Spanish watch-word is 'Lepanto.' Your father shall know to-day, that Anna is here."

After the departure from the Hohenort Gate had been fixed for nine o'clock in the evening, Georg went to Captain Van der Laen and the commandant Van der Does, received from the former the discharge he requested, and from Janus a letter to his friend, Admiral Boisot. When he informed his men, that he intended to leave the city and make his way to the Beggars, they declared they would follow, and live or die with him. It was with difficulty that he succeeded in restraining them. Before the town-hall he slackened his pace. The burgomaster was always to be found there at this hour. Should he quit the city without taking leave of him? No, no! And yet—since yesterday he had forfeited the right to look frankly into his eyes. He was afraid to meet him, it seemed as if he were completely estranged from him. So Georg rushed past the town-hall, and said defiantly: "Even if I leave him without a farewell, I owe him nothing; for I must pay for his kindness with cruel suffering, perhaps death. Maria loved me first, and what she is, and was, and ever will be to me, she shall know before I go."

He returned to his room at twilight, asked the manservant to carry his knapsack to Captain Van Duivenvoorde at the Hohenort Gate, and then went, with his little book in his doublet, to the main building to take leave of Maria. He ascended the staircase slowly and paused in the upper entry.

The beating of his heart almost stopped his breath. He did not know at which door to knock, and a torturing dread overpowered him, so that he stood for several minutes as if paralyzed. Then he summoned up his courage, shook himself, and muttered: "Have I become a coward!" With these words he opened the door leading into the dining-room and entered. Adrian was sitting at the empty table, beside a burning torch, with some books. Georg asked for his mother.

"She is probably spinning in her room," replied the boy.

"Call her, I have something important to tell her." Adrian went away, returning with the answer that the Junker might wait in his father's study.

"Where is Barbara?" asked Georg.

"With Bessie."

The German nodded, and while pacing up and down beside the dining-room, thought, "I can't go so. It must come from the heart; once, once more I will hear her say, that she loves me, I will—I will—Let it be dishonorable, let it be worthy of execration, I will atone for it; I will atone for it with my life!"

While Georg was pacing up and down the room, Adrian gathered his books together, saying: "B-r-r-r, Junker, how you look to-day! One might be

afraid of you. Mother is in there already. The tinder-box is rattling; she is probably lighting the lamp."

"Are you busy?" asked Georg. "I've finished."

"Then run over to Wilhelm Corneliussohn and tell him it is settled: we'll meet at nine, punctually at nine."

"At Aquarius's tavern?" asked the boy.

"No, no, he knows; make haste, my lad."

Adrian was going, but Georg beckoned to him, and said in a low tone: "Can you be silent?"

"As a fried sole."

"I shall slip out of the city to-day, and perhaps may never return."

"You, Junker? To-day?" asked the boy.

"Yes, dear lad. Come here, give me a farewell kiss. You must keep this little ring to remember me." The boy submitted to the kiss, put the ring on his finger, and said with tearful eyes: "Are you in earnest? Yes, the famine! God knows I'd run after you, if it were not for Bessie and mother. When will you come back again?"

"Who knows, my lad! Remember me kindly, do you hear? Kindly! And now run."

Adrian rushed down the stairs, and a few minutes after the Junker was standing in Peter's study, face to face with Maria. The shutters were closed, and the sconce on the table had two lighted candles.

"Thanks, a thousand thanks for coming," said Georg. "You pronounced my sentence yesterday, and to-day--"

"I know what brings you to me," she answered gently. "Henrica has bidden me farewell, and I must not keep her. She doesn't wish to have you accompany her, but Meister Wilhelm betrayed the secret to me. You have come to say farewell."

"Yes, Maria, farewell forever."

"If it is God's will, we shall see each other again. I know what is driving you away from here. You are good and noble, Georg, and if there is one thing that lightens the parting, it is this: We can now think of each other without sorrow and anger. You will not forget us, and--you know that the remembrance of you will be cherished here by old and young

–in the hearts of all–”

”And in yours also, Maria?”

”In mine also.”

”Hold it firmly. And when the storm has blown out of your path the poor dust, which to-day lives and breathes, loves and despairs, grant it a place in your memory.”

Maria shuddered, for deep despair looked forth with a sullen glow from the eyes that met hers. Seized with an anxious foreboding, she exclaimed: ”What are you thinking of, Georg? for Christ’s sake! tell me what is in your mind.”

”Nothing wrong, Maria, nothing wrong. We birds now sing differently. Whoever can saunter, with lukewarm blood and lukewarm pleasures, from one decade to another in peace and honor, is fortunate. My blood flows in a swifter course, and what my eager soul has once clasped with its polyp arms, it will never release until the death-hour comes. I am going, never to return; but I shall take you and my love with me to battle, to the grave.–I go, I go–”

”Not so, Georg, you must not part from me thus.” Then cry: ’Stay!’ Then say: ’I am here and pity you!’ But don’t expect the miserable wretch, whom you have blinded, to open his eyes, behold and enjoy the beauties of the world. ”Here you stand, trembling and shaking, without a word for him who loves you, for him–him–”

The youth’s voice faltered with emotion and sighing heavily, he pressed his hand to his brow. Then he seemed to recollect himself and continued in a low, sad tone: ”Here I stand, to tell you for the last time the state of my heart. You should hear sweet words, but grief and pain will pour bitter drops into everything I say. I have uttered in the language of poetry, when my heart impelled me, that for which dry prose possesses no power of expression. Read these pages, Maria, and if they wake an echo in your soul, oh! treasure it. The honeysuckle in your garden needs a support, that it may grow and put forth flowers; let these poor songs be the espalier around which your memory of the absent one can twine its tendrils and cling lovingly. Read, oh! read, and then say once more: ’You are dear to me,’ or send me from you.”

”Give it to me,” said Maria, opening the volume with a throbbing heart.

He stepped back from her, but his breath came quickly and his eyes followed hers while she was reading. She began with the last poem but one. It had been written just after Georg’s return the day before, and ran as follows:

”Joyously they march along,

Lights are flashing through the panes,
In the streets a busy throng
Curiosity enchains.
Oh! the merry festal night;
Would that it might last for aye!
For aye! Alas! Love, splendor, light,
All, all have passed away."

The last lines Georg had written with a rapid pen the night before. In them he bewailed his hard fate. She must hear him once, then he would sing her a peerless song. Maria had followed the first verses silently with her eyes, but now her lips began to move and in a low, rapid tone, but audibly she read:

"Sometimes it echoes like the thunder's peal,
Then soft and low through the May night doth steal;
Sometimes, on joyous wing, to Heaven it soars,
Sometimes, like Philomel, its woes deploras.
For, oh! this a song that ne'er can die,
It seeks the heart of all humanity.
In the deep cavern and the darksome lair,
The sea of ether o'er the realm of air,
In every nook my song shall still be heard,
And all creation, with sad yearning stirred,
United in a full, exultant choir,
Pray thee to grant the singer's fond desire.
E'en when the ivy o'er my grave hath grown,
Still will ring on each sweet, enchanting tone,
Through the whole world and every earthly zone,
Resounding on in aeons yet to come."

Maria read on, her heart beating more and more violently, her breath coming quicker and quicker, and when she had reached the last verse, tears burst from her eyes, and she raised the book with both hands to hurl it from her and throw her arms around the writer's neck.

He had been standing opposite to her, as if spellbound, listening blissfully to the lofty flight of his own words. Trembling with passionate emotion, he yet restrained himself until she had raised her eyes from his lines and lifted the book, then his power of resistance flew to the winds and, fairly beside himself, he exclaimed: "Maria, my sweet wife!"

"Wife?" echoed in her breast like a cry of warning, and it seemed as if an icy hand clutched her heart. The intoxication passed away, and as she saw him standing before her with out-stretched arms and sparkling eyes, she shrank back, a feeling of intense loathing of him and her own weakness seized upon her and, instead of throwing the book aside and rushing to meet him, she tore it in halves, saying proudly: "Here are your verses, Junker von Dornburg; take them with you." Then, maintaining

her dignity by a strong effort, she continued in a lower, more gentle tone, "I shall remember you without this book. We have both dreamed; let us now wake. Farewell! I will pray that God may guard you. Give me your hand, Georg, and when you return, we will bid you welcome to our house as a friend."

With these words Maria turned away from the Junker and only nodded silently, when he exclaimed: "Past! All past!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

Georg descended the stairs in a state of bewilderment. Both halves of the book, in which ever since the wedding at Delft he had written a succession of verses to Maria, lay in his hand.

The light of the kitchen-fire streamed into the entry. He followed it, and before answering Barbara's kind greeting, went to the hearth and flung into the fire the sheets, which contained the pure, sweet fragrance of a beautiful flower of youth.

"Oho! Junker!" cried the widow. "A quick fire doesn't suit every kind of food. What is burning there?"

"Foolish paper!" he answered. "Have no fear. At the utmost it might weep and put out the flames. It will be ashes directly. There go the sparks, flying in regular rows through the black, charred pages. How pretty it looks! They appear, leap forth and vanish—like a funeral procession with torches in a pitch-dark night. Good-night, poor children—good-night, dear songs! Look, Frau Barbara! They are rolling themselves up tightly, convulsively, as if it hurt them to burn."

"What sort of talk is that?" replied Barbara, thrusting the charred book deeper into the fire with the tongs. Then pointing to her own forehead, she continued: "One often feels anxious about you. High-sounding words, such as we find in the Psalms, are not meant for every-day life and our kitchen. If you were my own son, you'd often have something to listen to. People who travel at a steady pace reach their goal soonest."

"That's good advice for a journey," replied Georg, holding out his hand to the widow. "Farewell, dear mother. I can't bear it here any longer. In half an hour I shall turn my back on this good city."

"Go then—just as you choose—Or is the young lady taking you in tow? Nobleman's son and nobleman's daughter! Like to like—Yet, no; there has been nothing between you. Her heart is good, but I should wish you another wife than that Popish Everyday-different."

"So Henrica has told you—"

"She has just gone. Dear me—she has her relatives outside; and we—it's hard to divide a plum into twelve pieces. I said farewell to her cheerfully; but you, Georg, you—"

"I shall take her out of the city, and then—you won't blame me for it—then I shall make my way through to the Beggars."

"The Beggars! That's a different matter, that's right. You'll be in your proper place there! Cheer up, Junker, and go forth boldly? Give me your hand, and if you meet my boy—he commands a ship of his own.—Dear me, I remember something. You can wait a moment longer. Come here, Trautchen. The woollen stockings I knit for him are up in the painted chest. Make haste and fetch them. He may need them on the water in the damp autumn weather. You'll take them with you?"

"Willingly, most willingly; and now let me thank you for all your kindness. You have been like an own mother to me." Georg clasped the widow's hand, and neither attempted to conceal how dear each had become to the other and how hard it was to part. Trautchen had given Barbara the stockings, and many tears fell upon them, while the widow was bidding the Junker farewell. When she noticed they were actually wet, she waved them in the air and handed them to the young man.

The night was dark but still, even sultry. The travellers were received at the Hohenort Gate by Captain Van Duivenvoorde, preceded by an old sergeant, carrying a lantern, who opened the gate. The captain embraced his brave, beloved comrade, Dornburg; a few farewell words and god-speeds echoed softly from the fortification walls, and the trio stepped forth into the open country.

For a time they walked silently through the darkness. Wilhelm knew the way and strode in front of Henrica; the Junker kept close at her side.

All was still, except from time to time they heard a word of command from the walls, the striking of a clock, or the barking of a dog.

Henrica had recognized Georg by the light of the lantern, and when Wilhelm stopped to ascertain whether there was any water in the ditch over which he intended to guide his companions, she said, under her breath:

"I did not expect your escort, Junker."

"I know it, but I, too, desired to leave the city."

"And wish to avail yourself of our knowledge of the watchword. Then stay with us."

"Until I know you are safe, Fraulein."

"The walls of Leyden already lie between you and the peril from which you fly."

"I don't understand you."

"So much the better."

Wilhelm turned and, in a muffled voice, requested his companions to keep silence. They now walked noiselessly on, until just outside the camp they reached the broad road around which they had made a circuit. A Spanish sentinel challenged them.

"Lepanto!" was the answer, and they passed on through the camp unmolested. A coach drawn by four horses, a mere box hung between two tiny fore-wheels and a pair of gigantic hind-wheels, drove slowly past them. It was conveying Magdalena Moons, the daughter of an aristocratic Holland family, distinguished among the magistracy, back to the Hague from a visit to her lover and future husband, Valdez. No one noticed Henrica, for there were plenty of women in the camp. Several poorly-clad ones sat before the tents, mending the soldiers' clothes. Some gaily-bedizened wenches were drinking wine and throwing dice with their male companions in front of an officer's tent. A brighter light glowed from behind the general's quarters, where, under a sort of shed, several confessionals and an altar had been erected. Upon this altar candles were burning, and over it hung a silver lamp; a dark, motionless stream pressed towards it; Castilian soldiers, among whom individuals could be recognized only when the candle-light flashed upon a helmet or coat of mail.

The loud singing of carousing German mercenaries, the neighing and stamping of the horses, and the laughter of the officers and girls, drowned the low chanting of the priests and the murmur of the penitents, but the shrill sounding of the bell calling to mass from time to time pierced, with its swift vibrations, through the noise of the camp. Just outside the village the watch-word was again used, and they reached the first house unmolested.

"Here we are," said Wilhelm, with a sigh of relief. "Profit by the darkness, Junker, and keep on till you have the Spaniards behind you."

"No, my friend; you will remain here. I wish to share your danger. I shall return with you to Leyden and from thence try to reach Delft; meantime I'll keep watch and give you warning, if necessary."

"Let us bid each other farewell now, Georg; hours may pass before I return."

"I have time, a horrible amount of time. I'll wait. There goes the door."

The Junker grasped his sword, but soon removed his hand from the hilt, for it was Belotti, who came out and greeted the signorina.

Henrica followed him into the house and there talked with him in a low tone, until Georg called her, saying:

"Fraulein Van Hoogstraten, may I ask for a word of farewell?"

"Farewell, Herr von Dornburg!" she answered distantly, but advanced a step towards him.

Georg had also approached, and now held out his hand. She hesitated a moment, then placed hers in it, and said so softly, that only he could hear:

"Do you love Maria?"

"So I am to confess?"

"Don't refuse my last request, as you did the first. If you can be generous, answer me fearlessly. I'll not betray your secret to any one. Do you love Frau Van der Werff?"

"Yes, Fraulein."

Henrica drew a long breath, then continued: "And now you are rushing out into the world to forget her?"

"No, Fraulein."

"Then tell me why you have fled from Leyden?"

"To find an end that becomes a soldier."

Henrica advanced close to his side, exclaiming so scornfully, that it cut Georg to the heart:

"So it has grasped you too! It seizes all: Knights, maidens, wives and widows; not one is spared. Never ending sorrow! Farewell, Georg! We can laugh at or pity each other, just as we choose. A heart pierced with seven swords: what an exquisite picture! Let us wear blood-red knots of ribbon, instead of green and blue ones. Give me your hand once more, now farewell."

Henrica beckoned to the musician and both followed Belotti up the steep, narrow stairs. Wilhelm remained behind in a little room, adjoining a second one, where a beautiful boy, about three years old, was being

tended by an Italian woman. In a third chamber, which like all the other rooms in the farm-house, was so low that a tall man could scarcely stand erect, Henrica's sister lay on a wide bedstead, over which a screen, supported by four columns, spread like a canopy. Links dimly lighted the long narrow room. The reddish-yellow rays of their broad flames were darkened by the canopy, and scarcely revealed the invalid's face.

Henrica had given the Italian woman and the child in the second room but a hasty greeting, and now impetuously pressed forward into the third, rushed to the bed, threw herself on her knees, clasped her arms passionately around her sister, and covered her face with owing kisses.

She said nothing but "Anna," and the sick woman and no other word than "Henrica." Minutes elapsed, then the young girl started up, seized one of the torches A cast its light on her regained sister's face. How pale, how emaciated it looked! But it was still beautiful, still the same as before. Strangely-blended emotions of joy and grief took possession of Henrica's soul. Her cold hard feelings grew warm and melted, and in this hour the comfort of tears, of which she had been so long deprived, once more became hers.

Gradually the flood tide of emotion began to ebb, and the confusion of loving exclamations and incoherent words gained some order and separated into question and answer. When Anna learned that the musician had accompanied her sister, she wished to see him, and when he entered, held out both hands, exclaiming:

"Meister, Meister, in what a condition you find me again! Henrica, this is the best of men; the only unselfish friend I have found on earth."

The succeeding hours were full of sorrowful agitation.

Belotti and the old Italian woman often undertook to speak for the invalid, and gradually the image of a basely-destroyed life, that had been worthy of a better fate, appeared before Henrica and Wilhelm. Fear, anxiety and torturing doubt had from the first saddened Anna's existence with the unprincipled adventurer and gambler, who had succeeded in beguiling her young, experienced heart. A short period of intoxication was followed by an unexampled awakening. She was clasping her first child to her breast, when the unprecedented outrage occurred—Don Luis demanded that she should move with him into the house of a notorious Marchesa, in whose ill-famed gambling-rooms he had spent his evenings and nights for months. She indignantly refused, but he coldly and threateningly persisted in having his will. Then the Hoogstraten blood asserted itself, and without a word of farewell she fled with her child to Lugano. There the boy was received by his mother's former waiting-maid, while she herself went to Rome, not as an adventuress, but with a fixed, praiseworthy object in view. She intended to fully perfect her musical talents in the new schools of Palestrina and Nanini, and thus obtain the ability, by means of her art, to support her child

independently of his father and hers. She risked much, but very definite hopes hovered before her eyes, for a distinguished prelate and lover of music, to whom she had letters of introduction from Brussels, and who knew her voice, had promised that after her return from her musical studies he would give her the place of singing-mistress to a young girl of noble birth, who had been educated in a convent at Milan. She was under his guardianship, and the worthy man took care to provide Anna, before her departure, with letters to his friends in the eternal city.

Her hasty flight from Rome had been caused by the news, that Don Luis had found and abducted his son. She could not lose her child, and when she did not find the boy in Milan, followed and at last discovered him in Naples. There d'Avila restored the child, after she had declared her willingness to make over to him the income she still received from her aunt. The long journey, so full of excitement and fatigue, exhausted her strength, and she returned to Milan feeble and broken in health.

Her patron had been anxious to keep the place of singing-mistress open for her, but she could only fulfil for a short time the duties to which the superior of the convent kindly summoned her, for her sickness was increasing and a terrible cough spoiled her voice. She now returned to Lugano, and there sought to compensate her poor honest friend by the sale of her ornaments, but the time soon came when the generous artist was forced to submit to be supported by the charity of a servant. Until the last six months she had not suffered actual want, but when her maid's husband died, anxiety about the means of procuring daily bread arose, and now maternal love broke down Anna's pride: she wrote to her father as a repentant daughter, bowed down by misfortune, but received no reply. At last, reduced to starvation with her child, she undertook the hardest possible task, and besought the man, of whom she could only think with contempt and loathing, not to let his son grow up like a beggar's child. The letter, which contained this cry of distress, had reached Don Luis just before his death. No help was to come to her from him. But Belotti appeared, and now she was once more at home, her friend and sister were standing beside her bed, and Henrica encouraged her to hope for her father's forgiveness.

It was past midnight, yet Georg still awaited his friend's return. The noise and bustle of the camp began to die away and the lantern, which at first had but feebly lighted the spacious lower-room of the farmhouse, burned still more dimly. The German shared this apartment with agricultural implements, harnesses, and many kinds of grain and vegetables heaped in piles against the walls, but he lacked inclination to cast even a glance at his motley surroundings. There was nothing pleasant to him in the present or future. He felt humiliated, guilty, weary of life. His self-respect was trampled under foot, love and happiness were forfeited, there was naught before him save a colorless, charmless future, full of bitterness and mental anguish. Nothing seemed desirable save a speedy death. At times the fair image of his home rose

before his memory—but it vanished as soon as he recalled the burgomaster's dignified figure, his own miserable weakness and the repulse he had experienced. He was full of fierce indignation against himself, and longed with passionate impatience for the clash of swords and roar of cannon, the savage struggle man to man.

Time passed without his perceiving it, but a torturing desire for food began to torment the starving man. There were plenty of turnips piled against the wall, and he eat one after another, until he experienced the feeling of satiety he had so long lacked. Then he sat down on a kneading-trough and considered how he could best get to the Beggars. He did not know his way, but woe betide those who ventured to oppose him. His arm and sword were good, and there were Spaniards enough at hand whom he could make feel the weight of both. His impatience began to rise, and it seemed like a welcome diversion, when he heard steps approaching and a man's figure entered the house. He had stationed himself by the wall with his sword between his folded arms, and now shouted a loud "halt" to the new-comer.

The latter instantly drew his sword, and when Georg imperiously demanded what he wanted, replied in a boyish voice, but a proud, resolute tone:

"I ask you that question! I am in my father's house."

"Indeed!" replied the German smiling, for he had now recognized the speaker's figure by the dim light. I Put up your sword. If you are young Matanesse Van Wibisma, you have nothing to fear from me."

"I am. But what are you doing on our premises at night, sword in hand?"

"I'm warming the wall to my own satisfaction, or, if you want to know the truth, mounting guard."

"In our house?"

"Yes, Junker. There is some one up-stairs with your cousins, who wouldn't like to be surprised by the Spaniards. Go up. I know from Captain Van Duivenvoorde what a gallant young fellow you are."

"From Herr von Warmond?" asked Nicolas eagerly. "Tell me! what brings you here, and who are you?"

"One who is fighting for your liberty, a German, Georg von Dornburg."

"Oh, wait here, I entreat you. I'll come back directly. Do you know whether Fraulein Van Hoogstraten—"

"Up there," replied Georg, pointing towards the ceiling.

Nicolas sprang up the stairs in two or three bounds, called his cousin, and hastily told her that her father had had a severe fall from his horse while hunting, and was lying dangerously ill. When Nicolas spoke of Anna he had at first burst into a furious passion, but afterwards voluntarily requested him to tell him about her, and attempted to leave his bed to accompany him. He succeeded in doing so, but fell back fainting. When his father came early the next morning, she might tell him that he, Nicolas, begged his forgiveness; he was about to do what he believed to be his duty.

He evaded Henrica's questions, and merely hastily enquired about Anna's health and the Leyden citizen, whom Georg had mentioned.

When he heard the name of the musician Wilhelm, he begged her to warn him to depart in good time, and if possible in his company, then bade her a hurried farewell and ran down-stairs.

Wilhelm soon followed. Henrica accompanied him to the stairs to see Georg once more, but as soon as she heard his voice, turned defiantly away and went back to her sister.

The musician found Junker von Dornburg engaged in an eager conversation with Nicolas.

"No, no, my boy," said the German cordially, "my way cannot be yours."

"I am seventeen years old."

"That's not it; you've just confronted me bravely, and you have a man's strength of will—but life ought still to bear flowers for you, if such is God's will—you are going forth to fight sword-in-hand to win a worthy destiny of peace and prosperity, for yourself and your native land, in freedom—but I, I—give me your hand and promise—"

"My hand? There it is; but I must refuse the promise. With or without you—I shall go to the Beggars!"

Georg gazed at the brave boy in delight, and asked gently:

"Is your mother living?"

"No."

"Then come. We shall probably both find what we seek with the Beggars."

Nicolas clasped the hand Georg offered, but Wilhelm approached the Junker, saying:

"I expected this from you, after what I saw at St. Peter's church and Quatgelat's tavern."

"You first opened my eyes," replied Nicolas. "Now come, we'll go directly through the camp; they all know me."

In the road the boy pressed close to Georg, and in answer to his remark that he would be in a hard position towards his father, replied:

"I know it, and it causes me such pain—such pain.—But I can't help it. I won't suffer the word 'traitor' to cling to our name."

"Your cousin Matanesse, Herr von Riviere, is also devoted to the good cause."

"But my father thinks differently. He has the courage to expect good deeds from the Spaniards. From the Spaniards! I've learned to know them during the last few months. A brave lad from Leyden, you knew him probably by his nickname, Lowing, which he really deserved, was captured by them in fair fight, and then—it makes me shudder even now when I think of it—they hung him up head downward, and tortured him to death. I was present, and not one word of theirs escaped my ears. Such ought to be the fate of all Holland, country and people, that was what they wanted. And remarks like these can be heard every day. No abuse of us is too bad for them, and the King thinks like his soldiers. Let some one else endure to be the slave of a master, who tortures and despises us! My holy religion is eternal and indestructible. Even if it is hateful to many of the Beggars, that shall not trouble me—if only they will help break the Spanish chains." Amid such conversation they walked through the Castilian camp, where all lay buried in sleep. Then they reached that of the German troops, and here gay carousing was going on under many a tent. At the end of the encampment a sutler and his wife were collecting together the wares that remained unsold.

Wilhelm had walked silently behind the other two, for his heart was deeply stirred, joy and sorrow were striving for the mastery. He felt intoxicated with lofty, pure emotions, but suddenly checked his steps before the sutler's stand and pointed to the pastry gradually disappearing in a chest.

Hunger had become a serious, nay only too serious and mighty power, in the city beyond, and it was not at all surprising that Wilhelm approached the venders, and with sparkling eyes bought their last ham and as much bread as they had left.

Nicolas laughed at the bundle he carried under his arm, but Georg said:

"You haven't yet looked want in the face, Junker. This bread is a remedy for the most terrible disease." At the Hohenort Gate Georg ordered Captain von Warmond to be waked, and introduced Nicolas to him as a

future Beggar. The captain congratulated the boy and offered him money to supply himself in Delft with whatever he needed, and defray his expenses during the first few weeks; but Nicolas rejected his wealthy friend's offer, for a purse filled with gold coins hung at his girdle. A jeweller in the Hague had given them to him yesterday in payment for Fraulein Van Hoogstraten's emerald ring.

Nicolas showed the captain his treasure, and then exclaimed:

"Now forward, Junker von Dornburg, I know where we shall find them; and you, Captain Van Duivenvoorde, tell the burgomaster and Janus Dousa what has become of me."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A week had elapsed since Henrica's flight, and with it a series of days of severe privation. Maria knew from the musician, that young Matanesse had accompanied Georg, and that the latter was on his way to the Beggars. This was the right plan. The bubbling brook belonged to the wild, rushing, mighty river. She wished him happiness, life and pleasure; but—strange—since the hour that she tore his verses, the remembrance of him had receded as far as in the day: before the approach of the Spaniards. Nay, after her hard-won conquest of herself and his departure, a rare sense of happiness, amid all her cares and troubles, had taken possession of the young wife's heart. She had been cruel to herself, and the inner light of the clear diamond first gleams forth with the right brilliancy, after it has endured the torture of polishing. She now felt with joyous gratitude, that she could look Peter frankly in the eye, grant him love, and ask love in return. He scarcely seemed to notice her and her management under the burden of his cares, but she felt, that many things she said and could do for him pleased him. The young wife did not suffer specially from the long famine, while it caused Barbara pain and unstrung her vigorous frame. Amid so much suffering, she often sunk into despair before the cold hearth and empty pots, and no longer thought it worth while to plait her large cap and ruffs. It was now Maria's turn to speak words of comfort, and remind her of her son, the Beggar captain, who would soon enter Leyden.

On the sixth of September the burgomaster's wife was returning home from an early walk. Autumn mists darkened the air, and the sea-breeze drove a fine, drizzling spray through the streets. The dripping trees had long since been robbed of their leaves, not by wind and storm, but by children and adults, who had carried the caterpillars' food to their kitchens as precious vegetables.

At the Schagensteg Maria saw Adrian, and overtook him. The boy was

sauntering idly along, counting aloud. The burgomaster's wife called to him, and asked why he was not at school and what he was doing there.

"I'm counting," was the reply. "Now there are nine."

"Nine?"

"I've met nine dead bodies so far; the rector sent us home. Master Dirks is dead, and there were only thirteen of us to-day. There are some people bringing another one."

Maria drew her kerchief tighter and walked on. At her left hand stood a tall, narrow house, in which lived a cobbler, a jovial man, over whose door were two inscriptions. One ran as follows:

"Here are shoes for sale,
Round above and flat below;
If David's foot they will not fit,
Goliath's sure they'll suit, I know."

The other was:

"When through the desert roved the Jews,
Their shoes for forty years they wore,
Were the same custom now in use,
'Prentice would ne'er seek cobbler's door."

On the ridge of the lofty house was the stork's nest, now empty. The red-billed guests did not usually set out on their journey to the south so early, and some were still in Leyden, standing on the roofs as if lost in thought. What could have become of the cobbler's beloved lodgers? At noon the day before, their host, who in March usually fastened the luck-bringing nest firmly with his own hands, had stolen up to the roof, and with his cross-bow shot first the little wife and then the husband. It was a hard task, and his wife sat weeping in the kitchen while the evil deed was done, but whoever is tormented by the fierce pangs of hunger and sees his dear ones dying of want, doesn't think of old affection and future good fortune, but seeks deliverance at the present time.

The storks had been sacrificed too late, for the cobbler's son, his growing apprentice, had closed his eyes the night before for his eternal sleep. Loud lamentations reached Maria's ear from the open door of the shop, and Adrian said: "Jacob is dead, and Mabel is very sick. This morning their father cursed me on father's account, saying it was his fault that everything was going to destruction. Will there be no bread again to-day, mother? Barbara has some biscuit, and I feel so sick. I can't swallow the everlasting meal any longer."

"Perhaps there will be a slice. We must save the baked food, child."

In the entry of her house Maria found a man-servant, clad in black. He had come to announce the death of Commissioner Dietrich Van Bronkhorst. The plague had ended the strong man's life on the evening of the day before, Sunday.

Maria already knew of this heavy loss, which threw the whole responsibility of everything, that now happened, upon her husband's shoulders. She had also learned that a letter had been received from Valdez, in which he had pledged his word of honor as a nobleman, to spare the city, if it would surrender itself to the king's "mercy," and especially to grant Burgomaster Van der Werff, Herr Van der Does, and the other supporters of the rebellion, free passage through the Spanish lines. The Castilians would retire and Leyden should be garrisoned only by a few German troops. He invited Van der Werff and Herr von Nordwyk to come to Leyderdorp as ambassadors, and in any case, even if the negotiations failed, agreed to send them home uninjured under a safe escort. Maria knew that her husband had appointed that day for a great assembly of the council, the magistrates, and all the principal men in the city, as well as the captains of the city-guard—but not a word of all this had reached her ears from Peter. She had heard the news from Frail Van Hout and the wives of other citizens.

During the last few days a great change had taken place in her husband. He went out and returned with a pallid, gloomy face. Taciturn and wasting away with anxiety, he withdrew from the members of his family even when at home, repelling his wife curtly and impatiently when, yielding to the impulse of her heart, she approached him with encouraging words. Night brought him no sleep, and he left his couch before morning dawned, to pace restlessly to and fro, or gaze at Bessie, who to him alone still tried to show recognition by a faint smile.

When Maria returned home, she instantly went to the child and found Doctor Bontius with her. The physician shook his head at her appearance, and said the delicate little creature's life would soon be over. Her stomach had been injured during the first months of want; now it refused to do its office, and to hope for recovery would be folly.

"She must live, she must not die!" cried Maria, frantic with grief and yet full of hope, like a true mother, who cannot grasp the thought that she is condemned to lose her child, even when the little heart is already ceasing to beat and the bright eyes are growing dim and closing. "Bessie, Bessie, look at me! Bessie, take this nice milk. Only a few drops! Bessie, Bessie, you must not die."

Peter had entered the room unobserved and heard the last words. Holding his breath, he gazed down at his darling, his broad shoulders shook, and in a stifled, faltering voice he asked the physician: "Must she die?"

"Yes, old friend; I think so! Hold up your head! You have much still left you. All five of Van Loo's children have died of the plague."

Peter shuddered, and without taking any notice of Maria, passed from the room with drooping head. Bontius followed him into his study, laid his hand on his arm, and said:

"Our little remnant of life is made bitter to us, Peter. Barbara says a corpse was laid before your door early this morning."

"Yes. When I went out, the livid face offered me a morning greeting. It was a young person. All whom death mows down, the people lay to my charge. Wherever one looks—corpses! Whatever one hears—curses! Have I authority over so many lives? Day and night nothing but sorrow and death before my eyes;—and yet, yet, yet—oh God! save me from madness!"

Peter clasped both hands over his brow; but Bontius found no word of comfort, and merely exclaimed: "And I, and I? My wife and child ill with a fever, day and night on my feet, not to cure, but to see people die. What has been learned by hard study becomes childish folly in these days, and yet the poor creatures utter a sigh of hope when I feel their pulses. But this can't go on, this can't go on. Day before yesterday seventy, yesterday eighty-six deaths, and among them two of my colleagues."

"And no prospect of improvement?"

"To-morrow the ninety will become a hundred—the one hundred will become two, three, four, five, until at last one individual will be left, for whom there will be no grave-digger."

"The pest-houses are closed, and we still have cattle and horses."

"But the pestilence creeps through the joints, and since the last loaf of bread and the last malt-cake have been divided, and there is nothing for the people to eat except meat, meat, and nothing else—one tiny piece for the whole day—disease is piled on disease in forms utterly unprecedented, of which no book speaks, for which no remedy has yet been discovered. This drawing water with a bottomless pitcher is beginning to be too much for me. My brain is no stronger than yours. Farewell until to-morrow."

"To-day, to-day! You are coming to the meeting at the town-hall?"

"Certainly not! Do what you can justify; I shall practise my profession, which now means the same thing as saying: 'I shall continue to close eyes and hold coroner's inquests.' If things go on so, there will soon be an end to practice."

"Once for all: if you were in my place, you would treat with Valdez?"

"In your place? I am not you; I am a physician, one who has nothing to do except to take the field against suffering and death. You, since

Bronkhorst's death, are the providence of the city. Supply a bit of bread, if only as large as my hand, in addition to the meat, or—I love my native land and liberty as well as any one—or—”

”Or?”

”Or—leave Death to reap his harvest, you are no physician.”

Bontius bade his friend farewell and left him, but Peter thrust his hand through his hair and stood gazing out of the window, until Barbara entered, laid his official costume on a chair and asked with feigned carelessness:

”May I give Adrian some of the last biscuit? Meat is repulsive to him. He's lying on the bed, writhing in pain.”

Peter turned pale, and said in a hollow tone: ”Give it to him and call the doctor. Maria and Bontius are already with him.” The burgomaster changed his clothing, feeling a thrill of fierce indignation against every article he put on. To-day the superb costume was as hateful to him as the office, which gave him the right to wear it, and which, until a few weeks ago, he had occupied with a joyous sense of confidence in himself.

Before leaving the house, he sought Adrian. The boy was lying in Barbara's room, complaining of violent pains, and asking if he must die too.

Peter shook his head, but Maria kissed him, exclaiming:

”No, certainly not.”

The burgomaster's time was limited. His wife stopped him in the entry, but he hurried down-stairs without hearing what she called after him.

The young wife returned to Adrian's bedside, thinking anxiously of the speedy death of many comrades of the dear boy, whose damp hand rested in hers. She thought of Bessie, followed Peter in imagination to the town-hall, and heard his powerful voice contending for resistance to the last man and the last pound of meat; nay, she could place herself by his side, for she knew what was to come: To stand fast, stand fast for liberty, and if God so willed, die a martyr's death for it like Jacoba, Leonhard, and Peter's noble father.

One anxious hour followed another.

When Adrian began to feel better, she went to Bessie, who pale and inanimate, seemed to be gently fading away, and only now and then raised her little finger to play with her dry lips.

Oh, the pretty, withering human flower! How closely the little girl had grown into her heart, how impossible it seemed to give her up! With tearful eyes, she pressed her forehead on her clasped hands, which rested on the head-board of the little bed, and fervently implored God to spare and save this child. Again and again she repeated the prayer, but when Bessie's dim eyes no longer met hers and her hands fell into her lap, she could not help thinking of Peter, the assembly, the fate of the city, and the words: "Leyden saved, Holland saved! Leyden lost, all is lost!"

So the hours passed until the gloomy day were away into twilight, and twilight was followed by evening. Trautchen brought in the lamp, and at last Peter's step was heard on the stairs.

It must be he, and yet it was not, for he never came up with such slow and dragging feet.

Then the study door opened.

It was he!

What could have happened, what had the citizens determined?

With an anxious heart, she told Trautchen to stay with the child, and then went to her husband.

Peter sat at the writing-table in full official uniform, with his hat still on his head. His face lay buried on his folded arms, beside the sconce.

He saw nothing, heard nothing, and when she at last called him, started, sprang up and flung his hat violently on the table. His hair was dishevelled, his glance restless, and in the faint light of the glimmering candles his cheeks looked deadly pale.

"What do you want?" he asked curtly, in a harsh voice; but for a time Maria made no reply, fear paralyzed her tongue.

At last she found words, and deep anxiety was apparent in her question:

"What has happened?"

"The beginning of the end," he answered in a hollow tone.

"They have out-voted you?" cried the young wife. "Baersdorp and the other cowards want to negotiate?"

Peter drew himself up to his full height, and exclaimed in a loud, threatening tone:

"Guard your tongue! He who remains steadfast until his children die and corpses bar the way in front of his own house, he who bears the responsibility of a thousand deaths, endures curses and imprecations through long weeks, and has vainly hoped for deliverance during more than a third of a year—he who, wherever he looks, sees nothing save unprecedented, constantly increasing misery and then no longer repels the saving hand of the foe—"

"Is a coward, a traitor, who breaks the sacred oath he has sworn."

"Maria," cried Peter angrily, approaching with a threatening gesture.

She drew her slender figure up to its full height and with quickened breath awaited him, pointing her finger at him, as she exclaimed with a sharp tone perceptible through the slight tremor in her voice:

"You, you have voted with the Baersdorps, you, Peter Van der Werff! You have done this thing, you, the friend of the Prince, the shield and providence of this brave city, you, the man who received the oaths of the citizens, the martyr's son, the servant of liberty—"

"No more!" he interrupted, trembling with shame and rage. "Do you know what it is to bear the guilt of this most terrible suffering before God and men?"

"Yes, yes, thrice yes; it is laying one's heart on the rack, to save Holland and liberty. That is what it means! Oh, God, my God! You are lost! You intend to negotiate with Valdez!"

"And suppose I do?" asked the burgomaster, with an angry gesture.

Maria looked him sternly in the eye, and exclaimed in a loud, resolute tone:

"Then it will be my turn to say: Go to Delft; we need different men here."

The burgomaster turned pale and bent his eyes on the floor, while she fearlessly confronted him with a steady glance.

The light fell full upon her glowing face, and when Peter again raised his eyes, it seemed as if the same Maria stood before him, who as a bride had vowed to share trouble and peril with him, remain steadfast in the struggle for liberty to the end; he felt that his "child" Maria had grown to his own height and above him, recognized for the first time in the proud woman before him his companion in conflict, his high-hearted helper in distress and danger. An overmastering yearning, mightier than any emotion ever experienced before, surged through his soul, impelled him towards her, and found utterance in the words:

”Maria, Maria, my wife, my guardian angel! We have written to Valdez, but there is still time,—nothing binds me yet, and with you, with you I will stand firm to the end.”

Then, in the midst of these days of woe, she threw herself on his breast, crying aloud in the abundance of this new, unexpected, unutterable happiness:

”With you, one with you—forever, unto death, in conflict and in love!”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Peter felt animated with new life. A fresh store of courage and enthusiasm filled his breast, for he constantly received a new supply from the stout-hearted woman by his side.

Under the pressure of the terrible responsibility he endured, and urged by his fellow-magistrates, he had consented, at the meeting of the council, to write to Valdez and ask him to give free passage to ambassadors, who were to entreat the estates and the Prince of Orange to release the tortured city from her oath.

Valdez made every effort to induce the burgomaster to enter into farther negotiations, but the latter remained firm, and no petition for release from the sacred duty of resistance left the city. The two Van der Does, Van Hout, Junker von Warmond, and other resolute men, who had already, in the great assembly, denounced any intercourse with the enemy, now valiantly supported him against his fellow-magistrates and the council, that with the exception of seven of its members, persistently and vehemently urged the commencement of negotiations.

Adrian rapidly recovered, but Doctor Bontius’s prediction was terribly fulfilled, for famine and pestilence vied with each other in horrible fury, and destroyed almost half of all the inhabitants of the flourishing city. Intense was the gloom, dark the sky, yet even amidst the cruel woe there was many an hour in which bright sunshine illumined souls, and hope unfurled her green banner. The citizens of Leyden rose from their couches more joyously, than a bride roused by the singing of her companions on her wedding-day, when on the morning of September eleventh loud and long-continued cannonading was heard from the distance, and the sky became suffused with a crimson glow. The villages southwest of the city were burning. Every house, every barn that sunk into ashes, burying the property of honest men, was a bonfire to the despairing citizens.

The Beggars were approaching!

Yonder, where the cannon thundered and the horizon glowed, lay the Landscheiding, the bulwark which for centuries had guarded the plains surrounding Leyden from the assaults of the waves, and now barred the way of the fleet bringing assistance.

"Fall, protecting walls, rise, tempest, swallow thy prey, raging sea, destroy the property of the husbandman, ruin our fields and meadows, but drown the foe or drive him hence." So sang Janus Dousa, so rang a voice in Peter's soul, so prayed Maria, and with her thousands of men and women.

But the glow in the horizon died away, the firing ceased. A second day elapsed, a third and fourth, but no messenger arrived, no Beggar ship appeared, and the sea seemed to be calm; but another terrible power increased, moving with mysterious, stealthy, irresistible might; Death, with his pale companions, Despair and Famine.

The dead were borne secretly to their graves under cover of the darkness of night, to save their scanty ration for the survivors, in the division of food. The angel of death flew from house to house, touched pretty little Bessie's heart, and kissed her closed eyes while she slumbered in the quiet night.

The faint-hearted and the Spanish sympathizers raised their heads and assembled in bands, one of which forced a passage into the council-chamber and demanded bread. But not a crumb remained, and the magistrates had nothing more to distribute except a small portion of cow and horse-flesh, and boiled and salted hides.

During this period of the sorest distress, Van der Werff was passing down the "broad street." He did not notice that a throng of desperate men and women were pursuing him with threats; but as he turned to enter Van Hout's house, suddenly found himself surrounded. A pallid woman, with her dying child in her arms, threw herself before him, held out the expiring infant, and cried in hollow tones: "Let this be enough, let this be enough—see here, see this; it is the third. Let this be enough!"

"Enough, enough! Bread, bread! Give us bread!" was shrieked and shouted around him, and threatening weapons and stones were raised; but a carpenter, whom he knew, and who had hitherto faithfully upheld the good cause, advanced saying in measured accents, in his deep voice: "This can go on no longer. We have patiently borne hunger and distress in fighting against the Spaniards and for our Bible, but to struggle against certain death is madness."

Peter, pale and agitated, gazed at the mother, the child, the sturdy workman and the threatening, shrieking mob. The common distress, which afflicted them and so many starving people, oppressed his soul with a thousand-fold greater power. He would fain have drawn them all to his heart, as brothers in misfortune, companions of a future, worthier

existence. With deep emotion, he looked from one to the other, then pressed his hand upon his breast and called to the crowd, which thronged around him:

"Here I stand. I have sworn to faithfully endure to the end; and you did so with me. I will not break my oath, but I can die. If my life will serve you, here I am! I have no bread, but here, here is my body. Take it, lay hands on me, tear me to pieces. Here I stand, here I stand. I will keep my oath."

The carpenter bent his head, and said in a hollow tone: "Come, people, let God's will be done; we have sworn."

The burgomaster quietly entered his friend's house. Fran Van Hout had seen and heard all this, and on the very same day told the story to Maria, her eyes sparkling brightly as she exclaimed: "Never did I see any man so noble as he was in that hour! It is well for us, that he rules within these walls. Never will our children and children's children forget this deed."

They have treasured it in their memories, and during the night succeeding the day on which the burgomaster acted so manly a part, a letter arrived from the Prince, full of joyous and encouraging news. The noble man had recovered, and was striving with all his power to rescue brave Leyden. The Beggars had cut the Landscheiding, their vessels were pressing onward—help was approaching, and the faithful citizen who brought the letter, had seen with his own eyes the fleet bringing relief and the champions of freedom, glowing with martial ardor. The two Van der Does, by the same letter, were appointed the Prince's commissioners in place of the late Herr Van Bronkhorst. Van der Werff no longer stood alone, and when the next morning "Father William's" letter was read aloud and the messenger's news spread abroad, the courage and confidence of the tortured citizens rose like withering grass after a refreshing rain.

But they were still condemned to long weeks of anxiety and suffering.

During the last days of September they were forced to slaughter the cows hitherto spared for the infants and young mothers, and then, then?

Help was close at hand, for the sky often reddened, and the air was shaken by the roar of distant cannon; but the east wind continued to prevail, driving back the water let in upon the land, and the vessels needed a rising flood to approach the city.

Not one of all the messengers, who had been sent out, returned; there was nothing certain, save the cruelly increasing unendurable suffering. Even Barbara had succumbed, and complained of weakness and loathing of the ordinary food.

Maria thought of the roast-pigeon, which had agreed with Bessie so well,

and went to the musician, to ask if he could sacrifice another of his pets for her sister-in-law.

Wilhelm's mother received the burgomaster's wife. The old lady was sitting wearily in an arm-chair; she could still walk, but amid her anxiety and distress a strange twitching had affected her hands. When Maria made her request, she shook her head, saying: "Ask him yourself. He's obliged to keep the little creatures shut up, for whenever they appear, the poor starving people shoot at them. There are only three left. The messengers took the others, and they haven't returned.

"Thank God for it; the little food he still has, will do more good in dishes, than in their crops. Would you believe it? A fortnight ago he paid fifty florins out of his savings for half a sack of peas, and Heaven knows where he found them. Ulrich, Ulrich! Take Frau Van der Werff up to Wilhelm. I'd willingly spare you the climb, but he's watching for the carrier-pigeons that have been sent out, and won't even come down to his meals. To be sure, they would hardly be worth the trouble!"

It was a clear, sunny day. Wilhelm was standing in his look-out, gazing over the green, watery plain, that lay out-spread below him, towards the south. Behind him sat Andreas, the fencing-master's fatherless boy; writing notes, but his attention was not fixed on his work; for as soon as he had finished a line he too gazed towards the horizon, watching for the pigeon his teacher expected. He did not look particularly emaciated, for many a grain of the doves' food had been secretly added to his scanty ration of meat.

Wilhelm showed that he felt both surprised and honored by Frau Van der Werff's visit, and even promised to grant her request, though it was evident that the "saying yes" was by no means easy for him.

The young wife went out on the balcony with him, and he showed her in the south, where usually nothing but a green plain met the eye, a wide expanse over which a light mist was hovering. The noon sun seemed to steep the white vapor with light, and lure it upward by its ardent rays. This was the water streaming through the broken dyke, and the black oblong specks moving along its edges were the Spanish troops and herds of cattle, that had retreated before the advancing flood from the outer fortifications, villages and hamlets. The Land-scheiding itself was not visible, but the Beggars had already passed it. If the fleet succeeded in reaching the Zoetermere Lake and from thence.

Wilhelm suddenly interrupted his explanation, for Andreas had suddenly started up, upsetting his stool, and exclaimed:

"It's coming! The dove! Roland, my fore man, there it comes!"

For the first time Wilhelm heard the boy's lips utter his father's exclamation. Some great emotion must have stirred his heart, and in

truth he was not mistaken; the speck piercing the air, which his keen eye had discovered, was no longer a mere spot, but an oblong something—a bird, the pigeon!

Wilhelm seized the flag on the balcony, and waved it as joyously as ever conqueror unfurled his banner after a hard-won fight. The dove came nearer—alighted, slipped into the cote, and a few minutes after the musician appeared with a tiny letter.

”To the magistrates!” cried Wilhelm. ”Take it to your husband at once. Oh! dear lady, dear lady, finish what the dove has begun. Thank God! thank God! they are already at North-Aa. This will save the poor people from despair! And now one thing more! You shall have the roasted bird, but take this grain too; a barley-porridge is the best medicine for Barbara’s condition; I’ve tried it!”

When evening came, and the musician had told his parents the joyful news, he ordered the blue dove with the white breast to be caught. ”Kill it outside the house,” said he, ”I can’t bear to see it.”

Andreas soon came back with the beheaded pigeon.

His lips were bloody, Wilhelm knew from what, yet he did not reprove the hungry boy, but merely said:

”Fie, you pole-cat!”

Early the next morning a second dove returned. The letters the winged messengers had brought were read aloud from the windows of the town-hall, and the courage of the populace, pressed to the extremest limits of endurance, flickered up anew and helped them bear their misery. One of the letters were addressed to the magistrates, the other to Janus Dousa; they sounded confident and hopeful, and the Prince, the faithful shield of liberty, the friend and guide of the people, had recovered from his sickness and visited the vessels and troops intended for the relief of Leyden. Rescue was so near, but the north-east wind would not change, and the water did not rise. Great numbers of citizens, soldiers, magistrates and women stood on the citadel and other elevated places, gazing into the distance.

A thousand hands were clasped in fervent prayer, and the eyes of all were turned in feverish expectation and eager yearning towards the south, but the boundary line of the waves did not move; and the sun, as if in mockery, burst cheerily through the mists of the autumn morning, imparted a pleasant warmth to the keen air, and in the evening sank towards the west in the midst of radiant light, diffusing its golden rays far and wide. The cloudless blue sky arched pitilessly over the city, and at night glittered with thousands of twinkling stars. Early on the morning of the twenty-ninth the mists grew denser, the grass remained dry, the fogs lifted, the cool air changed to a sultry atmosphere, the grey clouds

piled in masses on each other, and grew black and threatening. A light breeze rose, stirring the leafless branches of the trees, then a sudden gust of wind swept over the heads of the throngs watching the distant horizon. A second and third followed, then a howling tempest roared and hissed without cessation through the city, wrenching tiles from the roofs, twisting the fruit-trees in the gardens and the young elms and lindens in many a street, tearing away the flags the boys had fastened on the walls in defiance of the Spaniards, lashing the still waters of the city moat and quiet canals, and—the Lord does not abandon His own—and the vanes turned, the storm came from the north-west. No one saw the result, but the sailors shouted the tidings, and each individual caught up the words and bore them exultantly on—the hurricane drove the sea into the mouth of the Meuse, forcing back the waves of the river by its fierce assault, driving them over its banks through the gaps opened in the dykes, and the gates of the sluices, and bearing forward on their towering crests the vessels bringing deliverance.

Roar, roar, thou storm, stream, stream, rushing rain, rage, waves, and destroy the meadows, swallow up houses and villages! Thousands and thousands of people on the walls and towers of Leyden hail your approach, behold in you the terrible armies of the avenging God, exult and shout a joyous welcome!

For two successive days the burgomaster, Maria and Adrian, the Van der Does and Van Houts stood with brief intervals of rest among the throng on the citadel or the tower at the Cow-Gate; even Barbara, far more strengthened by hope than by the barley-porridge or the lean carrier-pigeon, would not stay at home, but dragged herself to the musician's look-out, for every one wanted to see the rising water, the earth softening, the moisture creeping between the blades of grass, then spreading into pools and ponds, until at last there was a wide expanse of water, on which bubbles rose, burst under the descending rain, and formed ever-widening circles. Every one wanted to watch the Spaniards, hurrying hither and thither like sheep pursued by a wolf. Every one wanted to hear the thunder of the Beggars' cannon, the rattle of their arquebuses and muskets; men and women thought the tempest that threatened to sweep them away, pleasanter than the softest breeze, and the pouring rain, which drenched them, preferable to spring dew-drops mirroring the sunshine.

Behind the strong fort of Lammen, defended by several hundred Spanish soldiers, and the Castle of Cronenstein, a keen eye could distinguish the Beggars' vessels.

During Thursday and Friday Wilhelm watched in vain for a dove, but on Saturday his best flier returned, bringing a letter from Admiral Boisot, who called upon the armed forces of the city to sally out on Friday and attack Lammen.

The storm had blown the pigeon away. It had reached the city too late,

but on Saturday evening Janus Dousa and Captain Van der Laen were actively engaged, summoning every one capable of bearing arms to appear early Sunday morning. Poor, pale, emaciated troops were those who obeyed the leaders' call, but not a man was absent and each stood ready to give his life for the deliverance of the city and his family.

The tempest had moderated, the firing had ceased, and the night was dark and sultry. No eyes wished to sleep, and those whose slumber overpowered for a short time, were startled and terrified by strange, mysterious noises. Wilhelm sat in his look-out, gazing towards the south and listening intently. Sometimes a light gust of wind whistled around the lofty house, sometimes a shout, a scream, or the blast of a trumpet echoed through the stillness of the night; then a crashing noise, as if an earthquake had shaken part of the city to its foundations, arose near the Cow-Gate. Not a star was visible in the sky, but bright spots, like will-o'-the-wisps, moved through the dense gloom in regular order near Lanimen. It was a horrible, anxious night.

Early next morning the citizens saw that a part of the city-wall near the Cow-Gate had fallen, and then unexampled rejoicing arose at the breach, no longer dangerous; exultant cries echoed through every street and alley, drawing from the houses men and women, grey-beards and children, the sick and the well, one after another thronging to the Cow-Gate, where the Beggars' fleet was seen approaching. The city-carpenter, Thomassohn, and other men, tore out of the water the posts by which the Spaniards had attempted to bar the vessels' advance, then the first ship, followed by a second and third, arrived at the walls. Stern, bearded men, with fierce, scarred, weather-beaten faces, whose cheeks for years had been touched by no salt moisture, save the sea-spray, smiled kindly at the citizens, flung them one loaf of bread after another, and many other good things of which they had long been deprived, weeping and sobbing with emotion like children, while the poor people eat and eat, unable to utter a word of thanks. Then the leaders came, Admiral Boisot embraced the Van der Does and Burgomaster Van der Werff, the Beggar captain Van Duijkenburg was clasped in the arms of his mother, Barbara, and many a Leyden man hugged a liberator, on whom his eyes now rested for the first time. Many, many tears fell, thousands of hearts overflowed, and the Sunday bells, sounding so much clearer and gayer than usual, summoned rescuers and rescued to the churches to pray. The spacious sanctuary was too small for the worshippers, and when the pastor, Corneliussohn, who filled the place of the good Verstroot, now ill from caring for so many sufferers, called upon the congregation to give thanks, his exhortation had long since been anticipated; from the first notes of the organ, the thousands who poured into the church had been filled with the same eager longing, to utter thanks, thanks, fervent thanks.

In the Grey Sisters' chapel Father Damianus also thanked the Lord, and with him Nicolas Van Wibisma and other Catholics, who loved their native land and liberty.

After church Adrian, holding a piece of bread in one hand and his shoes in the other, waded at the head of his school-mates through the higher meadows to Leyderdorp, to see the Spaniards' deserted camp. There stood the superb tent of General Valdez, in which, over the bed, hung a map of the Rhine country, drawn by the Netherlander Beeldsnijder to injure his own nation. The boys looked at it, and a Beggar, who had formerly been in a writing-school and now looked like a sea-bear, said:

"Look here, my lads. There is the Land-scheiding.

"We first pierced that, but more was to be done. The green path had many obstacles, and here at the third dyke—they call it the Front-way—there were hard nuts to crack, and farther progress was impossible. We now returned, made a wide circuit across the Segwaertway, and through this canal here, where there was hard fighting, to North-Aa. The Zoetermeer Lake now lay behind us, but the water became too shallow and we could get no farther. Have you seen the great Ark of Delft? It's a huge vessel, moved by wheels, by which the water is thrust aside. You'll be delighted with it. At last the Lord gave us the storm and the spring-tide. Then the vessels had the right depth of water. There was warm work again at the Kirk-way, but the day before yesterday we reached Lammen. Many a brave man has fallen on both sides, but at Lammen every one expected the worst struggle to take place. We were going to attack it early this morning, but when day dawned everything was unnaturally quiet in the den, and moreover, a strange stillness prevailed. Then we thought: Leyden has surrendered; starvation conquered her. But it was nothing of the sort! You are people of the right stamp, and soon after a lad about as large as one of you, came to our vessel and told us he had seen a long procession of lights move out of the fort during the night and march away. At first we wouldn't believe him, but the boy was right. The water had grown too hot for the crabs, and the lights the lad saw were the Spaniards' lunts. Look, children, there is Lammen—"

Adrian had gone close to the map with his companions and now interrupted the Beggar by laughing loudly.

"What is it, curly-head?" asked the latter.

"Look, look!" cried the boy, "the great General Valdez has immortalized himself here, and there is his name too. Listen, listen! The rector would hang a placard with the word donkey round his neck, for he has written: 'Castelli parvi! Vale civitas, valete castelli parvi; relictis estis propter aquam et non per vim inimicorum!' Oh! the donkey 'Castelli parvi!'"

"What does it mean?" asked the Beggar.

"Farewell, Leyden, farewell, ye little 'Castelli;' ye are abandoned on account of the waves, and not of the power of the enemy. 'Parvi Castelli!' I must tell mother that!"

On Monday, William of Orange entered Leyden, and went to Herr von Montfort's house. The people received their Father William with joy, and the unwearied champion of liberty, in the midst of the exultation and rejoicing that surrounded him, labored for the future prosperity of the city. At a later period he rewarded the faithful endurance of the people with a peerless memorial: the University of Leyden. This awakened and kept alive in the busy city and the country bleeding for years in severe conflicts, that lofty aspiration and effort, which is its own reward, and places eternal welfare far above mere temporal prosperity. The tree, whose seed was planted amid the deepest misery, conflict and calamity, has borne the noblest fruits for humanity, still bears them, and if it is the will of God will continue to bear them for centuries.

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On the twenty-sixth of July, 1581, seven years after the rescue of Leyden, Holland and Zealand, whose political independence had already been established for six years, proclaimed themselves at the Hague free from Spain. Hitherto, William of Orange had ruled as King Philip's "stadtholder," and even the war against the monarch had been carried on in his name. Nay, the document establishing the University, a paper, which with all the earnestness that dictated it, deserves to be called an unsurpassed masterpiece of the subtlest political irony, purported to issue from King Philip's mouth, and it sounds amusing enough to read in this paper, that the gloomy dunce in the Escorial, after mature deliberation with his dear and faithful cousin, William of Orange, has determined to found a freeschool and university, from motives, which could not fail to seem abominable to the King.

On the twenty-fourth of July this game ceased, allegiance to Philip was renounced, and the Prince assumed sovereign authority.

Three days after, these joyful events were celebrated by a splendid banquet at Herr Van der Werff's house. The windows of the dining-room were thrown wide open, and the fresh breeze of the summer night fanned the brows of the guests, who had assembled around the burgomaster's table. They were the most intimate friends of the family: Janus Dousa, Van Hout, the learned Doctor Grotius of Delft, who to Maria's delight had been invited to Leyden as a professor, and this very year filled the office of President of the new University, the learned tavern-keeper Aquarius, Doctor Bontius, now professor of medicine at the University, and many others.

The musician Wilhelm was also present, but no longer alone; beside him sat his beautiful, delicate wife, Anna d'Avila, with whom he had recently returned from Italy. He had borne for several years the name of Van Duivenbode (messenger-dove), which the city had bestowed on him, together with a coat of arms bearing three blue doves on a silver field and two crossed keys.

With the Prince's consent the legacies bequeathed by old Fraulein Van Hoogstraten to her relatives and servants, had been paid, and Wilhelm now occupied with his wife a beautiful new house, that did not lack a dovecote, and where Maria, though her four children gave her little time, took part in many a madrigal. The musician had much to say about Rome and his beautiful sister-in-law Henrica, to Adrian, now a fine young man, who had graduated at the University and was soon to be admitted to the council. Belotti, after the death of the young girl's father, who had seen and blessed Anna again, went to Italy with her, where she lived as superior of a secular institution, where music was cultivated with special devotion.

Barbara did not appear among the guests. She had plenty to do in the kitchen. Her white caps were now plaited with almost coquettish skill and care, and the firm, contented manner in which she ruled Trautchen and the two under maid-servants showed that everything was going on well in Peter's house and business. It was worth while to do a great deal for the guests upstairs. Junker von Warmond was among them, and had been given the seat of honor between Doctor Grotius and Janus Dousa, the first trustee of the University, for he had become a great nobleman and influential statesman, who found much difficulty in getting time to leave the Hague and attend the banquet with his young assistant, Nicolas Van Wibisma. He drank to Meister Aquanus as eagerly and gaily as ever, exclaiming:

"To old times and our friend, Georg von Dornburg."

"With all my heart," replied the landlord. "We haven't heard of his bold deeds and expeditions for a long time."

"Of course! The fermenting wine is now clear. Dornburg is in the English service, and four weeks ago I met him as a member of her British Majesty's navy in London. His squadron is now on the way to Venice. He still cherishes an affectionate memory of Leyden, and sends kind remembrances to you, but you would never recognize in the dignified commander and quiet, cheerful man, our favorite in former days. How often his enthusiastic temperament carried him far beyond us all, and how it would make the heart ache to see him brooding mournfully over his secret grief."

"I met the Junker in Delft," said Doctor Grotius. "Such enthusiastic natures easily soar too high and then get a fall, but when they yoke themselves to the chariot of work and duty, their strength moves vast burdens, and with cheerful superiority conquers the hardest obstacles."

Meantime Adrian, at a sign from his father, had risen and filled the glasses with the best wine. The "hurrah," led by the Burgomaster, was given to the Prince, and Janus Dousa followed it by a toast to the independence and liberty of their native land.

Van Hout devoted a glass to the memory of the days of trouble, and the city's marvellous deliverance. All joined in the toast, and after the cheers had died away, Aquanus said:

"Who would not gladly recall the exquisite Sunday of October third; but when I think of the misery that preceded it, my heart contracts, even at the present day."

At these words Peter clasped Maria's hand, pressed it tenderly, and whispered:

"And yet, on the saddest day of my life, I found my best treasure."

"So did I!" she replied, gazing gratefully into his faithful eyes.