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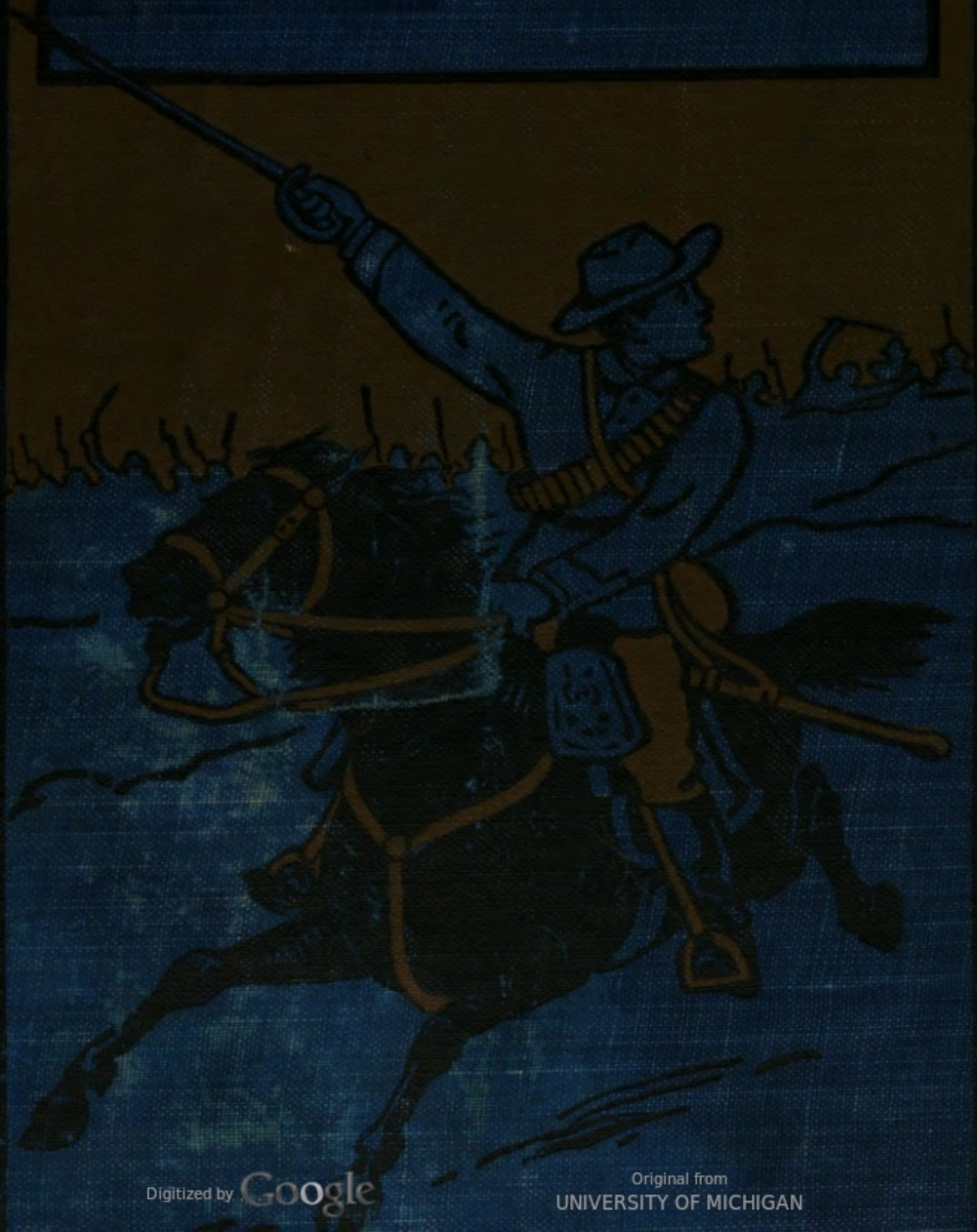

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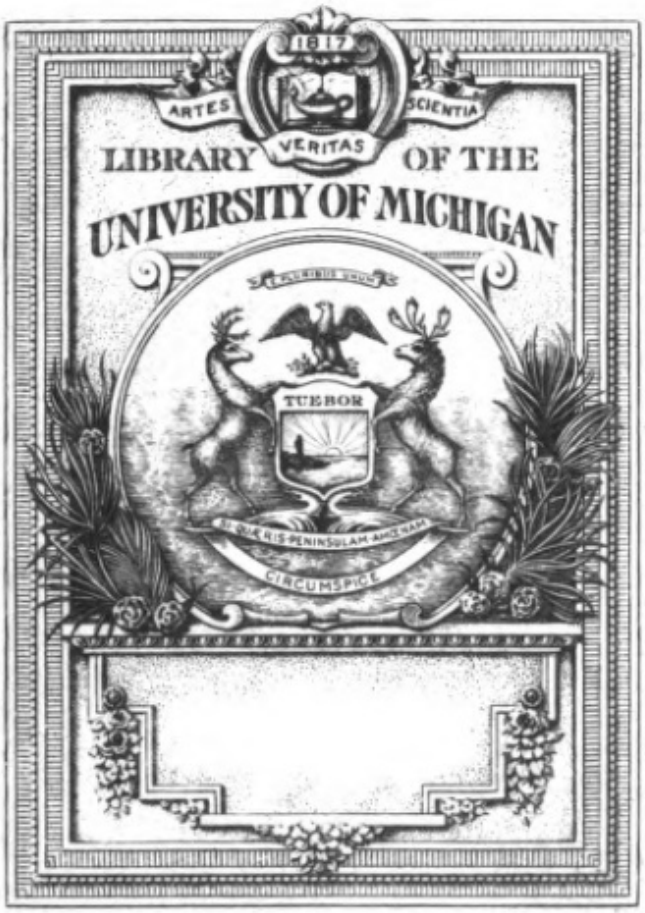

THE GIFT OF
Miss Marie Rominger &
Mrs. Mark Covill

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To Carl

From

Aunt Alice Dec 25th 19

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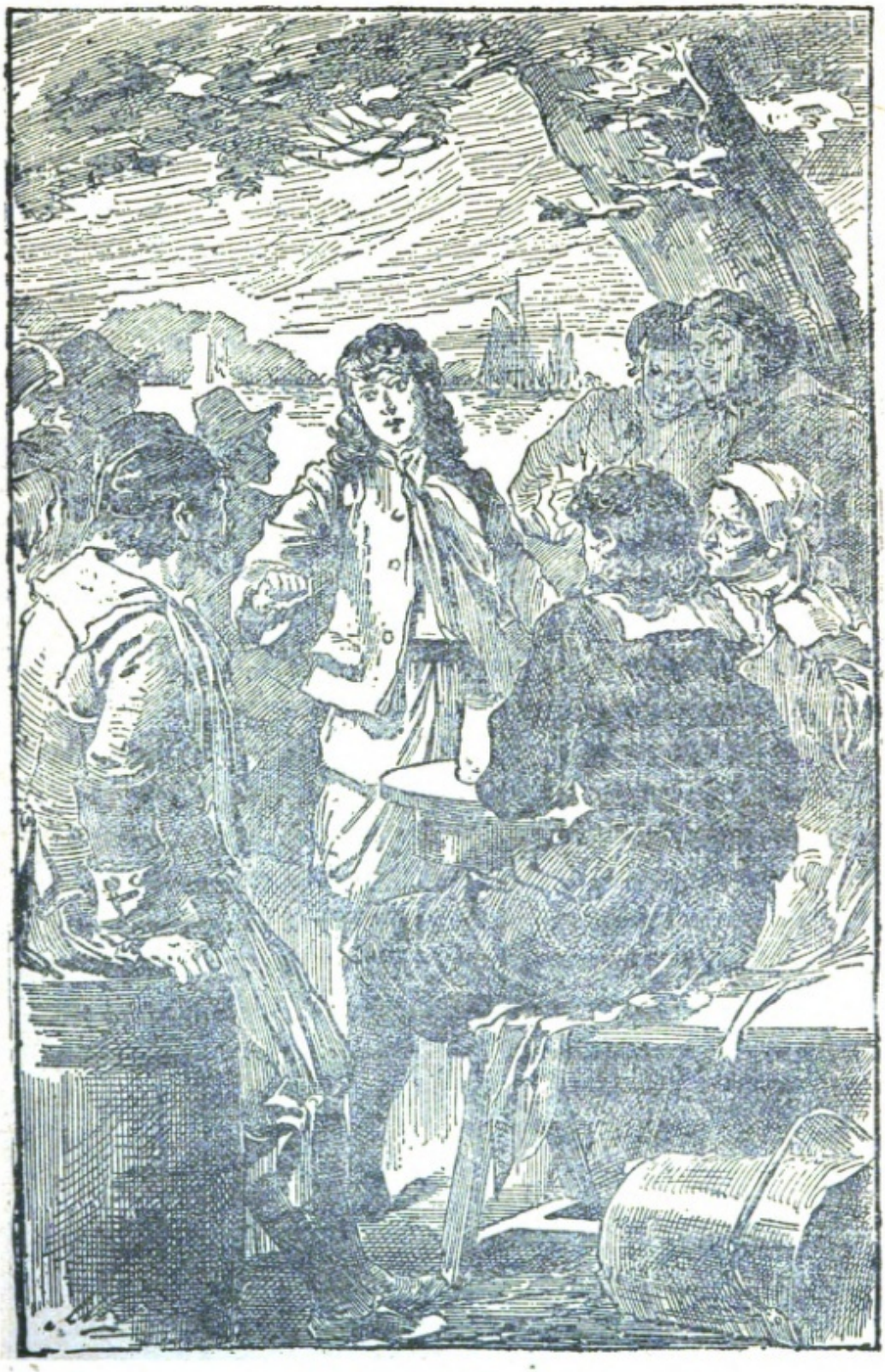

P. & D. NED GIVES THE CAPTAINS HIS VIEW OF THE MATTER.—Page 15.

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BY PIKE AND DYKE

A TALE OF THE RISE OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

BY

G. A. HENTY

AUTHOR OF "WITH CLIVE IN INDIA," "THE DRAGON AND THE RAVEN," "THE YOUNG CARTHAGINIAN," "WITH LEE IN VIRGINIA," "CAPTAIN BAYLEY'S HEIR," ETC.

THE MERSHON COMPANY
RAHWAY, N. J. NEW YORK

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GIFT OF
MISS MARIE BLYTHE
TO
MRS. MARK COVILL
5-26-42

PREFACE.

My Dear Lads:

In all the pages of history there is no record of a struggle so unequal, so obstinately maintained, and so long contested as that by which the men of Holland and Zeeland won their right to worship God in their own way, and also—although this was but a secondary consideration with them—shook off the yoke of Spain and achieved their independence. The incidents of the contest were of a singularly dramatic character. Upon one side was the greatest power of the time, set in motion by a ruthless bigot, who was determined either to force his religion upon the people of the Netherlands, or to utterly exterminate them. Upon the other were a scanty people, fishermen, sailors, and agriculturalists, broken up into communities with but little bond of sympathy, and no communication, standing only on the defensive, and relying solely upon the justice of their cause, their own stout hearts, their noble prince, and their one ally, the ocean. Cruelty, persecution, and massacre had converted this race of peace-loving workers into heroes capable of the most sublime self-sacrifices. Women and children were imbued with a spirit equal to that of the men, fought as stoutly on the walls, and died as uncomplainingly from famine in the beleaguered towns. The struggle was such a long one that I have found it impossible to recount all the leading events in

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the space of a single volume; and, moreover, before the close, my hero, who began as a lad, would have grown into middle age, and it is an established canon in books for boys that the hero must himself be young. I have therefore terminated the story at the murder of William of Orange, and hope in another volume to continue the history, and to recount the progress of the war, when England, after years of hesitation, threw herself into the fray, and joined Holland in its struggle against the power that overshadowed all Europe, alike by its ambition and its bigotry. There has been no need to consult many authorities. Motley in his great work has exhausted the subject, and for all the historical facts I have relied solely upon him.

Yours very sincerely,

G. A. HENTY.

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BY PIKE AND DYKE.

CHAPTER I.

THE "GOOD VENTURE."

ROTHERHITHE in the year of 1572 differed very widely from the Rotherhithe of to-day. It was then a scattered village, inhabited chiefly by a seafaring population. It was here that the captains of many of the ships that sailed from the port of London had their abode. Snug cottages with trim gardens lay thickly along the banks of the river, where their owners could sit and watch the vessels passing up and down or moored in the stream, and discourse with each other over the hedges as to the way in which they were handled, the smartness of their equipage, whence they had come, or where they were going. For the trade of London was comparatively small in those days, and the skippers as they chatted together could form a shrewd guess from the size and appearance of each ship as to the country with which she traded, or whether she was a coaster working the eastern or southern ports.

Most of the vessels, indeed, would be recognized and the captains known, and hats would be waved and welcomes or adieus shouted as the vessels passed. There was something that savored of Holland in the appearance of Rotherhithe; for it was with the Low Countries

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that the chief trade of England was carried on; and the marines who spent their lives in journeying to and fro between London and the ports of Zeeland, Friesland, and Flanders, who for the most part picked up the language of the country, and sometimes even brought home wives from across the sea, naturally learned something from their neighbors. Nowhere, perhaps, in and about London were the houses so clean and bright, and the gardens so trimly and neatly kept, as in the village of Rotherhithe, and in all Rotherhithe not one was brighter and more comfortable than the abode of Captain William Martin.

It was low and solid in appearance; the wooden framework was unusually massive, and there was much quaint carving on the beams. The furniture was heavy and solid, and polished with beeswax until it shone. The fireplaces were lined with Dutch tiles; the flooring was of oak, polished as brightly as the furniture. The appointments from roof to floor were Dutch; and no wonder that this was so, for every inch of wood in its framework and beams, floor and furniture, had been brought across from Friesland by William Martin in his ship, the Good Venture. It had been the dowry he received with his pretty young wife, Sophie Plomaert.

Sophie was the daughter of a well-to-do worker in wood near Amsterdam. She was his only daughter, and although he had nothing to say against the English sailor who had won her heart, and who was chief owner of the ship he commanded, he grieved much that she should leave her native land; and he and her three brothers determined that she should always bear her former home in her recollection. They therefore prepared as her wedding-gift a facsimile of the home in which she had been born and bred. The furniture and

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framework were similar in every particular, and it needed only the insertion of the brickwork and plaster when it arrived. Two of her brothers made the voyage in the Good Venture, and themselves put the framework, beams and flooring together and saw to the completion of the house on the strip of ground that William Martin had purchased on the bank of the river.

Even a large summer-house that stood at the end of the garden was a reproduction of that upon the bank of the canal at home; and when all was completed and William Martin brought over his bride she could almost fancy that she was still at home near Amsterdam. Ever since, she had once a year sailed over in her husband's ship, and spent a few weeks with her kinsfolk. When at home from sea the great summer-house was a general rendezvous of William Martin's friends in Rotherhithe, all skippers like himself, some still on active service, others, who had retired on their savings; not all, however, were fortunate enough to have houses on the river bank; and the summer-house was therefore useful not only as a place of meeting but as a lookout at passing ships.

It was a solidly built structure, inclosed on the land side but open toward the river, where, however, there were folding shutters, so that in cold weather it could be partially closed up, though still affording a sight of the stream. A great Dutch stove stood in one corner, and in this in winter a roaring fire was kept up. There were few men in Rotherhithe so well endowed with this world's goods as Captain Martin. His father had been a trader in the city, but William's tastes lay toward the sea rather than the shop, and as he was the youngest of three brothers he had his way in the matter. When he reached the age of twenty-three his father died, and

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with his portion of the savings William purchased the principal share of the Good Venture, which ship he had a few months before come to command.

When he married he had received not only his house but a round sum of money as Sophie's portion. With this he could, had he liked, have purchased the other shares of the Good Venture; but, being a thorough sailor, a prudent man, he did not like to put all his eggs into one basket, and accordingly bought with it a share in another ship. Three children had been born to William and Sophie Martin—a boy and two girls. Edward, who was the eldest, was at the time this story begins nearly sixteen. He was an active, well-built young fellow, and had for five years sailed with his father in the Good Venture. That vessel was now lying in the stream a quarter of a mile higher up, having returned from a trip to Holland upon the previous day.

The first evening there had been no callers, for it was an understood thing at Rotherhithe that a captain on his return wanted the first evening at home alone with his wife and family; but on the evening of the second day, when William Martin had finished his work of seeing to the unloading of his ship, the visitors began to drop in fast, and the summer-house was well-nigh as full as it could hold. Mistress Martin, who was now a comely matron of six-and-thirty, busied herself in seeing that the maid and her daughters, Constance and Janet, supplied the visitors with horns of home-brewed beer, or other strong waters brought from Holland for those who preferred them.

"You have been longer away than usual, Captain Martin," one of the visitors remarked.

"Yes," the skipper replied. "Trade is but dull, and though the Good Venture bears a good repute for speed

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and safety, and is seldom kept lying at the wharves for a cargo, we were a week before she was chartered. I know not what will be the end of it all. I verily believe that no people have ever been so cruelly treated for their conscience's sake since the world began; for you know it is not against the King of Spain but against the Inquisition that the opposition has been made. The people of the Low Countries know well enough it would be madness to contend against the power of the greatest country in Europe, and to this day they have borne, and are bearing, the cruelty to which they are exposed in quiet despair, and without a thought of resistance to save their lives. There may have been tumults in some of the towns, as in Antwerp, where the lowest part of the mob went into the cathedrals and churches and destroyed the shrines and images; but as to armed resistance to the Spaniards, there has been none.

"The first expeditions that the Prince of Orange made into the country were composed of German mercenaries, with a small body of exiles. They were scarce joined by any of the country-folk. Though, as you know, they gained one little victory, they were nigh all killed and cut to pieces. So horrible was the slaughter perpetrated by the soldiers of the tyrannical Spanish governor Alva, that when the Prince of Orange again marched into the country not a man joined him, and he had to fall back without accomplishing anything. The people seemed stunned by despair. Has not the Inquisition condemned the whole of the inhabitants of the Netherlands—save only a few persons specially named—to death as heretics? and has not Philip confirmed the decree, and ordered it to be carried into instant execution without regard to age or sex? Were three millions of men, women, and children ever before sentenced to

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death by one stroke of the pen, only because they refused to change their religion? Every day there are hundreds put to death by the orders of Alva's Blood Council, as it is called, without even the mockery of a trial."

There was a general murmur of rage and horror from the assembled party.

"Were I her queen's majesty," an old captain said, striking his fist on the table, "I would declare war with Philip of Spain to-morrow, and would send every man who could bear arms to the Netherlands to aid the people to free themselves from their tyrants."

"Ay, and there is not a Protestant in the land but would go willingly. To think of such cruelty makes the blood run through my veins as if I were a lad again. Why, in Mary's time there were two or three score burnt for their religion here in England, and we thought that a terrible thing. But three millions of people! Why, it is as many as we have got in all these islands! What think you of this, mates?"

"It is past understanding," another old sailor said. "It is too awful for us to take in."

"It is said," another put in, "that the King of France has leagued himself with Philip of Spain, and that the two have bound themselves to exterminate the Protestants in all their dominions, and as that includes Spain, France, Italy, the Low Countries, and most of Germany, it stands to reason as we who are Protestants ought to help our friends; for you may be sure, neighbors, that if Philip succeeds in the Low Countries he will never rest until he has tried to bring England under his rule also, and to plant the Inquisition with its bonfires and its racks and tortures here."

An angry murmur of assent ran round the circle.

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"We would fight them, you may be sure," Captain Martin said, "to the last; but Spain is a mighty power, and all know that there are no soldiers in Europe can stand against their pikemen. If the Low Countries, which number as many souls as we, cannot make a stand against them with all their advantages of rivers, and swamps, and dykes, and fortified towns, what chance should we have who have none of these things? What I say, comrades, is this: we have got to fight Spain—you know the grudge Philip bears us—and it is far better that we should go over and fight the Spaniards in the Low Countries, side by side with the people th re, and with all the advantages that their rivers and dykes give, and with the comfort that our wives and children are safe here at home, than wait till Spain has crushed down the Netherlands and exterminated the people, and is then able, with France as her ally, to turn her whole strength against us. That's what I say."

"And you say right, Captain Martin. If I were the queen's majesty I would send word to Philip to-morrow to call off his black crew of monks and inquisitors. The people of the Netherlands have no thought of resisting the rule of Spain, and would be, as they have been before, Philip's obedient subjects, if he would but leave their religion alone. It's the doings of the Inquisition that have driven them to despair. And when one hears what you are telling us, that the king has ordered the whole population to be exterminated—man, woman, and child—no wonder they are preparing to fight to the last; for it's better to die fighting a thousand times, than it is to be roasted alive with your wife and children!"

"I suppose the queen and her councillors see that if she were to meddle in this business it might cost her her kingdom, and us our liberty," another captain said.

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"The Spaniards could put, they say, seventy or eighty thousand trained soldiers in the field, while, except the queen's own bodyguard, there is not a soldier in England; while their navy is big enough to take the fifteen or twenty ships the queen has, and to break them up to burn their galley fires."

"That is all true enough," Captain Martin agreed; "but our English men have fought well on the plains of France before now, and I don't believe we should fight worse to-day. We beat the French when they were ten to one against us over and over, and what our fathers did we can do. What you say about the navy is true also. They have a big fleet, and we have no vessels worth speaking about, but we are as good sailors as the Spaniards any day, and as good fighters; and though I am not saying we could stop their fleet if it came sailing up the Thames, I believe when they landed we should show them that we were as good men as they. They might bring seventy thousand soldiers, but there would be seven hundred thousand Englishmen to meet; and if we had but sticks and stones to fight with, they would not find that they would have an easy victory."

"Yes, that's what you think and I think, neighbor; but, you see, we have not got the responsibility of it. The queen has to think for us all. Though I for one would be right glad if she gave the word for war, she may well hesitate before she takes a step that might bring ruin, and worse than ruin, upon all her subjects. We must own, too, that much as we feel for the people of the Low Countries in their distress, they have not always acted wisely. That they should take up arms against these cruel tyrants, even if they had no chance of beating them, is what we all agree would be right and natural; but when the mob of Antwerp broke into the

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cathedral, and destroyed the altars and carvings, and tore up the vestments, and threw down the Maries and the saints, and then did the same in the other churches in the town and in the country round, they behaved worse than children, and showed themselves as intolerant and bigoted as the Spaniards themselves. They angered Philip beyond hope of forgiveness, and gave him something like an excuse for his cruelties toward them."

"Ay, ay, that was a bad business," Captain Martin agreed; "a very bad business, comrade. And although these things were done by a mere handful of the scum of the town, the respectable citizens raised no hand to stop it, although they can turn out the town guard readily enough to put a stop to a quarrel between the members of two of the guilds. There were plenty of men who have banded themselves together under the name of 'the beggars,' and swore to fight for their religion, to have put these fellows down if they had chosen. They did not choose, and now Philip's vengeance will fall on them all alike."

"Well, what think you of this business, Ned?" one of the captains said, turning to the lad who was standing in a corner, remaining, as in duty bound, silent in the presence of his elders until addressed.

"Were I a Dutchman, and living under such a tyranny," Ned said passionately, "I would rise and fight to the death rather than see my family martyred. If none other would rise with me, I would take a sword and go out and slay the first Spaniard I met, and again another, until I was killed."

"Bravo, Ned! Well spoken, lad!" three or four of the captains said; but his father shook his head.

"Those are the words of hot youth, Ned; and were

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you living there you would do as others—keep quiet till the executioners came to drag you away, seeing that did you, as you say you would, use a knife against a Spaniard, it would give the butchers a pretext for the slaughtering of hundreds of innocent people."

The lad looked down abashed at the reproof, then he said:

"Well, father, if I could not rise in arms or slay a Spaniard and then be killed, I would leave my home and join the sea beggars under La Marck."

"There is more reason in that," his father replied; "though La Marck is a ferocious noble, and his followers make not very close inquiry whether the ships they attack are Spanish or those of other people. Still it is hard for a man to starve; and when time passes and they can light upon no Spanish merchantmen, one cannot blame them too sorely if they take what they require out of some other passing ship. But there is reason at the bottom of what you say. Did the men of the sea-coast, seeing that their lives and those of their families are now at the mercy of the Spaniards, take to their ships with those dear to them and continually harass the Spaniards, they could work them great harm, and it would need a large fleet to overpower them, and that with great difficulty, seeing that they know the coast and all the rivers and channels, and could take refuge in shallows where the Spaniards could not follow them. At present it seems to me the people are in such depths of despair that they have not heart for any such enterprise. But I believe that some day or other the impulse will be given—some more wholesale butchery than usual will goad them to madness, or the words of some patriot wake them into action, and then they will rise as one man and fight until utterly destroyed, for that they can in the

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end triumph over Spain is more than any human being can hope."

"Then they must be speedy about it, friend Martin," another said. "They say that eighty thousand have been put to death one way or another since Alva came into his government. Another ten years and there will be scarce an able-bodied man remaining in the Low Country. By the way, you were talking of the beggars of the sea. Their fleet is lying at present at Dover, and it is said that the Spanish ambassador is making grave complaints to the queen on the part of his master against giving shelter to these men, whom he brands as not only enemies of Spain, but as pirates and robbers of the sea."

"I was talking with Master Sheepshanks," another mariner put in, "whose ships I sailed for thirty years, and who is an alderman and knows what is going on, and he told me that from what he hears it is like enough that the queen will yield to the Spanish request. So long as she chooses to remain friends with Spain openly whatever her thoughts and opinions may be, she can scarcely allow her ports to be used by the enemies of Philip. It must go sorely against her high spirit; but till she and her council resolve that England shall brave the whole strength of Spain, she cannot disregard the remonstrances of Philip. It is a bad business, neighbors, a bad business; and the sooner it comes to an end the better. No one doubts that we shall have to fight Spain one of these days, and I say that it were better to fight while our brethren of the Low Countries can fight by our side, than to wait till Spain, having exterminated them, can turn the whole power against us."

There was a general chorus of assent, and then the subject changed to the rate of freight to the northern

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ports. The grievous need for the better marking of shallows and dangers, the rights of seamen, wages, and other matters, were discussed until the assembly broke up. Ned's sisters joined him in the garden.

"I hear, Constance," the boy said to the elder, "there has been no news from our grandfather and uncles since we have been away."

"No word whatever, Ned. Our mother does not say much, but I know she is greatly troubled and anxious about it."

"That she may well be, Constance, seeing neither quiet conduct nor feebleness nor aught else avail to protect any from the rage of the Spaniards. You who stay at home here only hear general tales of the cruelties done across the sea, but if you heard the tales that we do at their ports they would drive you almost to madness. Not that we hear much, for we have to keep on board our ships, and may not land or mingle with the people; but we learn enough from the merchants who come on board to see about the landing of their goods to make our blood boil. They do right to prevent our landing; for so fired is the sailor's blood by these tales of massacre, that were they to go ashore they would, I am sure, be speedily embroiled with the Spaniards.

"You see how angered these friends of our father are who are Englishmen, and have no Dutch blood in their veins, and who feel only because they are touched by these cruelties, and because the people of the Low Country are Protestants; but with us it is different, our mother is one of these persecuted people, and we belong to them as much as to England. We have friends and relations there who may, for aught we know, have already fallen victims to the cruelty of the

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Spaniards. Had I my will I would join the beggars of the sea, or I would ship with Drake or Cavendish and fight the Spaniards in the Indian seas. They say that there Englishmen are proving themselves better men than these haughty dons."

"It is very sad," Constance said; "but what can be done?"

"Something must be done soon," Ned replied gloomily. "Things cannot go on as they are. So terrible is the state of things, so heavy the taxation, that in many towns all trade is suspended. In Brussels, I hear, Alva's own capital, the brewers have refused to brew, the bakers to bake, the tapsters to draw liquors. The city swarms with multitudes of men thrown out of employment. The Spanish soldiers themselves have long been without pay, for Alva thinks of nothing but bloodshed. Consequently, they are insolent to their officers, care little for order, and insult and rob the citizens in the streets. Assuredly something must come of this ere long; and the people's despair will become a mad fury. If they rise, Constance, and my father does not say nay, I will assuredly join them and do my best.

"I do not believe that the queen will forbid her subjects to give their aid to the people of the Netherlands; for she allowed many to fight in France for Condé and the Protestants against the Guises, and she will surely do the same now, since the sufferings of our brothers in the Netherlands have touched the nation far more keenly than did those of the Huguenots in France. I am sixteen now, and my father says that in another year he will rate me as his second mate, and methinks that there are not many men on board who can pull more strongly a rope, or work more stoutly at the capstan when we heave our anchor. Besides, as we all

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talk Dutch as well as English, I should be of more use than men who know naught of the language of the country."

Constance shook her head. "I do not think, Ned, that our father would give you leave, at any rate not until you have grown up into a man. He looks to having you with him, and to your succeeding him some day in the command of the Good Venture, while he remains quietly at home with our mother."

Ned agreed with a sigh. "I fear that you are right, Constance, and that I shall have to stick to my trade of sailoring; but if the people of the Netherlands rise against their tyrants, it would be hard to be sailing backward and forward doing a peaceful trade between London and Holland while our friends and relatives are battling for their lives."

A fortnight later, the Good Venture filled up her hold with a cargo for Brill, a port where the united Rhine, Waal and Maas flow into the sea. On the day before she sailed a proclamation was issued by the queen forbidding any of her subjects to supply De la Marck and his sailors with meat, bread or beer. The passage down the river was slow, for the winds were contrary, and it was ten days afterwards, the 31st of March, when they entered the broad mouth of the river and dropped anchor off the town of Brill. It was late in the evening when they arrived. In the morning an officer came off to demand the usual papers and documents, and it was not until nearly two o'clock that a boat came out with the necessary permission for the ship to warp up to the wharves and discharge her cargo.

Just as Captain Martin was giving the order for the cap[illegible]ans to be manned, a fleet of some t[illegible]nty-four

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ships suddenly appeared round the seaward point of the land.

"Wait a moment, lads," the captain said, "half an hour will make no great difference in our landing. We may as well wait and see what is the meaning of this fleet. They do not look to me to be Spaniards, nor seem to be a mere trading fleet. I should not wonder if they are the beggars of the sea, who have been forced to leave Dover, starved out from the effect of the queen's proclamation, and have now come here to pick up any Spaniard they may meet sailing out."

The fleet dropped anchor at about half a mile from the town. Just as they did so, a ferryman named Koppelstok, who was carrying passengers across from the town of Maaslandluis, a town on the opposite bank a mile and a half away, was passing close by the Good Venture.

"What think you of yon ships?" the ferryman shouted to Captain Martin.

"I believe they must be the beggars of the sea," the captain replied. "An order had been issued before I left London that they were not to be supplied with provisions, and they would therefore have had to put out from Dover. This may well enough be them."

An exclamation of alarm broke from the passengers, for the sea beggars were almost as much feared by their own countrymen as by the Spaniards, the latter having spared no pains in spreading tales to their disadvantage. As soon as the ferryman had landed his passengers he rowed boldly out toward the fleet, having nothing of which he could be plundered, and being secretly well disposed toward the beggars. The first ship he hailed was that commanded by William de Blois, Lord of Treslong, who was well known at Brill, where his father had at one time been governor.

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His brother had been executed by the Duke of Alva four years before, and he had himself fought by the side of Count Louis of Nassau, brother to the Prince of Orange, in the campaign that had terminated so disastrously, and though covered with wounds had been one of the few who had escaped from the terrible carnage that followed the defeat at Jemmingen. After that disaster he had taken to the sea, and was one of the most famous of the captains of De la Marck, who had received a commission of admiral from the Prince of Orange.

"We are starving, Koppelstok; can you inform us how we can get some food? We have picked up two Spanish traders on our way here from Dover, but our larders were emptied before we sailed, and we found but scant supply on board our prizes."

"There is plenty in the town of Brill," the ferryman said; "but none that I know of elsewhere. That English brig lying there at anchor may have a few loaves on board."

"That will not be much," William de Blois replied, "among five hundred men, still it will be better than nothing. Will you row and ask them if they will sell to us?"

"You had best send a strongly armed crew," Koppelstok replied. "You know the English are well disposed toward us, and the captain would doubtless give you all the provisions he had to spare; but to do so would be to ruin him with the Spaniards, who might confiscate his ship. It were best that you should make a show of force, so that he could plead that he did but yield to necessity."

Accordingly a boat with ten men rowed to the brig, Koppelstok accompanying it. The latter climbed on to the deck

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"We mean you no harm, captain," he said; "but the men on board these ships are well-nigh starving. The Sieur de Treslong has given me a purse to pay for all that you can sell us, but thinking that you might be blamed for having dealings with him by the authorities of the town, he sent these armed men with me in order that if questioned you could reply that they came forcibly on board."

"I will willingly let you have all the provisions I have on board," Captain Martin said; "though these will go but a little way among so many, seeing that I only carry stores sufficient for consumption on board during my voyages."

A cask of salt beef was hoisted up on deck, with a sack of biscuits, four cheeses, and a side of bacon. Captain Martin refused any payment.

"No," he said, "my wife comes from these parts, and my heart is with the patriots. Will you tell Sieur de Treslong that Captain Martin of the Good Venture is happy to do the best in his power for him and his brave followers. That, Ned," he observed, turning to his son as the boat rowed away, "is a stroke of good policy. The value of the goods is small, but just at this moment they are worth much to those to whom I have given them. In the first place, you see, we have given aid to the good cause, in the second we have earned the gratitude of the beggars of the sea, and I shall be much more comfortable if I run among them in the future than I should have done in the past. The freedom to come and go without molestation by the sea beggars is cheaply purchased at the price of provisions which do not cost many crowns."

On regaining the Sieur de Treslong's ship some of the provisions were at once served out among the men, and

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the rest sent off among other ships, and William de Blois took Koppelstok with him on board the admiral's vessel.

"Well, De Blois, what do you counsel in this extremity?" De la Marck asked.

"I advise," the Lord of Treslong replied, "that we at once send a message to the town demanding its surrender."

"Are you joking or mad, Treslong?" the admiral asked in surprise. "Why we can scarce muster four hundred men, and the town is well walled and fortified."

"There are no Spanish troops here, admiral, and if we put a bold front on the matter we may frighten the burghers into submission. This man says he would be willing to carry the summons. He says the news as to who we are has already reached them by some passengers he landed before he came out, and he doubts not they are in a rare panic."

"Well, we can try," the admiral said, laughing; "it is clear we must eat, even if we have to fight for it; and hungry as we all are, we do not want to wait."

Treslong gave his ring to Koppelstok to show as his authority, and the fisherman at once rowed ashore. Stating that the beggars of the sea were determined to take the town, he made his way through the crowd of inhabitants who had assembled at the landing-place, and then pushed on to the town-hall, where the magistrates were assembled. He informed them that he had been sent by the Admiral of the Fleet and the Lord of Treslong, who was well known to them, to demand that two commissioners should be sent out to them on behalf of the city to confer with him. The only object of those who sent him was to free the land from the crushing taxes, and

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to overthrow the tyranny of Alva and the Spaniards. He was asked by the magistrates what force De la Marck had at his disposal, and replied carelessly that he could not say exactly, but that there might be five thousand in all.

This statement completed the dismay that had been caused at the arrival of the fleet. The magistrates agreed that it would be madness to resist, and determined to fly at once. With much difficulty two of them were persuaded to go out to the ship as deputies, and as soon as they set off most of the leading burghers prepared instantly for flight. The deputies on arriving on board were assured that no injury was intended to the citizens or private property, but only the overthrow of Alva's government, and two hours were given them to decide upon the surrender of the town.

During this two hours almost all the inhabitants left the town, taking with them their most valuable property. At the expiration of the time the beggars landed. A few of those remaining in the city made a faint attempt at resistance; but Treslong forced an entrance by the southern gate, and De la Marck made a bonfire against the northern gate and then battered it down with the end of an old mast. Thus the patriots achieved the capture of the first town, and commenced the long war that was to end only with the establishment of the Free Republic of the Netherlands. No harm was done to such of the inhabitants of the town as remained. The conquerors established themselves in the best of the deserted houses; they then set to work to plunder the churches. The altars and images were all destroyed; the rich furniture, the sacred vessels, and the gorgeous vestments were appropriated to private use. Thirteen unfortunates, among them some priests who had been

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unable to effect their escape, were seized and put to death by De la Marck.

He had received the strictest orders from the Prince of Orange to respect the ships of all neutral nations, and to behave courteously and kindly to all captives he might take. Neither of these injunctions were obeyed. De la Marck was a wild and sanguinary noble; he had taken a vow upon hearing of the death of his relative, the Prince of Egmont, who had been executed by Alva, that he would neither cut his hair nor his beard until that murder should be revenged, and had sworn to wreak upon Alva and upon Popery the deep vengeance that the nobles and peoples of the Netherlands owed them. This vow he kept to the letter, and his ferocious conduct to all priests and Spaniards who fell into his hands deeply sullied the cause for which he fought.

Upon the day after the capture of the city, the Good Venture went into the port. The inhabitants, as soon as they learned that the beggars of the sea respected the life and property of the citizens, returned in large numbers, and trade was soon re-established. Having taken the place, and secured the plunder of the churches and monasteries, De la Marck would have sailed away upon other excursions had not the Sieur de Treslong pointed out to him the importance of Brill to the cause, and persuaded him to hold the place until he heard from the Prince of Orange.

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CHAPTER II.

TERRIBLE NEWS.

A FEW days after Brill had been so boldly captured, Count Bossu advanced from Utrecht against it. The sea beggars, confident as they were as to their power of meeting the Spaniards on the seas, knew that on dry land they were no match for the well-trained pikemen; they therefore kept within the walls. A carpenter, however, belonging to the town, who had long been a secret partisan of the Prince of Orange, seized an axe, dashed into the water, and swam to the sluice and burst open the gates with a few sturdy blows. The sea poured in and speedily covered the land on the north side of the city.

The Spaniards advanced along the dyke to the southern gate, but the sea beggars had hastily moved most of the cannon on the wall to that point, and received the Spaniards with so hot a fire that they hesitated. In the meantime the Lord of Treslong and another officer had filled two boats with men and rowed out to the ships that had brought the enemy, cut some adrift, and set others on fire. The Spaniards at the southern gate lost heart; they were exposed to a hot fire, which they were unable to return. On one side they saw the water rapidly rising above the level of the dyke on which they stood, on the other they perceived their only means of retreat threatened. They turned, and in desperate haste retreated along the causeway now under water.

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In their haste many slipped off the road and were drowned, others fell and were smothered in the water, and the rest succeeded in reaching such of the vessels as were still untouched, and with all speed returned to Utrecht.

From the highest point of the masts to which they could climb, Captain Martin, Ned and the crew watched the struggle. Ned had begged his father to let him go along the walls to the south gate to see the conflict, but Captain Martin refused.

"We know not what the upshot of the business may be," he said. "If the Spaniards, which is likely enough, take the place, they will slaughter all they meet, and will not trouble themselves with questioning any one whether he is a combatant or a spectator. Besides, when they have once taken the town, they will question all here, and it would be well that I should be able to say that not only did we hold ourselves neutral in the affair, but that none of my equipage had set foot on shore to-day. Lastly, it is my purpose and hope if the Spaniards capture the place, to take advantage of the fact that all will be absorbed in the work of plunder, and to slip my hawsers and make off. Wind and tide are both favorable, and doubtless the crews of their ships will, for the most part, land to take part in the sack as soon as the town is taken."

However, as it turned out, there was no need of these precautions; the beggars were victorious and the Spaniards in full flight, and great was the rejoicing in Brill at this check which they had inflicted upon their oppressors.

Bossu, retiring from Brill, took his way toward Rotterdam. He found its gates closed; the authorities refused to submit to his demands or to admit a garrison.

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They declared they were perfectly loyal, and needed no body of Spanish troops to keep them in order. Bossu requested permission for his troops to pass through the city without halting. This was granted by the magistrates on condition that only a corporal's company should be admitted at a time. Bossu signed an agreement to this effect. But throughout the whole trouble the Spaniards never once respected the conditions they had made and sworn to with the inhabitants, and no sooner were the gates opened than the whole force rushed in, and the usual work of slaughter, atrocity, and plunder commenced. Within a few minutes four hundred citizens were murdered, and countless outrages and cruelties perpetrated upon the inhabitants.

Captain Martin completed the discharging of his cargo two days after Bossu made his ineffectual attempt upon the town. A messenger had arrived that morning from Flushing, with news that as soon as the capture of Brill had become known in that seaport, the Seigneur de Herpt had excited the burghers to drive the small Spanish garrison from the town.

Scarcely had they done so when a large reinforcement of the enemy arrived before the walls, having been despatched there by Alva, to complete the fortress that had been commenced to secure the possession of this important port at the mouth of the Western Scheldt. Herpt persuaded the burghers that it was too late to draw back now. They had done enough to draw the vengeance of the Spaniards upon them; their only hope now was to resist to the last. A half-witted man in the crowd offered, if any one would give him a pot of beer to ascend the ramparts and fire two pieces of artillery at the Spanish ships.

The offer was accepted, and the man ran up to the

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ramparts and discharged the guns. A sudden panic seized the Spaniards, and the whole fleet sailed away at once in the direction of Middelburg.

The governor of the island next day arrived at Flushing and was at once admitted. He called the citizens together to the market-place and there addressed them, beseeching them to return to their allegiance, assuring them that if they did so the king, who was the best-natured prince in all Christendom, would forget and forgive their offenses. The effect of the governor's oratory was sadly marred by the interruptions of De Herpt and his adherents, who reminded the people of the fate that had befallen other towns that had revolted, and scoffed at such good nature as the king displayed in the scores of executions daily taking place throughout the country.

The governor, finding his efforts unavailing, had left the town, and as soon as he did so the messenger was sent off to Brill, saying that the inhabitants of Flushing were willing to provide arms and ammunition if they would send them men experienced in partisan warfare. Two hundred of the beggars, under the command of Treslong, accordingly started the next day for Flushing. The Good Venture threw off her hawsers from the wharf at about the same time that these were starting, and for some time kept company with them.

"Did one ever see such a wild crew?" Captain Martin said, shaking his head. "Never, I believe, did such a party set out upon a warlike adventure."

The appearance of Treslong's followers was indeed extraordinary. Every man was attired in the gorgeous vestments of the plundered churches—in gold and embroidered cassocks, glittering robes, or the somber cowls and garments of Capuchin friars. As they sailed along

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their wild sea songs rose in the air, mingled with shouts for vengeance on the Spaniards and the Papacy.

"One would not think that this ribald crew could fight," Captain Martin went on; "but there is no doubt they will do so. They must not be blamed altogether; they are half maddened by the miseries and cruelties endured by their friends and relations at the hands of the Spaniards. I knew that when at last the people rose the combat would be a terrible one, and that they would answer cruelty by cruelty, blood by blood. The Prince of Orange, as all men know, is one of the most clement and gentle of rulers. All his ordinances enjoin gentle treatment of prisoners, and he has promised every one over and over again complete toleration in the exercise of religion; but though he may forgive and forget, the people will not.

"It is the Catholic church that has been their oppressor. In its name tens of thousands have been murdered, and I fear that the slaughter of those priests at Brill is but the first of a series of bloody reprisals that will take place wherever the people get the upper hand."

A fresh instance of this was shown a few hours after the Good Venture put into Flushing. A ship arrived in port, bringing with it Pacheco, the Duke of Alva's chief engineer, an architect of the highest reputation. He had been despatched by the duke to take charge of the new works that the soldiers had been sent to execute, and ignorant of what had taken place he landed at the port. He was at once seized by the mob. An officer, willing to save his life, took him from their hands and conducted him to the prison; but the populace were clamorous for his blood, and Treslong was willing enough to satisfy them and to avenge upon

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Alva's favorite officer the murder of his brother by Alva's orders. The unfortunate officer was therefore condemned to be hung, and the sentence was carried into effect the same day.

A few days later an officer named Zeraerts arrived at Flushing with a commission from the Prince of Orange as Governor of the Island of Walcheren. He was attended by a small body of French infantry, and the force under his command speedily increased; for as soon as it was known in England that Brill and Flushing had thrown off the authority of the Spaniards, volunteers from England began to arrive in considerable numbers to aid their fellow-Protestants in the struggle before them.

The Good Venture had stayed only a few hours in Flushing. In the present condition of affairs there was no chance of obtaining a cargo there, and Captain Martin therefore thought it better not to waste time, but to proceed at once to England in order to learn the intention of the merchants for whom he generally worked as to what could be done under the changed state of circumstances that had arisen.

Every day brought news of the extension of the rising. The Spanish troops lay for the most part in Flanders, and effectually deterred the citizens of the Flemish towns from revolting; but throughout Holland, Zeeland and Friesland the flame of revolt spread rapidly. The news that Brill and Flushing had thrown off the Spanish yoke fired every heart. It was the signal for which all had been so long waiting. They knew how desperately Spain would strive to regain her grip upon the Netherlands, how terrible would be her vengeance if she conquered; but all felt that it was better to die sword in hand than to be murdered piecemeal. And

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accordingly town after town rose, expelled the authorities appointed by Spain and the small Spanish garrisons, and in three months after the rising of Brill the greater part of the maritime provinces were free. Some towns, however, still remained faithful to Spain. Prominent among these was Amsterdam, a great trading city, which feared the ruin that opposition to Alva might bring upon it, more than the shame of standing aloof when their fellow-countrymen were fighting for freedom and the right to worship God in their own way.

On the 23d of May, Louis of Nassau, with a body of troops from France, captured the important town of Mons by surprise, but was at once beleaguered there by a Spanish army. In June the States of Holland assembled at Dort and formally renounced the authority of the Duke of Alva, and declared the Prince of Orange, the royally-appointed stadtholder, the only legal representative of the Spanish crown in their country; and in reply to an eloquent address of Sainte Aldegonde, the prince's representative, voted a considerable sum of money for the payment of the army the prince was raising in Germany. On the 19th of June a serious misfortune befell the patriot cause. A reinforcement of Huguenot troops, on the way to succor the garrison of Mons, were met and cut to pieces by the Spaniards, and Count Louis, who had been led by the French king to expect ample succor and assistance from him, was left to his fate.

On the 7th of July the Prince of Orange crossed the Rhine with fourteen thousand foot and seven thousand horse. He advanced but a short distance when the troops mutinied in consequence of their pay being in arrears, and he was detained four weeks until the cities of Holland guaranteed their payment for three months.

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A few cities opened their gates to him, but they were for the most part unimportant places, and Mechlin was the only large town that admitted his troops. Still he pressed on toward Mons, expecting daily to be joined by twelve thousand French infantry and three thousand cavalry under the command of Admiral Coligny.

The prince, who seldom permitted himself to be sanguine, believed that the goal of his hopes was reached, and that he should now be able to drive the Spaniards from the Netherlands. But as he was marching forward he received tidings that showed him that all his plans were shattered, and that the prospects were darker than they had ever before been. While the King of France had throughout been encouraging the revolted Netherlands, and had authorized his minister to march with an army to their assistance, he was preparing for a deed that would be the blackest in history, were it not that its horrors are less appalling than those inflicted upon the captured cities of the Netherlands by Alva. On St. Bartholomew's eve there was a general massacre of the Protestants in Paris, followed by similar massacres throughout France, the number of victims being variously estimated at from twenty-five to a hundred thousand.

Protestant Europe was filled with horror at this terrible crime. Philip of Spain was filled with equal delight. Not only was the danger that seemed to threaten him in the Netherlands at once and forever, as he believed, at an end, but he saw in this destruction of the Protestants of France a great step in the direction he had so much at heart—the entire extirpation of heretics throughout Europe. He wrote letters of the warmest congratulation to the King of France, with whom he had formerly been at enmity; while the pope, accompanied by his

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cardinals, went to the church of St. Mark to render thanks to God for the grace thus singularly vouchsafed to the Holy See and to all Christendom.

To the Prince of Orange the news came as a thunderclap. His troops wholly lost heart, and refused to keep the field. The prince himself almost lost his life at the hands of the mutineers, and at last, crossing the Rhine, he disbanded his army and went almost alone to Holland to share the fate of the provinces that adhered to him. He went there expecting and prepared to die. "There I will make my sepulcher," was his expression in the letter in which he announced his intention to his brother. Count Louis of Nassau had now nothing left before him but to surrender. His soldiers, almost entirely French, refused any longer to resist, now that the king had changed his intentions, and the city was surrendered, the garrison being allowed to retire with their weapons.

The terms of the capitulation were so far respected; but instead of the terms respecting the townspeople being adhered to, a council of blood was set up, and for many months from ten to twenty of the inhabitants were hanged, burned, or beheaded every day. The news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, of the treachery of the King of France toward the inhabitants of the Netherlands, and of the horrible cruelties perpetrated upon the inhabitants of Mechlin and other towns that had opened their gates to the Prince of Orange, excited the most intense indignation among the people of England.

The queen put on mourning, but was no more inclined than before to render any really efficient aid to the Netherlands. She allowed volunteers to pass over, furnished some meager sums of money, but held aloof from any open participation in the war; for if before, when France was supposed to be favorable to the Netherlands

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and hostile to Spain, she felt unequal to a war with the latter power, still less could she hope to cope with Spain when the deed of St. Bartholomew had re-united the two Catholic monarchs.

Captain Martin, married to a native of the Netherlands, and mixing constantly with the people in his trade, was naturally ardent, even beyond the majority of his countrymen, in their cause, and over and over again declared that were he sailing by when a sea-fight was going on between the Dutch and the Spaniards, he would pull down his English flag, hoist that of Holland, and join in the fray; and Ned, as was to be expected, shared to the utmost his father's feelings on the subject. Early in September the Good Venture started with a cargo for Amsterdam, a city that almost alone in Holland adhered to the Spanish cause.

Sophie Martin was pleased when she heard that this was the ship's destination; for she was very anxious as to the safety of her father and brothers, from whom she had not heard for a long time. Postage was dear and mails irregular. Few letters were written or received by people in England, still more seldom letters sent across the sea. There would, therefore, under the ordinary circumstances, have been no cause whatever for uneasiness had years elasped without news coming from Amsterdam; and, indeed, during her whole married life Sophie Martin had only received one or two letters by post from her former home, although many communications had been brought by friends of her husband's trading there. But as many weeks seldom passed without the Good Venture herself going into Amsterdam, for that town was one of the great trading centers of Holland, there was small occasion for letters to pass. It happened, however, that from one cause or another,

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eighteen months had passed since Captain Martin's business had taken him to that port, and no letter had come either by post or hand during that time.

None who had friends in the Netherlands could feel assured that these must, either from their station or qualities, be safe from the storm that was sweeping over the country. The poor equally with the rich, the artisan equally with the noble, was liable to become a victim of Alva's Council of Blood. The net was drawn so as to catch all classes and conditions; and although it was upon the Protestants that his fury chiefly fell, the Catholics suffered too, for pretexts were always at hand upon which these could also be condemned.

The Netherlands swarmed with spies and informers, and a single unguarded expression of opinion was sufficient to send a man to the block. And, indeed, in a vast number of cases, private animosity was the cause of the denunciation; for any accusation could be safely made where there was no trial and the victims were often in complete ignorance as to the nature of the supposed crime for which they were seized and dragged away to execution.

When the vessel sailed Sophie Martin gave her husband a letter to her father and brothers, begging them to follow the example of thousands of their countrymen, and to leave the land where life and property were no longer safe, and to come over to London. They would have no difficulty in procuring work there, and could establish themselves in business and do as well as they had been doing at home.

They had, she knew, money laid by in London; for after the troubles began her father had sold off the houses and other property he had purchased with his savings, and had transmitted the result to England by her hus

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band, who had intrusted it for investment to a leading citizen with whom he did business. As this represented not only her father's accumulations but those of her brothers who worked as partners with him, it amounted to a sum that in those days was regarded as considerable.

"I feel anxious, Ned," Captain Martin said as he sailed up the Zuider-Zee toward the city, "as to what has befallen your grandfather and uncles. I have always made the best of the matter to your mother, but I cannot conceal from myself that harm may have befallen them. It is strange that no message has come to us through any of our friends trading with the town, for your uncles know many of my comrades and can see their names in the shipping lists when they arrive. They would have known how anxious your mother would be at the news of the devil's work that is going on here, and, being always tender and thoughtful for her, would surely have sent her news of them from time to time as they had a chance. I sorely fear that something must have happened. Your uncles are prudent men, going about their work and interfering with none; but they are men, too, who speak their mind, and would not, like many, make a false show of affection when they feel none.

"Well, well; we shall soon know. As soon as the ship is moored and my papers are declared in order, you and I will go over to Voordwyk and see how they are faring. I think not that they will follow your mother's advice and sail over with us; for it was but the last time I saw them that they spoke bitterly against the emigrants, and said that every man who could bear arms should, however great his danger, wait and bide the time until there was a chance to strike for his religion and country. They are sturdy men these Dutchmen,

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and not readily turned from an opinion they have taken up, and although I shall do my best to back up your mother's letter by my arguments, I have but small hope that I shall prevail with them."

In the evening they were moored alongside the quays of Amsterdam, at that time one of the busiest cities in Europe. Its trade was great, the wealth of its citizens immense. It contained a large number of monasteries, its authorities were all Catholics and devoted to the cause of Spain, and although there were a great many well-wishers to the cause of freedom within its walls, these were powerless to take action, and the movement which after the capture of Brill and Flushing, had caused almost all the towns of Holland to declare for the Prince of Orange, found no echo in Amsterdam. The vessel anchored outside the port, and the next morning, after their papers were examined and found in order, she ranged up alongside the crowded tiers of shipping. Captain Martin went on shore with Ned, visited the merchants to whom his cargo was consigned, and told them that he should begin to unload the next day.

He then started with Ned to walk to Vordwyk, which lay two miles away. On reaching the village they stopped suddenly. The roof of the house they had so often visited was gone, its walls blackened by fire. After the first exclamation of surprise and regret they walked forward until opposite the ruin, and stood gazing at it. Then Captain Martin stepped up to a villager, who was standing at the door of his shop, and asked him when did this happen, what had become of the old man Plomaert?

"You are his son-in-law, are you not?" the man asked in reply. "I have seen you here at various times." Captain Martin nodded. The man looked round cau-

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tiously to see that none were within sound of his voice.

"You have not heard then?" he said. "It was a terrible business, though we are growing used to it now. One day, it is some eight months since, a party of soldiers came from Amsterdam and hauled away my neighbor Plomaert and his three sons. They were denounced as having attended the field preaching a year ago, and you know what that means."

"And the villains murdered them?" Captain Martin asked in horror-stricken tones.

The man nodded. "They were hung together next day, together with Gertrude, the wife of the eldest brother. Johan was, as you know, unmarried. Elizabeth, the wife of Louis, lay ill at the time, or doubtless she would have fared the same as the rest. She has gone with her two daughters to Haarlem where her family live. All their property was, of course, seized and confiscated, and the house burned down; for, as you know, they all lived together. Now, my friend, I will leave yu. I dare not ask you in for I know not who may be watching us, and to entertain even the brother-in-law of men who have been sent to the gallows might well cost a man his life in our days."

Then Captain Martin's grief and passion found vent in words, and he roundly cursed the Spaniards and their works, regardless of who might hear him; then he entered the garden, visited the summer-house where he had so often talked with the old man and his sons, and then sat down and gave full vent to his grief. Ned felt almost stunned by the news; being so often away at sea he had never given the fact that so long a time had elapsed since his mother had received a letter from her family much thought. It had, indeed been mentioned

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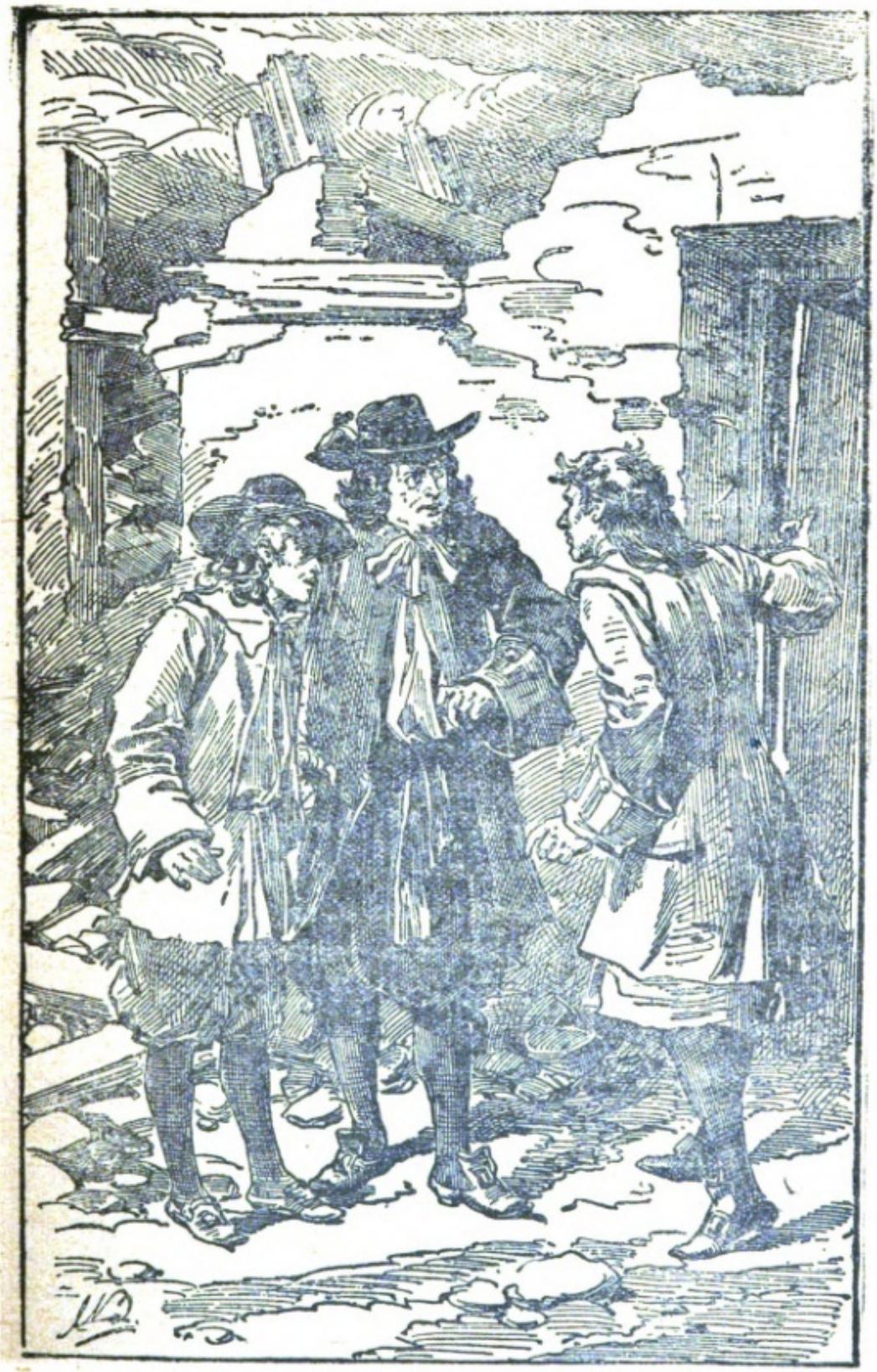

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before him; but, knowing the disturbed state of the country, it had seemed to him natural enough that his uncles should have had much to think of and trouble them, and might well have no time for writing letters. His father's words the evening before had for the first time excited a feeling of real uneasiness about them, and the shock caused by the sight of the ruined house, and the news that his grandfather, his three uncles, and one of his aunts, had been murdered by the Spaniards, completely overwhelmed him.

"Let us be going, Ned," his father said at last; "there is nothing for us to do here; let us get back to our ship. I am a peaceable man, Ned, but I feel now as if I could join the beggars of the sea, and go with them in slaying every Spaniard who fell into their hands. This will be terrible news for your mother, lad."

"It will indeed," Ned replied. "Oh, father, I wish you would let me stay here and join the prince's bands and fight for their freedom. There were English volunteers coming out to Brill and Flushing when we sailed from the Thames, and if they come to fight for Holland who have no tie in blood, why should not I who am Dutch by my mother's side and whose relations have been murdered?"

"We will talk of it later on, Ned," his father said. "You are young yet for such rough work as this, and this is no common war. There is no quarter given here, it is a fight to the death. The Spaniards slaughter the Protestants like wild beasts, and like wild beasts they will defend themselves. But if this war goes on till you have gained your full strength and sinew I will not say you may. As you say, our people at home are ready to embark in a war for the cause of liberty and religion, did the queen but give the word; and when others,

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fired solely by horror at the Spaniards' cruelty, are ready to come over here and throw in their lot with them, it seems to me that it will be but right that you, who are half Dutch and have had relatives murdered by these fiends, should come over and side with the oppressed. If there is fighting at sea, it may be that I myself will take part with them, and place the Good Venture at the service of the Prince of Orange. But of that we will talk later on, as also about yourself. When you are eighteen you will still be full young for such work."

As they talked they were walking fast toward Amsterdam. "We will go straight on board, Ned; and I will not put my foot ashore again before we sail. I do not think that I could trust myself to meet a Spaniard now, but should draw my knife and rush upon him. I have known that these things happened, we have heard of these daily butcherings, but it has not come home to me as now, when our own friends are the victims."

Entering the gate of the town they made their way straight down to the port, and were soon on board the Good Venture where Captain Martin retired to his cabin. Ned felt too restless and excited to go down at present; but he told the crew what had happened, and the exclamations of anger among the honest sailors were loud and deep. Most of them had sailed with Captain Martin ever since he had commanded the Good Venture, and had seen the Plomaerts when they had come on board whenever the vessel put in at Amsterdam. The fact that there was nothing to do, and no steps to take to revenge the murders, angered them all the more.

"I would we had twenty ships like our own, Master Ned," one of them said. "That would give us four hundred men, and with those we could go ashore and

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hang the magistrates and the councilors and all who had a hand in this foul business, and set their public buildings in a flame, and then fight our way back again to the port."

"I am afraid four hundred men would not be able to do it here as they did at Brill. There was no Spanish garrison there, and here they have a regiment; and though the Spaniards seem to have the hearts of devils rather than men, they can fight."

"Well, we would take our chance," the sailor replied. "If there was four hundred of us, and the captain gave the word, we would show them what English sailors could do, mates—wouldn't we?"

"Ay, that would we," the others growled in a chorus.

The next morning the work of unloading began. The sailors worked hard; for, as one of them said, "This place seems to smell of blood—let's be out of it, mates, as soon as we can." At four in the afternoon a lad of about Ned's age came on board. He was the son of the merchant to whom the larger part of the cargo of the Good Venture was consigned.

"I have a letter that my father charged me to give into your hands, Captain Martin. He said that the matter was urgent, and begged me to give it you in your cabin. He also told me to ask when you think your hold will be empty, as he has goods for you for the return voyage."

"We shall be well-nigh empty by to-morrow night," Captain Martin said, as he led the way to his cabin in the poop. "The men have been working faster than usual, for it generally takes us three days to unload."

"I do not think my father cared about that," the lad said when he entered the cabin; "it was but an excuse for my coming down here, and he gave me the message

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before all the other clerks. But methinks that the letter is the real object of my coming."

Captain Martin opened the letter. Thanks to his preparation for taking his place in his father's business, he had learned to read and write; accomplishments by no means general among sea-captains of the time.

"It is important, indeed," he said, as he glanced through the letter. It ran as follows: "Captain Martin—A friend of mine, who is one of the council here, has just told me that at the meeting this afternoon a denunciation was laid against you for having publicly, in the street of Vordwyk, cursed and abused his majesty the King of Spain, the Duke of Alva, the Spaniards, and the Catholic religion. Some were of opinion that you should at once be arrested on board your ship, but others thought that it were better to wait and seize you the first time you came on shore, as it might cause trouble, were you taken from under the protection of the British flag. On shore, they urged, no question could arise, especially as many English have now, although the two nations are at peace, openly taken service under the Prince of Orange.

"I have sent to tell you this, though at no small risk to myself were it discovered that I had done so; but as we have had dealings for many years together, I think it right to warn you. I may say that the counsel of those who were for waiting prevailed; but if, after a day or two, they find that you do not come ashore, I fear they will not hesitate to arrest you on your own vessel. Please to destroy this letter at once after you have read it, and act as seems best to you under the circumstances. I send this to you by my son's hand, for there are spies everywhere, and in these days one can trust no one."

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"I am much obliged to you, young sir, for bringing me this letter. Will you thank your father from me, and say that I feel deeply indebted to him, and will think over how I can best escape from this strait. Give him the message from me before others, that I shall be empty and ready to receive goods by noon on the day after to-morrow."

When the lad had left, Captain Martin called in Ned and William Peters, his first mate, and laid the case before them.

"It is an awkward business, Captain Martin," Peters said. "You sha'n't be arrested on board the Good Venture, as long as there is a man on board can wield a cutlass; but I don't know whether that would help you in the long run."

"Not at all, Peters. We might beat off the first party that came to take me, but it would not be long before they brought up a force against which we should stand no chance whatever. No, it is not by fighting that there is any chance of escape. It is evident by this that I am safe for to-morrow; they will wait at least a day to see if I go ashore, which indeed they will make certain I shall do sooner or later. As far as my own safety is concerned and that of Ned here, who, as he was with me, is doubtless included in the denunciation, it is easy enough. We have only to get into the boat after dark, to muffle the oars, and to row for Haarlem, which lies but ten miles away, and has declared for the Prince of Orange. But I do not like to leave the ship, for if they found us gone they might seize and declare it confiscated. And although when we got back to England, we might lay a complaint before the queen, there would be no chance of our getting the ship or her value from the Spaniards. There are so

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many causes of complaint between the two nations, that the seizure of a brig would make no difference one way or another. The question is, could we get her out?"

"It would be no easy matter," Peters said, shaking his head. "That French ship that came in this afternoon has taken up a berth outside us, and there would be no getting out until she moved out of the way. If she were not there it might be tried, though it would be difficult to do so without attracting attention. As for the Spanish war vessels, of which there are four in the port, I should not fear them if we once got our sails up, for the Venture can sail faster than these lubberly Spaniards; but they would send row-boats after us, and unless the wind was strong these would speedily overhaul us."

"Well, I must think it over," Captain Martin said. "I should be sorry indeed to lose my ship, which would be well-nigh ruin to me, but if there is no other way we must make for Haarlem by boat."

The next day the work of unloading continued. In the afternoon the captain of the French ship lying outside them came on board. He had been in the habit of trading with Holland, and addressed Captain Martin in Dutch.

"Are you likely to be lying here long?" he asked. "I want to get my vessel alongside the wharf as soon as I can, for it is slow work unloading into these lighters. There are one or two ships going out in the morning, but I would rather have got in somewhere about this point if I could, for the warehouses of Mynheer Strous, to whom my goods are consigned, lie just opposite."

"Will you come down into my cabin and have a glass

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of wine with me," Captain Martin said, "and then we can talk it over?"

Captain Martin discovered, without much trouble, that the French captain was a Huguenot, and that his sympathies were all with the people of the Netherlands.

"Now," he said, "I can speak freely to you. I was ashore the day before yesterday, and learned that my wife's father, her three brothers and one of their wives have been murdered by the Spaniards. Well, you can understand that in my grief and rage I cursed the Spaniards and their doings. I have learned that some spy has denounced me, and that they are only waiting for me to set foot on shore to arrest me, and you know what will come after that; for at present, owing to the volunteers that have come over to Brill and Flushing, the Spaniards are furious against the English. They would rather take me on shore than on board, but if they find that I do not land they will certainly come on board for me. They believe that I shall not be unloaded until noon to-morrow, and doubtlessly expect that as soon as the cargo is out I shall land to arrange for a freight to England. Therefore, until to-morrow afternoon I am safe, but no longer. Now, I am thinking of trying to get out quietly to-night; but to do so it is necessary that you should shift your berth a ship's length one way or the other. Will you do this for me?"

"Certainly I will, with pleasure," the captain replied. "I will give orders at once."

"No, that will never do," Captain Martin said. "They are all the more easy about me because they know that as long as your ship is there I cannot get out, but if they saw you shifting your berth it would strike them at once that I might be intending to slip away. You must wait until it gets perfectly dark, and then

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throw off your warps and slacken out your cable as silently as possible, and let her drop down so as to leave me an easy passage. As soon as it is dark I will grease all my blocks, and when everything is quiet try to get her out. What wind there is is from the southwest, which will take us well down the Zuider-Zee."

"I hope you may succeed," the French captain said.

"Once under sail you would be safe from their warships, for you would be two or three miles away before they could manage to get up their sails. The danger lies in their rowboats and galleys."

"Well, well, we must risk it," Captain Martin said. "I shall have a boat alongside, and if I find the case is desperate we will take to it and row to the shore, and make our way to Haarlem, where we should be safe."

Ned, who had been keeping a sharp lookout all day, observed that two Spanish officials had taken up their station on the wharf, not far from the ship. They appeared to have nothing to do, and to be indifferent to what was going on. He told his father that he thought that they were watching. Presently the merchant himself came down to the wharf. He did not come on board, but spoke to Captain Martin as he stood on the deck of the vessel, so that all around could hear his words.

"How are you getting on, Captain Martin?" he asked in Dutch.

"Fairly well," Captain Martin replied. "I think if we push on we shall have her empty by noon to-morrow."

"I have a cargo to go back with you, you know," the merchant said, "and I shall want to see you at the office, if you will step round to-morrow after you have cleared."

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"All right, Mynheer, you may expect me about two o'clock. But you won't see me," he added to himself.

The merchant waved his hand and walked away, and a few minutes later the two officials also strolled off.

"That has thrown dust into their eyes," Captain Martin said, "and has made it safe for Strous. He will pretend to be as surprised as any one when he hears I have gone."

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CHAPTER III.

A FIGHT WITH THE SPANIARDS.

As soon as it became dark, and the wharves were deserted, Captain Martin sent two sailors aloft with grease pots, with orders that every block was to be carefully greased to ensure its running without noise. A boat which rowed six oars was lowered noiselessly into the water, and flannel was bound round the oars. The men who had been aware of the danger that threatened their captain, sharpened the pikes and axes, and declared to each other that whether the captain ordered it or not no Spaniards should set foot on board as long as one of them stood alive on the decks. The cook filled a great boiler with water and lighted a fire under it, and the carpenter heated a caldron of pitch without orders.

"What are you doing, Thompson?" the captain asked, noticing the glow of the fire as he came out of his cabin.

The sailor came aft before he replied, "I am just cooking up a little hot sauce for the dons, captain. We don't ask them to come, you know; but if they do, it's only right that we should entertain them."

"I hope there will be no fighting, lad," the captain said.

"Well, your honor, that ain't exactly the wish of me and my mates. After what we have been hearing of, we [illegible] as we sha'n't be happy until we have had a brush

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with them 'ere Spaniards. And as to fighting, your honor; from what we have heard, Captain Hawkins and others out in the Indian seas have been a-showing that though they may swagger on land that they ain't no match for an Englishman on the sea. Anyhow, your honor, we ain't going to stand by and see you and Master Ned carried away by these 'ere butchering Spaniards.

"We have all made up our minds that what happens to you happens to all of us. We have sailed together in this ship the Good Venture for the last seventeen or eighteen years, and we means to swim or sink together. No disrespect to you, captain; but that is the fixed intention of all of us. It would be a nice thing for us to sail back to the port of London and say as we stood by and saw our captain and his son carried off to be hung or burnt or what not by the Spaniards, and then sailed home to tell the tale. We don't mean no disrespect, captain, I says again; but in this 'ere business we take our orders from Mr. Peters, seeing that you being consarned, as it were, in the affair ain't to be considered as having, so to speak, a right judgment upon it."

"Well, well, we shall see if there is a chance of making a successful fight," Captain Martin said, unable to resist a smile from the sailor's way of putting it.

The night was dark, and the two or three oil lamps that hung suspended from some of the houses facing the port threw no ray of light which extended to the shipping. It was difficult to make out against the sky the outline of the masts of the French vessel lying some twenty yards away; but presently Ned's attention was called toward her by a slight splash of her cable. Then he heard the low rumble as the ropes ran out through the hawse-holes, and saw that the masts were slowly

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moving. In two or three minutes they had disappeared from his sight. He went into the cabin.

"The Frenchman has gone, father; and so noiselessly that I could hardly hear her. If we can get out as quietly there is but little fear of our being noticed."

"We cannot be as quiet as that, Ned. She has only to slack away her cables and drift with the tide that turned half an hour ago, we have got to tow out and set sail. However, the night is dark, the wind is off shore, and everything is in our favor. Do you see if there be any one about on the decks of the ships above and below us."

Ned went first on to the stern, and then to the bow. He could hear the voices of men talking and singing in the forecastles, but could hear no movement on the deck of either ship. He went down and reported to his father.

"Then, I think, we may as well start at once, Ned. There are still sounds and noises in the town, and any noise we may make is therefore less likely to be noticed than if we waited until everything was perfectly still."

The sailors were all ready. All were barefooted so as to move as noiselessly as possible. The four small cannon that the Good Venture carried had been loaded to the muzzle with bullets and pieces of iron. A search had been made below and several heavy lumps of stone, a part of the ballast carried on some former occasion, brought up and placed at intervals along the bulwarks. The pikes had been fastened by a loose lashing to the mast, and the axes leaned in readiness against the cannon.

"Now, Peters," Captain Martin said, "let the boat be manned. Do you send a man ashore to cast off the hawser at the bow. Let him take a line ashore with him

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so as to ease the hawser off and not let the end fall in the water. The moment he has done that let him come to the stern and get on board there, and do you and he get the plank on board as noiselessly as you can. As soon as the bow-hawser is on board I will give the men in the boat the word to row. Ned will be on board her, and see that they row in the right direction. The moment you have got the plank in get out your knife and cut the stern warp half through, and directly her head is out, and you feel the strain, sever it. The stern is so close to the wharf that the end will not be able to drop down into the water and make a splash."

Ned's orders were that as soon as the vessel's head pointed seaward he was to steer rather to the right, so as to prevent the stream, which, however, ran but feebly, from carrying her down on to the bows of the French ship. Once beyond the latter he was to go straight out, steering by the lights on shore. The men were enjoined to drop their oars as quietly as possible into the water at each stroke, and to row deeply, as having the vessel in tow they would churn up the water unless they did so. The boat rowed off a stroke or two, and then, as the rope tightened, the men sat quiet until Captain Martin was heard to give the order to row in a low tone; then they bent to their oars. Peters had chosen the six best rowers on board the ship for the purpose, and so quietly did they dip their oars in the water that Captain Martin could scarce hear the sound, and only knew by looking over the other side, and seeing that the shore was receding, that the ship was in motion. Two minutes later Peters came forward.

"I have cut the warp, Captain Martin, and she is moving out. I have left Watson at the helm." Scarce a word was spoken for the next five minutes. It was

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only by looking at the light ashore that they could judge the progress they were making. Every one breathed more freely now the first danger was over. They had got out from their berth without attracting the slightest notice, either from the shore or from the ships lying next to them. Their next danger was from the ships lying at anchor off the port waiting their turn to come in. Were they to run against one of these, the sound of the collision, and perhaps the breaking of spars and the shouts of the crew, would certainly excite attention from the sentries on shore.

So far the boat had been rowing but a short distance in advance of the end of the bowsprit, but Captain Martin now made his way out to the end of that spar, and told Ned that he was going to give him a good deal more rope in order that he might keep well ahead, and that he was to keep a sharp lookout for craft at anchor. Another quarter of an hour passed, and Captain Martin thought that they must now be beyond the line of the outer shipping. They felt the wind more now that they were getting beyond the shelter of the town, and its effect upon the hull and spars made the work lighter for those in the boat ahead.

"Now, Peters, I think that we can safely spread the foresail and call them in from the boat."

The sail had been already loosed and was now let fall; it bellied out at once.

"Haul in the sheets, lads," Captain Martin said, and going forward gave a low whistle. A minute later the boat was alongside. "Let her drop astern, Peters, the captain said, as Ned and the rowers clambered on board; "we may want her presently. Hullo! what's that? It's one of the guard-boats, I do believe, and coming this way." The men heard the sound of coming oars,

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and silently stole to the mast and armed themselves with the pikes, put the axes in their belts, and ranged themselves along by the side of the ship toward which the boat was approaching. "Will she go ahead of us or astern?" Captain Martin whispered to the mate.

"I cannot tell yet, sir. By the sound she seems making pretty nearly straight for us."

"How unfortunate," Captain Martin murmured; "just as it seemed that we were getting safely away."

In another minute the mate whispered, "She will go astern of us, sir, but not by much."

"I trust that she will not see us," the captain said. "But now we are away from the town and the lights, it doesn't seem so dark, besides their eyes are accustomed to it."

There was dead silence in the ship as the boat approached. She was just passing the stern at the distance of about a ship's length, when there was a sudden exclamation, and a voice shouted, "What ship is that? Where are you going?" Captain Martin replied in Dutch, "We are taking advantage of the wind to make to sea."

"Down with that sail, sir!" the officer shouted: "this is against all regulations. No ship is permitted to leave the port between sunrise and sunset. Pull alongside, lads; there is something strange about this!"

"Do not come alongside," Captain Martin said sternly. "We are peaceable traders who meddle with no one, but if you interfere with us it will be the worse for you."

"You insolent hound!" the officer exclaimed furiously, "do you dare to threaten me. Blow your matches, lads, and shoulder your arquebuses. There is treason and rebellion here."

Those on board saw six tiny sparks appear, two in the

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bow and four in the stern. A minute later the boat dashed alongside. As it did so three great pieces of stone were cast into it, knocking down two of the rowers.

"Fire!" the officer exclaimed as he sprang up to climb the ship's side. The six muskets were discharged, and the men rose to follow their leader, when there was a cry from the rowers, "The boat is sinking! She is staved in!"

At the same moment the officer fell back thrust through with a pike. Two of the soldiers were cut down with axes, the other sprang back into the sinking boat, which at once drifted astern.

"Up with her sails, lads!" Captain Martin shouted; "it is a question of speed now. The alarm is spread on shore already." The sentries on the various batteries were discharging their muskets and shouting, and the roll of a drum was heard almost immediately. The crew soon had every stitch of sail set upon the brig. She was moving steadily through the water; but the wind was still light, although occasionally a stronger puff gave ground for hope that it would ere long blow harder.

"They will be some time before they make out what it is all about, Peters," Captain Martin said. "The galleys will be manned, and will row to the spot where the firing was heard. Some of the men in the boat are sure to be able to swim, and will meet them as they come out and tell them what has happened. The worst of it is, the moon will be up in a few minutes. I forgot all about that. That accounts for its being lighter. However, we have got a good start. One or two guard-boats may be out here in a quarter of an hour, but it will take the galleys twice as long to gather their

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crews and get out. It all depends on the wind. It is lucky it is not light yet, or the batteries might open on us; I don't think now they will get sight of us until we are fairly out of range."

Now that there was no longer occasion for silence on board the Good Venture, the crew laughed and joked at the expense of the Spaniards. They were in high spirits at their success, and their only regret was that the brush with their pursuers had not been a more serious one. It was evident from the talk that there was quite as much hope as fear in the glances that they cast astern, and that they would have been by no means sorry to see a foe of about their own strength in hot pursuit of them. A quarter of an hour after the shattered boat had dropped astern the moon rose on the starboard-bow. It was three quarters full, and would assuredly reveal the ship to those on shore. Scarcely indeed did it show above the horizon when there was the boom of a gun astern, followed a second or two later by a heavy splash in the water close alongside.

"That was a good shot," Captain Martin said; "but luck rather than skill I fancy. There is little chance of their hitting us at this distance. We must be a mile and a half away; don't you think so, Peters?"

"Quite that, captain; and they must have given their gun a lot of elevation to carry so far. I almost wonder they wasted their powder."

"Of course they can't tell in the least who they are firing at," the captain said. "They cannot have learned anything yet, and can have only known that there was firing off the port, and that a craft is making out. We may be one of the sea beggars' vessels for anything they know, and may have come in to carry off a prize from under their very noses."

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"That is so," the mate replied; "but the gun may have been fired as a signal as much as with any hope of hitting us."

"So it may, so it may, Peters; I did not think of that. Certainly that is likely enough. We know they have several ships cruising in the Zuider-Zee keeping a lookout for the beggars. On a night like this, and with the wind astern, the sound will be heard miles away. We may have trouble yet. I was not much afraid of the galleys, for though the wind is so light we are running along famously. You see we have nothing in our hold; and that is all in our favor so long as we are dead before the wind. Besides, if the galleys did come up it would probably be singly, and we should be able to beat them off, for high out of water as we are they would find it difficult to climb the sides; but if we fall in with any of their ships it is a different matter altogether."

Four or five more shots were fired, but they all fell astern; and as they were fully two miles and a half away when the last gun was discharged, and the cannoneers must have known that they were far out of range, Captain Martin felt sure that the mate's idea was a correct one, and that the cannon had been discharged rather as a signal than with any hope of reaching them.

"Ned, run up into the foretop," the captain said, "and keep a sharp lookout ahead. The moon has given an advantage to those who are on our track behind, but it gives us an advantage as against any craft there may be ahead of us. We shall see them long before they can see us."

Peters had been looking astern when the last gun was fired, and said that by its flash he believed that he

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had caught sight of three craft of some kind or other outside the ships moored off the port.

"Then we have two miles' start if those are their galleys," the captain said. "We are stealing through the water at about the rate of four knots, and perhaps they may row six, so it will take them an hour to come up."

"Rather more than that, I should say, captain, for the wind at times freshens a little. It is likely to be an hour and a half before they come up."

"All the better, Peters. They will have learned from those they picked up from that boat that we are not a large craft, and that our crew probably does not exceed twenty men; therefore, as those galleys carry about twenty soldiers besides the twenty rowers, they will not think it necessary to keep together, but will each do his best to overtake us, one of them is sure to be faster than the others, and if they come up singly I think we shall be able to beat them off handsomely. It is no use discussing now whether it is wise to fight or not. By sinking that first boat we have all put our heads in a noose, and there is no drawing back. We have repulsed their officers with armed force, and there will be no mercy for any of us if we fall into their hands."

"We shall fight all the better for knowing that," Peters said grimly. "The Dutchmen are learning that, as the Spaniards are finding to their cost, there is nothing like making a man fight better than the knowledge that there is a halter waiting for him if he is beaten."

"You had better get two of the guns astern, Peters, so as to fire down into them as they come up. You may l[illegible] the others, one on each side, for the present,

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and run one of them over when you see which side they are making for. Ah! that's a nice little puff. If it would but hold like that we should show them our heels altogether."

In two or three minutes the puff died out and the wind fell even lighter than before.

"I thought that we were going to have more of it," the captain said discontentedly; "it looked like it when the sun went down."

"I think we shall have more before morning," Peters agreed; "but I am afraid it won't come in time to help us much."

As the moon rose they were able to make out three craft astern of them. Two were almost abreast of each other, the third some little distance behind.

"That is just what I expected, Peters; they are making a race of it. We shall have two of them on our hands at once; the other will be too far away by the time they come up to give them any assistance. They are about a mile astern now, I should say, and unless the wind freshens up a bit they will be alongside in about twenty minutes. I will give you three men here, Peters. As soon as we have fired, load again, and then slew the guns round and run them forward to the edge of the poop, and point them down into the waist. If the Spaniards get on board, and we find them too strong for us, those of us who can will take to the forecastle, the others will run up here. Then sweep the Spaniards with your guns, and directly you have fired charge down among them with pike and axe. We will do the same, and it is hard if we do not clear the deck of them."

Just at this moment Ned hailed them from the top. "There is a ship nearly ahead of us, sir; she is lying with her sails brailed up, evidently waiting."

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"How far is she off, do you think, Ned?"

"I should say she is four miles away," Ned replied.

"Well, we need not trouble about her for the present; there will be time to think about her when we have finished with these fellows behind. You can come down now, Ned."

In a few words the captain now explained his intentions to his men.

"I hope, lads, that we shall be able to prevent their getting a footing on the deck; but if they do, and we find we can't beat them back, as soon as I give the word you are to take either to the forecastle or to the poop. Mr. Peters will have the two guns there ready to sweep them with bullets. The moment he has fired give a cheer and rush down upon them from both sides. We will clear them off again, never fear. Ned, you will be in charge in the waist until I rejoin you. Get ready to run one of the guns over the instant I tell you on which side they are coming up. Depress them as much as you can. I shall take one gun and you take the other, and be sure you don't fire until you see a boat well under the muzzle of your gun. Mind it's the boat you are to aim at, and not the men."

Captain Martin again ascended to the poop and joined Peters. The two boats were now but a few hundred yards astern, and they could hear the officers cheering on the rowers to exert themselves to the utmost. The third boat was fully a quarter of a mile behind the leaders. When they approached within a hundred yards a fire of musketry was opened.

"Lie down under the bulwarks, men," Captain Martin said to the three sailors. "It is no use risking your lives unnecessarily. I expect one boat will come one side and one the other, Peters. If they do we will

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both take the one coming up on the port side. One of us may miss, and it is better to make sure of one boat if we can. I think we can make pretty sure of beating off the other. Yes, there they are separating. Now work your gun round a bit, so that it bears on a point about twenty yards astern and a boat's length on the port side. I will do the same. Have you done that?"

"Yes, I think I have about got it, sir."

"Very well, then. Stoop down now, or we may get hit before it is time to fire."

The bulwarks round the poop were only about a foot high, but sitting back from them the captain and the mate were protected from the bullets that were now singing briskly over the stern of the ship.

"They are coming up, Peters," Captain Martin said. "Now kneel up and look along your gun; get your match ready, and do not fire till you see right into the boat, then clap on your match whether I fire or not."

The boat came racing along until when within some twenty yards of the stern, the cannons were discharged almost simultaneously. The sound was succeeded by a chorus of screams and yells; the contents of both guns had struck the boat fairly midships, and she sank almost instantly. As soon as they had fired, Captain Martin ran forward and joined the crew in the waist. He had already passed the word to Ned to get both guns over to the starboard side, and he at once took charge of one while Ned stood at the other. The Spaniards had pushed straight on without waiting to pick up their drowning comrades in the other boat, and in a minute were alongside. So close did the helmsman bring the boat to the side that the guns could not be depressed so as to bear upon her, and a moment later the Spaniards were climb-

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P. & D. THE SPANIARDS ARE DRIVEN BACK INTO THE BOAT.—Page 63.

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ing up the sides of the vessel, the rowers dropping their oars and seizing axes and joining the soldiers.

"Never mind the gun, Ned; it is useless at present. Now, lads, drive them back as they come up."

With pike and hatchet the sailors met the Spaniards as they tried to climb up. The cook had brought his caldron of boiling water to the bulwarks, and threw pailful after pailful down into the boat, while the carpenter bailed over boiling pitch with the great ladle. Terrible yells and screams rose from the boat, and the soldiers in vain tried to gain a footing upon the ship's deck. As they appeared above the level of the bulwarks they were met either with thrust of pike or with a crashing blow from an axe, and it was but three or four minutes from the moment that the fight began that the boat cast off and dropped behind, more than half those on board being killed or disabled. A loud cheer broke from the crew.

"Shall I run the guns back to the stern again," Peters asked from above, "and give them a parting dose?"

"No, no," Captain Martin said, "let them go, Peters; we are fighting to defend ourselves, and have done them mischief enough. See what the third boat is doing, though."

"They have stopped rowing," Peters said, after going to the stern. "I think they are picking up some swimmers from the boat we sank. There cannot be many of them, for most of the rowers would have been killed by our discharges, and the soldiers in their armor will have sunk at once."

Captain Martin now ascended to the poop. In a short time the boat joined that which had dropped astern, which was lying helpless in the water, no attempt having been made to man the oars, as most of the unwounded

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men were scalded more or less severely. Their report was evidently not encouraging, and the third boat made no attempt to pursue. Some of her oarsmen were shifted to the other boat, and together they turned and made back for Amsterdam.

"Now then for this vessel ahead," Captain Martin said; "that is a much more serious business than the boats."

The vessel, which was some two miles ahead of them, had now set some of her sails, and was heading toward them.

"They can make us out now plainly enough, Peters, and the firing will of course have told them we are the vessel that they are in search of. I don't think that there is any getting away from them."

"I don't see that there is," the mate agreed. "Whichever way we edged off they could cut us off. The worst of it is no doubt she has got some big guns on board, and these little things of ours are of no good except at close quarters. It would be no use trying to make a running fight with her?"

"Not in the least, Peters. We had better sail straight at her."

"You don't mean to try and carry her by boarding?" Peters asked doubtfully. "She looks like a large ship, and has perhaps a hundred and fifty men on board; and though the Spaniards are no sailors they can fight on the decks of their ships."

"That is so, Peters. What I think of doing is to bear straight down upon her as if I intended to board. We shall have to stand one broadside as we come up, and then we shall be past her, and with our light draught we should run right away from her with this wind. There is more of it than there was, and we are

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slipping away fast. Unless she happens to knock away one of our masts we shall get away from her."

When they were within half a mile of the Spanish ship they saw her bows bear off.

"Lie down, lads," the captain ordered, "she is going to give us a broadside. When it is over start one of those sea-beggar songs you picked up at Brill; that will startle them, and they will think we are crowded with men and going to board them."

A minute later eight flashes of fire burst from the Spanish ship, now lying broadside to them. One shot crashed through the bulwarks, two others passed through the sails, the rest went wide of their mark. As soon as it was over the crew leaped to their feet and burst into one of the wild songs sung by the sea-beggars.

"Keep our head straight toward her, Peters," Captain Martin said. "They will think we mean to run her down, and it will flurry and confuse them."

Loading was not quick work in those days, and the distance between the vessels was decreased by half before the guns were again fired. This time it was not a broadside; the guns went off one by one as they were loaded, and the aim was hasty and inaccurate, for close as they were not a shot struck the hull of the Good Venture, though two or three went through the sails. In the bright moonlight men could be seen running about and officers waving their arms and giving orders on board the Spaniard, and then her head began to pay off.

"We have scared them," Captain Martin laughed. "They thought we were going to run them down. They know the sea beggars would be quite content to sink themselves if they could sink an enemy. Follow close in her wake, Peters, and then bear off a little as if you

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meant to pass them on their starboard side; then when you get close give her the helm sharp and sweep across her stern. We will give her the guns as we pass, then bear off again and pass her on her port side; the chances are they will not have loaded again there."

The Spanish ship was little more than a hundred yards ahead. When she got before the wind again Captain Martin saw with satisfaction that the Good Venture sailed three feet to her two. The poop and stern galleries of the Spaniard were clustered with soldiers, who opened a fire with their muskets upon their pursuer.

The men were all lying down now at their guns, which were loaded with musket balls to their muzzles.

"Elevate them as much as you can. She is much higher out of the water than we are. Now, Peters, you see to the guns, I will take the helm."

"I will keep the helm, sir," the mate replied.

"No, you won't, Peters; my place is the place of danger. But if you can, lie under the bulwark there after you have fired, and be ready to take my place if you see me drop. Now, lads, get ready."

So saying the captain put down the tiller. The Good Venture swept round under the stern of the Spaniard at a distance of some forty yards, and as she did so the guns loaded with bullets to the muzzle were fired one after the other. The effect was terrible, and the galleries and poop were swept by the leaden shower. Then the captain straightened the helm again. The crew burst into the wild yells and cries the beggars raised when going into battle. The Spaniards, confused by the terrible slaughter worked by the guns of their enemies, and believing that they were about to be boarded on the port side by a crowd of desperate foemen, hastily put up the tiller, and the ship bore away as the Good

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Venture swept up, presenting her stern instead of her broadside to them.

To the momentary relief of the Spaniards their assailant instead of imitating their maneuvers kept straight upon her course before the wind, and instead of the wild cries of the beggars a hearty English cheer was raised. As Captain Martin had expected, the guns on the port side had not been reloaded after the last discharge, and the Good Venture was two or three hundred yards away before the Spaniards recovered from their surprise at what seemed the incomprehensible maneuvers of their foes, and awoke to the fact that they had been tricked, and that instead of a ship crowded with beggars of the sea their supposed assailant had been an English trader that was trying to escape from them.

A dozen contradictory orders were shouted as soon as the truth dawned upon them. The captain had been killed by the discharge of grape, and the first lieutenant severely wounded. The officer in command of the troops shouted to his men to load the guns, only to find when this was accomplished that the second lieutenant of the ship had turned her head in pursuit of the enemy, and that not a single gun would bear. There was a sharp altercation between the two authorities, but the military chief was of the highest rank.

"Don't you see," he said furiously, "that she is going away from us every foot. She was but a couple of hundred yards away when I gave the order to load, and now she is fully a quarter of a mile."

"If I put the helm down to bring her broadside on." the seaman said, "she will be half a mile ahead before we can straighten up and get in her wake again; and unless you happen to cripple her she will get away to a certainty."

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"She will get away anyhow," the soldier roared, "if we don't cripple her. Put your helm down instantly."

The order was given and the ship's head swayed round. There was a flapping of sails and a rattling of blocks, and then a broadside was fired; but it is no easy matter for angry and excited men to hit a mast at the distance of nearly half a mile. One of the shots plowed up the deck within a yard of the foot of the mainmast, another splintered a boat, three others added to the holes in the sails, but no damage of importance was done. By the time the Spaniard had borne round and was again in chase, the Good Venture was over half a mile ahead.

"It is all over now, captain," Peters said as he went aft. "Unless we light upon another of these fellows, which is not likely, we are safe."

"Are any of the men hit, Peters?"

"The carpenter was knocked down and stunned by a splinter from the boat, sir; but I don't think it is serious."

"Thank God for that," the captain said. "Now, will you take the helm?" There was something in the voice that startled the mate.

"Is anything the matter, sir? Don't say you are hit."

"I am hit, Peters, and I fear rather badly; but that matters little now that the crew and ship are safe."

Peters caught the captain, for he saw that he could scarce stand, and called two men to his assistance. The captain was laid down on the deck.

"Where are you hit, sir?"

"Halfway between the knee and the hip," Captain Martin replied faintly. "If it hadn't been for the tiller I should have fallen, but with the aid of that I made

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shift to stand on the other leg. It was just before we fired, at the moment when I put the helm down."

"Why didn't you call me?" Peters said reproachfully.

"It was of no good getting two of us hit, Peters; and as long as I could stand to steer I was better there than you."

Ned came running aft as the news was passed along that the captain was wounded, and threw himself on his knees by his father's side.

"Bear up, Ned; bear up like a man," his father said. "I am hit hard, but I don't know that it is to death. But even if it is, it is ten thousand times better to die in battle with the Spaniards than to be hung like a dog, which would have befallen me and perhaps all of us if they had taken us."

By Peters' directions a mattress was now brought up, and the captain carried down to his cabin. There was no thought on board now of the pursuers astern, or of possible danger lying ahead. The news that Captain Martin was badly wounded damped all the feelings of triumph and enthusiasm which the crew had before been feeling at the success with which they had eluded the Spaniard while heavily punishing her. As soon as the captain was laid on a sofa Peters examined the wound. It was right in front of the leg, some four inches above the knee.

"There is nothing to be done for it," Captain Martin said. "It has smashed the bone, I am sure."

"I am afraid it has, captain," Peters said ruefully; "and it is no use my saying that it has not. I think, sir, we had best put in at Enkhuizen. We are not above four or five miles from it now, and we shall find surgeons there who will do all they can for you."

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"I think that will be the best plan, Peters."

The orders were given at once, and the ship's course altered, and half an hour later the lights of Enkhuizen were seen ahead.

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CHAPTER IV.

WOUNDED.

THEY dropped anchor a short distance off the port, and then lit some torches and waved them.

"The firing is sure to have been heard," Peters said, "and they will be sending off to know what is going on, otherwise there would have been small chance of getting in to-night."

As the mate anticipated, the sound of oars was soon heard, and a large boat rowed out toward them. It stopped at a distance of a hundred yards, and there was a shout of "What ship is that?"

"The English brig Good Venture. We pray you to allow us to bring our captain, who has been sorely wounded by the Spaniards, on shore."

"What has been the firing we have heard? We could see the flashes across the water."

"We have been twice engaged," Peters shouted; "first with two Spanish galleys, and then with a large ship of war, which we beat off with heavy loss."

"Well done, Englishman!" the voice exclaimed, and the boat at once rowed out to the brig. "You cannot come in to-night," the Dutch official said, "for the chain is up across the harbor, and the rule is imperative and without exception; but I will gladly take your captain on shore, and he shall have, I promise you, the best surgical aid the town can give him. Is he the only one hurt?"

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"One of the men has been injured with a splinter, but he needs but bandaging and laying up for a few days. We have had a shot or two through our bulwarks, and the sails are riddled. The captain's son is below with him; he acts as second mate, and will tell you all about this affair into which we were forced."

"Very well; we will take him ashore with us then. There is quite an excitement there. The news that a sea-fight was going on brought all the citizens to the walls."

The mattress upon which Captain Martin was lying was brought out and lowered carefully into the stern of the boat. Ned took his seat beside it, and the boat pushed off. Having passed the forts they entered the port and rowed to the landing-place. A number of citizens, many of them carrying torches, were assembled here. "What is the news?" a voice asked as the boat approached.

"It is an English ship, burgomaster. She has been hotly engaged; first with Spanish galleys, and then with a war-ship, which was doubtless the one seen beating up this afternoon. She sank one of the galleys and beat off the ship." A loud cheer broke from the crowd. When it subsided the official went on: "I have the English captain and his son on board. The captain is sorely wounded, and I have promised him the best medical aid the town can give him."

"That he shall have," the burgomaster said. "Let him be carried to my house at once. Hans Leipart, do you hurry on and tell my wife to get a chamber prepared instantly. You have heard who it is, and why he is coming, and I warrant me she will do her best to make the brave Englishman comfortable. Do two others of you run to Doctors Zobel and Harreng, and pray them

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to hasten to my house. Let a stretcher be fetched instantly from the town hall."

As soon as the stretcher was brought the mattress was placed on it, and six of the sailors carried it on shore. The crowd had by this time greatly increased, for the news had rapidly spread. Every head was bared in token of sympathy and respect as the litter was brought up. The crowd fell back and formed a lane, and, led by the burgomaster, the sailors carried the wounded man into the town. He was taken upstairs to the room prepared for him, and the surgeons were speedily in attendance. Medicine in those days was but a primitive science, but the surgery, though rough and rude, was far ahead of the sister art. Wars were of such constant occurrence that surgeons had ample opportunity for practice; and simple operations, such as the amputation of limbs, were matters of very common occurrence. It needed but a very short examination by the two surgeons to enable them to declare that the leg must at once be amputated.

"The bone appears to be completely smashed," one of them said. "Doubtless the ball was fired at a very short distance." A groan burst from Ned when he heard the decision.

"I knew that it would be so, Ned," his father said. "I never doubted it for a moment. It is well that I have been able to obtain aid so speedily. Better a limb than life, my boy. I did not wince when I was hit, and with God's help I can stand the pain now. Do you go away and tell the burgomaster how it all came about, and leave me with these gentlemen."

As soon as Ned had left the room, sobbing in spite of his efforts to appear manly, the captain said: "Now, gentlemen. since this must be done, I pray you to do it

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without loss of time. I will bear it as best I can, I promise you; and as three or four and twenty years at sea makes a man pretty hard and accustomed to rough usage, I expect I shall stand it as well as another."

The surgeons agreed that there was no advantage in delay, and indeed that it was far better to amputate it before fever set in. They therefore returned home at once for their instruments, the knives and saws, the irons that were to be heated white-hot to stop the bleeding, and the other appliances in use at the time. Had Ned been aware that the operation would have taken place so soon, he would have been unable to satisfy the curiosity of the burgomaster and citizens to know how it had happened that an English trader had come to blows with the Spaniards; but he had no idea that it would take place that night, and thought that probably some days would elapse before the surgeons finally decided that it was necessary to amputate it.

One of the surgeons had, at the captain's request, called the burgomaster aside as he left the house, and begged him to keep the lad engaged in conversation until he heard from him that all was over. This the burgomaster willingly promised to do; and as many of the leading citizens were assembled in the parlor to hear the news, there was no chance of Ned's slipping away.

"Before you begin to tell us your story, young sir, we should be glad to know how it is that you speak our language so well; for indeed we could not tell by your accent that you are not a native of these parts, which is of course impossible, seeing that your father is an Englishman and captain of the ship lying off there."

"My mother comes from near here," Ned said. "She is the daughter of Mynheer Plomaert, who lived at

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Vordwyk, two miles from Amsterdam. She went over to England when she married my father, but when he was away on his voyages she always spoke her own language to us children, so that we grew to speak it naturally as we did English."

Ned then related the news that met them on their arrival at his grandfather's home, and the exclamation of fury on the part of his father.

"It is a common enough story with us here," the burgomaster said, "for few of us but have lost friends or relatives at the hands of these murderous tyrants of ours. But to you, living in a free land, truly it must have been a dreadful shock; and I wonder not that your father's indignation betrayed him into words which, if overheard, might well cost a man his life in this country."

"They were overheard and reported," Ned said; and then proceeded to relate the warning they had received, the measures they had taken to get off unperceived, the accidental meeting with the guard-boat and the way in which it had been sunk, the pursuit by the galleys and the fight with them, and then the encounter with the Spanish ship of war.

"And you say your father never relaxed his hold of the tiller when struck!" the burgomaster said in surprise. "I should have thought he must needs have fallen headlong to the ground."

"He told me," Ned replied, "that at the moment he was hit he was pushing over the tiller, and had his weight partly on that and partly on his other leg. Had it been otherwise he would of course have gone down, for he said that for a moment he thought his leg had been shot off."

When Ned finished his narrative the burgomaster and

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magistrates were loud in their exclamations of admiration at the manner in which the little trader had both fought and deceived her powerful opponent.

"It was gallantly done indeed," the burgomaster said. "Truly it seems marvelous that a little ship with but twenty hands should have fought and got safely away from the Don Pedro, for that was the ship we saw pass this afternoon. We know her well, for she has often been in port here before we declared for the Prince of Orange a month ago. The beggars of the sea themselves could not have done better—could they, my friends? though we Dutchmen and Zeelanders believe that there are no sailors that can match our own."

The story had taken nearly an hour to tell, and Ned now said:

"With your permission, sir, I will now go up to my father again."

"You had best not go for the present," the burgomaster said. "The doctor asked me to keep you with me for awhile, for that he wished his patient to be entirely undisturbed. He is by his bedside now, and will let me know at once if your father wishes to have you with him."

A quarter of an hour later a servant called the burgomaster out. The surgeon was waiting outside.

"It is finished," he said, "and he has borne it well. Scarce a groan escaped him, even when we applied the hot irons; but he is utterly exhausted now, and we have given him an opiate and hope that he will soon drop off to sleep. My colleague will remain with him for four hours, and then I will return and take his place. You had best say nothing to the lad about it. He would naturally want to see his father; we would much rather that he should not. Therefore tell him, please, that his

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father is dropping off to sleep, and must not on any account be disturbed; and that we are sitting up with him by turns, and will let him know at once should there be any occasion for his presence."

Ned was glad to hear that his father was likely to get off to sleep; and although he would gladly have sat up with him, he knew that it was much better that he should have the surgeon beside him. The burgomaster's wife, a kind and motherly woman, took him aside into a little parlor, where a table was laid with a cold capon, some manchets of bread, and a flask of the burgomaster's best wine. As Ned had eaten nothing since the afternoon, and it was now past midnight, he was by no means sorry to partake of some refreshment. When he had finished he was conducted to a comfortable little chamber that had been prepared for him, and in spite of his anxiety about his father it was not long before he fell asleep.

The sun was high before he awoke. He dressed himself quickly and went downstairs, for he feared to go straight to his father's room lest he might be sleeping.

"You have slept well," the burgomaster's wife said with a smile; "and no wonder, after your fatigues. The surgeon has just gone, and I was about to send up to wake you, for he told me to tell you that your father had passed a good night, and that you can now see him."

Ned ran upstairs, and turning the handle of the door very quietly entered his father's room. Captain Martin was looking very pale, but Ned thought that his face had not the drawn look that had marked it the evening before.

"How are you, my dear father?"

"I am going on well, Ned; at least so the doctors

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say. I feel I shall be but a battered old hulk when I get about again; but your mother will not mind that, I know."

"And do the doctors still think that they must take the leg off?" Ned asked hesitatingly.

"That was their opinion last night, Ned, and it was my opinion too; and so the matter was done off hand, and there is an end of it."

"Done off hand?" Ned repeated. "Do you mean—" and he hesitated.

"Do I mean that they have taken it off? Certainly I do, Ned. They took it off last night while you were downstairs in the burgomaster's parlor; but I thought it would be much better for you not to know anything about it until this morning. Yes, my boy, thank God, it is all over! I don't say that it wasn't pretty hard to bear; but it had to be done, you know, and the sooner it was over the better. There is nothing worse than lying thinking about a thing."

Ned was too affected to speak; but with tears streaming down his cheeks, leaned over and kissed his father. The news had come as a shock to him, but it seemed to have lifted a weight from his mind. The worst was over now; and although it was terrible to think that his father had lost his leg, still this seemed a minor evil after the fear that perhaps his life might be sacrificed. Knowing that his father should not be excited, or even talk more than was absolutely necessary, Ned stayed but a few minutes with him, and then hurried off to the ship, where, however, he found that the news that the captain's leg had been amputated, and that the doctors hoped that he would go on well, had been known some hours before; as Peters had come on shore with the first dawn of daylight for news, and heard from the

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burgomaster's servant that the amputation had taken place the evening before, and an hour later had learned from the lips of the doctor who had been watching by the captain's bedside, that he had passed a fairly good night, and might so far be considered to be doing well.

"What do you think, we had better do, Master Ned? Of course it will be for the captain to decide; but in these matters it is always best to take counsel beforehand. For although it is, of course, what he thinks in the matter will be done, still it may be that we might direct his thoughts; and the less thinking he does in his present state the better."

"What do you mean as to what is to be done, Peters?"

"Well, your father is like to be here many weeks; indeed, if I said many months I don't suppose it would be far from the truth. Things never go on quite smooth. There are sure to be inflammations, and fever keeps on coming and going; and if the doctor says three months, like enough it is six."

"Of course I shall stay here and nurse him, Peters."

"Well, Master Ned, that will be one of the points for the captain to settle. I do not suppose he will want the Good Venture to be lying idle all the time he is laid up; and though I can sail the ship, the trading business is altogether out of my line. You know all the merchants he does business with, going ashore, as you most always do with him; I doubt not that you could fill his place and deal with them just the same as if he was here."

"But I cannot leave him at present."

"No, no, Master Ned; no one would think of it. Now, what I have been turning over in my mind is, that the best thing for the captain and for you and your good mother is that I should set sail in the Venture with-

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out the loss of a day and fetch her over. If the wind is reasonable, and we have good luck, we may be back in ten days or so. By that time the captain may be well enough to think where we had better go for a cargo, and what course had best be taken about things in general."

"I think that would certainly be the best plan, Peters; and I will suggest it to my father at once. He is much more likely to go on well if my mother is with him, and she would be worrying sadly at home were she not by his side. Besides, it will be well for her to have something to occupy her, for the news of what has befallen her father and brothers will be a terrible blow to her. If I put it in that way to him I doubt not that he will agree to the plan; otherwise, he might fear to bring her out here in such troubled times, for there is no saying when the Spaniards will gather their army to recover the revolted cities, or against which they will first make their attempts. I will go back at once, and if he be awake I will tell him that you and I agree that it will be best for you to sail without loss of an hour to fetch my mother over, and that we can then put off talking about other matters until the ship returns."

Ned at once went back to his father's bedroom. He found the captain had just awoke from a short sleep.

"Father, I do not want to trouble you to think at present, but will tell you what Master Peters and I, who have been laying our heads together, concluded is best to be done. You are likely to be laid up here for some time, and it will be far the best plan for the Good Venture to sail over and fetch mother to nurse you."

"I shall get on well enough, Ned. They are kindly people here; and regarding our fight with the Spaniards as a sign of our friendship and good-will toward them, they will do all in their power for me."

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"Yes, father, I hope, indeed, that you will go on well; and I am sure that the good people here will do their best in all ways for you, and of course I will nurse you to the best of my power, though, indeed, this is new work for me; but it was not so much you as mother that we were thinking of. It will be terrible for her when the news comes that her father and brothers are all killed, and that you are lying here sorely wounded. It will be well-nigh enough to drive her distraught. But if she were to come over here at once she would, while busying about you, have less time to brood over her griefs; and, indeed, I see not why she should be told what has happened at Vordwyk until she is here with you, and you can break it to her. It will come better from your lips, and for your sake she will restrain her grief."

"There is a great deal in what you say, Ned, and, indeed, I long greatly to have her with me; but Holland is no place at present to bring a woman to, and I suppose also that she would bring the girls, for she could not well leave them in a house alone. There are plenty of friends there who would be glad to take them in; but that she could decide upon herself. However, as she is a native here she will probably consider she may well run the same risks as the rest of our countrywomen. They remain with their fathers and husbands and endure what perils there may be, and she will see no reason why she should not do the same."

"What we propose is that the Venture should set sail at once and fetch my mother over, and the girls, if she sees fit to bring them. I shall of course stay here with you until the brig returns, and by that time you will, I hope, be strong enough to talk over what had best be done regarding the ship and business generally."

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"Well, have your way, Ned. At present I cannot think over things and see what is best; so I will leave the matter in your hands, and truly I should be glad indeed to have your mother here with me."

Well content to have obtained the permission Ned hurried from the room.

"Has the burgomaster returned?" he asked when he reached the lower story.

"He has just come in, and I was coming up to tell you that dinner is served."

"Is it eleven o'clock already?" Ned exclaimed. "I had no idea it was so late." He entered the room and bowed to the burgomaster and his wife.

"Worshipful sir," he said, "I have just obtained leave from my father to send our ship off to London to fetch hither my mother to come to nurse him. I trust that by the time she arrives he will be able to be moved, and then they will take lodgings elsewhere, so as not to trespass longer upon your great kindness and hospitality."

"I think that it is well that your mother should come over," the burgomaster said; "for a man who has had the greater part of his leg taken off cannot be expected to get round quickly. Besides, after what you told us last night about the misfortune that has befallen her family it were best that she should be busied about her husband, and so have little time to brood over the matter. As to hospitality, it would be strange indeed if we should not do all that we could for a brave man who has been injured in fighting our common enemy. Send word to your mother that she will be as welcome as he is, and that we shall be ready in all respects to arrange whatever she may think most convenient and comfortable. And now you had best sit down and have your meal with us. As soon as it is over I will go down with

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you to the wharf, and will do what I can to hasten the sailing of your ship. I don't think," he went on, when they had taken their seats at table, "that there is much chance of her meeting another Spaniard on her way out to sea, for we have news this morning that some ships of the beggars have been seen cruising off the entrance and the Spaniards will be getting under shelter of their batteries at Amsterdam. I hear they are expecting a fleet from Spain to arrive soon to aid in their operations against our ports. However, I have little fear that they will do much by sea against us. I would we could hold our own as well on the land as we can on the water."

Ned found the meal extremely long and tedious, for he was fretting to be off to hasten the preparations on board the Good Venture, and he was delighted when at last the burgomaster said:

"Now, my young friend, we will go down to the wharf together."

But although somewhat deliberate, the burgomaster proved a valuable assistant. When he had told Ned that he would do what he could to expedite the sailing of the ship the lad had regarded it as a mere form of words, for he did not see how he could in any way expedite her sailing. As soon, however, as they had gone on board, and Ned had told Peters that the captain had given his consent to his sailing at once, the burgomaster said: "You can scarce set sail before the tide turns, Master Peters, for the wind is so light that you would make but little progress if you did. From what Master Martin tells me you came off so hurriedly from Amsterdam that you had no time to get ballast on board. It would be very venturesome to start for a voyage to England unless with something in your hold. I will give orders that you shall be furnished at once with sand-bags,

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otherwise you would have to wait your turn with the other vessels lying here; for ballast is, as you know, a rare commodity in Holland, and we do not like parting even with our sand hills. In the meantime, as you have well-nigh six hours before you get under way, I will go round among my friends and see if I cannot procure you a little cargo that may pay some of the expenses of your voyage."

Accordingly the burgomaster proceeded at once to visit several of the principal merchants, and, representing that it was the clear duty of the townsfolk to do what they could for the men who had fought so bravely against the Spaniards, he succeeded in obtaining from them a considerable quantity of freight upon good terms; and so zealously did he push the business that in a very short time drays began to arrive alongside the Good Venture, and a number of men were speedily at work in transferring the contents to her hold, and before evening she had taken on board a goodly amount of cargo.

Ned wrote a letter to his mother telling her what had taken place, and saying that his father would be glad for her to come over to be with him, but that he left it to her to decide whether to bring the girls over or not. He said no word of the events at Vordwyk; but merely mentioned they had learned that a spy had denounced his father to the Spaniards as having used expressions hostile to the king and the religious persecutions, and that on this account he would have been arrested, had he not at once put to sea. Peters was charged to say nothing as to what he had heard about the Plomaerts unless she pressed him with questions. He was to report briefly that they were so busy with the unloading of the ship at Amsterdam that Captain Martin had

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only once been ashore, and leave it to be inferred that he only landed to see the merchants to whom the cargo was consigned.

"Of course, Peters, if my mother presses you as to whether any news has been received from Vordwyk, you must tell the truth; but if it can be concealed from her it will be much the best. She will have anxiety enough concerning my father."

"I will see," Peters said, "what can be done. Doubtless at first she will be so filled with the thought of your father's danger that she will not think much of anything else; but on the voyage she will have time to turn her thoughts in other directions, and she is well-nigh sure to ask about her father and brothers. I shall be guided in my answers by her condition. Mistress Martin is a sensible woman, and not a girl who will fly into hysterics and rave like a madwoman.

"It may be too, she will feel the one blow less for being so taken up with the other; however, I will do the best I can in the matter, Master Ned. Truly your friend the burgomaster is doing us right good service. I had looked to lose this voyage to England, and that the ten days I should be away would be fairly lost time; but now, although we shall not have a full hold, the freight will be ample to pay all expenses and to leave a good profit beside."

As soon as the tide turned the hatches were put on, the vessel was warped out from her berth, and a few minutes later was under sail.

Ned had been busy helping to stow away the cargo as fast as it came on board, twice running up to see how his father was getting on. Each time he was told by the woman whom the burgomaster had now engaged to act as nurse, that he was sleeping quietly. When he

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returned after seeing the Good Venture fairly under way he found on peeping quietly into the room that Captain Martin had just woke.

"I have had a nice sleep, Ned," he said, as the lad went up to his bedside. "I see it is already getting dark. Has the brig sailed?"

"She has just gone out of port, father. The wind is light and it was no use starting until tide turned; although, indeed, the tides are of no great account in these inland waters. Still, we had to take some ballast on board as our hold was empty, and they might meet with storms on their way home, so they had to wait for that. But, indeed, after all, they took in but little ballast, for the burgomaster bestirred himself so warmly in our favor that the merchants sent down goods as fast as we could get them on board, and short as the time was, the main-hold was well-nigh half full before we put on the hatches; so that her voyage home will not be without a good profit after all."

"That is good news, Ned; for although as far as I am concerned the money is of no great consequence one way or the other, I am but part owner, and the others might well complain at my sending the ship home empty to fetch my wife instead of attending to their interests."

"I am sure they would not have done that, father, seeing how well you do for them, and what good money the Venture earns. Why, I have heard you say she returns her value every two years. So that they might well have gone without a fortnight's earnings without murmuring."

"I don't suppose they would have murmured, Ned, for they are all good friends of mine, and always seem well pleased with what I do for them. Still, in matters of business it is always well to be strict and regular, and

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I should have deemed it my duty to have calculated the usual earnings of the ship for the time she was away, and to have paid my partners their share as if she had been trading as usual. It is not because the ship is half mine and that I and my partners made good profit out of her, that I have a right to divert her from her trade for my own purposes. As you say, my partners might be well content to let me do so; but that is not the question—I should not be content myself.

"We should always in business work with a good conscience, being more particular about the interests of those who trust us than of our own. Indeed, on the bare ground of expediency it is best to do so; for then, if misfortune happens, trade goes bad, or your vessel is cast away, they will make good allowance for you, knowing that you are a loser as well as they, and that at all times you have thought as much of them as of yourself. Lay this always to heart, lad. It is unlikely that I shall go to sea much more, and ere long you will be in command of the Good Venture. Always think more of the interests of those who trust you than of your own.

"They have put their money into the ship, relying upon their partner's skill and honesty and courage. Even at a loss to yourself you should show them always that this confidence is not misplaced. Do your duty and a little more, lad. Most men do their duty. It is the little more that makes the difference between one man and the other. I have tried always to do a little more, and I have found my benefit from it in the confidence and trust of my partners in the ship, and of the merchants with whom I do business. However, I am right glad that the ship is not going back empty. I shall reckon how much we should have received for the freight that

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was promised me at Amsterdam, then you will give me an account of what is to be paid by the merchants here. The difference I shall make up, as is only right, seeing that it is entirely from my own imprudence in expressing my opinion upon affairs particular to myself, and in no way connected with the ship, that I was forced to leave without taking in that cargo."

Ned listened in silence to his father's words, and resolved to lay to heart the lessons they conveyed. He was proud of the high standing and estimation in which his father was held by all who knew him, and he now recognized fully for the first time how he had won that estimation. It was not only that he was a good sailor, but that in all things men were assured that his honor could be implicitly relied upon, and that he placed the interest of his employers beyond his own.

After the first day or two Ned could see but little change in his father's condition; he was very weak and low, and spoke but seldom. Doubtless his bodily condition was aggravated now by the thought that must be ever present to him—that his active career was terminated. He might, indeed, be able when once completely cured to go to sea again, but he would no longer be the active sailor he had been; able to set an example of energy to his men when the winds blew high and the ship was in danger. And unless fully conscious that he was equal to discharging all the duties of his position, Captain Martin was not the man to continue to hold it.

Ned longed anxiously for the return of the Good Venture. He knew that his mother's presence would do much for his father, and that whatever her own sorrows might be she would cheer him. Captain Martin never expressed any impatience for her coming; but when each morning he asked Ned, the first thing, which

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way the wind was blowing, his son knew well enough what he was thinking of. In the mean time Ned had been making inquiries, and he arranged for the hire of a comfortable house, whose inhabitants being Catholics, had, when Enkhuizen declared for the Prince of Orange, removed to Amsterdam. For although the prince insisted most earnestly and vigorously that religious toleration should be extended to the Catholics, and that no one should suffer for their religion, all were not so tolerant; and when the news arrived of wholesale massacres of Protestants by Alva's troops, the lower class were apt to rise in riot, and to retaliate by the destruction of the property of the Catholics in their towns.

Ned had therefore no difficulty in obtaining the use of the house, on extremely moderate terms, from the agent in whose hands its owner had placed his affairs in Enkhuizen. The burgomaster's wife had at his request engaged two female servants, and the nurse would of course accompany her patient. The burgomaster and his wife had both protested against any move being made; but Ned, although thanking them earnestly for their hospitable offer, pointed out that it might be a long time before his father could be about, that it was good for his mother to have the occupation of seeing to the affairs of the house to divert her thoughts from the sick-bed, and, as it was by no means improbable that she would bring his sisters with her, it would be better in all respects that they should have a house of their own. The doctors having been consulted, agreed that it would be better for the wounded man to be among his own people, and that no harm would come of removing him carefully to another house.

"A change, even a slight one, is often a benefit," they agreed; "and more than counterbalance any

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slight risk that there may be in a patient's removal from one place to another, providing that it be gently and carefully managed."

Therefore it was arranged that as soon as the Good Venture was seen approaching, Captain Martin should be carried to his new abode, where everything was kept prepared for him, and that his wife should go direct to him there.

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CHAPTER V.

NED'S RESOLVE.

On the ninth morning after the departure of the brig Ned was up as soon as daylight appeared, and made his way to the walls. The watchman there, with whom he had had several talks during the last two days, said:

"There is a brig, hull down, seaward, and I should say that she is about the size of the one you are looking for. She looks, too, as if she were heading for this port."

"I think that is she," Ned said, gazing intently at the distant vessel. "It seems to me that I can make out that her jib is lighter in color than the rest of her canvas. If that is so I have no doubt about its being the Good Venture, for we blew our jib away in a storm off Ostend, and had a new one about four months ago."

"That is her then, young master," the watchman said, shading his eyes and looking intently at the brig. "Her jib is surely of lighter color than the rest of her canvas."

With this confirmation Ned at once ran round to the house he had taken, and told the servants to have fires lighted, and everything in readiness for the reception of the party.

"My father," he said, "will be brought here in the course of an hour or so. My mother will arrive a little later."

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Ned then went round to the doctor, who had promised that he would personally superintend the removing of his patient, and would bring four careful men and a litter for his conveyance. He said that he would be round at the burgomaster's in half an hour. Ned then went back to his father. Captain Martin looked round eagerly as he entered.

"Yes, father," Ned said, answering the look; "there is a brig in sight, which is, I am pretty sure, the Good Venture. She will be in port in the course of a couple of hours. I have just been round to Doctor Harreng, and he will be here in half an hour with the litter to take you over to the new house."

Captain Martin gave an exclamation of deep thankfulness, and then lay for some time with his eyes closed, and spoke but little until the arrival of the doctor and the men with the litter.

"You must first of all drink this broth that has just been sent up for you," the surgeon said, "and then take a spoonful of cordial. It will be a fatigue, you know, however well we manage it; and you must be looking as bright and well as you can by the time your good wife arrives, else she will have a very bad opinion of the doctors of Enkhuizen."

Captain Martin did as he was ordered. The men then carefully raised the mattress with him upon it, and placed it upon the litter.

"I think we will cover you up altogether," the doctor said, "as we go along through the streets. The morning air is a good deal keener than the atmosphere of this room, and you won't want to look about."

The litter was therefore completely covered with a blanket, and was then lifted and taken carefully down the broad staircase and through the streets. The

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burgomaster's wife had herself gone on before to see that everything was comfortably prepared, and when the bed was laid down on the bedstead and the blanket turned back Captain Martin saw a bright room with a fire burning on the hearth, and the burgomaster's wife and nurse beside him, while Ned and the doctor were at the foot of the bed.

"You have not suffered, I hope, in the moving, Captain Martin?" the burgomaster's wife asked.

"Not at all," he said. "I felt somewhat faint at first, but the movement has been so easy that it soon passed off. I was glad my head was covered, for I do not think that I could have stood the sight of the passing objects."

"Now you must drink another spoonful of cordial," the doctor said, "and then lie quiet. I shall not let you see your wife when she arrives if your pulse is beating too rapidly. So far you have been going on fairly, and we must not have you thrown back."

"I shall not be excited," Captain Martin replied. "Now that I know the vessel is in sight I am contented enough; but I have been fearing lest the brig might fall in with a Spaniard as she came through the islands, and there would be small mercy for any on board had she been detected and captured. Now that I know she is coming to port safely, I can wait quietly enough. Now, Ned, you can be off down to the port."

The doctor went out with Ned and charged him strictly to impress upon his mother the necessity for self-restraint and quiet when she saw her husband.

"I am not over satisfied with his state," he said, "and much will depend on this meeting. If it passes off well and he is none the worse for it to-morrow, I shall look to see him mend rapidly; but if, on the other hand, he

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is agitated and excited, fever may set in at once, and in that case, weak as he is, his state will be very serious."

"I understand, sir, and will impress it upon my mother; but I do not think you need fear for her. Whatever she feels, she will, I am sure, carry out your instructions."

Ned went down to the port. He found that the brig was but a quarter of a mile away. He could make out female figures on board, and knew that, as he had rather expected would be the case, his mother had brought his sisters with her. Jumping into a boat he was rowed off to the vessel and climbing the side was at once in his mother's arms. Already he had answered the question that Peters had shouted before he was halfway from the shore and had replied that his father was going on as well as could be expected. Thus when Ned leaped on board his mother and the girls were in tears at the relief to the anxiety that had oppressed them during the voyage lest they should at its end find they had arrived too late.

"And he is really better?" were Mrs. Martin's first words as she released Ned from her embrace.

"I don't know that he is better, mother, but he is no worse. He is terribly weak; but the doctor tells me that if no harm comes to him from his agitation in meeting you, he expects to see him mend rapidly. He has been rather fretting about your safety, and I think that the knowledge that you are at hand has already done him good. His voice was stronger when he spoke just before I started than it has been for some days. Only, above all things, the doctor says you must restrain your feelings and be calm and quiet when you first meet him. And now, girls, how are you both?" he asked, turning to them. "Not very well, I suppose; for I know you

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have always shown yourselves bad sailors when you have come over with mother."

"The sea has not been very rough," Janet said; "and except when we first got out to sea we have not been ill."

"What are you going to do about the girls?" Mrs. Martin asked. "Of course I must go where your father is, but I cannot presume upon the kindness of strangers so far as to quarter the girls upon them."

"That is all arranged, mother. Father agreed with me that it would not be pleasant for any of you being with strangers, and I have therefore taken a house; and he has just been moved there, so you will have him all to yourself."

"That is indeed good news," Mrs. Martin said. "However kind people are, one is never so comfortable as at home. One is afraid of giving trouble, and altogether it is different. I have heard all the news, my boy. Master Peters tried his best to conceal it from me, but I was sure by his manner that there was something wrong. It was better that I should know at once," she went on, wiping her eyes. "Terrible as it all is, I have scarce time to think about it now when my mind is taken up with your father's danger. And it hardly came upon me even as a surprise, for I have long felt that some evil must have befallen them or they would have assuredly managed to send me word of themselves before now."

By this time the Good Venture had entered the port, and had drawn up close beside one of the wharves. As soon as the sails were lowered and the warps made fast, Peters directed three of the seamen to bring up the boxes from the cabin, and to follow him. Ned then led the way to the new house.

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"I will go up first, mother, and tell them that you have come."

Mrs. Martin quietly removed her hat and cloak, followed Ned upstairs, and entered her husband's room with a calm and composed face.

"Well, my dear husband," she said almost cheerfully, "I have come to nurse you. You see when you get into trouble it is us women that you men fall back upon after all."

The doctor, who had retired into the next room when he heard that Mrs. Martin had arrived, nodded his head with a satisfied air. "She will do," he said. "I have not much fear for my patient now."

Ned, knowing that he would not be wanted upstairs for some time, went out with Peters after the baggage had been set down in the lower room.

"So you had a fine voyage of it, Peters?"

"We should have been better for a little more wind, both coming and going," the mate said; "but there was nothing much to complain of."

"You could not have been long in the river then, Peters?"

"We were six and thirty hours in port. We got in at the top of tide on Monday morning, and went down with the ebb on Tuesday evening. First, as in duty bound, I went to see our good dame and give her your letter, and answer her questions. It was a hard business that, and I would as lief have gone before the queen herself to give her an account of things as to have gone to your mother. Of course I hoisted the flag as we passed up the river. I knew that some of them were sure to be on watch at Botherhithe, and that they would run in and tell her that the Good Venture was in port again. I had rather hoped that our coming back so soon might

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lead her to think that something was wrong, for she would have known that we could scarce have gone to Amsterdam and discharged, loaded up again, and then back here, especially as the wind had been light ever since she sailed. And sure enough the thought had struck her; for when I caught sight of the garden-gate one of your sisters was there on the lookout, and directly she saw me she ran away in. I hurried on as fast as I could go then, for I knew that Mistress Martin would be sorely frightened when she heard that it was neither your father nor you. As I got there your mother was standing at the door. She was just as white as death. 'Cheer up, mistress,' I said as cheery as I could speak. 'I have bad news for you, but it might have been a deal worse. The captain's got a hurt, and Master Ned is stopping to nurse him.'

"She looked at me as if she would read me through. 'That's the truth as I am a Christian man, mistress,' I said. 'It has been a bad business, but it might have been a deal worse. The doctor said that he was doing well.' Then your mother gave a deep sigh, and I thought for a moment she was going to faint, and ran forward to catch her; but she seemed to make an effort and straighten herself up, just as I have seen the brig do when a heavy sea has flooded her decks and swept all before it.

"'Thanks be to the good God that he is not taken from me,' she said. 'Now I can bear anything. Now, Peters, tell me all about it.'

"'I ain't good at telling a story, Mistress Martin,' I said; 'but here is Master Ned's letter. When you have read that maybe I can answer questions as to matters of which he may not have written. I will stand off and on in the garden, ma'am, and then you can read it com-

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fortable-like indoors, and hail me when you have got to the bottom of it.' It was not many minutes before one of your sisters called me in. They had all been crying, and I felt more uncomfortable than I did when those Spanish rascals gave us a broadside, as I went in, for I was afraid she would so rake me with questions that she would get out of me that other sad business; and it could hardly be expected that even the stoutest ship should weather two such storms, one after the other.

"'I don't understand it all, Master Peters,' she said, 'for my son gives no good reason why the Spaniards should thus have attacked an English ship; but we can talk of that afterward. All that matters at present is, that my husband has been wounded and has lost his leg and lies in some danger; for although Ned clearly makes the best of it, no man can suffer a hurt like that without great risk of life. He wishes me to go over at once. As to the girls, he says I can take them with me or leave them with a friend here. But they wish, as is natural, greatly to go; and it were better for all reasons that they did so. Were they left here they would be in anxiety about their father's state, and as it may be long before he can be moved I should not like to leave them in other charge than my own. When will you be ready to sail again?"

"'I shall be ready by to-morrow evening's tide, Mistress Martin,' I said. 'I have cargo on board that I must discharge, and must have carpenters and sailmakers on board to repair some of the damages we suffered in the action. I do not think I can possibly be ready to drop down the river before high water to-morrow, which will be about six o'clock. I will send a boat to the stairs here at half-past five to take you and your trunks on board.'

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"'We shall be ready,' she said. 'As Ned says that my husband is well cared-for in the house of the burgomaster, and has every comfort and attention, there is nothing I need take over for him.' I said that I was sure he had all he could require, and that she need take no trouble on that score, and then said that with her permission I would go straight back on board again, seeing there was much to do, and that it all came on my shoulders just at present.

"I had left the bosun in charge, and told him to get the hatches off and begin to get up the cargo as soon as he had stowed the sails and make all tidy; for I had not waited for that, but had rowed ashore as soon as the anchor was dropped. So without going back to the brig I crossed the river and landed by the steps at the bridge, and took the letters to the merchants for whom I had goods, and prayed them to send off boats immediately, as it was urgent for me to discharge as soon as possible; then I went to the merchants whose names you had given me, and who ship goods with us regularly, to tell them that the Venture was in port but would sail again to-morrow evening, and would take what cargo they could get on board for Enkhuizen or any of the seaward ports, but not for Amsterdam or other places still in the hands of the Spaniards.

"Then I went to the lord mayor and swore an information before him to lay before the queen and the council that the Spaniards had wantonly, and without offense given, attacked the Good Venture and inflicted much damage upon her, and badly wounded her captain; and would have sunk her had we not stoutly defended ourselves and beat them off. I was glad when all that was over, Master Ned; for, as you know, I know nought about writing. My business is to sail the ship under

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your father's orders; but as to talking with merchants who press you with questions, and seem to think that you have nought to do but to stand and gossip, this is not in my way, and I wished sorely that you had been with me, and could have taken all this business into your hands.

"Then I went down to the wharves, and soon got some carpenters at work to mend the bulwarks and put some fresh planks on the deck where the shot had ploughed it up. Luckily enough I heard of a man who had some sails that he had bought from the owners of a ship which was cast away down near the mouth of the river. They were a little large for the Venture; but I made a bargain with him in your father's name, and got them on board and set half a dozen sailmakers to work upon them, and they were ready by the next afternoon. The others will do again when they have got some new cloths in, and a few patches; but if we had gone out with a dozen holes in them the first Spaniard who saw us, and who had heard of our fight with the Don Pedro, would have known us at once.

"I was thankful, I can tell you, when I got on board again. Just as I did so some lighters came out, and we were hard at work till dusk getting out the cargo. The next morning at daylight fresh cargo began to come out to us, and things went on well, and would have gone better had not people come on board pestering me with questions about our fight with the Spaniards. And just at noon two of the queen's officers came down and must needs have the whole story from beginning to end; and they had brought a clerk with them to write it down from my lips. They had said we had done right gallantly, and that no doubt I should be wanted next day at the royal council to answer other questions touch-

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ing the affair. You may be sure I said no word about the fact that in six hours we should be dropping down the river; for like enough if I had they would have ordered me not to go, and as I should have gone whether they had or not—seeing that Captain Martin was looking for his wife, and that the mistress was anxious to be off—it might have led to trouble when I got back again.

"By the afternoon we had got some thirty tons of goods on board, and although that is but a third of what she would carry, I was well content that we had done so much. After the new sails had come on board I had put a gang to work to bend them, and had all ready and the anchor up just as the tide turned. We had not dropped down many hundred yards when the boat with Mistress Martin and your sisters came alongside; and thankful I was when it came on dark and we were slipping down the river with a light southwesterly wind, for I had been on thorns all the afternoon lest some messenger might arrive from the council with orders for me to attend there. I did not speak much to your mother that evening, for it needs all a man's attention to work down the river at night.

"The next morning I had my breakfast brought up on deck instead of going down, for, as you may guess, I did not want to have your mother questioning me; but presently your sister came up with a message to me that Mistress Martin would be glad to have a quarter of an hour's conversation with me as soon as duty would permit me to leave deck. So after awhile I braced myself up and went below, but I tell you that I would rather have gone into action again with the Don Pedro. She began at once, without parley or courtesies, by firing a broadside right into me.

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"'I don't think, Master Peters, that you have told me yet all there is to be told.'

"That took me between wind and water, you see. However, I made a shift to bear up.

"'Well, Mistress Martin,' says I, 'I don't say as I have given you all particulars. I don't know as I mentioned to you as Joe Wiggins was struck down by a splinter from the long-boat, and was dazed for full two hours,but he came round again all right, and was fit for duty next day.'

"Mrs. Martin heard me quietly, and then she said:

"'That will not do, John Peters; you know well what I mean. You need not fear to tell me the news; I have long been fearing it. My husband is not one to talk loosely in the streets and to bring upon himself the anger of the Spaniards. He must have had good cause before he said words that spoken there would place his life in peril. What has happened at Vordwyk?"

"Well, Master Ned, I stood there as one struck stupid. What was there to say? I am a truthful man, but I would have told a lie if I had thought it would have been any good. But there she was, looking quietly at me, and I knew as she would see in a moment whether I was speaking truth or not. She waited quiet ever so long and at last I said:

"'The matter is in this wise, Mistress Martin. My orders was I was to hold my tongue about all business not touching the captain or the affairs of this ship. When you sees the captain it's for you to ask him questions, and for him to answer if he sees right and good to do so.'

"She put her hand over her face and sat quiet for some time, and when she looked up again her eyes were

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full of tears and her cheeks wet; then she said in a low tone:

"All, Peters—are they all gone?"

"Well, Master Ned, I was swabbing my own eyes; for it ain't in a man's nature to see a woman suffering like that, and so quiet and brave, without feeling somehow as if all the manliness had gone out of him. I could not say nothing. What could I say, knowing what the truth was? Then she burst out a-crying and a-sobbing, and I steals off without a word, and goes on deck and sets the men a-hauling at the sheets and trimming the sails, till I know there was not one of them but cussed me in his heart and wished that the captain was back again.

"Mistress Martin did not say no word about it afterward. She came up on deck a few times, and asked me more about the captain, and how he looked, and what he was doing when he got his wound. And of course I told her all about it, full and particular, and how he had made every one else lie down, and stood there at the tiller as we went under the stern of the Spaniard, and that none of us knew he was hit until it was all over; and how we had peppered them with our four carronades, and all about it. But mostly she stopped down below till we hauled our wind and headed up the Zuider-Zee toward Enkhuizen."

"Well, now it is all over, Peters," Ned said, "there is no doubt that it is better she should have heard the news from you instead of my father having to tell her."

"I don't deny that that may be so, Master Ned, now that it is all over and done; but never again will John Peters undertake a job where he is got to keep his mouth shut when a woman wants to get something out of him. Lor' bless you, lad, they just see right through

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you; and you feel that, twist and turn as you will, they will get it out of you sooner or later. There, I started with my mind quite made up that orders was to be obeyed, and that your mother was to be kept in the dark about it till she got here; and I had considered with myself that in such a case as this it would be no great weight upon my conscience if I had to make up some kind of a yarn that would satisfy her; and yet in three minutes after she got me into that cabin she was at the bottom of it all."

"You see, she has been already very uneasy at not hearing for so long from her father and brothers, Peters; and that and the fact that my father had spoken openly against the Spanish authorities set her upon the track, and enabled her to put the questions straightforwardly to you."

"I suppose that was it, sir. And now, has the captain said anything about what is going to be done with the ship till he gets well?"

"Nothing whatever, Peters. He has spoken very little upon any subject. I know he has been extremely anxious for my mother to arrive, though he has said but little about it. I fancy that for the last few days he has not thought that he should recover. But the doctor told me I must not be uneasy upon that ground, for that he was now extremely weak, and men, even the bravest and most resolute when in health, are apt to take a gloomy view when utterly weak and prostrate. His opinion was that my mother's coming would probably cheer him up and enable him to rally.

"I think, too, that he has been dreading having to tell her the terrible news about her father and brothers: and now he knows that she is aware of that it will be a load off his mind. Besides, I know that for his sake

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she will be cheerful and bright, and with her and the girls with him, he will feel as if at home. The doctor told me that the mind has a great influence over the body, and that a man with cheerful surroundings had five chances to one as against one among strangers, and with no one to brighten him up. I have no doubt that as soon as he gets a little stronger he will arrange what is to be done with the brig, but I am sure it will be a long time before he can take the command again himself."

"Ay, I fear it will be," Peters agreed. "It is a pity you are not four or five years older, Master Ned. I do not say that I couldn't bring the ship into any port in Holland; for, having been sailing backward and forward here, man and boy, for over thirty years, I could do so pretty nigh blindfold. But what is the good of bringing a ship to a port if you have not got the head to see about getting a cargo for her, and cannot read the bills of lading, or as much as sign your name to a customs list.

"No, Master Ned, I am not fit for a captain, that is quite certain. But though I would not mind serving under another till your father is fit to take charge again I could not work on board the Venture under another for good. I have got a little money saved up, and would rather buy a share in a small coaster and be my own master there. After serving under your father for nigh twenty years, I know I should not get on with another skipper nohow."

"Well, Peters, it is no use talking it over now, because I have no idea what my father's decision will be. I hope above all things that he will be able to take command again, but I have great doubts in my mind whether he will ever do so. If he had lost the leg below the

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knee it would not so much have mattered; but as it is, with the whole leg stiff, he would have great difficulty in getting about, especially if the ship was rolling in a heavy sea."

John Peters shook his head gravely, for this was the very thing he had turned in his mind over and over again during the voyage to and from England.

"Your cargo is not all for this place, I suppose, Peters?"

"No, sir. Only two or three tons which are down in the forehold together are for Enkhuizen, the rest are for Leyden and The Hague. I told the merchants that if they put their goods on board I must sail past the ports and make straight on to Enkhuizen; for that first of all I must bring Mistress Martin to the captain, but that I would go round and discharge their goods as soon as I had brought her here. It was only on these terms I agreed to take the cargo."

"That will do very well, Peters. I will go on board with you at once, and see to whom your goods are consigned here, and warn them to receive them at once. You will get them on shore by to-night, and then to-morrow I will sail with you to Leyden and The Hague, and aid you in getting your cargo into the right hands there. Now that my mother and the girls are here my father will be able to spare me. We can be back here again in four or five days, and by that time I hope he will be so far recovered as to be able to think matters over, and come to some decision as to the future management of the brig. Of course if he wishes me to stay on board her I shall obey his orders, whether you or another are the captain."

"Why, of course you will remain on board, Master Ned. What else should you do?"

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"Well, Peters, my own mind is set upon joining the Prince of Orange, and fighting against the Spaniards. Before I sailed from home I told my sisters that was what I was longing to do, for I could scarce sleep for thinking of all the cruelties and massacres that they carried out upon the people of the Netherlands, who are, by my mother's side, my kinsfolk. Since then I have scarce thought of aught else. They have murdered my grandfather and uncles and one of my aunts; they have shot away my father's leg, and would have taken his life had he not escaped out of their hands; so that what was before a longing is now a fixed idea, and if my father will but give me permission, assuredly I will carry it out.

"There are many English volunteers who have already crossed the sea to fight against these murderers, although unconnected by ties of blood as I am, and who have been brought here to fight solely from pity and horror, and because, as all know, Spain is the enemy of England as well as of the Netherlands, and would put down our freedom and abolish our religion as she has done here. I know that my wishes, in this as in all other matters, must give way to those of my father. Still I hope he may be moved to consent to them."

Ned thought it better to allow his father and mother to remain quietly together for some time, and did not therefore return to the house until twelve o'clock, when he knew that dinner would be prepared; for his mother was so methodical in her ways that everything would go on just as at home directly she took charge of the affairs of the house. He went up for a few minutes before dinner, and was struck with the change in the expression of his father's face. There was a peaceful and contented look in his eyes, and it almost seemed to

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Ned that his face was less hollow and drawn than before. Ned told him that it would be necessary for the brig to go round to Leyden and The Hague, and that Peters had proposed that he should go with him to see the merchants, and arrange the business part of the affair.

"That will do very well," Captain Martin said. "You are young, Ned, to begin having dealings with the Dutch merchants, but when you tell them how it comes that I am not able to call upon them myself, they will doubtless excuse your youth."

"Do you wish us to take any cargo there, father, if we can get any?"

Captain Martin did not answer for some little time, then he said:

"No, Ned, I think you had best return here in the ship. By that time I shall, I hope, be capable of thinking matters over, and deciding upon my arrangements for the future. When is Peters thinking of sailing?"

"By to-morrow morning's tide, sir. He said that he could be ready perhaps by this evening; but that unless you wished it otherwise he would not start till to-morrow's tide, as he will thereby avoid going out between the islands at night."

"That will be the best way, Ned. If the winds are fair he will be at The Hague before nightfall."

The day after his return Ned took an opportunity of speaking to his mother as to his wish to take service with the Prince of Orange, and to aid in the efforts that the people of the Netherlands were making to free themselves from their persecutors. His mother, as he feared would be the case, expressed a strong opposition to his plan.

"You are altogether too young, Ned, even if it were a matter that concerned you?"

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"It does concern me, mother. Are you not Dutch? And though I was born in England and a subject of the queen, it is natural I should feel warmly in the matter; besides we know that many English are already coming over here to help. Have not the Spanish killed my relations, and unless they are driven back they will altogether exterminate the Protestants of the Netherlands? Have they not already been doomed to death regardless of age and sex by Philip's proclamation? and do not the Spaniards whenever they capture a town slay well-nigh all within it?"

"That is all true enough," his mother agreed; "but proves in no way that you are a fit age to meddle in the affair."

"I am sixteen, mother; and a boy of sixteen who has been years at sea is as strong as one of eighteen brought up on the land. You have told me yourself that I look two or three years older than I am, and methinks I have strength to handle pike and axe."

"That may be perfectly true," said Mrs. Martin, "but even supposing all other things were fitting, how could we spare you now when your father will be months before he can follow his trade on the sea again, even if he is ever able to do so?"

"That is the thing, mother, that weighs with me. I know not what my father's wishes may be in that respect, and of course if he holds that I can be of use to him I must give up my plan; but I want you at any rate to mention it to him. And I pray you not to add your objections, but to let him decide on the matter according to his will."

"There will be no occasion for me to add objections, Ned. I do not think your father will listen to such a mad scheme for a moment."

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It was not until three or four days later that Mrs. Martin, seeing that her husband was stronger and better, and was taking an interest in what passed in the house, fulfilled her promise to Ned by telling his father of his wishes.

"You must not be angry with him," she said when she had finished; "for he spoke beautifully, and expressed himself as perfectly willing to yield his wishes to yours in the matter. I told him, of course, that it was a mad-brained scheme, and not to be thought of. Still, as he was urgent I should lay it before you, I promised to do so."

Captain Martin did not, as his wife expected, instantly declare that such a plan was not to be thought of even for a moment, but lay for some time apparently turning it over in his mind.

"I know not quite what to say," he said at length.

"Not know what to say?" his wife repeated in surprise. "Why, husband, you surely cannot for a moment think of allowing Ned to embark in so wild a business."

"There are many English volunteers coming over; some of them not much older, and not so fit in bodily strength for the work as Ned. He has, too, the advantage of speaking the language, and can pass anywhere as a native. You are surprised, Sophie, at my thinking of this for a moment."

"But what would you do without him?" she exclaimed in astonishment.

"That is what I have been thinking as I lay here. I have been troubled what to do with Ned. He is too young yet to entrust with all the business of the ship, and the merchants here and at home would hesitate in doing business with a lad. Moreover, he is too young to be first mate on board the brig. Peters is a worthy

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man and a good sailor, but he can neither read nor write and knows naught of business; and, therefore, until I am able, if I ever shall be, to return to the Good Venture, I must have a good seaman as first mate, and a supercargo to manage the business affairs of the ship. Were Ned four years older he could be at once first mate and supercargo. There, you see your objection that I need him falls to the ground. As to other reasons I will think them over, and speak to you another time."

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CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.

MISTRESS MARTIN was much troubled in her mind by what seemed to her the unaccountable favor with which her husband had received Ned's proposal. She did not, however, allow any trace of this feeling to escape her, nor did she mention to Ned that she had as yet spoken as to his wishes to his father. The next day Captain Martin himself renewed the subject.

"I told you yesterday, Sophia, why in my opinion Ned would at present be of little aid to me in the matter of the brig, and may even go further in that respect and say that I think for a time it will be just as well that he were not on board. Having no established position there would be no special duties for him to perform. Now, I have made a point of telling him all about the consignments and the rates of freight, and have encouraged him always to express his opinion freely on these matters in order that his intelligence might thereby be quickened; but if he so expressed himself to the supercargo the latter might well take offense and difficulties arise, therefore before you spoke to me I had quite resolved that it would be best he should sail no more in the Good Venture until old enough to come in and take the place of second mate and supercargo, but that I would place him with some captain of my acquaintance, under whom he would continue to learn his duty for the next three or four years."

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"That is a good reason, doubtless, husband, why Ned should not sail in the Venture, but surely no reason at all why he should carry out this mad fancy of his."

"No reason, I grant you, wife; but it simply shows that it happens at this moment we can well spare him. As to the main question, it is a weighty one. Other young Englishmen have come out to fight for the Netherlands with far less cause than he has to mix themselves up in its affairs. Moreover, and this principally, it is borne strongly upon my mind that it may be that this boy of ours is called upon to do good service to Holland. It seems to me, wife," he went on, in answer to the look of astonishment upon his wife's face, "that the hand of Providence is in this matter.

"I have always felt with you a hatred of the Spaniards and a deep horror at the cruelties they are perpetrating upon this unhappy people, and have thought that did the queen give the order for war against them I would gladly adventure my life and ship in such an enterprise; further than that I have not gone. But upon that day when I heard the news of your father and brother's murder I took a solemn oath to heaven of vengeance against their slayers, and resolved that on my return to England I would buy out my partners in the Good Venture, and with her join the beggars of the sea and wage war to the death against the Spaniards. It has been willed otherwise, wife. Within twenty-four hours of my taking that oath I was struck down, and my fighting powers were gone forever.

"My oath was not accepted. I was not to be an instrument of God's vengeance upon these murderers. Now, our son, without word or consultation with me, feels called upon to take up the work I cannot perform. It happens strangely that he can for the next two or three

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years be well spared from his life at sea. That the boy will do great feats I do not suppose; but he is cool and courageous, for I marked his demeanor under fire the other day. And it may be that though he may do no great things in fighting he may be the means in saving some woman, some child, from the fury of the Spaniards. If he saved but one, the next three years of his life will not have been misspent."

"But he may fall—he may be killed by the Spaniards!" Mistress Martin said in great agitation.

"If it be the will of God, wife, not otherwise. He is exposed to danger every time he goes to sea. More than once since he first came on board, the Venture has been in dire peril; who can say that her next voyage may not be her last. However, I decide nothing now; to-morrow I will speak to the boy myself and gather from his words whether this is a mere passing fancy, natural enough to his age and to the times, or a deep longing to venture his life in the cause of a persecuted people whose blood runs in his veins, and who have a faith which is his own and ours."

Mrs. Martin said no more; her husband's will had, since she married, been in all matters of importance law to her, and was more so than ever now that he lay weak and helpless. His words and manner too had much impressed her. Her whole sympathies were passionately with her countrymen, and the heavy losses she had so recently sustained had added vastly to her hatred of the Spaniards. The suggestion, too, of her husband that though Ned might do no great deeds as a soldier he might be the means of saving some woman or child's life, appealed to her womanly feelings.

She had girls of her own, and the thought that one of like age might possibly be saved from the horrors of the

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sack of a city by Ned's assistance appealed to her with great force. She went about the house for the rest of the day subdued and quiet. Ned was puzzled at her demeanor, and had he not seen for himself that his father was progressing satisfactorily he would have thought that some relapse had taken place, some unfavorable symptom appeared. But this was clearly not the reason, and he could only fancy that now his mother's anxiety as to his father's state was in some degree abating, she was beginning to feel the loss of her father and brothers all the more.

That the request she had promised to make in his name to his father had anything to do with the matter did not enter his mind. Indeed, he had begun to regret that he had made it. Not that his intense longing to take service against the Spaniards was in any way abated, but he felt it was selfish, now that he might for the first time be of real use to his parents, for him thus to propose to embark in adventures on his own account. He had asked his mother to put the matter before his father, but he had scarce even a hope the latter would for a moment listen to the proposal. The next morning after breakfast, as he was about to start for a stroll to the wharf to have a talk with Peters, his mother said to him quietly: "Put aside your cap, Ned, your father wishes to speak to you."

She spoke so gravely that Ned ascended the stairs in some perturbation of spirit. Doubtless she had spoken to his father, and the latter was about to rate him severely for his folly in proposing to desert his duty, and to embark in so wild an adventure as that he had proposed. He was in no way reassured by the grave tone in which his father said:

"Place that chair by my bedside, Ned, and sit down;

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my voice is not strong and it fatigues me to speak loud. And now," he went on, when Ned with a shamefaced expression had seated himself by the bedside, "this desire that your mother tells me of to fight against the Spaniards for a time in the service of the Prince of Orange, how did it first come to you?"

"Ever since I heard the terrible story of the persecutions here," Ned replied. "I said to myself then when I came to be a man I would take revenge for these horrible murders. Since then the more I have heard of the persecutions that the people here have suffered in the cause of their religion, the more I have longed to be able to give them such aid as I could. I have spoken of it over and over again to my sisters; but I do not think that I should ever have ventured to put my desire into words, had it not been for the terrible news he learned at Vordwyk. Now, however, that they have killed my grandfather and uncles and have wounded you, I long more than ever to join the patriots here; and of course the knowledge that many young Englishmen were coming out to Brill and Flushing as volunteers added to my desire. I said to myself if they who are English are ready to give their lives in the cause of the Hollanders, why should not I, who speak their language and am of their blood?"

"You have no desire to do great deeds or to distinguish yourself?" Captain Martin asked.

"No, father; I have never so much as thought of that. I could not imagine that I, as a boy, could be of any great service. I thought I might, perhaps, being so young, be able to be of use in passing among the Spaniards and carrying messages where a man could not get through. I thought sometimes I might perhaps carry a warning in time to enable women to escape with their children

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from a town that was about to be beleaguered, and I hoped that if I did stand in the ranks to face the Spaniards I should not disgrace my nation and blood. I know, father, that, it was presumptuous for me to think that I could be of any real use; and if you are against it I will, of course, as I told my mother, submit myself cheerfully to your wishes."

"I am glad to see, Ned, that in this matter you are actuated by right motives, and not moved by any boyish idea of adventure or of doing feats of valor. This is no ordinary war, my boy. There is none of the chivalry of past times in the struggle here. It is one of life and death—grim, earnest, and determined. On one side is Philip with the hosts of Spain, the greatest power in Europe, determined to crush out the life of these poor provinces, to stamp out the religion of the country, to leave not one man, woman, or child alive who refuses to attend mass and to bow the knee before the Papist images; on the other side you have a poor people tenanting a land snatched from the sea, and held by constant and enduring labor, equally determined that they will not abjure their religion, that they will not permit the Inquisition to be established among them, and ready to give lives and homes and all in the cause of religious liberty. They have no thought of throwing off their allegiance to Spain, if Spain will but be tolerant. The Prince of Orange issues his orders and proclamations as the stadholder and lieutenant of the king, and declares that he is warring for Philip, and designs only to repel those who, by their persecution and cruelty, are dishonoring the royal cause.

"This cannot go on forever, and in time the Netherlands will be driven to entreat some other foreign monarch to take them under his protection. In this war

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there is no talk of glory. Men are fighting for their religion, their homes, their wives and families. They know that the Spaniards show neither quarter nor mercy, and that it is scarce more than a question between death by the sword and death by torture and hanging. There is no mercy for prisoners. The town that yields on good conditions is sacked and destroyed as is one taken by storm, for in no case have the Spaniards observed the conditions they have made, deeming oaths taken to heretics to be in no way binding on their consciences.

"Thus, Ned, those who embark upon this war engage in a struggle in which there is no honor, nor glory, nor fame, nor reward to be won, but one in which almost certain death stares them in the face, and which, so far as I can see, can end only in the annihilation of this country, or in the expulsion of the Spaniards. I do not say that there is no glory to be gained; but it is not personal glory. In itself, no cause was ever more glorious than that of men who struggle, not to conquer territory, not to gather spoil, not to gratify ambition, but for freedom, for religion, for hearth and home, and to revenge the countless atrocities inflicted upon them by their oppressors. After what I have said, do you still wish to embark upon this struggle?"

"I do wish it, father," Ned said firmly. "I desire it above all things, if you and my mother can spare me."

Captain Martin then repeated to Ned the reasons that he had given his wife for consenting to his carrying out his wishes: the fact that there was no place for him at present on board the Good Venture, the oath of vengeance upon the Spaniards that he had taken, and his impression that although he himself could not carry out that oath, its weight had been transferred to his son,

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whose desire to take up the work he had intended to carry out, just at this moment, seemed to him to be a special design of Providence.

"Now Ned," he concluded, "you understand the reasons that sway me in giving my consent to your desire to do what you can for the cause of religion and liberty. I do not propose that you should at present actually take up arms that I question if you are strong enough to wield. I will pray the burgomaster to give you letters of introduction to the prince, saying you are a young Englishman ready and desirous of doing all that lies in your power for the cause; that you speak the language as a native, and will be ready to carry his messages wheresoever he may require them to be sent; that you can be relied upon to be absolutely faithful, and have entered the cause in no light spirit or desire for personal credit or honor, but as one who has suffered great wrong in the loss of near relatives at the hands of the Spaniards, and is wishful only of giving such services as he can to the cause.

"It may be that coming with such recommendation the prince will see some way in which he can turn your services to account. And now leave me, my boy. I am wearied with all this talking; and although I deem that it is not my duty to withstand your wishes, it is no slight trial to see my only son embark in so terrible and perilous an adventure as this. But the cause I regard as a sacred one, and it seems to me that I have no right to keep you from entering upon it, as your mind lies that way."

Ned left the room greatly impressed with his father's words. He was glad indeed that the permission he had asked for had been granted, and that he was free to devote himself to the cause so dear to most Englishmen,

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and doubly so to him from his relations with the country. Sailing backward and forward to the various ports in the Netherlands, and able to hold intercourse with all he met, he had for years been listening to tales of atrocity and horror, until he had come to regard the Spaniards as human monsters, and to long with all his heart and strength to be able to join the oppressed people against their tyrants.

Now he had got permission to do so. But he felt more than he had done before the serious nature of the step which he was taking; and although he did not for a moment regret the choice he had made, he was conscious of its importance and of the solemn nature of the duties he took upon himself in thus engaging in the struggle between the Netherlands and Spain. He passed the room where his mother was sitting, went over and kissed her, and then taking his cap passed out into the street and mounted the ramparts, where he could think undisturbed. His father's words had not shaken his determination, although they had depressed his enthusiasm; but as he paced up and down, with the fresh air from the sea blowing upon his cheek, the feeling of youth and strength soon sent the blood dancing through his veins again. His cheeks flushed, and his eyes brightened.

"There is honor and glory in the struggle," he said. "Did not the people, old and young, pour out to the Crusades to wrest Jerusalem from the hands of the infidels? This is a more glorious task. It is to save God's followers from destruction; to succor the oppressed; to fight for women and children as well as for men. It is a holier and nobler object than that for which the Crusaders fought. They died in hundreds of thousands by heat, by famine, thirst, and the swords

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of the enemy. Few of those who fought ever returned home to reap glory for their deeds; but there was honor for those who fell. And in the same spirit in which even women and children left their homes, and went in crowds to die for the Holy Sepulcher, so will I venture my life for religion and freedom here."

An hour later he returned home; he could see that his mother had been crying.

"Mother," he said, "I trust you will not grieve over this. I have been thinking how the women of the early days sent their husbands and sons and lovers to fight for the Holy Sepulcher. I think that this cause is an even greater and more noble one; and feel sure that though you may be anxious, you will not grudge me to do my best for our religion and country people."

"Truly I think it is a holy cause, my boy; and after what your father has said, I would not if I could say nay. I can only pray that heaven will bless and keep you, and one day restore you to me. But you will not be always fighting, Ned. There is no saying how long the struggle may last; and if I let you go, it is with the promise that at one-and-twenty at the latest, you will return to us, and take your place again as your father's right hand and mine."

"I promise you, mother, that then, or if at any time before that you write and say to me come home, I will come."

"I am content with that," his mother said.

That afternoon Ned told Peters what had been decided, and the following morning the latter had a long talk with Captain Martin, who directed him to apply to the other owners of the ship to appoint him an able first mate, and also to choose one of their clerks in whom they h[illegible]onfidence to sail in the vessel as su[illegible]rgo.

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"The doctors tell me, Peters, that in two or three months I may be able to return home and to get about on crutches, but they advise me that it will be at least another four months before I can strap on a wooden leg and trust my weight to it. When I can do that, I shall see how I can get about. You heard from Ned last night that he is going to enter as a sort of volunteer under the Prince of Orange?"

"Yes, he told me, Captain Martin. He is a lad of spirit; and if I were fifteen years younger I would go with him."

"He is young for such work yet," Captain Martin said doubtfully.

"He is a strong youth, Captain Martin, and can do a man's work. His training at sea has made him steady and cool; and I warrant me, if he gets into danger, he will get out again if there is a chance. I only hope, Captain Martin, that the brush we have had with the Spaniards will not be our last, and that we too may be in the way of striking a blow at the Spaniards."

"I hope that we may, Peters," Captain Martin said earnestly. "My mind is as much bent upon it as is Ned's and I will tell you what must at present be known only to yourself, that I have made up my mind that if I recover, and can take command of the Good Venture again, I will buy up the other shares, so that I can do what I like with her without accounting to any man. I need not do so much on board as I used to do, but will get you a good second mate, and will myself only direct. Then we will, as at present, trade between London and the Netherlands; but if, as is likely enough, the Spaniards and Hollanders come to blows at sea, or the prince needs ships to carry troops to beleaguered towns, then for a time we will quit trading and will

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join with the Good Venture, and strike a blow at sea."

"That is good hearing, Captain Martin," Peters said, rubbing his hands. "I warrant me you will not find one of the crew backward at that work, and for my part I should like nothing better than to tackle a Spaniard who does not carry more than two or three times our own strength. The last fellow was a good deal too big for us, but I believe if we had stuck to him we should have beaten him in the end, big as he was."

"Perhaps we might, Peters; but the ship was not mine to risk then, and we had cargo on board. If, in the future, we meet a Spaniard when the ship is mine to venture, and our hold is clear, the Good Venture shall not show him her stern I warrant you, unless he be big enough to eat us."

On the following day the Good Venture set sail for England, and the burgomaster having received a message from Captain Martin, praying him to call upon him, paid him a visit. Captain Martin unfolded his son's plans to him, and prayed him to furnish him with a letter to the prince recommending him as one who might be trusted, and who was willing to risk his life upon any enterprise with which he might intrust him. This the burgomaster at once consented to do.

"Younger lads than he," he said, "have fought stoutly on the walls of some of our towns against the Spaniards; and since such is his wish, I doubt not he will be able to do good service. All Holland has heard how your ship beat off the Don Pedro; and the fact that the lad is your son, and took part in the fight, will at once commend him to the prince. All Englishmen are gladly received; not only because they come to fight as volunteers on our side, but as a pledge that the heart of

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England is with us, and that sooner or later she will join us in our struggle against Spain. And doubtless, as you say, the fact that the lad is by his mother's side one of us, and that he can converse in both our language and yours with equal ease, is greatly in his favor. To-morrow I will furnish him with letters to the prince, and also to two or three gentlemen of my acquaintances, who are in the prince's councils."

When the burgomaster had left, Captain Martin called Ned in.

"Now, you are going as a volunteer, Ned, and for a time, at any rate, there must be no question of pay; you are giving your services and not selling them. In the first place you must procure proper attire, in which to present yourself to the prince; you must also purchase a helmet, breast and back pieces, with sword and pistols. As for money, I shall give you a purse with sufficient for your present needs, and a letter which you can present to any of the merchants in the seaports with whom we have trade, authorizing you to draw upon me, and praying them to honor your drafts. Do not stint yourself of money, and do not be extravagant. Your needs will be small, and when serving in a garrison or in the field you will, of course, draw rations like others. I need not give you a list of the merchants in the various towns, since you already know them, and have been with me at many of their places of business.

In regard to your actions, I say to you do not court danger, but do not avoid it. The cause is a good one, and you are risking your life for it; but remember also that you are an only son, and there are none to fill your place if you fall. Therefore be not rash; keep always cool in danger, and if there is a prospect of escape seize it promptly. Remember that your death can in no way

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benefit Holland, while your life may do so; therefore do not from any mistaken sense of heroism throw away your life in vain defense when all hope of success is over, but rather seek some means of escape by which, when all is lost, you can manage to avoid the vengeance of the Spaniards. I fear that there will be many defeats before success can be obtained, for there is no union among the various states or cities.

"Holland and Zeeland alone seem in earnest in the cause, though Friesland and Guelderland will perhaps join heartily; but these provinces alone are really Protestant, in the other the Catholics predominate, and I fear they will never join heartily in resistance to Spain. How this narrow strip of land by the sea is to resist all the power of Spain I cannot see; but I believe in the people and in their spirit, and am convinced that sooner than fall again into the grasp of the Inquisition they will open the sluices and let the sea in over the country they have so hardly won from it, and will embark on board ship and seek in some other country that liberty to worship God in their own way that is denied them here."

It was not necessary to purchase many articles of clothing, for the dress of the people of Holland differed little from that of the English. Ned bought a thick buff jerkin to wear under his armor, and had little difficulty in buying steel cap, breast and back piece, sword and pistol; for the people of Holland had not as yet begun to arm generally, and many of the walls were defended by burghers in their citizen dress, against the mail-clad pikemen of Spain.

Three days later Ned took a tearful farewell of his family, and set sail in a small vessel bound for Rotterdam, where the Prince of Orange at present was. The voyage was made without adventure, and upon landing

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Ned at once made his way to the house occupied by the prince. There were no guards at the gate, or any sign of martial pomp. The door stood open, and when Ned entered a page accosted him and asked him his business.

"I have letters for the prince," he said, "which I pray you to hand to him when he is at leisure."

"In that case you would have to wait long," the page replied, "for the prince is at work from early morning until late at night, However, he is always open of access to those who desire to see him, therefore if you will give me the name of the writer of the letter you bear I will inform him, and you can then deliver it yourself." A minute later Ned was shown into the presence of the man who was undoubtedly the foremost of his age.

Born of a distinguished family, William of Orange had been brought up by a pious mother, and at the age of twelve had become a page in the family of the Emperor Charles. So great was the boy's ability, that at fifteen he had become the intimate and almost confidential friend of the emperor, who was a keen judge of merit.

Before he reached the age of twenty-one he was named commander-in-chief of the army on the French frontier. When the Emperor Charles resigned, the prince was appointed by Philip to negotiate a treaty with France, and had conducted these negotiations with extreme ability. The prince and the Duke of Alva remained in France as hostages for the execution of the treaty. Alva was secretly engaged in arranging an agreement between Philip and Henry for the extirpation of Protestantism, and the general destruction of all those who held that faith. The French king, believing that the Prince of Orange was also in the secret,

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spoke to him one day when out hunting freely on the subject, and gave him all the details of the understanding that had been entered into for a general massacre of the Protestants throughout the dominions of France and Spain.

The Prince of Orange neither by word or look indicated that all this was new to him, and the king remained in ignorance of how completely he had betrayed the plans of himself and Philip. It was his presence of mind and reticence, while listening to this astounding relation, that gained for the Prince of Orange the title of William the Silent. Horror-struck at the plot he had discovered, the prince from that moment threw himself into the cause of the Protestants of the Netherlands, and speedily became the head of the movement, devoting his whole property and his life to the object. So far it had brought him only trials and troubles.

His estate and that of his brothers had been spent in the service; he had incurred enormous debts; the armies of German mercenaries he had raised had met with defeat and ruin; the people of the Netherlands, crushed down with the apathy of despair, had not lifted a finger to assist the forces that had marched to their aid. It was only when almost by an accident Brill had been captured by the sea beggars that the spark he had for so many years been trying to fan burst into flame in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland.

The prince had been sustained through his long and hitherto fruitless struggle by a deep sense of religion. He believed that God was with him and would eventually save the people of the Netherlands from the fate to which Philip had doomed them. And yet, though an ardent Protestant, and in an age when Protestants were well nigh as bigoted as Catholics, and when the idea of relig-

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ious freedom had scarce entered into the minds of men, the prince was perfectly tolerant, and from the first insisted that in all the provinces over which he exercised authority the same perfect freedom of worship should be granted to the Catholics that he claimed for the Protestants in the Catholic states of the Netherlands.

He had not always been a Protestant. When appointed by Philip stadtholder of Holland, Friesland, Utrecht, he had been a moderate Catholic. But his thoughts were but little turned to religious subjects, and it was as a patriot and a man of humane nature that he had been shocked at the discovery that he had made, of the determination of the kings of France and Spain to extirpate the Protestants. He used this knowledge first to secretly urge the people of the Netherlands to agitate for the removal of the Spanish troops from the country; and although he had secret instructions from Philip to enforce the edicts against all heretics with vigor, he avoided doing so as much as was in his power, and sent private warnings to many whom he knew to be in danger of arrest.

As governor of the Netherlands at the age of twenty-six, he was rich, powerful, and of sovereign rank. He exercised a splendid hospitality, and was universally beloved by the whole community for the charm of his manner and his courtesy to people of all ranks. Even at this period the property which he had inherited from his father, and that he had received with his first wife, Anne of Egmont, the richest heiress of the Netherlands, had been seriously affected by his open-handed hospitality and lavish expenditure. His intellect was acknowledged to be of the highest class. He had extraordinary adroitness and capacity for conducting state affairs. His knowledge of human nature was profound. He

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had studied deeply, and spoke and wrote with facility Latin, French, German, Flemish, and Spanish.

The epithet Silent was in no way applicable to his general character. He could be silent when speech was dangerous, but at other times he was a most cheerful and charming companion, and in public the most eloquent orator and the most brilliant controversialist of his age. Thirteen years had passed since then, thirteen years spent in incessant troubles and struggles. The brilliant governor of Philip in theNetherlands had for years been an exile; the careless Catholic had become an earnest and sincere Protestant; the wealthy noble had been harassed with the pecuniary burdens he had undertaken in order to raise troops for the rescue of his countrymen.

He had seen his armies defeated, his plans overthrown, his countrymen massacred by tens of thousands, his coreligionists burnt, hung, and tortured, and it was only now that the spirit of resistance was awakening among his countrymen. But misfortune and trial had not soured his temper: his faith that sooner or later the cause would triumph had never wavered. His patience was inexhaustible, his temper beyond proof. The incapacity of many in whom he had trusted, the jealousies and religious differences which prevented anything like union between the various states, the narrowness and jealousy even of those most faithful to the cause, would have driven most men to despair.

Upon his shoulders alone rested the whole weight of the struggle. It was for him to plan and carry out, to negotiate with princes, to organize troops, to raise money to compose jealousies, to rouse the lukewarm and appeal to the waverers. Every detail, great and small, had to be elaborated by him. So far it was not the Netherland-

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it was William of Orange alone who opposed himself to the might of the greatest power in Europe.

Such was the prince to whom Ned Martin was now introduced, and it was with a sense of the deepest reverence that he entered the chamber. He saw before him a man looking ten years older than he really was: whose hair was grizzled and thin from thought and care, whose narrow face was deeply marked by the lines of anxiety and trouble, but whose smile was as kindly, whose manner as kind and gracious as that which had distinguished it when William was the brilliant young stadtholder of the Emperor Philip.

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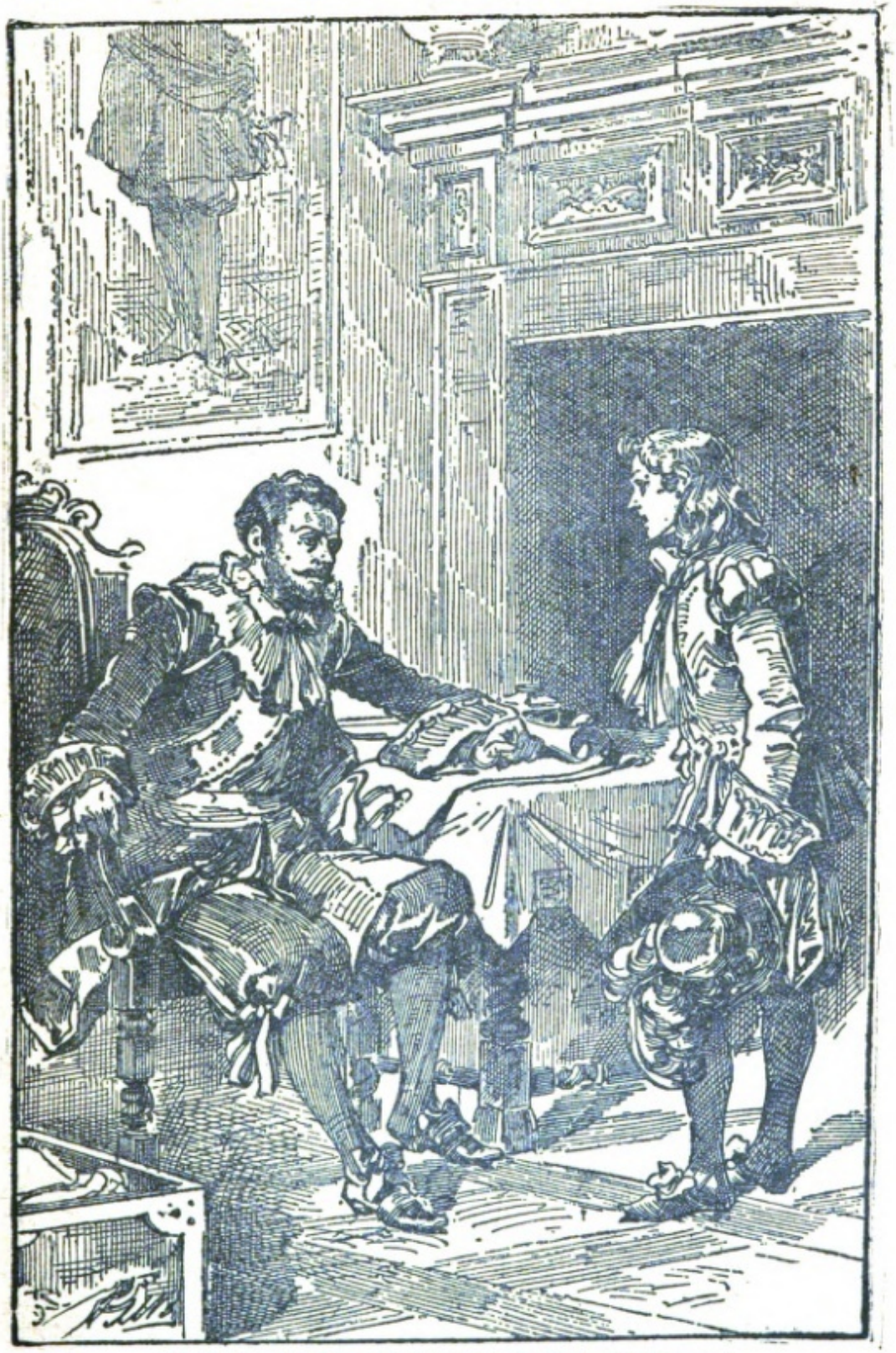

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CHAPTER VII.

A DANGEROUS MISSION.

"I HEAR you have a letter for me from my good friend the burgomaster of Enkhuizen," the Prince of Orange said, as Ned with a deep reverence approached the table at which he was sitting. "He sends me no ill news, I hope?"

"No, your excellency," Ned said: "it is on a matter personal to myself that he has been good enough to write to you, and I crave your pardon beforehand for occupying your time for a moment with so unimportant a subject."

The prince glanced at him keenly as he was speaking and saw that the young fellow before him was using no mere form of words, bnt that he really felt embarrassed at the thought that he was intruding upon his labors. He opened the letter and glanced down it.

"Ah! you are English," he said in surprise. "I thought you a countryman of mine."

"My mother is from Holland, sir," Ned replied; "and has brought me up to speak her language as well as my father's and to feel that Holland is my country as much as England."

"And you are the son of the English Captain, who, lately, as I heard, being stopped in his passage down the Zuider-Zee by the Spanish ship Don Pedro, defended himself so stoutly that he inflicted great loss and damage upon the Spaniard, and brought his ship into Enk-

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huizen without further damage than a grievous wound to himself. The burgomaster tells me that you are anxious to enter my service as a volunteer, and that you have the permission of your parents to do so. Many of your brave compatriots are already coming over; and I am glad indeed of their aid, which I regard as an omen that England will some day bestir herself on our behalf. But you look young for such rough work, young sir. I should not take you for more than eighteen."

"I am not yet eighteen, sir," Ned said, although he did not think it necessary to mention that he still wanted two years to that age. "But even children and women have aided in the defense of their towns."

"It is somewhat strange," the prince said, "that your parents should have countenanced your thus embarking in this matter at so young an age."

"The Spaniards have murdered my grandfather, three of my uncles, and an aunt; and my father would, had it not been that he is disabled by the wound he received, and which has cost him the loss of a leg, have himself volunteered," Ned replied. "But, sir, if you think me too young as yet to fight in the ranks, my father thought that you might perhaps make use of me in other ways. I have sailed up every river in the Netherlands, having been for the last five years in my father's ship trading with these ports, and know their navigation and the depth of water. If you have letters that you want carried to your friends in Flanders, and would intrust them to me, I would deliver them faithfully for you whatever the risk; and being but a boy, could pass perhaps where a man would be suspected. I only ask, sir, to be put to such use as you can make of me, whatever it may be, deeming my life but of slight account in so great and good a cause."

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"No man can offer more," the prince said kindly. "I like your face, young sir, and can see at once that you can be trusted, and that you have entered upon this matter in a serious spirit. Your father has proved himself to be a brave fighter and a skillful sailor, and I doubt not that you are worthy of him. Your youth is no drawback in my eyes, seeing that I myself, long before I reached your age, was mixed up in state affairs, and that the Emperor Charles, my master, did not disdain to listen to my opinions. I accept your offer of service in the name of the Netherlands; and deeming that, as you say, you may be of more service in the way of which you have spoken than were I to attach you to one of the regiments I am raising, I will for the present appoint you as a volunteer attached to my own household, and, trust me, I will not keep you long in idleness." He touched a bell and the page entered. "Take this gentleman," he said, "to Count Nieuwenar, and tell him that he is to have rank as a gentleman volunteer, and will at present remain as a member of my household, and be treated as such."

With a kindly nod he dismissed Ned, who was so affected by the kindness of manner of the prince that he could only murmur a word or two of thanks and assurances of devotion. One of the burgomaster's letters, of which Ned was the bearer, was to Count Nieuwenar, the prince's chamberlain, and when the page introduced him to that officer with the message the prince had given him Ned handed to him the burgomaster's letter. The count ran his eye down it.

"My friend the burgomaster speaks highly in your praise, young sir," he said; "and although it needed not that since the prince himself has been pleased to appoint you to his household, yet I am glad to receive

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so good a report of you. All Holland and Zeeland have been talking of the gallant fight that your father's ship made against the Spaniard; and though I hear that the Queen of England has made remonstrances to the Spanish Ambassador as to this attack upon an English ship, methinks that it is the Spaniards who suffered most in the affair."

"Would you kindly instruct me, sir, in the duties that I have to perform."

"There are no duties whatever," the count said with a smile. "There is no state or ceremony here. The prince lives like a private citizen, and all that you have to do is to behave discreetly, to present yourself at the hours of meals, and to be in readiness to perform any service with which the prince may intrust you; although for what service he destines you, I own that I am in ignorance. But," he said more gravely, "the prince is not a man to cumber himself with persons who are useless to him, nor to keep about his person any save those upon whose fidelity he is convinced that he can rely. Therefore I doubt not that he will find work for you to do, for indeed there is but little ease and quiet for those who serve him. This afternoon I will find for you an apartment, and I may tell you that although you will have at present no duties to perform, and need not therefore keep in close attendance, it would be better that you should never be very long absent: for when the prince wants a thing done he wants it done speedily, and values most those upon whom he can rely at all times of the night and day. Return here at noon, and I will then present you to the gentlemen and officers with whom you will associate."

On leaving the chamberlain Ned walked for some time through the streets of Rotterdam. He scarcely

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noticed where he went, so full were his thoughts of the reception that he had met with, and the more than realization of his hopes. The charm of manner, as well as the real kindness of the prince, had completely captivated him, as indeed they did all who came in contact with him, and he felt that no dangers he could run, no efforts he could make would be too great if he could but win the approbation of so kind a master. He presented himself to the chamberlain at the hour named, and the latter took him to a large hall in which many officers and gentlemen were about to sit down to dinner, and introduced Ned to them as the son of the English captain who had so bravely beaten off the Don Pedro, and whom the Prince of Orange had received into his household in the quality of a gentleman volunteer.

Ned was well received, both on his own account and from the good-will that was entertained toward England. Although personally the Prince of Orange kept up no state and lived most simply and quietly, he still maintained an extensive household, and extended a generous hospitality more suited to his past wealth than to his present necessities. He had the habits of a great noble; and although pressed on all sides for money, and sometimes driven to make what he considered great economies in his establishment, his house was always open to his friends and adherents.

Certainly in the meal to which he sat down Ned saw little signs of economy. There was but little silver plate on the table, for the prince's jewels and plate had been pledged years before for the payment of the German mercenaries; but there was an abundance of food of all kinds generous wine in profusion, and the guests were served by numerous pages and attendants. On the following day the prince rode to Haarlem, accompanied by his

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household and a hundred horsemen, for at Haarlem he had summoned a meeting of the representatives of the states that still remained faithful to him. As soon as they were settled in the quarters assigned to them Ned sallied out to make inquiries concerning the relatives with whom his aunt and cousins had taken refuge. As he knew her maiden name he had no great difficulty in learning the part of the town in which her father dwelt and knowing that the prince would at any rate for the rest of the day be wholly absorbed in important business, made his way thither, introducing himself to the burgher.

"Ah!" the latter said, "I have often heard my daughter speak of her sister-in-law who had married and settled in England. So you are her son? Well, you will find her house in the street that runs along by the city wall, near the Watergate. It was well that she happened to be laid up with illness at the time Alva's ruffians seized and murdered her husband and his family. She was well-nigh distraught for a time, and well she might be; though, indeed, her lot is but that of tens of thousands of others in this unhappy country. I would gladly have welcomed her here, but I have another married daughter who lives with me and keeps my house for me, and as she has half a dozen children the house is well-nigh full. And Elizabeth longed for quiet in her sorrow, so I established her in the little house I tell you of. I have been going to write to your father, but have put it off from time to time, for one has so much to think of in these days that one has no time for private matters. She tells me that her husband and his brothers had, foreseeing the evil times coming, sent money to England to his care, and that it has been invested in houses in London."

"I believe that is so," Ned replied; "and my father,

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who is at present lying sorely wounded at Enkhuizen, will, I am sure, now that he knows where my aunt is, communicate with her by letter on the subject. I will give you his address at Enkhuizen, and as it is but a short journey from here you might perhaps find time to go over and see him, when he will be able to talk freely with you on the subject. Now, with your permission I will go and see my aunt."

Ned had no difficulty in finding the house indicated. He knocked at the door, and it was opened by his aunt herself. She looked up for a moment inquiringly, and then exclaimed:

"Why, it is my nephew, Edward Martin! It is nearly two years since I saw you last, and so much has happened since;" and she burst into tears.

Ned followed her into the house, where he was warmly welcomed by his two cousins—girls of fourteen and fifteen years old. He had first to explain how it was that he had come to Haarlem, and they were grieved indeed to hear what had happened to Captain Martin, who was a great favorite with them.

"And so you have entered the service of the Prince of Orange?" his aunt said when he had finished his story. "Truly I wonder that your father and mother have allowed you to embark in so hopeless an enterprise."

"Not hopeless," Ned said. "Things look dark at present, but either England or France may come to our help. At any rate, aunt, if the Spanish army again sweeps over Holland and Zeeland, surely you, with two girls, will not await its approach. You have friends in England. My father and mother will be only too glad to have you with them till you can make yourself a home close by. And there are the moneys sent over

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that will enable you to live in comfort. It will not be like going among strangers. There is quite a colony of emigrants from the Netherlands already in London. You will find plenty who can speak your language."

"All my family are here," she replied; "my father, and brothers, and sisters. I could never be happy elsewhere."

"Yes, aunt, I can understand that. But if the Spaniards come, how many of your family may be alive here a week afterward?"

The woman threw up her hands in a gesture of despair.

"Well, we must hope for the best, aunt; but I would urge you most strongly if you hear that a Spanish army is approaching to fly to England if there be an opportunity open to you, or if not to leave the city and go to some town or village as far from here as possible."

"Haarlem is strong, and can stand a stout siege," the woman said confidently.

"I have no doubt it can, aunt. But the Spaniards are good engineers and unless the Prince of Orange is strong enough to march to its succor, sooner or later it must fall; and you know what happens then."

"Why should they come here more than elsewhere? There are many other towns that lie nearer to them."

"That is so, aunt. But from the walls you can see the towns and spires of Amsterdam, and that city serves them as a gathering place in the heart of the country whence they may strike blows all round; and, therefore, as you lie so close, one of the first blows may be struck here. Besides, if they take Haarlem, they cut the long strip of land that almost alone remains faithful to the prince asunder. Well, aunt, please think it over. If you doubt my words write to my mother at Enkhui-

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sen. I warrant she will tell you how gladly she will receive you in England, and how well you may make yourself a home there. I do not know how long I am to be staying here, and I have to be in close attendance on the prince in case he may suddenly have occasion for my services, but I will come down every day for a talk with you; and I do hope that for the sake of my cousins, if not for your own, you will decide to leave this troubled land for a time, and to take refuge in England, where none will interfere with your religion, and where you can live free from the Spaniards' cruel bigotry."

Ned remained for a fortnight without any particular duties. When the prince was closeted with persons of importance, and he knew that there was no chance of his being required, he spent much of his time at his aunt's. He was beginning to feel weary of hanging about the prince's antechamber doing nothing, when one day a page came up to him and told him that the prince required his presence. He followed the boy to the prince's cabinet, full of hope that he was to have an opportunity of proving that he was in earnest in his offers of service to the cause of Holland.

"I dare say you began to think that I had forgotten you," the prince began when the page had retired and the curtain had fallen behind him, "but it is not so. Until to-day I have had no occasion for your services, but have now a mission to intrust to you. I have letters that I wish carried to Brussels and delivered to some of my friends there. You had best start at once in the disguise of a peasant-boy. You must sew up your despatches in your jerkin, and remember that if they are found upon you a cruel death will surely be your fate. If you safely carry out your mission in Brussels return

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with the answers you will receive by such route as may seem best to you; for this must depend upon the movements of the Spaniards. The chamberlain will furnish you with what money you may require."

"Thanks, your excellency, I am provided with sufficient means for such a journey."

"I need not tell you, my lad, to be careful and prudent. Remember, not only is your own life at stake, but that the interest of the country will suffer, and the lives of many will be forfeited should you fail in your mission. You will see that there are no names upon these letters; only a small private mark, differing in each case, by which you can distinguish them. Here is a paper which is a key to those marks. You must, before you start, learn by heart the names of those for whom the various letters are intended. In this way, should the letters fall into the hands of the Spaniards, they will have no clue as to the names of those to whom they are addressed.

"This paper, on which is written, 'To the Blue Cap in the South Corner of the Market Square of Brussels,' is intended to inclose all the other letters, and when you have learned the marks Count Nieuwenar will fasten them up in it and seal it with my seal. The object of doing this is, that should you be captured, you can state that your instructions from me are to deliver the packet to a man with a blue cap, who will meet you at the south corner of the Market Square at Brussels, and, touching you on the shoulder, ask 'How blows the wind in Holland?' These are the instructions I now give you. If such a man comes to you you will deliver the packet to him, if not you will open it and deliver the letters. But this last does not form part of your instructions.

"This device will not save your life if you are taken, but it may save you from torture and others from death.

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For were these unaddressed letters found upon you, you would be put to such cruel tortures that flesh and blood could not withstand them, and the names of those for whom these letters are intended would be wrung from you; but inclosed as they are to Master Blue Cap, it may be believed that you are merely a messenger whose instructions extend no further than the handing over the parcel to a friend of mine in Brussels. Now, you have no time to lose. You have your disguise to get, and these signs and the names they represent to commit to heart. A horse will be ready in two hours' time to take you to Rotterdam, whence you will proceed in a coasting vessel to Sluys or Axel."

At the time named Ned was in readiness. He was dressed now as a young Flemish peasant. He had left the chest with his clothes, together with his armor and weapons, in the care of his aunt's father, for he hoped that before his return she would have left the town. He could not, however, obtain any promise that she would do so. Her argument was, if other women could stay in Haarlem why should she not do the same. Her friends and family were there; and although, if the Spaniards were to besiege the town, she might decide to quit it, she could not bring herself to go into exile, unless indeed all Holland was conquered and all hope gone.

Ned carried a stout stick; which was a more formidable weapon than it looked, for the knob was loaded with lead. He hesitated about taking pistols; for if at any time he were searched and such weapons found upon him the discovery might prove fatal, for a peasant boy certainly would not be carrying weapons that were at that time costly and comparatively rare. His despatches were sewn up in the lining of his coat, and his money, beyond that required for the present use, hidden

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in his big boots. A country horse with rough trappings, such as a small farmer might ride, was in readiness, and mounting this he rode to Rotterdam, some thirty-five miles distant, and there put it up at a small inn, where he had been charged to leave it.

He then walked down to the river and inquired about boats sailing for the ports of Sluys or Axel. He was not long in discovering one that would start the next day for the latter place, and after bargaining with the master for a passage returned to the inn. The next morning he set sail soon after daybreak. There were but three or four other passengers, and Ned was not long before he established himself on friendly terms with the master and the four men that constituted the crew.

"I wonder," he said presently to the master, "that trade still goes on between the towns of Holland and those in the provinces that hold to Alva."

"The citizens of those towns are greatly divided in their opinions," the captain said. "Many would gladly rise if they had the chance, but they lie too close to the Spanish power to venture to do so. Still they are friendly enough to us; and as they have need of our goods and we of theirs, no one hinders traffic or interferes with those who come and go. Most of these towns have but small Spanish garrisons, and these concern themselves not with anything that goes on beyond maintaining the place for Spain. It is the Catholic magistrates appointed by Alva who manage the affairs of the towns, and as these are themselves mostly merchants and traders, their interests lie in keeping the ports open and encouraging trade, so we come and go unquestioned. The Spaniards have enough on their hands already without causing discontent by restricting

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trade. Besides, the duke affects to consider the rising in Holland and Zeeland as a trifling rebellion which he can suppress without difficulty, and it would be giving too much importance to the movement were he to close all the ports and forbid communication."

"Will you go outside or inside Walcheren?"

"Outside," the captain replied. "It is the longest way, but the safest. The Spaniards hold Middleburg and Tergoes, and have lately defeated the force from Flushing that endeavored to capture Tergoes. There are many of our craft and some of the Spaniards in the pssages, and fighting often takes place. It is better to avoid risks of trouble, although it may be a few leagues further round by Walcheren. I am ready to take my share of the fighting when it is needful, and aid in carrying the troops across from Flushing and back, but when I have goods in my hold I like to keep as well away from it as may be."

They cast anchor off Flushing, for the wind was now foul, but when tide turned they again got under way and beat up the channel to Axel. No questions were asked as they drew up alongside the wharves. Ned at once stepped ashore and made his way to a small inn, chiefly frequented by sailors, near the jetty. The shades of night were just falling as they arrived, and he thought it were better not to attempt to proceed further until the following morning. He had been several times at Axel in the Good Venture, and was familiar with the town. The population was a mixed one, for although situated in Brabant, Axel had so much communication with the opposite shores of Holland that a considerable portion of the population had imbibed something of the spirit that animated their neighbors, and would, if opportunity offered, have gladly thrown

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off the authority of the officials appointed by the Spaniards.

Ned knew that as a stranger he should be viewed with great suspicion by the frequenters of the little inn, for the spy system was carried to such an extent that people were afraid to utter their sentiments even in the bosom of their own families. He therefore walked about until it was time to retire to rest, and in that way escaped alike the suspicions and questionings he might otherwise have encountered. He could easily have satisfied them as to the past—he had just arrived in the coasting smack the Hopeful from Rotterdam, and the master of the craft could, if questioned, corroborate his statement—but it would not be so easy to satisfy questioners as to the object of his coming. Why should a lad from Holland want to come to Brabant? Every one knew that work was far more plentiful in the place he had come from than in the states under the Spaniards, where the cultivators scarce dare sow crops sufficient for their own consumption, so extensive was the pillaging carried on by the Spanish troops.

These, always greatly in arrears of pay, did not hesitate to take all they required from the unfortunate inhabitants; and the latter knew that resistance or complaint was alike useless, for the soldiers were always on the verge of mutiny. The officers had little control over them; and Alva himself was always short of money, and being unable to pay his troops was obliged to allow them to maintain themselves upon the country.

As soon as the gates were open in the morning Ned made his way to that through which the road to Brussels ran. The four or five Spanish soldiers at the gate asked no questions, and Ned passed on with a brisk step.

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He had gone about three miles when he heard sounds of horses' hoofs behind him, and presently two men came along. One was, by his appearance, a person of some importance, the other he took to be his clerk. Ned doffed his hat as the horse went past.

"Where are you going, lad?" the elder of the two men asked.

"I am going, worshipful sir, to see some friends who live at the village of Deligen, near Brussels."

"These are evil times for traveling. Your tongue shows that you come not from Brabant."

"No, sir, my relations lived at Vordwyk, hard by Amsterdam."

"Amsterdam is a faithful city; although there, as elsewhere, there are men who are traitors to their king and false to their faith. You are not one of them, I hope?"

"I do not know," Ned said, "that I am bound to answer questions of any that ride by the highway, unless I know that they have right and authority to question me."

"I have right and authority," the man said angrily. "My name is Philip Von Aert, and I am one of the council charged by the viceroy to investigate into these matters."

Ned again doffed his hat. "I know your name, worshipful sir, as that of one who is foremost in searching out heretics. There are few in the land, even ignorant country boys like myself, who have not heard it."

The councilor looked gratified. "Ah! you have heard me well spoken of?" he said.

"I have heard you spoken of, sir, well or ill, according to the sentiments of those who spoke."

"And why have you left Amsterdam to journey so

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far from home? This is a time when all men must be looked upon with suspicion until they prove themselves to be good Catholics and faithful subjects of the king, and even a boy like you may be engaged upon treasonable business. I ask you again why are you leaving your family at Amsterdam?"

"Misfortunes have fallen upon them," Ned replied, "and they can no longer maintain me."

"Misfortunes, ah! and of what kind?"

"Their business no longer brings them in profit," Ned replied. "They lived, as I told your worship, not in the town itself, but in a village near it, and in these troubled times trade is well-nigh at a standstill, and there is want at many a man's door."

"I shall stop for the night at Antwerp, where I have business to do; see when you arrive there that you call upon me. I must have further talk with you, for your answers do not satisfy me."

Ned bowed low.

"Very well, see that you fail not, or it will be the worse for you." So saying Von Aert put spurs to his horse, which had been walking alongside Ned as he conversed and rode forward at a gallop.

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CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE HANDS OF THE BLOOD COUNCIL.

"YOU are an evil-looking pair of scoundrels," Ned said to himself as he looked after the retreating figures of the two men. "The master I truly know by name as one of the worst instruments of the tyrant; as to the man, knave is written on his face. He is as thin as a scarecrow—he has a villainous squint and an evil smile on his face. If I had been bent on any other errand I would have given very different answers, and taken my chance of holding my own with this good stick of mine. At any rate I told them no absolute lies. The council or will not have a chance of asking me any more questions this evening, and I only hope that he will be too busy to think any more about it. I will take the road through Ghent; it matters little which way I go, for the two roads seem to me to be of nearly equal distance."

He therefore at once left the road he was following, and struck across the fields northward until he came upon the road to Ghent, at which town he arrived soon after noon, having walked two or three and twenty miles. Fearing to be questioned he passed through the town without stopping, crossed the Scheldt and continued his way for another five miles, when he stopped at the village of Gontere. He entered a small inn:

"I wish to stop here for the night," he said, "if you have room?"

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"Room enough and to spare," the host replied. "There is no scarcity of room, though there is of good fare; a party of soldiers from Ghent paid a visit to us yesterday, and have scarce left a thing to eat in the village. However, I suppose we ought to feel thankful that they did not take our lives also."

"Peter," a shrill voice cried from inside the house, "how often have I told you not to be gossiping on public affairs with strangers? Your tongue will cost you your head presently, as I have told you a score of times."

"Near a hundred I should say, wife," the innkeeper replied. "I am speaking no treason, but am only explaining why our larder is empty, save some black bread and some pig's flesh we bought an hour ago; besides, this youth is scarce likely to be one of the duke's spies."

"There you are again," the woman cried angrily. "You want to leave me a widow, and your children fatherless, Peter Grantz. Was a woman ever tormented with such a man?"

"I am not so sure that it is not the other way," the man grumbled in an undertone. "Why, wife," he went on, raising his voice, "who is there to say anything against us. Don't I go regularly to mass, and send our good priest a fine fish or the best cut off the joint two or three times a week. What can I do more? Any one would think to hear you talk that I was a heretic."

"I think you are more fool than heretic," his wife said angrily, "and that is the best hope for us. But come in, boy, and sit down; my husband will keep you gossiping at the door for the next hour if you would listen to him."

"I shall not be sorry to sit down, mistress," Ned said

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entering the low-roofed room. "I have walked from Axel since morning."

"That is a good long walk truly," the woman said. "Are you going on to Brussels? If so, your nearest way would have been by Antwerp."

"I took the wrong road," Ned said; "and as they told me that there was but a mile or two difference between them, I thought I might as well keep on the one I had first taken."

"You are from Holland are you not, by your speech?" the woman asked.

"Yes; I have come from Holland," Ned replied.

"And is it true what they say, that the people there have thrown off the authority of the duke, and are going to venture themselves against all the strength of Spain?"

"Some have risen and some have not," Ned replied. "None can say what will come of it."

"You had best not say much about your coming from Holland," the woman said; "for they say that well-nigh all from that province are heretics, and to be even suspected of being a heretic in Brabant is enough to cost any one his life."

"I am not one to talk," Ned replied; "but I thank you for your caution, mistress. I have been questioned already by Philip Von Aert, and he said he would see me again, but in truth I have no intention of further intruding on him."

"He is one of the Council of Blood," the woman said, dropping her voice and looking round anxiously; "and one of the most cruel of them. Beware, my lad, how you fall into his hands, for be assured he will show you no mercy, if he has reason to suspect, but in the slightest, that you are not a good Catholic and loyal to the

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Spaniards. Rich or poor, gentle or simple, woman or child, it is naught to him. There is no mercy for heretics, whomsoever they may be; and unless you can satisfy him thoroughly your best plan is to go back at once to Axel, and to cross to Holland. You do not know what they are. There are spies in every town and village, and were it known what I have said to you now, little though that be, it would go hard with me. Women have been burned or strangled for far less."

"I will be careful," Ned said. "I have business which takes me to Brussels, but when that is discharged I shall betake me back to Holland as soon as I can."

By this time the woman, who had been standing over the fire while she was talking, had roasted two or three slices of pork, and these, with a piece of black bread and a jug of ale, she placed before Ned.

Her husband, who had been standing at the door, now came in.

"You are no wiser than I am, wife, with all your scolding. I have been listening to your talk; you have scolded me whenever I open my lips, and there you yourself say things ten times as dangerous."

"I say them inside the house, Peter Grantz," she retorted, "and don't stand talking at the door so that all the village may hear me. The lad is honest, as I can see by his face, and if I could do aught for him I would do so."

"I should be glad if you could tell me of some little place where I could put up in Brussels; some place where I could stay while looking out for work, without any one troubling themselves as to whence I came or where I am going, or what are my views as to religion or politics."

"That were a difficult matter," the woman replied.

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"It is not that the landlords care what party those who visit their house belong to, but that for aught they know there may be spies in their own household; and in these days it is dangerous even to give shelter to one of the new religion. Therefore, although landlords may care nothing who frequent their houses, they are in a way forced to do so lest they themselves should be denounced as harborers of heretics. Brussels has a strong party opposed to the duke; for you know that it is not those of the new religion only who would gladly see the last of the Spaniards. There are but few heretics in Brabant now, the Inquisition and the Council of Blood have made an end of most, others have fled either to France, or England, or Holland, some have outwardly conformed to the rites of the Church, and there are few indeed who remain openly separated from her, though in their hearts they may remain heretics as before.

"Still there are great numbers who long to see the old Constitution restored—to see persecution abolished, the German and Spanish troops sent packing, and to be ruled by our own laws under the viceroy of the King of Spain. Therefore in Brussels you are not likely to be very closely questioned. There are great numbers of officials, a small garrison, and a good many spies; all of these are for the duke, the rest of the population would rise to-morrow did they see a chance of success. I should say that you are more likely, being a stranger, of being suspected of being a spy than of being a heretic—that is if you are one, which I do not ask and do not want to know. The people of Brussels are not given to tumults as are those of Antwerp and Ghent, but are a quiet people going their own way. Being the capital there are more strangers resort there than to

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other places, and therefore people come and go without inquiry; still were I you I would, if you have any good reason for avoiding notice, prefer to lodge outside the city, entering the gates of a morning, doing what business you may have during the day, and leaving again before sunset. That way you would altogether avoid questionings, and will attract no more attention than other country people going in to sell their goods."

"Thank you, I will follow your advice," Ned said. "I have no wish to get into trouble, and being a stranger there I should have difficulty in proving that my story is a true one were I questioned."

The next morning Ned set out at daybreak, and arrived at Brussels early in the afternoon. He had determined to adopt the advice given him the evening before; and also that he would not endeavor to get a lodging in any of the villages.

"It will not take me more than a day, or at most two days, to deliver my letters," he thought to himself, "and there will be no hardship in sleeping in the fields or under a tree for a couple of nights. In that way I shall escape all notice, for people talk in villages even more than they do in towns." He had decided that he would not that day endeavor to deliver any of the letters, but would content himself with walking about the town and learning the names of the streets, so that he could set about delivering the letters without the necessity for asking many questions. When within half a mile of the town he left the road, and cutting open the lining of his jerkin took out the letters. Then he cut up a square piece of turf with his knife, scooped out a little earth, inserted the packet of letters, and then stamped down the sod above it. In another hole close to it he buried the money hidden in his boot, and

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then returning to the road walked on into Brussels, feeling much more comfortable now that he had for a time got rid of documents that would cost him his life were they found upon him.

Passing through the gates, he wandered about for some hours through the streets, interested in the stir and bustle that prevailed. Mingled with the grave citizens were Spanish and German soldiers, nobles with their trains of pages and followers, deputies from other towns of Brabant and Artois, monks and priests, country people who had brought in their produce, councilors and statesmen, Spanish nobles and whining mendicants. He learned the names of many of the streets, and marked the houses of those for whom he had letters. Some of these were nobles, others citizens of Brussels. He bought some bread and cheese in the market-place, and ate them sitting on a doorstep; and having tied some food in a bundle to serve for supper, he left the town well satisfied with his discoveries.

He slept under the shelter of a haystack, and in the morning dug up the packet, sewed it up in its hiding-place again, and re-entered the city as soon as the gates were opened, going in with a number of market-people who had congregated there awaiting the opening of the gates. In a very short time the shops were all opened; for if people went to bed early, they were also astir early in those days. He went first toward the house of one of the burghers, and watched until he saw the man himself appear at the door of his shop; then he walked across the street.

"The weather is clear," he said, "but the sun is nigh hidden with clouds."

The burgher gave a slight start; then Ned went on: "I have brought you tidings from the farm."

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"Come in," the burgher said in loud tones, so that he could be heard by his two assistants in the shop. "My wife will be glad to hear tidings of her old nurse, who was ill when she last heard from her. You can reassure her in that respect, I hope?"

"Yes, she is mending fast," Ned replied, as he followed the burgher through the shop.

The man led the way upstairs, and then into a small sitting-room. He closed the door behind him.

"Now," he asked, "what message do you bring from Holland."

"I bring a letter," Ned replied; and taking out his knife again he cut the threads of the lining and produced the packet. The silk that bound it, and which was fastened by the prince's seal, was so arranged that it could be slipped off, and so enable the packet to be opened without breaking the seal. Ned took out the letters; and after examining the marks on the corners handed one to the burgher. The latter opened and read the contents.

"I am told," he said when he had finished, "not to give you an answer in writing, but to deliver it by word of mouth. Tell the prince that I have sounded many of my guild, and that certainly the greater part of the weavers will rise and join in expelling the Spaniards whenever a general rising has been determined upon; and it is certain that all the other chief towns will join in the movement. Unless it is general, I fear that nothing can be done. So great is the consternation that has been caused by the sack of Mechlin, the slaughter of thousands of the citizens, and the horrible atrocities upon the women, that no city alone will dare to provoke the vengeance of Alva. All must rise or none will do so. I am convinced that Brussels will do her part, if

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others do theirs; although, as the capital, it is upon her the first brunt of the Spanish attack will fall. In regard to money, tell him that at present none can be collected. In the first place, we are all well-nigh ruined by the exactions of the Spanish; and in the next, however well disposed we may be, there are few who would commit themselves by subscribing for the cause until the revolt is general and successful. Then, I doubt not that the councilors would vote as large a subsidy as the city could afford to pay. Four at least of the members of the council of our guild can be thoroughly relied upon, and the prince can safely communicate with them. These are Gunther, Barneveldt, Hasselaer, and Buys."

"Please, repeat them again," Ned said, "in order that I may be sure to remember them rightly."

"As to general toleration," the burgher went on, after repeating the names, "in matters of religion, although there are many differences of opinion, I think that the prince's commands on this head will be complied with, and that it would be agreed that Lutherans, Calvinists, and other sects will be allowed to assemble for worship without hindrance; but the Catholic feeling is very strong, especially among the nobles, and the numbers of those secretly inclined to the new religion has decreased greatly in the past few years, just as they have increased in Holland and Zeeland, where, as I hear, the people are now well-nigh all Protestants. Please assure the prince of my devotion to him personally, and that I shall do my best to further his plans and can promise him that the Guild of Weavers will be among the first to rise against the tyranny of the Spaniards."

Ned, as he left the house, decided that the man be

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had visited was not one of those who would be of any great use in an emergency. He was evidently well enough disposed to the cause, but was not one to take any great risks, or to join openly in the movement unless convinced that success was assured for it. He was walking along, thinking the matter over, when he was suddenly and roughly accosted. Looking up he saw the Councilor Von Aert and his clerk; the former with an angry look on his face, the latter, who was close beside his master, and who had evidently drawn his attention to him, with a malicious grin of satisfaction.

"Hullo, sirrah," the councilor said angrily, "did I not tell you to call upon me at Antwerp?"

Ned took off his hat, and said humbly, "I should of course have obeyed your worship's order had I passed through Antwerp; but I afterward remembered that I had cause to pass through Ghent and therefore took that road knowing well that one so insignificant as myself could have nothing to tell your worship that should occupy your valuable time."

"That we will see about," the councilor said grimly. "Genet, lay your hand upon this young fellow's collar. We will lodge him in safe keeping and inquire into the matter when we have leisure. I doubt not that you were right when you told me that you suspected he was other than he seemed."

Ned glanced round; a group of Spanish soldiers were standing close by, and he saw that an attempt at escape would be hopeless. He therefore walked quietly along by the side of the clerk's horse, determining to wrest himself from the man's hold and run for it the instant he saw an opportunity. Unfortunately, however, he was unaware that they were at the moment within fifty yards of the prison. Several bystanders who had heard

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the conversation followed to see the result; and other passers-by, seeing Ned led by the collar behind the dreaded councilor, speedily gathered around with looks expressing no good will to Von Aert.

The Spanish soldiers, however, accustomed to frays with the townspeople, at once drew their weapons and closed round the clerk and his captive, and two minutes later they arrived at the door of the prison, and Ned, completely taken by surprise, found himself thrust in and the door closed behind him before he had time to decide upon his best course.

"You will place this prisoner in a secure place," the councilor said. "It is a case of grave suspicion; and I will myself question him later on. Keep an eye upon him until I come again."

Ned was handed over to two warders, who conducted him to a chamber in the third story. Here, to his dismay, one of his jailers took up his post, while the other retired, locking the door behind him. Thus the intention Ned had formed as he ascended the stairs of destroying the documents as soon as he was alone, was frustrated. The warder took his place at the window which looked into an inner court of the prison and putting his head out entered into conversation with some of his comrades in the yard below.

Ned regretted now that he had, before leaving the burgher, again sewn up the letters in his doublet. Had he carried them loosely about him he could have chewed them up one by one and swallowed them; but he dared not attempt to get at them now as his warder might at any moment look round. The latter was relieved twice during the course of the day. None of the men paid any attention to the prisoner. The succession of victims who entered the walls of the prison only to quit them

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for the gallows was so rapid that they had no time to concern themselves with their affairs. Probably the boy was a heretic; but whether or not, if he had incurred the enmity of Councilor Von Aert, his doom was sealed.

It was late in the evening before a warder appeared at the door, and said that the councilor was below, and that the prisoner was to be brought before him. Ned was led by the two men to a chamber on the ground floor. Here Von Aert, with two of his colleagues, was seated at a table, the former's clerk standing behind him.

"This is a prisoner I myself made this morning," Von Aert said to his companions. "I overtook him two miles this side of Axel, and questioned him. He admitted that he came from Holland; and his answers were so unsatisfactory that I ordered him strictly to call upon me at Antwerp, not having time at that moment to question him further. Instead of obeying, he struck off from the road and took that through Ghent; and I should have heard no more of him had I not by chance encountered him this morning in the street here. Has he been searched?" he asked the warder.

"No, your excellency. You gave no orders that he should be examined."

"Fools!" the councilor said angrily; "this is the way you do your duty. Had he been the bearer of important correspondence he might have destroyed it by now."

"We have not left him, your excellency. He has never been alone for a moment, and had no opportunity whatever for destroying anything."

"Well, search that bundle first," the councilor said.

The bundle was found to contain nothing suspicious.

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"Now, take off his doublet and boots and examine them carefully. Let not a seam or corner escape you."

Accustomed to the work, one of the warders had scarcely taken the doublet in his hand when he proclaimed that there was a parcel sewn up in the lining.

"I thought so!" Von Aert exclaimed, beaming with satisfaction at his own perspicacity. "I thought there was something suspicious about the fellow. I believe I can almost smell out a heretic or a traitor."

The councilor's colleagues murmured their admiration at his acuteness.

"What have we here?" Von Aert went on, as he examined the packet. "A sealed parcel addressed 'To the Blue Cap in the South Corner of the Market Square of Brussels.' What think you of that, my friends, for mystery and treason? Now, let us see the contents. Ah, ten letters without addresses! But I see there are marks different from each other on the corners. Ah!" he went on with growing excitement, as he tore one open and glanced at the contents, "from the arch-traitor himself to conspirators here in Brussels. This is an important capture indeed. Now, sirrah, what have you to say to this? For whom are these letters intended?"

"I know nothing of the contents of the letters, worshipful sir," Ned said, falling on his knees and assuming an appearance of abject terror. "They were delivered to me at Haarlem, and I was told that I should have five nobles if I carried them to Brussels and delivered them safely to a man who would meet me in the south corner of the Market Square of Brussels. I was to hold the packet in my hand and sling my bundle upon my stick, so that he might know me. He was to have a blue cap on, and was to touch me on the shoulder

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and ask me 'How blows the wind in Holland?' and that, worshipful sir, is all I know about it. I could not tell that there was any treason in the business, else not for fifty nobles would I have undertaken it."

"You lie, you young villain!" the councilor shouted. "Do you try to persuade me that the Prince of Orange would have intrusted documents of such importance to the first boy he met in the street? In the first place you must be a heretic."

"I don't know about heretics," Ned said, rising to his feet and speaking stubbornly. "I am of the religion my father taught me, and I would not pretend that I was a Catholic, not to save my life."

"There you are, you see," the councilor said triumphantly to his colleagues. "Look at the obstinacy and insolence of these Hollanders. Even this brat of a boy dares to tell us that he is not a Catholic. Take him away," he said to the warder, "and see that he is securely kept. We may want to question him again; but in any case he will go to the gallows to-morrow or next day."

Ned was at once led away.

"What think you?" Von Aert asked his colleagues as the door closed behind the prisoner. "Is it worth while to apply the torture to him at once to obtain from him the names of those for whom these letters were intended? It is most important for us to know. Look at this letter; it is from the prince himself, and refers to preparations making for a general rising."

"I should hardly think the boy would have been intrusted with so important a secret," one of the other councilors said; "for it would be well known he would be forced by torture to reveal it if these letters were to be found upon them. I think that the story he tells us

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is a true one, and that it is more likely they would be given him to deliver to some person who would possess the key to these marks on the letters."

"Well, at any rate no harm can be done by applying the screws," the councilor said. "If he knows they will make him speak, I warrant you.

The other two agreed.

"If you will allow me to suggest, your excellency," Genet said humbly, "that it might be the better way to try first if any such as this Blue Cap exists. The boy might be promised his life if he could prove that the story was true. Doubtless there is some fixed hour at which he was to meet this Blue Cap. We might let him go to meet him, keeping of course a strict watch over him. Then if any such man appears and speaks to him we could pounce upon him at once and wring from him the key to these marks. If no such man appears we should then know that the story was but a device to deceive, and could then obtain by some means the truth from him."

The suggestion met with approval.

"That is a very good plan, and shall be carried out. Send for the prisoner again."

Ned was brought down again.

"We see that you are young," Von Aert said, "and you have doubtless been misled in this matter, and knew not that you were carrying treasonable correspondence. We therefore are disposed to treat you leniently. At what time were you to meet this Blue Cap in the market?"

"Within an hour of sunset," Ned replied. "I am to be there at sunset and to wait for an hour; and was told that he would not fail to come in that time, but that if he did I was to come again the next day."

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"It is to be hoped that he will not fail you," Von Aert said grimly, "for we shall not be disposed to wait his pleasure. To-morrow evening you will go with a packet and deliver it to the man when he comes to you. Beware that you do not try to trick us, for you will be closely watched, and it will be the worse for you if you attempt treachery. If the man comes those who are there will know how to deal with him."

"And shall I be at liberty to depart?" Ned asked doubtfully.

"Of course you will," Von Aert replied; "we should then have no further occasion for you, and you would have proved to us that your story was a true one, and that you were really in ignorance that there was any harm in carrying the packet hither.

Ned was perfectly well aware that the councilor was lying, and that even had he met the man in the blue cap he would be dragged back to prison and put to death, and that the promise meant absolutely nothing—the Spaniards having no hesitation in breaking the most solemn oaths made to heretics. He had, indeed, only asked the question because he thought that to assent too willingly to the proposal might arouse suspicion. It was the very thing he had been hoping for, and which offered the sole prospect of escape from a death by torture, for it would at least give him the chance of a dash for freedom.

He had named an hour after sunset partly because it was the hour which would have been probably chosen by those who wished that the meeting should take place unobserved, but still more because his chances of escape would be vastly greater were the attempt made after dark. The three councilors sat for some time talking over the matter after Ned had been removed. The let-

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ters had all been read. They had been carefully written, so as to give no information if they should fall into the wrong hands, and none of them contained any allusion whatever to past letters or previous negotiations.

"It is clear," Von Aert said, "that this is a conspiracy, and that those to whom these letters are sent are deeply concerned in it, and yet these letters do not prove it. Suppose that we either seize this Blue Cap or get from the boy the names of those for whom the letters are intended, they could swear on the other hand that they knew nothing whatever about them, and had been falsely accused. No doubt many of these people are nobles and citizens of good position, and if it is merely their word against the word of a boy, and that wrung from him by torture, our case would not be a strong one.

"Our case is not always strong," one of the other councilors said; "but that does not often make much difference."

"It makes none with the lower class of the people," Von Aert agreed; "but when we have to deal with people who have influential friends it is always best to be able to prove a case completely. I think that if we get the names of those for whom the letters are meant we can utilize the boy again. We will send him to deliver the letters in person, as I believe he was intend ed to do. He may receive answers to take back to Holland; but even if he does not the fact that these people should have received such letters without at once denouncing the bearer and communicating the contents to us, will be quite sufficient proof of their guilt."

"In that case," one of the others remarked, "the boy must not be crippled with the torture."

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"There will be no occasion for that," Von Aert said contemptuously. "A couple of turns with the thumb-screw will suffice to get out of a boy of that age everything he knows. Well, my friends, we will meet here to-morrow evening. I shall go round to the Market Square with Genet to see the result of this affair, in which I own I am deeply interested; not only because it is most important, but because it is due to the fact that I myself entertained a suspicion of the boy that the discovery of the plot has been made. I will take charge of these letters, which are for the time useless to us, but which are likely to bring ten men's heads to the block."

As Ned sat alone in his cell during the long hours of the following day he longed for the time to come when his fate was to be settled. He was determined that if it lay with him he would not be captured alive. He would mount to the top story of a house and throw himself out of a window, or snatch a dagger from one of his guards and stab himself, if he saw no mode of escape. A thousand times better to die so than to expire on a gibbet after suffering atrocious tortures, which would, he knew, wring from him the names of those for whom the letters were intended.

He could bear pain as well as another; but flesh and blood could not resist the terrible agonies inflicted by the torture, and sooner or later the truth would be wrung from the most reluctant lips. Still he thought that he had a fair chance of escape. It was clear that he could not be closely surrounded by a guard, for in that case Blue Cap would not venture near him. He must, therefore, be allowed a considerable amount of liberty; and, however many men might be on watch a short distance off, he ought to be able by a sudden rush

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to make his way through them. There would at that hour be numbers of people in the street, and this would add to his chance of evading his pursuers.

He eat heartily of a meal that was brought him at midday, and when just at sunset the warder entered the cell and told him to follow him, he felt equal to any exertion. When he came down into the courtyard, a dozen men were gathered there, together with Von Aert and his clerk.

"Now," the councilor said sternly, "you see these men. They will be round you on all sides, and I warn you that if you attempt to escape or to give any warning sign to this Blue Cap, or to try any tricks with us of any sort, you shall be put to death with such tortures as you never dreamed of. Upon the other hand, if you carry out my orders faithfully, and hand over this packet to the man who meets you, you will be at liberty to go straight away, and to return home without molestation."

"I understand," Ned replied; "and as I cannot help myself will do your bidding. Where are my stick and bundle? He will not know me unless I have them. I am to carry them on my shoulder."

"Ah! I forgot," the councilor said, and giving the order to one of the warders Ned's bundle and stick were brought him.

"You will stroll leisurely along," Von Aert said, "and appear natural and unconcerned. We shall be close to you, and you will be seized in an instant if we observe anything suspicious in your movements. Von Aert then took a packet from his doublet and handed it to Ned, who placed it in his belt. The prison door was opened; three or four of the men went out, and Ned followed. It was a curious feeling to him as he walked

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down the street. Round him were numbers of people laughing and chatting as they went, while he though apparently as free as they, was a prisoner with a dozen pair of eyes watching him, and his life in deadly peril.

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CHAPTER IX.

IN HIDING.

AFTER five minutes' walking Ned arrived at the market-square and passed steadily on down toward the south corner. The market was long since over, and the market folk had returned to their farms and villages, but there were a large number of people walking about. It was already growing dusk, and in another half-hour would be dark. Ned turned when he got near the corner, strolled a short distance back and then turned again, pacing backward and forward some thirty or forty yards. He carefully abstained from seeming to stare about. The councilor and his clerk kept within as hort distance of him, the former wrapped up in a cloak with a high collar that almost concealed his face.

As to the others watching him, Ned could only guess at them. Four men he noticed, who turned whenever he did; the others he guessed were keeping somewhat further off, or were perhaps stationed at the streets leading out of the square so as to cut him off should he escape from those close to him. A few oil lamps were suspended from posts at various points in the square, and at the ends of the streets leading from it. These were lighted soon after he arrived in the square. He decided that it would not do to make for the street leading out of the south corner, as this was the one that he would be suspected of aiming for; and, moreover, men would surely be placed there to cut off Blue Cap on his

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entry. He, therefore, determined to make for a somewhat narrow street, about halfway between the south and west corners.

He had followed this on the day he entered Brussels, as one of the persons to whom the letters were addressed lived in it. He knew that there were many lanes running into it, and that at the lower end several streets, branching off in various directions, met in the small square in which it terminated. Half an hour passed. It was now quite dark, and he felt that he had better delay no longer. He walked half along his beat toward the south corner, then with a sudden spring darted off. The two men walking on that side of him were some ten paces distant, and he ran straight at them. Taken by surprise, before they had time to throw back their cloaks and draw their rapiers, he was upon them.

With a blow from his leaded stick, delivered with all his strength, he struck one man to the ground, and then turning to the other struck him on the wrist as he was in the act of drawing his sword. The man uttered a loud cry of pain and rage, and Ned ran at top of his speed toward the street. He knew that he need fear no pursuit from the two men he had encountered, that those on the other side of him were some distance behind, and that as so many people intervened his pursuers would probably soon lose sight of him. Threading his way between the groups of people, who had arrested their walk at the sound of loud and sudden shouting, he approached the end of the street.

By the light of the lamp there he saw two men standing with drawn swords. Breaking suddenly into a walk he made for the house next to the street, and then turned so that he came upon the men sideways instead of from the front, at which they were expecting him.

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There was a sudden exclamation from the man nearest to him; but Ned was within two yards of him before he perceived him, and before he was on guard the loaded stick fell with the full sweep of Ned's arm upon his ankle, and in an instant he was prostrate, and Ned darted at full speed down the street with the other man in pursuit a few paces behind him.

Before he had run far Ned found that he could gain but little upon his pursuer, and that he must rid himself of him if he were to have a chance of escaping. He slackened his speed a little, and allowed the man to gain slightly upon him. Thinking that the fugitive was within his grasp the warder exerted himself to his utmost. Suddenly Ned sprang into a doorway; the man, unable to check himself, rushed past. In a moment Ned was out again, and before the fellow could arrest his steps and turn, gave him a violent shove behind, which hurled him on to his face with a tremendous crash, and Ned continued his way. There was a great shouting, but it was full fifty yards away, and he felt his hopes rise. His pursuers were now all behind him, and he felt sure that in the darkness and the narrow streets he should be able to evade them.

He took the first turning he came to, turned again and again, and presently slackened his pace to a walk, convinced that for a time his pursuers must be at fault. He was now among narrow streets inhabited by the poorer classes. There were no lamps burning here, and he began to wonder which way he had better take, and where he should pass the night. It was absolutely necessary to obtain some other disguise, for he was sure that the gates would be so carefully watched in the morning there would be no chance whatever of his getting safely out in his present attire. Presently, through

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a casement on the ground-floor, he heard the sound of low singing in a woman's voice. He stopped at once and listened. It was the air of a Lutheran hymn he had frequently heard in Holland. Without hesitation he knocked at the door, and lifting the latch entered. A women and girl were sitting at work inside; they looked up in surprise at seeing a stranger.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I am a Protestant, and am hunted by Alva's bloodhounds. I have evaded them and I am safe for the present; but I know not where to go, or where to obtain a disguise. As I passed the window I heard the air of a Lutheran hymn, and knew that there were within those who would, if they could aid me."

The woman looked reprovingly at the girl.

"How imprudent of you, Gertrude!" she said. "Not that it is your fault more than mine. I ought to have stopped you, but I did not think your voice would be heard through that thick curtain. Who are you, sir, and where do you come from?" she asked, turning to Ned.

"I come from Holland," he said, "and was the bearer of important letters from the Prince of Orange."

The woman hesitated. "I would not doubt you," she said: "but in these days one has to be suspicious of one's shadow. However, as after what you have heard our lives are in your hands, I would fain trust you; though it seems to me strange that an important mission should be intrusted to one of your age and station."

"My age was all in my favor," Ned replied. "As to my station, it is not quite what it seems; for I am a gentleman volunteer in the service of the prince, and he accepted my services thinking that I might succeed when a man would be suspected."

"I will give you shelter," the woman said quietly;

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"though I know that I risk my life and my daughter's in doing so. But the Lord holds us in his hands, and unless it be his will we shall not perish." So saying, she got up and barred the door.

"Now, tell me more as to how you came to fall into this peril," she said.

Ned related his adventure, and the manner in which he had effected his escape from the hands of his captors.

"You have, indeed, had an escape," the woman said. "There are few upon whom Councilor Von Aert lays his hand who ever escape from it. You have indeed shown both skill and courage in thus freeing yourself."

"There is no great courage in running away when you know that if you stay torture and death are before you," Ned replied.

"And now, what are your plans?" the woman asked.

"My only plan is to obtain a disguise in which to escape from the city. My mission is unfortunately ended by the loss of my papers, and I shall have but a sorry story to tell to the prince if I succeed in making my way back to Holland, of the utter failure I have made of the mission with which he was good enough to intrust me." He took from his belt the packet that Von Aert had given him, and was about to throw it in the fire when his eye fell upon it. He opened it hastily, and exclaimed with delight, "Why, here are the letters! That scoundrel must have had them in his doublet, as well as the packet, made up for me to carry, and he has inadvertently given me the wrong parcel. See, madam, these are the letters I told you of, and these are the marks in the corners whose meaning Von Aert was so anxious to discover. Now, if I can but obtain a good disguise I will deliver these letters before I start on my way back."

The girl, who was about fourteen years of age, spoke

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a few words in a low voice to her mother. The latter glanced at Ned.

"My daughter suggests that you should disguise yourself as a woman," she said. "And indeed in point of height you might pass well, seeing that you are but little taller than myself. But I fear that you are far too widely built across the shoulders to wear my clothes."

"Yes, indeed," Ned agreed, smiling; "but you are tall and slight. I could pass well enough for one of these Flemish peasant girls, for they are sometimes near as broad as they are long. Yes, indeed, if I could get a dress such as these girls wear I could pass easily enough. I am well provided with money, but unfortunately it is hidden in the ground a mile outside the gates. I only carry with me a small sum for daily use, and that of course was taken from me by my jailers."

"Be not uneasy about money," the woman said. "Like yourself, we are not exactly what we look. I am the Countess Von Harp."

Ned made a movement of surprise. The name was perfectly known to him, being that of a noble in Friesland who had been executed at Brussels a few months before by the orders of the Council of Blood.

"When my husband was murdered," the Countess Von Harp went on, "I received a warning from a friend that I and my daughter, being known to be members of the Reformed Church, would be seized. For myself I cared little; but for my daughter's sake I resolved to endeavor to escape. I knew that I should be nowhere safe in the Netherlands, and that there was little chance of a woman and girl being able to escape from the country, when upon every road we should meet with disorderly soldiery, and every town we should pass through swarmed with Alva's agents. I resolved,

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therefore, to stay here. An old servant took this house for me, and here I have lived ever since in the disguise you see. My servant still lives with us, and goes abroad and makes our purchases. Our neighbors are all artisans and attend to their own business. It is supposed among them that I am one who has been ruined in the troubles, and now support myself by embroidery; but in fact I am well supplied with money. When I came here I brought all my jewels with me; besides, I have several good friends who know my secret, and through whom, from time to time, money has been transmitted to me from my steward in Friesland. Our estates in Brabant have of course been confiscated, and for a time those in Friesland were also seized. But when the people rose four months ago they turned out the man who had seized them, and as he was a member of the Council of Blood he was lucky in escaping with his life. So that, you see, the cost of a peasant woman's dress is a matter that need give you no concern."

There was now a knock at the door. It was repeated.

"It is my servant," the countess said. Ned at once unbarred and opened the door. The old woman gave an exclamation of astonishment at seeing a stranger.

"Come in, Magdalene," the countess said; "it is a friend. You are later than I expected."

"It is not my fault, madam," the old servant said. "I have been stopped four or five times, and questioned and made game of, by German soldiers posted at the ends of the streets; the quarter is full of them. I was going through the market-place when a sudden tumult arose, and they say a prisoner of great importance has made his escape. Councilor Von Aert was there, shouting like a madman. But he had better have held his tongue; for as soon as he was recognized the crowd

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hustled and beat him, and went nigh killing him, when some men with drawn swords rescued him from their hands, and with great difficulty escorted him to the town-hall. He is hated in Brussels, and it was rash of him to venture out after dark."

"This is the escaped prisoner, Magdalene." The old woman looked with surprise at Ned.

"You are pleased to joke with me, madam. This is but a boy."

"That is true, Magdalene; but he is, nevertheless, the prisoner whose escape angered the councilor so terribly, and for whom the guard you speak of are now in search."

The old servant shook her head. "Ah, madam, are you not running risks enough of detection here without adding to them that of concealing a fugitive?"

"You are right," Ned said; "and it was selfish and wrong of me to intrude myself here."

"God willed it so," the countess said. "My daughter's voice was the instrument that directed your steps here. It is strange that she should have sung that hymn just as you were passing, and that I should have heard her without checking her. The hand of God is in all these things; therefore, do not make yourself uneasy on our account. Magdalene, we have settled that he shall assume the disguise of a young peasant girl, and to-morrow you shall purchase the necessary garments."

"Yes, he might pass as a girl," the old servant agreed. "But, I pray you, let him not stay an instant in this garb. I do not think they will search the houses, for the artisans of Brussels are tenacious of their rights, and an attempt would bring them out like a swarm of bees. Still it is better that he should not remain as he is for

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