

## CHAPTER XI

### ADRIAN RESCUES BEAUTY IN DISTRESS

All that long evening Adrian wandered about the causeways which pierced the meadowlands and marshes, pondering these things and picturing himself as having attained to the dignity of a grandee of Spain, perhaps even--who could tell--to the proud rank of a Knight of the Golden Fleece entitled to stand covered in the presence of his Sovereign. More than one snipe and other bird such as he had come to hawk rose at his feet, but so preoccupied was he that they were out of flight before he could unhood his falcon. At length, after he had passed the church of Weddinvliet, and, following the left bank of the Old Vliet, was opposite to the wood named Boshhuyen after the half-ruined castle that stood in it, he caught sight of a heron winging its homeward way to the heronry, and cast off his peregrine out of the hood. She saw the quarry at once and dashed towards it, whereon the heron, becoming aware of the approach of its enemy, began to make play, rising high into the air in narrow circles. Swiftly the falcon climbed after it in wider rings till at length she hovered high above and stooped, but in vain. With a quick turn of the wings the heron avoided her, and before the falcon could find her pitch again, was far on its path towards the wood.

Once more the peregrine climbed and stooped with a like result. A third time she soared upwards in great circles, and a third time rushed downwards, now striking the quarry full and binding to it. Adrian, who

was following their flight as fast as he could run, leaping some of the dykes in his path and splashing through others, saw and paused to watch the end. For a moment hawk and quarry hung in the air two hundred feet above the tallest tree beneath them, for at the instant of its taking the heron had begun to descend to the grove for refuge, a struggling black dot against the glow of sunset. Then, still bound together, they rushed downward headlong, for their spread and fluttering wings did not serve to stay their fall, and vanished among the tree-tops.

"Now my good hawk will be killed in the boughs--oh! what a fool was I to fly so near the wood," thought Adrian to himself as again he started forward.

Pushing on at his best pace, soon he was wandering about among the trees as near to that spot where he had seen the birds fall as he could guess it, calling to the falcon and searching for her with his eyes. But here, in the dense grove, the fading light grew faint, so that at length he was obliged to abandon the quest in despair, and turned to find his way to the Leyden road. When within twenty paces of it, suddenly he came upon hawk and heron. The heron was stone dead, and the brave falcon so injured that it seemed hopeless to try to save her, for as he feared, they had crashed through the boughs of a tree in their fall. Adrian looked at her in dismay, for he loved this bird, which was the best of its kind in the city, having trained her himself from a nestling. Indeed there had always been a curious sympathy between himself and this fierce creature of which he made a companion as another man might of a dog.

Even now he noted with a sort of pride that broken-winged and shattered though she was, her talons remained fixed in the back of the quarry, and her beak through the neck.

He stroked the falcon's head, whereon the bird, recognising him, loosed her grip of the heron and tried to flutter to her accustomed perch upon his wrist, only to fall to the ground, where she lay watching him with her bright eyes. Then, because there was no help for it, although he choked with grief at the deed, Adrian struck her on the head with his staff until she died.

"Goodbye, friend," he muttered; "at least that is the best way to go hence, dying with a dead foe beneath," and, picking up the peregrine, he smoothed her ruffled feathers and placed her tenderly in his satchel.

Then it was, just as Adrian rose to his feet, standing beneath the shadow of the big oak upon which the birds had fallen, that coming from the road, which was separated from him by a little belt of undergrowth, he heard the sound of men's voices growling and threatening, and with them a woman's cry for help. At any other time he would have hesitated and reconnoitred, or, perhaps, have retreated at once, for he knew well the dangers of mixing himself up in the quarrels of wayfarers in those rough days. But the loss of the hawk had exasperated his nerves, making any excitement or adventure welcome to him. Therefore, without pausing to think, Adrian pushed forward through the brushwood to find himself in the midst of a curious scene.

Before him ran the grassy road or woodland lane. In the midst of it, sprawling on his back, for he had been pulled from his horse, lay a stout burgher, whose pockets were being rifled by a heavy-browed footpad, who from time to time, doubtless to keep him quiet, threatened his victim with a knife. On the pillion of the burgher's thickset Flemish horse, which was peacefully cropping at the grass, sat a middle-aged female, who seemed to be stricken dumb with terror, while a few paces away a second ruffian and a tall, bony woman were engaged in dragging a girl from the back of a mule.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, Adrian shouted,

"Come on, friends, here are the thieves," whereon the robber woman took to flight and the man wheeled round, as he turned snatching a naked knife from his girdle. But before he could lift it Adrian's heavy staff crashed down upon the point of his shoulder, causing him to drop the dagger with a howl of pain. Again the staff rose and fell, this time upon his head, staggering him and knocking off his cap, so that the light, such as it was, shone upon his villainous fat face, the fringe of sandy-coloured whisker running from throat to temples, and the bald head above, which Adrian knew at once for that of Hague Simon, or the Butcher. Fortunately for him, however, the Butcher was too surprised, or too much confused by the blow which he had received upon his head, to recognise his assailant. Nor, having lost his knife, and believing doubtless that Adrian was only the first of a troop of rescuers, did he

seem inclined to continue the combat, but, calling to his companion to follow him, he began to run after the woman with a swiftness almost incredible in a man of his build and weight, turning presently into the brushwood, where he and his two fellow thieves vanished away.

Adrian dropped the point of his stick and looked round him, for the whole affair had been so sudden, and the rout of the enemy so complete, that he was tempted to believe he must be dreaming. Not eighty seconds ago he was hiding the dead falcon in his satchel, and now behold! he was a gallant knight who, unarmed, except for a dagger, which he forgot to draw, had conquered two sturdy knaves and a female accomplice, bristling with weapons, rescuing from their clutches Beauty (for doubtless the maiden was beautiful), and, incidentally, her wealthy relatives. Just then the lady, who had been dragged from the mule to the ground, where she still lay, struggled to her knees and looked up, thereby causing the hood of her travelling cloak to fall back from her head.

Thus it was, softened and illuminated by the last pale glow of this summer evening, that Adrian first saw the face of Elsa Brant, the woman upon whom, in the name of love, he was destined to bring so much sorrow.

The hero Adrian, overthrower of robbers, looked at the kneeling Elsa, and knew that she was lovely, as, under the circumstances, was right and fitting, and the rescued Elsa, gazing at the hero Adrian, admitted to herself that he was handsome, also that his appearance on the scene had been opportune, not to say providential.

Elsa Brant, the only child of that Hendrik Brant, the friend and cousin of Dirk van Goorl, who was already figured in this history, was just nineteen. Her eyes, and her hair which curled, were brown, her complexion was pale, suggesting delicacy of constitution, her mouth small, with a turn of humour about it, and her chin rather large and firm. She was of middle height, if anything somewhat under it, with an exquisitely rounded and graceful figure and perfect hands. Lacking the stateliness of a Spanish beauty, and the coarse fulness of outline which has always been admired in the Netherlands, Elsa was still without doubt a beautiful woman, though how much of her charm was owing to her bodily attractions, and how much to her vivacious mien and to a certain stamp of spirituality that was set upon her face in repose, and looked out of her clear large eyes when she was thoughtful, it would not be easy to determine. At any rate, her charms were sufficient to make a powerful impression upon Adrian, who, forgetting all about the Marchioness d'Ovanda, inspirer of sonnets, became enamoured of her then and there; partly for her own sake and partly because it was the right kind of thing for a deliverer to do.

But it cannot be said, however deep her feelings of gratitude, that Elsa became enamoured of Adrian. Undoubtedly, as she had recognised, he was handsome, and she much admired the readiness and force with which he had smitten that singularly loathsome-looking individual who had dragged her from the mule. But as it chanced, standing where he did, the shadow of

his face lay on the grass beside her. It was a faint shadow, for the light faded, still it was there, and it fascinated her, for seen thus the fine features became sinister and cruel, and their smile of courtesy and admiration was transformed into a most unpleasant sneer. A trivial accident of light, no doubt, and foolish enough that Elsa should notice it under such circumstances. But notice it she did, and what is more, so quickly are the minds of women turned this way or that, and so illogically do they draw a right conclusion from some pure freak of chance, it raised her prejudice against him.

"Oh! Senor," said Elsa, clasping her hands, "how can I thank you enough?"

This speech was short and not original. Yet there were two things about it that Adrian noted with satisfaction; first, that it was uttered in a soft and most attractive voice, and secondly, that the speaker supposed him to be a Spaniard of noble birth.

"Do not thank me at all, gracious lady," he replied, making his lowest bow. "To put to flight two robber rogues and a woman was no great feat, although I had but this staff for weapon," he added, perhaps with a view to impressing upon the maiden's mind that her assailants had been armed while he, the deliverer, was not.

"Ah!" she answered, "I daresay that a brave knight like you thinks nothing of fighting several men at once, but when that wretch with the

big hands and the flat face caught hold of me I nearly died of fright. At the best of times I am a dreadful coward, and--no, I thank you, Senor, I can stand now and alone. See, here comes the Heer van Broekhoven under whose escort I am travelling, and look, he is bleeding. Oh! worthy friend, are you hurt?"

"Not much, Elsa," gasped the Heer, for he was still breathless with fright and exhaustion, "but that ruffian--may the hangman have him--gave me a dig in the shoulder with his knife as he rose to run. However," he added with satisfaction, "he got nothing from me, for I am an old traveller, and he never thought to look in my hat."

"I wonder why they attacked us," said Elsa.

The Heer van Broekhoven rubbed his head thoughtfully. "To rob us, I suppose, for I heard the woman say, 'Here they are; look for the letter on the girl, Butcher.'"

As he spoke Elsa's face turned grave, and Adrian saw her glance at the animal she had been riding and slip her arm through its rein.

"Worthy sir," went on Van Broekhoven, "tell us whom we have to thank."

"I am Adrian, called Van Goorl," Adrian replied with dignity.

"Van Goorl!" said the Heer. "Well, this is strange; Providence could not



have arranged it better. Listen, wife," he went on, addressing the stout lady, who all this while had sat still upon the horse, so alarmed and bewildered that she could not speak, "here is a son of Dirk van Goorl, to whom we are charged to deliver Elsa."

"Indeed," answered the good woman, recovering herself somewhat, "I thought from the look of him that he was a Spanish nobleman. But whoever he is I am sure that we are all very much obliged to him, and if he could show us the way out of this dreadful wood, which doubtless is full of robbers, to the house of our kinsfolk, the Broekhovens of Leyden, I should be still more grateful."

"Madam, you have only to accept my escort, and I assure you that you need fear no more robbers. Might I in turn ask this lady's name?"

"Certainly, young sir, she is Elsa Brant, the only child of Hendrik Brant, the famous goldsmith of The Hague, but doubtless now that you know her name you know all that also, for she must be some kind of cousin to you. Husband, help Elsa on to her mule."

"Let that be my duty," said Adrian, and, springing forward, he lifted Elsa to the saddle gracefully enough. Then, taking her mule by the bridle, he walked onwards through the wood praying in his heart that the Butcher and his companions would not find courage to attack them again before they were out of its depths.

"Tell me, sir, are you Foy?" asked Elsa in a puzzled voice.

"No," answered Adrian, shortly, "I am his brother."

"Ah! that explains it. You see I was perplexed, for I remember Foy when I was quite little; a beautiful boy, with blue eyes and yellow hair, who was always very kind to me. Once he stopped at my father's house at The Hague with his father."

"Indeed," said Adrian, "I am glad to hear that Foy was ever beautiful. I can only remember that he was very stupid, for I used to try to teach him. At any rate, I am afraid you will not think him beautiful now--that is, unless you admire young men who are almost as broad as they are long."

"Oh! Heer Adrian," she answered, laughing, "I am afraid that fault can be found with most of us North Holland folk, and myself among the number. You see it is given to very few of us to be tall and noble-looking like high-born Spaniards--not that I should wish to resemble any Spaniard, however lovely she might be," Elsa added, with a slight hardening of her voice and face. "But," she went on hurriedly, as though sorry that the remark had escaped her, "you, sir, and Foy are strangely unlike to be brothers; is it not so?"

"We are half-brothers," said Adrian looking straight before him; "we have the same mother only; but please do not call me 'sir,' call me

'cousin.'"

"No, I cannot do that," she replied gaily, "for Foy's mother is no relation of mine. I think that I must call you 'Sir Prince,' for, you see, you appeared at exactly the right time; just like the Prince in the fairy-tales, you know."

Here was an opening not to be neglected by a young man of Adrian's stamp.

"Ah!" he said in a tender voice, and looking up at the lady with his dark eyes, "that is a happy name indeed. I would ask no better lot than to be your Prince, now and always charged to defend you from every danger." (Here, it may be explained, that, however exaggerated his language, Adrian honestly meant what he said, seeing that already he was convinced that to be the husband of the beautiful heiress of one of the wealthiest men in the Netherlands would be a very satisfactory walk in life for a young man in his position.)

"Oh! Sir Prince," broke in Elsa hurriedly, for her cavalier's ardour was somewhat embarrassing, "you are telling the story wrong; the tale I mean did not go on like that at all. Don't you remember? The hero rescued the lady and handed her over--to--to--her father."

"Of whom I think he came to claim her afterwards," replied Adrian with another languishing glance, and a smile of conscious vanity at the

neatness of his answer. Their glances met, and suddenly Adrian became aware that Elsa's face had undergone a complete change. The piquante, half-amused smile had passed out of it; it was strained and hard and the eyes were frightened.

"Oh! now I understand the shadow--how strange," she exclaimed in a new voice.

"What is the matter? What is strange?" he asked.

"Oh!--only that your face reminded me so much of a man of whom I am terrified. No, no, I am foolish, it is nothing, those footpads have upset me. Praise be to God that we are out of that dreadful wood! Look, neighbour Broekhoven, here is Leyden before us. Are not those red roofs pretty in the twilight, and how big the churches seem. See, too, there is water all round the walls; it must be a very strong town. I should think that even the Spaniards could not take it, and oh! I am sure that it would be a good thing if we might find a city which we were quite, quite certain the Spaniards could never take--all, all of us," and she sighed heavily.

"If I were a Spanish general with a proper army," began Adrian pompously, "I would take Leyden easily enough. Only this afternoon I studied its weak spots, and made a plan of attack which could scarcely fail, seeing that the place would only be defended by a mob of untrained, half-armed burghers."

Again that curious look returned into Elsa's eyes.

"If you were a Spanish general," she said slowly. "How can you jest about such a thing as the sacking of a town by Spaniards? Do you know what it means? That is how they talk; I have heard them," and she shuddered, then went on: "You are not a Spaniard, are you, sir, that you can speak like that?" And without waiting for an answer Elsa urged her mule forward, leaving him a little behind.

Presently as they passed through the Witte Poort, he was at her side again and chatting to her, but although she replied courteously enough, he felt that an invisible barrier had arisen between them. Yes, she had read his secret heart; it was as though she had been a party to his thoughts when he stood by the bridge this afternoon designing plans for the taking of Leyden, and half wishing that he might share in its capture. She mistrusted him, and was half afraid of him, and Adrian knew that it was so.

Ten minutes' ride through the quiet town, for in those days of terror and suspicion unless business took them abroad people did not frequent the streets much after sundown, brought the party to the van Goorl's house in the Bree Straat. Here Adrian dismounted and tried to open the door, only to find that it was locked and barred. This seemed to exasperate a temper already somewhat excited by the various events and experiences of the day, and more especially by the change in Elsa's

manner; at any rate he used the knocker with unnecessary energy. After a while, with much turning of keys and drawing of bolts, the door was opened, revealing Dirk, his stepfather, standing in the passage, candle in hand, while behind, as though to be ready for any emergency, loomed the great stooping shape of Red Martin.

"Is that you, Adrian?" asked Dirk in a voice at once testy and relieved.

"Then why did you not come to the side entrance instead of forcing us to unbar here?"

"Because I bring you a guest," replied Adrian pointing to Elsa and her companions. "It did not occur to me that you would wish guests to be smuggled in by a back door as though--as though they were ministers of our New Religion."

The bow had been drawn at a venture but the shaft went home, for Dirk started and whispered: "Be silent, fool." Then he added aloud, "Guest! What guest?"

"It is I, cousin Dirk, I, Elsa, Hendrik Brant's daughter," she said, sliding from her mule.

"Elsa Brant!" ejaculated Dirk. "Why, how came you here?"

"I will tell you presently," she answered; "I cannot talk in the street," and she touched her lips with her finger. "These are my

friends, the van Broekhovens, under whose escort I have travelled from The Hague. They wish to go on to the house of their relations, the other Broekhovens, if some one will show them the way."

Then followed greetings and brief explanations. After these the Broekhovens departed to the house of their relatives, under the care of Martin, while, its saddle having been removed and carried into the house at Elsa's express request, Adrian led the mule round to the stable.

When Dirk had kissed and welcomed his young cousin he ushered her, still accompanied by the saddle, into the room where his wife and Foy were at supper, and with them the Pastor Arentz, that clergyman who had preached to them on the previous night. Here he found Lysbeth, who had risen from the table anxiously awaiting his return. So dreadful were the times that a knocking on the door at an unaccustomed hour was enough to throw those within into a paroxysm of fear, especially if at the moment they chanced to be harbouring a pastor of the New Faith, a crime punishable with death. That sound might mean nothing more than a visit from a neighbour, or it might be the trump of doom to every soul within the house, signifying the approach of the familiars of the Inquisition and of a martyr's crown. Therefore Lysbeth uttered a sigh of joy when her husband appeared, followed only by a girl.

"Wife," he said, "here is our cousin, Elsa Brant, come to visit us from The Hague, though why I know not as yet. You remember Elsa, the little Elsa, with whom we used to play so many years ago."

"Yes, indeed," answered Lysbeth, as she put her arms about her and embraced her, saying, "welcome, child, though," she added, glancing at her, "you should no longer be called child who have grown into so fair a maid. But look, here is the Pastor Arentz, of whom you may have heard, for he is the friend of your father and of us all."

"In truth, yes," answered Elsa curtseying, a salute which Arentz acknowledged by saying gravely,

"Daughter, I greet you in the name of the Lord, who has brought you to this house safely, for which give thanks."

"Truly, Pastor, I have need to do so since--" and suddenly she stopped, for her eyes met those of Foy, who was gazing at her with such wonder and admiration stamped upon his open face that Elsa coloured at the sight. Then, recovering herself, she held out her hand, saying, "Surely you are my cousin Foy; I should have known you again anywhere by your hair and eyes."

"I am glad," he answered simply, for it flattered him to think that this beautiful young lady remembered her old playmate, whom she had not seen for at least eleven years, adding, "but I do not think I should have



known you."

"Why?" she asked, "have I changed so much?"

"Yes," Foy answered bluntly, "you used to be a thin little girl with red arms, and now you are the most lovely maiden I ever saw."

At this speech everybody laughed, including the Pastor, while Elsa, reddening still more, replied, "Cousin, I remember that you used to be rude, but now you have learned to flatter, which is worse. Nay, I beg of you, spare me," for Foy showed signs of wishing to argue the point. Then turning from him she slipped off her cloak and sat down on the chair which Dirk had placed for her at the table, reflecting in her heart that she wished it had been Foy who rescued her from the wood thieves, and not the more polished Adrian.

Afterwards as the meal went on she told the tale of their adventure. Scarcely was it done when Adrian entered the room. The first thing he noticed was that Elsa and Foy were seated side by side, engaged in animated talk, and the second, that there was no cover for him at the table.

"Have I your permission to sit down, mother?" he asked in a loud voice, for no one had seen him come in.

"Certainly, son, why not?" answered Lysbeth, kindly. Adrian's voice

warned her that his temper was ruffled.

"Because there is no place for me, mother, that is all, though doubtless it is more worthily filled by the Rev. Pastor Arentz. Still, after a man has been fighting for his life with armed thieves, well--a bit of food and a place to eat it in would have been welcome."

"Fighting for your life, son!" said Lysbeth astonished. "Why, from what Elsa has just been telling us, I gathered that the rascals ran away at the first blow which you struck with your staff."

"Indeed, mother; well, doubtless if the lady says that, it was so. I took no great note; at the least they ran and she was saved, with the others; a small service not worth mentioning, still useful in its way."

"Oh! take my chair, Adrian," said Foy rising, "and don't make such a stir about a couple of cowardly footpads and an old hag. You don't want us to think you a hero because you didn't turn tail and leave Elsa and her companions in their hands, do you?"

"What you think, or do not think, is a matter of indifference to me," replied Adrian, seating himself with an injured air.

"Whatever my cousin Foy may think, Heer Adrian," broke in Elsa anxiously, "I am sure I thank God who sent so brave a gentleman to help us. Yes, yes, I mean it, for it makes me sick to remember what might

have happened if you had not rushed at those wicked men like--like----"

"Like David on the Philistines," suggested Foy.

"You should study your Bible, lad," put in Arentz with a grave smile.

"It was Samson who slew the Philistines; David conquered the giant Goliath, though it is true that he also was a Philistine."

"Like Samson--I mean David--on Goliath," continued Elsa confusedly. "Oh! please, cousin Foy, do not laugh; I believe that you would have left me at the mercy of that dreadful man with a flat face and the bald head, who was trying to steal my father's letter. By the way, cousin Dirk, I have not given it to you yet, but it is quite safe, sewn up in the lining of the saddle, and I was to tell you that you must read it by the old cypher."

"Man with a flat face," said Dirk anxiously, as he slit away at the stitches of the saddle to find the letter; "tell me about him. What was he like, and what makes you think he wished to take the paper from you?"

So Elsa described the appearance of the man and of the black-eyed hag, his companion, and repeated also the words that the Heer van Broekhoven had heard the woman utter before the attack took place.

"That sounds like the spy, Hague Simon, him whom they call the Butcher, and his wife, Black Meg," said Dirk. "Adrian, you must have seen these

people, was it they?"

For a moment Adrian considered whether he should tell the truth; then, for certain reasons of his own, decided that he would not. Black Meg, it may be explained, in the intervals of graver business was not averse to serving as an emissary of Venus. In short, she arranged assignations, and Adrian was fond of assignations. Hence his reticence.

"How should I know?" he answered, after a pause; "the place was gloomy, and I have only set eyes upon Hague Simon and his wife about twice in my life."

"Softly, brother," said Foy, "and stick to the truth, however gloomy the wood may have been. You know Black Meg pretty well at any rate, for I have often seen you--" and he stopped suddenly, as though sorry that the words had slipped from his tongue.

"Adrian, is this so?" asked Dirk in the silence which followed.

"No, stepfather," answered Adrian.

"You hear," said Dirk addressing Foy. "In future, son, I trust that you will be more careful with your words. It is no charge to bring lightly against a man that he has been seen in the fellowship of one of the most infamous wretches in Leyden, a creature whose hands are stained red with

the blood of innocent men and women, and who, as your mother knows, once

brought me near to the scaffold."

Suddenly the laughing boyish look passed out of the face of Foy, and it grew stern.

"I am sorry for my words," he said, "since Black Meg does other things besides spying, and Adrian may have had business of his own with her which is no affair of mine. But, as they are spoke, I can't eat them, so you must decide which of us is--not truthful."

"Nay, Foy, nay," interposed Arentz, "do not put it thus. Doubtless there is some mistake, and have I not told you before that you are over rash of tongue?"

"Yes, and a great many other things," answered Foy, "every one of them true, for I am a miserable sinner. Well, all right, there is a mistake, and it is," he added, with an air of radiant innocency that somehow was scarcely calculated to deceive, "that I was merely poking a stick into Adrian's temper. I never saw him talking to Black Meg. Now, are you satisfied?"

Then the storm broke, as Elsa, who had been watching the face of Adrian while he listened to Foy's artless but somewhat fatuous explanation, saw that it must break.

"There is a conspiracy against me," said Adrian, who had grown white with rage; "yes, everything has conspired against me to-day. First the ragamuffins in the street make a mock of me, and then my hawk is killed. Next it chances that I rescue this lady and her companions from robbers in the wood. But, do I get any thanks for this? No, I come home to find that I am so much forgotten that no place is even laid for me at table; more, to be jeered at for the humble services that I have done. Lastly, I have the lie given to me, and without reproach, by my brother, who, were he not my brother, should answer for it at the sword's point."

"Oh! Adrian, Adrian," broke in Foy, "don't be a fool; stop before you say something you will be sorry for."

"That isn't all," went on Adrian, taking no heed. "Whom do I find at this table? The worthy Heer Arentz, a minister of the New Religion. Well, I protest. I belong to the New Religion myself, having been brought up in that faith, but it must be well known that the presence of a pastor here in our house exposes everybody to the risk of death. If my stepfather and Foy choose to take that risk, well and good, but I maintain that they have no right to lay its consequences upon my mother, whose eldest son I am, nor even upon myself."

Now Dirk rose and tapped Adrian on the shoulder. "Young man," he said coldly and with glittering eyes, "listen to me. The risks which I and my son, Foy, and my wife, your mother, take, we run for conscience sake.

You have nothing to do with them, it is our affair. But since you have raised the question, if your faith is not strong enough to support you I acknowledge that I have no right to bring you into danger. Look you, Adrian, you are no son of mine; in you I have neither part nor lot, yet I have cared for you and supported you since you were born under very strange and unhappy circumstances. Yes, you have shared whatever I had to give with my own son, without preference or favour, and should have shared it even after my death. And now, if these are your opinions, I am tempted to say to you that the world is wide and that, instead of idling here upon my bounty, you would do well to win your own way through it as far from Leyden as may please you."

"You throw your benefits in my teeth, and reproach me with my birth," broke in Adrian, who by now was almost raving with passion, "as though it were a crime in me to have other blood running in my veins than that of Netherlander tradesfolk. Well, if so, it would seem that the crime was my mother's, and not mine, who----"

"Adrian, Adrian!" cried Foy, in warning, but the madman heeded not.

"Who," he went on furiously, "was content to be the companion, for I understand that she was never really married to him, of some noble Spaniard before she became the wife of a Leyden artisan."

He ceased, and at this moment there broke from Lysbeth's lips a low wail of such bitter anguish that it chilled even his mad rage to silence.

"Shame on thee, my son," said the wail, "who art not ashamed to speak thus of the mother that bore thee."

"Ay," echoed Dirk, in the stillness that followed, "shame on thee! Once thou wast warned, but now I warn no more."

Then he stepped to the door, opened it, and called, "Martin, come hither."

Presently, still in that heavy silence, which was broken only by the quick breath of Adrian panting like some wild beast in a net, was heard the sound of heavy feet shuffling down the passage. Then Martin entered the room, and stood there gazing about him with his large blue eyes, that were like the eyes of a wondering child.

"Your pleasure, master," he said at length.

"Martin Roos," replied Dirk, waving back Arentz who rose to speak, "take that young man, my stepson, the Heer Adrian, and lead him from my house--without violence if possible. My order is that henceforth you are not to suffer him to set foot within its threshold; see that it is not disobeyed. Go, Adrian, to-morrow your possessions shall be sent to you, and with them such money as shall suffice to start you in the world."

Without comment or any expression of surprise, the huge Martin shuffled



forward towards Adrian, his hand outstretched as though to take him by the arm.

"What!" exclaimed Adrian, as Martin advanced down the room, "you set your mastiff on me, do you? Then I will show you how a gentleman treats dogs," and suddenly, a naked dagger shining in his hand, he leaped straight at the Frisian's throat. So quick and fierce was the onslaught that only one issue to it seemed possible. Elsa gasped and closed her eyes, thinking when she opened them to see that knife plunged to the hilt in Martin's breast, and Foy sprang forward. Yet in this twinkling of an eye the danger was done with, for by some movement too quick to follow, Martin had dealt his assailant such a blow upon the arm that the poniard, jarred from his grasp, flew flashing across the room to fall in Lysbeth's lap. Another second and the iron grip had closed upon Adrian's shoulder, and although he was strong and struggled furiously, yet he could not loose the hold of that single hand.

"Please cease fighting, Mynheer Adrian, for it is quite useless," said Martin to his captive in a voice as calm as though nothing unusual had happened. Then he turned and walked with him towards the door.

On the threshold Martin stopped, and looking over his shoulder said, "Master, I think that the Heer is dead, do you still wish me to put him into the street?"

They crowded round and stared. It was true, Adrian seemed to be dead; at

least his face was like that of a corpse, while from the corner of his mouth blood trickled in a thin stream.