

CHAPTER XII

THE SUMMONS

"Wretched man!" said Lysbeth wringing her hands, and with a shudder shaking the dagger from her lap as though it had been a serpent, "you have killed my son."

"Your pardon, mistress," replied Martin placidly; "but that is not so. The master ordered me to remove the Heer Adrian, whereon the Heer Adrian very naturally tried to stab me. But I, having been accustomed to such things in my youth," and he looked deprecatingly towards the Pastor Arentz, "struck the Heer Adrian upon the bone of his elbow, causing the knife to jump from his hand, for had I not done so I should have been dead and unable to execute the commands of my master. Then I took the Heer Adrian by the shoulder, gently as I might, and walked away with him, whereupon he died of rage, for which I am very sorry but not to blame."

"You are right, man," said Lysbeth, "it is you who are to blame, Dirk; yes, you have murdered my son. Oh! never mind what he said, his temper was always fierce, and who pays any heed to the talk of a man in a mad passion?"

"Why did you let your brother be thus treated, cousin Foy?" broke in Elsa quivering with indignation. "It was cowardly of you to stand still

and see that great red creature crush the life out of him when you know well that it was because of your taunts that he lost his temper and said things that he did not mean, as I do myself sometimes. No, I will never speak to you again--and only this afternoon he saved me from the robbers!" and she burst into weeping.

"Peace, peace! this is no time for angry words," said the Pastor Arentz, pushing his way through the group of bewildered men and overwrought women. "He can scarcely be dead; let me look at him, I am something of a doctor," and he knelt by the senseless and bleeding Adrian to examine him.

"Take comfort, Vrouw van Goorl," he said presently, "your son is not dead, for his heart beats, nor has his friend Martin injured him in any way by the exercise of his strength, but I think that in his fury he has burst a blood-vessel, for he bleeds fast. My counsel is that he should be put to bed and his head cooled with cold water till the surgeon can be fetched to treat him. Lift him in your arms, Martin."

So Martin carried Adrian, not to the street, but to his bed, while Foy, glad of an excuse to escape the undeserved reproaches of Elsa and the painful sight of his mother's grief, went to seek the physician. In due course he returned with him, and, to the great relief of all of them, the learned man announced that, notwithstanding the blood which he had lost, he did not think that Adrian would die, though, at the best, he must keep his bed for some weeks, have skilful nursing and be humoured

in all things.

While his wife Lysbeth and Elsa were attending to Adrian, Dirk and his son, Foy, for the Pastor Arentz had gone, sat upstairs talking in the sitting-room, that same balconied chamber in which once Dirk had been refused while Montalvo hid behind the curtain. Dirk was much disturbed, for when his wrath had passed he was a tender-hearted man, and his stepson's plight distressed him greatly. Now he was justifying himself to Foy, or, rather, to his own conscience.

"A man who could speak so of his own mother, was not fit to stop in the same house with her," he said; "moreover, you heard his words about the pastor. I tell you, son, I am afraid of this Adrian."

"Unless that bleeding from his mouth stops soon you will not have cause to fear him much longer," replied Foy sadly, "but if you want my opinion about the business, father, why here it is--I think that you have made too much of a small matter. Adrian is--Adrian; he is not one of us, and he should not be judged as though he were. You cannot imagine me flying into a fury because the women forgot to set my place at table, or trying to stab Martin and bursting a blood vessel because you told him to lead me out of the room. No, I should know better, for what is the use of any ordinary man attempting to struggle against Martin? He might as well try to argue with the Inquisition. But then I am I, and Adrian is Adrian."

"But the words he used, son. Remember the words."

"Yes, and if I had spoken them they would have meant a great deal, but in Adrian's mouth I think no more of them than if they came from some angry woman. Why, he is always sulking, or taking offence, or flying into rages over something or other, and when he is like that it all means--just nothing except that he wants to use fine talk and show off and play the Don over us. He did not really mean to lie to me when he said that I had not seen him talking to Black Meg, he only meant to contradict, or perhaps to hide something up. As a matter of fact, if you want to know the truth, I believe that the old witch took notes for him to some young lady, and that Hague Simon supplied him with rats for his hawks."

"Yes, Foy, that may be so, but how about his talk of the pastor? It makes me suspicious, son. You know the times we live in, and if he should go that way--remember it is in his blood--the lives of every one of us are in his hand. The father tried to burn me once, and I do not wish the child to finish the work."

"Then when they come out of his hand, you are at liberty to cut off mine," answered Foy hotly. "I have been brought up with Adrian, and I know what he is; he is vain and pompous, and every time he looks at you and me he thanks God that he was not made like that. Also he has failings and vices, and he is lazy, being too fine a gentleman to work like a common Flemish burgher, and all the rest of it. But, father, he has a good heart, and if any man outside this house were to tell me that

Adrian is capable of playing the traitor and bringing his own family to the scaffold, well, I would make him swallow his words, or try to, that is all. As regards what he said about my mother's first marriage"--and Foy hung his head--"of course it is a subject on which I have no right to talk, but, father, speaking as one man to another--he is sadly placed and innocent, whatever others may have been, and I don't wonder that he feels sore about the story."

As he spoke the door opened and Lysbeth entered.

"How goes it with Adrian, wife?" Dirk asked hastily.

"Better, husband, thank God, though the doctor stays with him for this night. He has lost much blood, and at the best must lie long abed; above all none must cross his mood or use him roughly," and she looked at her husband with meaning.

"Peace, wife," Dirk answered with irritation. "Foy here has just read me one lecture upon my dealings with your son, and I am in no mood to listen to another. I served the man as he deserved, neither less nor more, and if he chose to go mad and vomit blood, why it is no fault of mine. You should have brought him up to a soberer habit."

"Adrian is not as other men are, and ought not to be measured by the same rule," said Lysbeth, almost repeating Foy's words.

"So I have been told before, wife, though I, who have but one standard of right and wrong, find the saying hard. But so be it. Doubtless the rule for Adrian is that which should be used to measure angels--or Spaniards, and not one suited to us poor Hollanders who do our work, pay our debts, and don't draw knives on unarmed men!"

"Have you read the letter from your cousin Brant?" asked Lysbeth, changing the subject.

"No," answered Dirk, "what with daggers, swoonings, and scoldings it slipped my mind," and drawing the paper from his tunic he cut the silk and broke the seals. "I had forgotten," he went on, looking at the sheets of words interspersed with meaningless figures; "it is in our private cypher, as Elsa said, or at least most of it is. Get the key from my desk, son, and let us set to work, for our task is likely to be long."

Foy obeyed, returning presently with an old Testament of a very scarce edition. With the help of this book and an added vocabulary by slow degrees they deciphered the long epistle, Foy writing it down sentence by sentence as they learned their significance. When at length the task was finished, which was not till well after midnight, Dirk read the translation aloud to Lysbeth and his son. It ran thus:

"Well-beloved cousin and old friend, you will be astonished to see my

dear child Elsa, who brings you this paper sewn in her saddle, where I trust none will seek it, and wonder why she comes to you without warning. I will tell you.

"You know that here the axe and the stake are very busy, for at The Hague the devil walks loose; yes, he is the master in this land. Well, although the blow has not yet fallen on me, since for a while I have bought off the informers, hour by hour the sword hangs over my head, nor can I escape it in the end. That I am suspected of the New Faith is not my real crime. You can guess it. Cousin, they desire my wealth. Now I have sworn that no Spaniard shall have this, no, not if I must sink it in the sea to save it from them, since it has been heaped up to another end. Yet they desire it sorely, and spies are about my path and about my bed. Worst among them all, and at the head of them, is a certain Ramiro, a one-eyed man, but lately come from Spain, it is said as an agent of the Inquisition, whose manners are those of a person who was once a gentleman, and who seems to know this country well. This fellow has approached me, offering if I will give him three-parts of my wealth to secure my escape with the rest, and I have told him that I will consider the offer. For this reason only I have a little respite, since he desires that my money should go into his pocket and not into that of the Government. But, by the help of God, neither of them shall touch it.

"See you, Dirk, the treasure is not here in the house as they think. It is hidden, but in a spot where it cannot stay.

"Therefore, if you love me, and hold that I have been a good friend to you, send your son Foy with one other strong and trusted man--your Frisian servant, Martin, if possible--on the morrow after you receive this. When night falls he should have been in The Hague some hours, and have refreshed himself, but let him not come near me or my house. Half an hour after sunset let him, followed by his serving man, walk up and down the right side of the Broad Street in The Hague, as though seeking adventures, till a girl, also followed by a servant, pushes up against him as if on purpose, and whispers in his ear, 'Are you from Leyden, sweetheart?' Then he must say 'Yes,' and accompany her till he comes to a place where he will learn what must be done and how to do it. Above all, he must follow no woman who may accost him and does not repeat these words. The girl who addresses him will be short, dark, pretty, and gaily dressed, with a red bow upon her left shoulder. But let him not be misled by look or dress unless she speaks the words.

"If he reaches England or Leyden safely with the stuff let him hide it for the present, friend, till your heart tells you it is needed. I care not where, nor do I wish to know, for if I knew, flesh and blood are weak, and I might give up the secret when they stretch me on the rack.

"Already you have my will sent to you three months ago, and enclosed in it a list of goods. Open it now and you will find that under it my possessions pass to you and your heirs absolutely as my executors, for such especial trusts and purposes as are set out therein. Elsa has been ailing, and it is known that the leech has ordered her a change.

Therefore her journey to Leyden will excite no wonder, neither, or so I hope, will even Ramiro guess that I should enclose a letter such as this in so frail a casket. Still, there is danger, for spies are many, but having no choice, and my need being urgent, I must take the risks. If the paper is seized they cannot read it, for they will never make out the cypher, since, even did they know of them, no copies of our books can be found in Holland. Moreover, were this writing all plain Dutch or Spanish, it tells nothing of the whereabouts of the treasure, of its destination, or of the purpose to which it is dedicate. Lastly, should any Spaniard chance to find that wealth, it will vanish, and, mayhap, he with it."

"What can he mean by that?" interrupted Foy.

"I know not," answered Dirk. "My cousin Brant is not a person who speaks at random, so perhaps we have misinterpreted the passage." Then he went on reading:

"Now I have done with the pelf, which must take its chance. Only, I pray you--I trust it to your honour and to your love of an old friend to bury it, burn it, cast it to the four winds of heaven before you suffer a Spaniard to touch a gem or a piece of gold.

"I send to you to-day Elsa, my only child. You will know my reason. She

will be safer with you in Leyden than here at The Hague, since if they take me they might take her also. The priests and their tools do not spare the young, especially if their rights stand between them and money. Also she knows little of my desperate strait; she is ignorant even of the contents of this letter, and I do not wish that she should share these troubles. I am a doomed man, and she loves me, poor child. One day she will hear that it is over, and that will be sad for her, but it would be worse if she knew all from the beginning. When I bid her good-bye to-morrow, it will be for the last time--God give me strength to bear the blow.

"You are her guardian, as you deal with her--nay, I must be crazy with my troubles, for none other would think it needful to remind Dirk van Goorl or his son of their duty to the dead. Farewell, friend and cousin. God guard you and yours in these dreadful times with which it has pleased Him to visit us for a season, that through us perhaps this country and the whole world may be redeemed from priestcraft and tyranny. Greet your honoured wife, Lysbeth, from me; also your son Foy, who used to be a merry lad, and whom I hope to see again within a night or two, although it may be fated that we shall not meet. My blessing on him, especially if he prove faithful in all these things. May the Almighty who guards us give us a happy meeting in the hereafter which is at hand. Pray for me. Farewell, farewell.--Hendrik Brant.

"P.S. I beg the dame Lysbeth to see that Elsa wears woollen when the weather turns damp or cold, since her chest is somewhat delicate. This

was my wife's last charge, and I pass it on to you. As regards her marriage, should she live, I leave that to your judgment with this command only, that her inclination shall not be forced, beyond what is right and proper. When I am dead, kiss her for me, and tell her that I loved her beyond any creature now living on the earth, and that wherever I am from day to day I wait to welcome her, as I shall wait to welcome you and yours, Dirk van Goorl. In case these presents miscarry, I will send duplicates of them, also in mixed cypher, whenever chance may offer."

Having finished reading the translation of this cypher document, Dirk bent his head while he folded it, not wishing that his face should be seen. Foy also turned aside to hide the tears which gathered in his eyes, while Lysbeth wept openly.

"A sad letter and sad times!" said Dirk at length.

"Poor Elsa," muttered Foy, then added, with a return of hopefulness, "perhaps he is mistaken, he may escape after all."

Lysbeth shook her head as she answered,

"Hendrik Brant is not the man to write like that if there was any hope for him, nor would he part with his daughter unless he knew that the end

must be near at hand."

"Why, then, does he not fly?" asked Foy.

"Because the moment he stirred the Inquisition would pounce upon him, as a cat pounces upon a mouse that tries to run from its corner," replied his father. "While the mouse sits still the cat sits also and purrs; when it moves----"

There was a silence in which Dirk, having fetched the will of Hendrik Brant from a safe hiding place, where it had lain since it reached his hands some months before, opened the seals and read it aloud.

It proved to be a very short document, under the terms of which Dirk van Goorl and his heirs inherited all the property, real and personal, of Hendrik Brant, upon trust, (1) to make such ample provision for his daughter Elsa as might be needful or expedient; (2) to apply the remainder of the money "for the defence of our country, the freedom of religious Faith, and the destruction of the Spaniards in such fashion and at such time or times as God should reveal to them, which," added the will, "assuredly He will do."

Enclosed in this document was an inventory of the property that constituted the treasure. At the head came an almost endless list of jewels, all of them carefully scheduled. These were the first three items:

"Item: The necklace of great pearls that I exchanged with the Emperor Charles when he took a love for sapphires, enclosed in a watertight copper box.

"Item: A coronet and stomacher of rubies mounted in my own gold work, the best that ever I did, which three queens have coveted, and none was rich enough to buy.

"Item: The great emerald that my father left me, the biggest known, having magic signs of ancients engraved upon the back of it, and enclosed in a chased case of gold."

Then came other long lists of precious stones, too numerous to mention, but of less individual value, and after them this entry:

"Item: Four casks filled with gold coin (I know not the exact weight or number)."

At the bottom of this schedule was written, "A very great treasure, the greatest of all the Netherlands, a fruit of three generations of honest trading and saving, converted by me for the most part into jewels, that it may be easier to move. This is the prayer of me, Hendrik Brant, who owns it for his life; that this gold may prove the earthly doom of any Spaniard who tries to steal it, and as I write it comes into my mind that God will grant this my petition. Amen. Amen. Amen! So say I,

Hendrik Brant, who stand at the Gate of Death."

All of this inventory Dirk read aloud, and when he had finished Lysbeth gasped with amazement.

"Surely," she said, "this little cousin of ours is richer than many princes. Yes, with such a dowry princes would be glad to take her in marriage."

"The fortune is large enough," answered Dirk. "But, oh! what a burden has Hendrik Brant laid upon our backs, for under this will the wealth is left, not straight to the lawful heiress, Elsa, but to me and my heirs on the trusts started, and they are heavy. Look you, wife, the Spaniards know of this vast hoard, and the priests know of it, and no stone on earth or hell will they leave unturned to win that money. I say that, for his own sake, my cousin Hendrik would have done better to accept the offer of the Spanish thief Ramiro and give him three-fourths and escape to England with the rest. But that is not his nature, who was ever stubborn, and who would die ten times over rather than enrich the men he hates. Moreover, he, who is no miser, has saved this fortune that the bulk of it may be spent for his country in the hour of her need, and alas! of that need we are made the judges, since he is called away. Wife, I foresee that these gems and gold will breed bloodshed and misery to all our house. But the trust is laid upon us and it must be borne. Foy, to-morrow at dawn you and Martin will start for The Hague to carry out the command of your cousin Brant."

"Why should my son's life be risked on this mad errand?" asked Lysbeth.

"Because it is a duty, mother," answered Foy cheerfully, although he tried to look depressed. He was young and enterprising; moreover, the adventure promised to be full of novelty.

In spite of himself Dirk smiled and bade him summon Martin.

A minute later Foy was in the great man's den and kicking at his prostrate form. "Wake up, you snoring bull," he said, "awake!"

Martin sat up, his red beard showing like a fire in the shine of the taper. "What is it now, Master Foy?" he asked yawning. "Are they after us about those two dead soldiers?"

"No, you sleepy lump, it's treasure."

"I don't care about treasure," replied Martin, indifferently.

"It's Spaniards."

"That sounds better," said Martin, shutting his mouth. "Tell me about it, Master Foy, while I pull on my jerkin."

So Foy told him as much as he could in two minutes.

"Yes, it sounds well," commented Martin, critically. "If I know anything of those Spaniards, we shan't get back to Leyden without something happening. But I don't like that bit about the women; as likely as not they will spoil everything."

Then he accompanied Foy to the upper room, and there received his instructions from Dirk with a solemn and unmoved countenance.

"Are you listening?" asked Dirk, sharply. "Do you understand?"

"I think so, master," replied Martin. "Hear;" and he repeated sentence by sentence every word that had fallen from Dirk's lips, for when he chose to use it Martin's memory was good. "One or two questions, master," he said. "This stuff must be brought through at all hazards?"

"At all hazards?" answered Dirk.

"And if we cannot bring it through, it must be hidden in the best way possible?"

"Yes."

"And if people should try to interfere with us, I understand that we must fight?"

"Of course."

"And if in the fighting we chance to kill anybody I shall not be reproached and called a murderer by the pastor or others?"

"I think not," replied Dirk.

"And if anything should happen to my young master here, his blood will not be laid upon my head?"

Lysbeth groaned. Then she stood up and spoke.

"Martin, why do you ask such foolish questions? Your peril my son must share, and if harm should come to him as may chance, we shall know well that it is no fault of yours. You are not a coward or a traitor, Martin."

"Well, I think not, mistress, at least not often; but you see here are two duties: the first, to get this money through, the second, to protect the Heer Foy. I wish to know which of these is the more important."

It was Dirk who answered.

"You go to carry out the wishes of my cousin Brant; they must be attended to before anything else."

"Very good," replied Martin; "you quite understand, Heer Foy?"

"Oh! perfectly," replied that young man, grinning.

"Then go to bed for an hour or two, as you may have to keep awake to-morrow night; I will call you at dawn. Your servant, master and mistress, I hope to report myself to you within sixty hours, but if I do not come within eighty, or let us say a hundred, it may be well to make inquiries," and he shuffled back to his den.

Youth sleeps well whatever may be behind or before it, and it was not until Martin had called to him thrice next morning that Foy opened his eyes in the grey light, and, remembering, sprang from his bed.

"There's no hurry," said Martin, "but it will be as well to get out of Leyden before many people are about."

As he spoke Lysbeth entered the room fully dressed, for she had not slept that night, carrying in her hand a little leathern bag.

"How is Adrian, mother?" asked Foy, as she stooped down to kiss him.

"He sleeps, and the doctor, who is still with him, says that he does well," she answered. "But see here, Foy, you are about to start upon

your first adventure, and this is my present to you--this and my blessing." Then she untied the neck of the bag and poured from it something that lay upon the table in a shining heap no larger than Martin's fist. Foy took hold of the thing and held it up, whereon the little heap stretched itself out marvellously, till it was as large indeed as the body garment of a man.

"Steel shirt!" exclaimed Martin, nodding his head in approval, and adding, "good wear for those who mix with Spaniards."

"Yes," said Lysbeth, "my father brought this from the East on one of his voyages. I remember he told me that he paid for it its weight in gold and silver, and that even then it was sold to him only by the special favour of the king of that country. The shirt, they said, was ancient, and of such work as cannot now be made. It had been worn from father to son in one family for three hundred years, but no man that wore it ever died by body-cut or thrust, since sword or dagger cannot pierce that steel. At least, son, this is the story, and, strangely enough, when I lost all the rest of my heritage--" and she sighed, "this shirt was left to me, for it lay in its bag in the old oak chest, and none noticed it or thought it worth the taking. So make the most of it, Foy; it is all that remains of your grandfather's fortune, since this house is now your father's."

Beyond kissing his mother in thanks, Foy made no answer; he was too much engaged in examining the wonders of the shirt, which as a worker in

metals he could well appreciate. But Martin said again:

"Better than money, much better than money. God knew that and made them

leave the mail."

"I never saw the like of it," broke in Foy; "look, it runs together like quicksilver and is light as leather. See, too, it has stood sword and dagger stroke before to-day," and holding it in a sunbeam they perceived in many directions faint lines and spots upon the links caused in past years by the cutting edge of swords and the points of daggers. Yet never a one of those links was severed or broken.

"I pray that it may stand them again if your body be inside of it," said Lysbeth. "Yet, son, remember always that there is One who can guard you better than any human mail however perfect," and she left the room.

Then Foy drew on the coat over his woollen jersey, and it fitted him well, though not so well as in after years, when he had grown thicker. Indeed, when his linen shirt and his doublet were over it none could have guessed that he was clothed in armour of proof.

"It isn't fair, Martin," he said, "that I should be wrapped in steel and you in nothing."

Martin smiled. "Do you take me for a fool, master," he said, "who have

seen some fighting in my day, private and public? Look here," and, opening his leathern jerkin, he showed that he was clothed beneath in a strange garment of thick but supple hide.

"Bullskin," said Martin, "tanned as we know how up in Friesland. Not as good as yours, but will turn most cuts or arrows. I sat up last night making one for you, it was almost finished before, but the steel is cooler and better for those who can afford it. Come, let us go and eat; we should be at the gates at eight when they open."