

Lysbeth

By

H. Rider Haggard

LYSBETH

A Tale Of The Dutch

By H. Rider Haggard

First Published 1901.

DEDICATION

In token of the earnest reverence of a man of a later generation for his character, and for that life work whereof we inherit the fruits to-day, this tale of the times he shaped is dedicated to the memory of one of the greatest and most noble-hearted beings that the world has known; the immortal William, called the Silent, of Nassau.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There are, roughly, two ways of writing an historical romance--the first to choose some notable and leading characters of the time to be treated, and by the help of history attempt to picture them as they were; the other, to make a study of that time and history with the country in which it was enacted, and from it to deduce the necessary characters.

In the case of "Lysbeth" the author has attempted this second method. By an example of the trials, adventures, and victories of a burgher family of the generation of Philip II. and William the Silent, he strives to set before readers of to-day something of the life of those who lived through perhaps the most fearful tyranny that the western world has known. How did they live, one wonders; how is it that they did not die of very terror, those of them who escaped the scaffold, the famine and the pestilence?

This and another--Why were such things suffered to be?--seem problems worth consideration, especially by the young, who are so apt to take everything for granted, including their own religious freedom and personal security. How often, indeed, do any living folk give a grateful thought to the forefathers who won for us these advantages, and many others with them?

The writer has sometimes heard travellers in the Netherlands express surprise that even in an age of almost universal decoration its noble

churches are suffered to remain smeared with melancholy whitewash. Could they look backward through the centuries and behold with the mind's eye certain scenes that have taken place within these very temples and about their walls, they would marvel no longer. Here we are beginning to forget the smart at the price of which we bought deliverance from the bitter yoke of priest and king, but yonder the sword bit deeper and smote more often. Perhaps that is why in Holland they still love whitewash, which to them may be a symbol, a perpetual protest; and remembering stories that have been handed down as heirlooms to this day, frown at the sight of even the most modest sacerdotal vestment. Those who are acquainted with the facts of their history and deliverance will scarcely wonder at the prejudice.

LYSBETH

A TALE OF THE DUTCH

BOOK THE FIRST

THE SOWING

CHAPTER I

THE WOLF AND THE BADGER

The time was in or about the year 1544, when the Emperor Charles V. ruled the Netherlands, and our scene the city of Leyden.

Any one who has visited this pleasant town knows that it lies in the midst of wide, flat meadows, and is intersected by many canals filled with Rhine water. But now, as it was winter, near to Christmas indeed, the meadows and the quaint gabled roofs of the city lay buried beneath a dazzling sheet of snow, while, instead of boats and barges, skaters glided up and down the frozen surface of the canals, which were swept

for their convenience. Outside the walls of the town, not far from the Morsch poort, or gate, the surface of the broad moat which surrounded them presented a sight as gay as it was charming. Just here one of the branches of the Rhine ran into this moat, and down it came the pleasure-seekers in sledges, on skates, or afoot. They were dressed, most of them, in their best attire, for the day was a holiday set apart for a kind of skating carnival, with sleighing matches, such games as curling, and other amusements.

Among these merry folk might have been seen a young lady of two or three and twenty years of age, dressed in a coat of dark green cloth trimmed with fur, and close-fitting at the waist. This coat opened in front, showing a brodered woollen skirt, but over the bust it was tightly buttoned and surmounted by a stiff ruff of Brussels lace. Upon her head she wore a high-crowned beaver hat, to which the nodding ostrich feather was fastened by a jewelled ornament of sufficient value to show that she was a person of some means. In fact, this lady was the only child of a sea captain and shipowner named Carolus van Hout, who, whilst still a middle-aged man, had died about a year before, leaving her heiress to a very considerable fortune. This circumstance, with the added advantages of a very pretty face, in which were set two deep and thoughtful grey eyes, and a figure more graceful than was common among the Netherlander women, caused Lysbeth van Hout to be much sought after and admired, especially by the marriageable bachelors of Leyden.

On this occasion, however, she was unescorted except by a serving woman

somewhat older than herself, a native of Brussels, Greta by name, who in appearance was as attractive as in manner she was suspiciously discreet.

As Lysbeth skated down the canal towards the moat many of the good burghers of Leyden took off their caps to her, especially the young burghers, one or two of whom had hopes that she would choose them to be her cavalier for this day's fete. Some of the elders, also, asked her if she would care to join their parties, thinking that, as she was an orphan without near male relations, she might be glad of their protection in times when it was wise for beautiful young women to be protected. With this excuse and that, however, she escaped from them all, for Lysbeth had already made her own arrangements.

At that date there was living in Leyden a young man of four or five and twenty, named Dirk van Goorl, a distant cousin of her own. Dirk was a native of the little town of Alkmaar, and the second son of one of its leading citizens, a brass founder by trade. As in the natural course of events the Alkmaar business would descend to his elder brother, their father appointed him to a Leyden firm, in which, after eight or nine years of hard work, he had become a junior partner. While he was still living, Lysbeth's father had taken a liking to the lad, with the result that he grew intimate at the house which, from the first, was open to him as a kinsman. After the death of Carolus van Hout, Dirk had continued to visit there, especially on Sundays, when he was duly and ceremoniously received by Lysbeth's aunt, a childless widow named Clara van Ziel, who acted as her guardian. Thus, by degrees, favoured with

such ample opportunity, a strong affection had sprung up between these two young people, although as yet they were not affianced, nor indeed had either of them said a word of open love to the other.

This abstinence may seem strange, but some explanation of their self-restraint was to be found in Dirk's character. In mind he was patient, very deliberate in forming his purposes, and very sure in carrying them out. He felt impulses like other men, but he did not give way to them. For two years or more he had loved Lysbeth, but being somewhat slow at reading the ways of women he was not quite certain that she loved him, and above everything on earth he dreaded a rebuff. Moreover he knew her to be an heiress, and as his own means were still humble, and his expectations from his father small, he did not feel justified in asking her in marriage until his position was more assured. Had the Captain Carolus still been living the case would have been different, for then he could have gone to him. But he was dead, and Dirk's fine and sensitive nature recoiled from the thought that it might be said of him that he had taken advantage of the inexperience of a kinswoman in order to win her fortune. Also deep down in his mind he had a sincerer and quite secret reason for reticence, whereof more in its proper place.

Thus matters stood between these two. To-day, however, though only with diffidence and after some encouragement from the lady, he had asked leave to be his cousin's cavalier at the ice fete, and when she consented, readily enough, appointed the moat as their place of meeting.

This was somewhat less than Lysbeth expected, for she wished his escort through the town. But, when she hinted as much, Dirk explained that he would not be able to leave the works before three o'clock, as the metal for a large bell had been run into the casting, and he must watch it while it cooled.

So, followed only by her maid, Greta, Lysbeth glided lightly as a bird down the ice path on to the moat, and across it, through the narrow cut, to the frozen mere beyond, where the sports were to be held and the races run. There the scene was very beautiful.

Behind her lay the roofs of Leyden, pointed, picturesque, and covered with sheets of snow, while above them towered the bulk of the two great churches of St. Peter and St. Pancras, and standing on a mound known as the Burg, the round tower which is supposed to have been built by the Romans. In front stretched the flat expanse of white meadows, broken here and there by windmills with narrow waists and thin tall sails, and in the distance, by the church towers of other towns and villages.

Immediately before her, in strange contrast to this lifeless landscape, lay the peopled mere, fringed around with dead reeds standing so still in the frosty air that they might have been painted things. On this mere half the population of Leyden seemed to be gathered; at least there were thousands of them, shouting, laughing, and skimming to and fro in their bright garments like flocks of gay-plumaged birds. Among them, drawn by horses with bells tied to their harness, glided many sledges of

wickerwork and wood mounted upon iron runners, their fore-ends fashioned to quaint shapes, such as the heads of dogs or bulls, or Tritons. Then there were vendors of cakes and sweetmeats, vendors of spirits also, who did a good trade on this cold day. Beggars too were numerous, and among them deformities, who, nowadays, would be hidden in charitable homes, slid about in wooden boxes, which they pushed along with crutches. Lastly many loafers had gathered there with stools for fine ladies to sit on while the skates were bound to their pretty feet, and chapmen with these articles for sale and straps wherewith to fasten them. To complete the picture the huge red ball of the sun was sinking to the west, and opposite to it the pale full moon began already to gather light and life.

The scene seemed so charming and so happy that Lysbeth, who was young, and now that she had recovered from the shock of her beloved father's death, light-hearted, ceased her forward movement and poised herself upon her skates to watch it for a space. While she stood thus a little apart, a woman came towards her from the throng, not as though she were seeking her, but aimlessly, much as a child's toy-boat is driven by light, contrary winds upon the summer surface of a pond.

She was a remarkable-looking woman of about thirty-five years of age, tall and bony in make, with deep-set eyes, light grey of colour, that seemed now to flash fiercely and now to waver, as though in memory of some great dread. From beneath a coarse woollen cap a wisp of grizzled hair fell across the forehead, where it lay like the forelock of

a horse. Indeed, the high cheekbones, scarred as though by burns, wide-spread nostrils and prominent white teeth, whence the lips had strangely sunk away, gave the whole countenance a more or less equine look which this falling lock seemed to heighten. For the rest the woman was poorly and not too plentifully clad in a gown of black woollen, torn and stained as though with long use and journeys, while on her feet she wore wooden clogs, to which were strapped skates that were not fellows, one being much longer than the other.

Opposite to Lysbeth this strange, gaunt person stopped, contemplating her with a dreamy eye. Presently she seemed to recognise her, for she said in a quick, low voice, the voice of one who lives in terror of being overheard:--

"That's a pretty dress of yours, Van Hout's daughter. Oh, yes, I know you; your father used to play with me when I was a child, and once he kissed me on the ice at just such a fete as this. Think of it! Kissed me, Martha the Mare," and she laughed hoarsely, and went on: "Yes, well-warmed and well-fed, and, without doubt, waiting for a gallant to kiss you"; here she turned and waved her hand towards the people--"all well-warmed and well-fed, and all with lovers and husbands and children to kiss. But I tell you, Van Hout's daughter, as I have dared to creep from my hiding hole in the great lake to tell all of them who will listen, that unless they cast out the cursed Spaniard, a day shall come when the folk of Leyden must perish by thousands of hunger behind those walls. Yes, yes, unless they cast out the cursed Spaniard and his

Inquisition. Oh, I know him, I know him, for did they not make me carry my own husband to the stake upon my back? And have you heard why, Van Hout's daughter? Because what I had suffered in their torture-dens had made my face--yes, mine that once was so beautiful--like the face of a horse, and they said that 'a horse ought to be ridden.'"

Now, while this poor excited creature, one of a whole class of such people who in those sad days might be found wandering about the Netherlands crazy with their griefs and sufferings, and living only for revenge, poured out these broken sentences, Lysbeth, terrified, shrank back before her. As she shrank the other followed, till presently Lysbeth saw her expression of rage and hate change to one of terror. In another instant, muttering something about a request for alms which she did not wait to receive, the woman had wheeled round and fled away as fast as her skates would carry her--which was very fast indeed.

Turning about to find what had frightened her, Lysbeth saw standing on the bank of the mere, so close that she must have overheard every word, but behind the screen of a leafless bush, a tall, forbidding-looking woman, who held in her hand some brodered caps which apparently she was offering for sale. These caps she began to slowly fold up and place one by one in a hide satchel that was hung about her shoulders. All this while she was watching Lysbeth with her keen black eyes, except when from time to time she took them off her to follow the flight of that person who had called herself the Mare.

"You keep ill company, lady," said the cap-seller in a harsh voice.

"It was none of my seeking," answered Lysbeth, astonished into making a reply.

"So much the better for you, lady, although she seemed to know you and to know also that you would listen to her song. Unless my eyes deceived me, which is not often, that woman is an evil-doer and a worker of magic like her dead husband Van Muyden; a heretic, a blasphemer of the Holy Church, a traitor to our Lord the Emperor, and one," she added with a snarl, "with a price upon her head that before night will, I hope, be in Black Meg's pocket." Then, walking with long firm steps towards a fat man who seemed to be waiting for her, the tall, black-eyed pedlar passed with him into the throng, where Lysbeth lost sight of them.

Lysbeth watched them go, and shivered. To her knowledge she had never seen this woman before, but she knew enough of the times they lived in to be sure that she was a spy of the priests. Already there were such creatures moving about in every gathering, yes, and in many a private place, who were paid to obtain evidence against suspected heretics. Whether they won it by fair means or by foul mattered not, provided they could find something, and it need be little indeed, to justify the Inquisition in getting to its work.

As for the other woman, the Mare, doubtless she was one of those wicked

outcasts, accursed by God and man, who were called heretics; people who said dreadful things about the Pope and the Church and God's priests, having been misled and stirred up thereto by a certain fiend in human form named Luther. Lysbeth shuddered at the thought and crossed herself, for in those days she was an excellent Catholic. Yet the wanderer said that she had known her father, so that she must be as well born as herself--and then that dreadful story--no, she could not bear to think of it. But of course heretics deserved all these things; of that there could be no doubt whatever, for had not her father confessor told her that thus alone might their souls be saved from the grasp of the Evil One?

The thought was comforting, still Lysbeth felt upset, and not a little rejoiced when she saw Dirk van Goorl skating towards her accompanied by another young man, also a cousin of her own on her mother's side who was destined in days to come to earn himself an immortal renown--young Pieter van de Werff. The two took off their bonnets to her, Dirk van Goorl revealing in the act a head of fair hair beneath which his steady blue eyes shone in a rather thick-set, self-contained face. Lysbeth's temper, always somewhat quick, was ruffled, and she showed it in her manner.

"I thought, cousins, that we were to meet at three, and the kirk clock yonder has just chimed half-past," she said, addressing them both, but looking--not too sweetly--at Dirk van Goorl.

"That's right, cousin," answered Pieter, a pleasant-faced and alert young man, "look at him, scold him, for he is to blame. Ever since a quarter past two have I--I who must drive a sledge in the great race and am backed to win--been waiting outside that factory in the snow, but, upon my honour, he did not appear until seven minutes since. Yes, we have done the whole distance in seven minutes, and I call that very good skating."

"I thought as much," said Lysbeth. "Dirk can only keep an appointment with a church bell or a stadhuis chandelier."

"It was not my fault," broke in Dirk in his slow voice; "I have my business to attend. I promised to wait until the metal had cooled sufficiently, and hot bronze takes no account of ice-parties and sledge races."

"So I suppose that you stopped to blow on it, cousin. Well, the result is that, being quite unescorted, I have been obliged to listen to things which I did not wish to hear."

"What do you mean?" asked Dirk, taking fire at once.

Then she told them something of what the woman who called herself the Mare had said to her, adding, "Doubtless the poor creature is a heretic and deserves all that has happened to her. But it is dreadfully sad, and I came here to enjoy myself, not to be sad."

Between the two young men there passed a glance which was full of meaning. But it was Dirk who spoke. The other, more cautious, remained silent.

"Why do you say that, Cousin Lysbeth?" he asked in a new voice, a voice thick and eager. "Why do you say that she deserves all that can happen to her? I have heard of this poor creature who is called Mother Martha, or the Mare, although I have never seen her myself. She was noble-born, much better born than any of us three, and very fair--once they called her the Lily of Brussels--when she was the Vrouw van Muyden, and she has suffered dreadfully, for one reason only, because she and hers did not worship God as you worship Him."

"As we worship Him," broke in Van de Werff with a cough.

"No," answered Dirk sullenly, "as our Cousin Lysbeth van Hout worships Him. For that reason only they killed her husband and her little son, and drove her mad, so that she lives among the reeds of the Haarlemer Meer like a beast in its den; yes, they, the Spaniards and their Spanish priests, as I daresay that they will kill us also."

"Don't you think that it is getting rather cold standing here?"

interrupted Pieter van de Werff before she could answer. "Look, the sledge races are just beginning. Come, cousin, give me your hand," and, taking Lysbeth by the arm, he skated off into the throng, followed at a

distance by Dirk and the serving-maid, Greta.

"Cousin," he whispered as he went, "this is not my place, it is Dirk's place, but I pray you as you love him--I beg your pardon--as you esteem a worthy relative--do not enter into a religious argument with him here in public, where even the ice and sky are two great ears. It is not safe, little cousin, I swear to you that it is not safe."

In the centre of the mere the great event of the day, the sledge races, were now in progress. As the competitors were many these must be run in heats, the winners of each heat standing on one side to compete in the final contest. Now these victors had a pretty prerogative not unlike that accorded to certain dancers in the cotillion of modern days. Each driver of a sledge was bound to carry a passenger in the little car in front of him, his own place being on the seat behind, whence he directed the horse by means of reins supported upon a guide-rod so fashioned that it lifted them above the head of the traveller in the car. This passenger he could select from among the number of ladies who were present at the games; unless, indeed, the gentleman in charge of her chose to deny him in set form; namely, by stepping forward and saying in the appointed phrase, "No, for this happy hour she is mine."

Among the winners of these heats was a certain Spanish officer, the Count Don Juan de Montalvo, who, as it chanced, in the absence on leave of his captain, was at that date the commander of the garrison at Leyden. He was a man still young, only about thirty indeed, reported to

be of noble birth, and handsome in the usual Castilian fashion. That is to say, he was tall, of a graceful figure, dark-eyed, strong-featured, with a somewhat humorous expression, and of very good if exaggerated address. As he had but recently come to Leyden, very little was known about this attractive cavalier beyond that he was well spoken of by the priests and, according to report, a favourite with the Emperor. Also the ladies admired him much.

For the rest everything about him was handsome like his person, as might be expected in the case of a man reputed to be as rich as he was noble. Thus his sledge was shaped and coloured to resemble a great black wolf rearing itself up to charge. The wooden head was covered in wolf skin and adorned by eyes of yellow glass and great fangs of ivory. Round the neck also ran a gilded collar hung with a silver shield, whereon were painted the arms of its owner, a knight striking the chains from off a captive Christian saint, and the motto of the Montalvos, "Trust to God and me." His black horse, too, of the best breed, imported from Spain, glittered in harness decorated with gilding, and bore a splendid plume of dyed feathers rising from the head-band.

Lysbeth happened to be standing near to the spot where this gallant had halted after his first victory. She was in the company of Dirk van Goorl alone--for as he was the driver of one of the competing sledges, her other cousin, Pieter van de Werff, had now been summoned away. Having nothing else to do at the moment, she approached and not unnaturally admired this brilliant equipage, although in truth it was the sledge and

the horse rather than their driver which attracted her attention. As for the Count himself she knew him slightly, having been introduced to and danced a measure with him at a festival given by a grandee of the town. On that occasion he was courteous to her in the Spanish fashion, rather too courteous, she thought, but as this was the manner of Castilian dons when dealing with burgher maidens she paid no more attention to the matter.

The Captain Montalvo saw Lysbeth among the throng and recognised her, for he lifted his plumed hat and bowed to her with just that touch of condescension which in those days a Spaniard showed when greeting one whom he considered his inferior. In the sixteenth century it was understood that all the world were the inferiors to those whom God had granted to be born in Spain, the English who rated themselves at a valuation of their own--and were careful to announce the fact--alone excepted.

An hour or so later, after the last heat had been run, a steward of the ceremonies called aloud to the remaining competitors to select their passengers and prepare for the final contest. Accordingly each Jehu, leaving his horse in charge of an attendant, stepped up to some young lady who evidently was waiting for him, and led her by the hand to his sledge. While Lysbeth was watching this ceremony with amusement--for these selections were always understood to show a strong preference on behalf of the chooser for the chosen--she was astonished to hear a well-trained voice addressing her, and on looking up to see Don Juan de

Montalvo bowing almost to the ice.

"Senora," he said in Castilian, a tongue which Lysbeth understood well enough, although she only spoke it when obliged, "unless my ears deceived me, I heard you admiring my horse and sledge. Now, with the permission of your cavalier," and he bowed courteously to Dirk, "I name you as my passenger for the great race, knowing that you will bring me fortune. Have I your leave, Senor?"

Now if there was a people on earth whom Dirk van Goorl hated, the Spaniards were that people, and if there lived a cavalier who he would prefer should not take his cousin Lysbeth for a lonely drive, that cavalier was the Count Juan de Montalvo. But as a young man, Dirk was singularly diffident and so easily confused that on the spur of the moment it was quite possible for a person of address to make him say what he did not mean. Thus, on the present occasion, when he saw this courtly Spaniard bowing low to him, a humble Dutch tradesman, he was overwhelmed, and mumbled in reply, "Certainly, certainly."

If a glance could have withered him, without doubt Dirk would immediately have been shrivelled to nothing. To say that Lysbeth was angry is too little, for in truth she was absolutely furious. She did not like this Spaniard, and hated the idea of a long interview with him alone. Moreover, she knew that among her fellow townspeople there was a great desire that the Count should not win this race, which in its own fashion was the event of the year, whereas, if she appeared as his

companion it would be supposed that she was anxious for his success. Lastly--and this was the chiefest sore--although in theory the competitors had a right to ask any one to whom they took a fancy to travel in their sledges, in practise they only sought the company of young women with whom they were on the best of terms, and who were already warned of their intention.

In an instant these thoughts flashed through her mind, but all she did was to murmur something about the Heer van Goorl----

"Has already given his consent, like an unselfish gentleman," broke in Captain Juan tendering her his hand.

Now, without absolutely making a scene, which then, as to-day, ladies considered an ill-bred thing to do, there was no escape, since half Leyden gathered at these "sledge choosings," and many eyes were on her and the Count. Therefore, because she must, Lysbeth took the proffered hand, and was led to the sledge, catching, as she passed to it through the throng, more than one sour look from the men and more than one exclamation of surprise, real or affected, on the lips of the ladies of her acquaintance. These manifestations, however, put her upon her mettle. So determining that at least she would not look sullen or ridiculous, she began to enter into the spirit of the adventure, and smiled graciously while the Captain Montalvo wrapped a magnificent apron of wolf skins about her knees.

When all was ready her charioteer took the reins and settled himself upon the little seat behind the sleigh, which was then led into line by a soldier servant.

"Where is the course, Senor?" Lysbeth asked, hoping that it would be a short one.

But in this she was to be disappointed, for he answered:

"Up to the little Quarkel Mere, round the island in the middle of it, and back to this spot, something over a league in all. Now, Senora, speak to me no more at present, but hold fast and have no fear, for at least I drive well, and my horse is sure-footed and roughed for ice. This is a race that I would give a hundred gold pieces to win, since your countrymen, who contend against me, have sworn that I shall lose it, and I tell you at once, Senora, that grey horse will press me hard."

Following the direction of his glance, Lysbeth's eye lit upon the next sledge. It was small, fashioned and painted to resemble a grey badger, that silent, stubborn, and, if molested, savage brute, which will not loose its grip until the head is hacked from off its body. The horse, which matched it well in colour, was of Flemish breed; rather a raw-boned animal, with strong quarters and an ugly head, but renowned in Leyden for its courage and staying power. What interested Lysbeth most, however, was to discover that the charioteer was none other than Pieter van de Werff, though now when she thought of it, she remembered he

had told her that his sledge was named the Badger. In his choice of passenger she noted, too, not without a smile, that he showed his cautious character, disdainful of any immediate glory, so long as the end in view could be attained. For there in the sleigh sat no fine young lady, decked out in brave attire, who might be supposed to look at him with tender eyes, but a little fair-haired mate aged nine, who was in fact his sister. As he explained afterwards, the rules provided that a lady passenger must be carried, but said nothing of her age and weight.

Now the competitors, eight of them, were in a line, and coming forward, the master of the course, in a voice that every one might hear, called out the conditions of the race and the prize for which it was to be run, a splendid glass goblet engraved with the cross-keys, the Arms of Leyden. This done, after asking if all were ready, he dropped a little flag, whereon the horses were loosed and away they went.

Before a minute had passed, forgetting all her doubts and annoyances, Lysbeth was lost in the glorious excitement of the moment. Like birds in the heavens, cleaving the keen, crisp air, they sped forward over the smooth ice. The gay throng vanished, the dead reeds and stark bushes seemed to fly away from them. The only sounds in their ears were the rushing of the wind, the swish of the iron runners, and the hollow tapping of the hooves of their galloping horses. Certain sledges drew ahead in the first burst, but the Wolf and the Badger were not among these. The Count de Montalvo was holding in his black stallion, and as yet the grey Flemish gelding looped along with a constrained and awkward

stride. When, passing from the little mere, they entered the straight of the canal, these two were respectively fourth and fifth. Up the course they sped, through a deserted snow-clad country, past the church of the village of Alkemaade. Now, half a mile or more away appeared the Quarkel Mere, and in the centre of it the island which they must turn. They reached it, they were round it, and when their faces were once more set homewards, Lysbeth noted that the Wolf and the Badger were third and fourth in the race, some one having dropped behind. Half a mile more and they were second and third; another half mile and they were first and second with perhaps a mile to go. Then the fight began.

Yard by yard the speed increased, and yard by yard the black stallion drew ahead. Now in front of them lay a furlong or more of bad ice encumbered with lumps of frozen snow that had not been cleared away, which caused the sleigh to shake and jump as it struck. Lysbeth looked round.

"The Badger is coming up," she said.

Montalvo heard, and for the first time laid his whip upon the haunches of his horse, which answered gallantly. But still the Badger came up. The grey was the stronger beast, and had begun to put out his strength. Presently his ugly head was behind them, for Lysbeth felt the breath from his nostrils blowing on her, and saw their steam. Then it was past, for the steam blew back into her face; yes, and she could see the eager eyes of the child in the grey sledge. Now they were neck and neck, and

the rough ice was done with. Six hundred yards away, not more, lay the goal, and all about them, outside the line of the course, were swift skaters travelling so fast that their heads were bent forward and down to within three feet of the ice.

Van de Werff called to his horse, and the grey began to gain. Montalvo lashed the stallion, and once more they passed him. But the black was failing, and he saw it, for Lysbeth heard him curse in Spanish. Then of a sudden, after a cunning glance at his adversary, the Count pulled upon the right rein, and a shrill voice rose upon the air, the voice of the little girl in the other sledge.

"Take care, brother," it cried, "he will overthrow us."

True enough, in another moment the black would have struck the grey sideways. Lysbeth saw Van de Werff rise from his seat and throw his weight backward, dragging the grey on to his haunches. By an inch--not more--the Wolf sleigh missed the gelding. Indeed, one runner of it struck his hoof, and the high wood work of the side brushed and cut his nostril.

"A foul, a foul!" yelled the skaters, and it was over. Once more they were speeding forward, but now the black had a lead of at least ten yards, for the grey must find his stride again. They were in the straight; the course was lined with hundreds of witnesses, and from the throats of every one of them arose a great cry, or rather two cries.

"The Spaniard, the Spaniard wins!" said the first cry that was answered by another and a deeper roar.

"No, Hollander, the Hollander! The Hollander comes up!"

Then in the midst of the fierce excitement--bred of the excitement perhaps--some curious spell fell upon the mind of Lysbeth. The race, its details, its objects, its surroundings faded away; these physical things were gone, and in place of them was present a dream, a spiritual interpretation such as the omens and influences of the times she lived in might well inspire. What did she seem to see?

She saw the Spaniard and the Hollander striving for victory, but not a victory of horses. She saw the black Spanish Wolf, at first triumphant, outmatch the Netherland Badger. Still, the Badger, the dogged Dutch badger, held on.

Who would win? The fierce beast or the patient beast? Who would be the master in this fight? There was death in it. Look, the whole snow was red, the roofs of Leyden were red, and red the heavens; in the deep hues of the sunset they seemed bathed in blood, while about her the shouts of the backers and factions transformed themselves into a fierce cry as of battling peoples. All voices mingled in that cry--voices of hope, of agony, and of despair; but she could not interpret them. Something told her that the interpretation and the issue were in the mind of God alone.

Perhaps she swooned, perhaps she slept and dreamed this dream; perhaps the sharp rushing air overcame her. At the least Lysbeth's eyes closed and her mind gave way. When they opened and it returned again their sledge was rushing past the winning post. But in front of it travelled another sledge, drawn by a gaunt grey horse, which galloped so hard that its belly seemed to lie upon the ice, a horse driven by a young man whose face was set like steel and whose lips were as the lips of a trap.

Could that be the face of her cousin Pieter van de Werff, and, if so, what passion had stamped that strange seal thereon? She turned herself in her seat and looked at him who drove her.

Was this a man, or was it a spirit escaped from doom? Blessed Mother of Christ! what a countenance! The eyeballs starting and upturned, nothing

but the white of them to be seen; the lips curled, and, between, two lines of shining fangs; the lifted points of the mustachios touching the high cheekbones. No--no, it was neither a spirit nor a man, she knew now what it was; it was the very type and incarnation of the Spanish Wolf.

Once more she seemed to faint, while in her ears there rang the cry--"The Hollander! Outstayed! Outstayed! Conquered is the accursed Spaniard!"

Then Lysbeth knew that it was over, and again the faintness overpowered

her.