

CHAPTER XV

SEÑOR RAMIRO

If Foy van Goorl, by some magic, could have seen what was passing in the mind of that fugitive in the boat as he sailed swiftly away from the scene of death and ruin, bitterly indeed would he have cursed his folly and inexperience which led him to disregard the advice of Red Martin.

Let us look at this man as he goes gnawing his hand in rage and disappointment. There is something familiar about his face and bearing, still gallant enough in a fashion, yet the most observant would find it difficult to recognise in the Señor Ramiro the handsome and courtly Count Juan de Montalvo of over twenty years before. A long spell of the galleys changes the hardiest man, and by ill luck Montalvo, or Ramiro, to call him by his new name, had been forced to serve nearly his full time. He would have escaped earlier indeed, had he not been foolish enough to join in a mutiny, which was discovered and suppressed. It was in the course of this savage struggle for freedom that he lost his eye, knocked out with a belaying pin by an officer whom he had just stabbed. The innocent officer died and the rascal Ramiro died, but without his good looks.

To a person of gentle birth, however great a scoundrel he might be, the galleys, which represented penal servitude in the sixteenth century, were a very rough school. Indeed for the most part the man who went into

them blameless became bad, and the man who went into them bad became worse, for, as the proverb says, those who have dwelt in hell always smell of brimstone. Who can imagine the awfulness of it--the chains, the arduous and continual labour, the whip of the quarter-masters, the company of thieves and outcast ruffians, all dreadful in its squalid sameness?

Well, his strength and constitution, coupled with a sort of grim philosophy, brought him through, and at length Ramiro found himself a free man, middle-aged indeed, but intelligent and still strong, the world once more before him. Yet what a world! His wife, believing him dead, or perhaps wishing to believe it, had remarried and gone with her husband to New Spain, taking his children with her, and his friends, such of them as lived, turned their backs upon him. But although he had been an unlucky man, for with him wickedness had not prospered, he still had resource and courage.

The Count Montalvo was a penniless outlaw, a byword and a scorn, and so the Count Montalvo--died, and was buried publicly in the church of his native village. Strangely enough, however, about the same time the Senor Ramiro appeared in another part of Spain, where with success he practised as a notary and man of affairs. Some years went by thus, till at length, having realised a considerable sum of money by the help of an ingenious fraud, of which the details are superfluous, an inspiration took him and he sailed for the Netherlands.

In those dreadful days, in order to further the ends of religious persecution and of legalised theft, informers were rewarded with a portion of the goods of heretics. Ramiro's idea--a great one in its way--was to organise this informing business, and, by interesting a number of confederates who practically were shareholders in the venture, to sweep into his net more fortunes, or shares of fortunes, than a single individual, however industrious, could hope to secure. As he had expected, soon he found plenty of worthy companions, and the company was

floated. For a while, with the help of local agencies and spies, such as Black Meg and the Butcher, with whom, forgetting past injuries, he had secretly renewed his acquaintance, it did very well, the dividends being large and regular. In such times handsome sums were realised, without risk, out of the properties of unfortunates who were brought to the stake, and still more was secured by a splendid system of blackmail extracted from those who wished to avoid execution, and who, when they had been sucked dry, could either be burnt or let go, as might prove most convenient.

Also there were other methods of making money--by an intelligent method of robbery, by contracts to collect fines and taxes and so forth. Thus things went well, and, at length, after many years of suffering and poverty, the Senor Ramiro, that experienced man of affairs, began to grow rich, until, indeed, driven forward by a natural but unwise ambition, a fault inherent to daring minds, he entered upon a dangerous path.

The wealth of Hendrik Brant, the goldsmith, was a matter of common report, and glorious would be the fortune of him who could secure its reversion. This Ramiro wished to win; indeed, there was no ostensible reason why he should not do so, since Brant was undoubtedly a heretic, and, therefore, legitimate game for any honourable servant of the Church and King. Yet there were lions in the path, two large and formidable lions, or rather a lion and the ghost of a lion, for one was material and the other spiritual. The material lion was that the Government, or in other words, his august kingship Philip, desired the goldsmith's thousands for himself, and was therefore likely to be irritated by an interloper. The spiritual lion was that Brant was connected with Lysbeth van Goorl, once known as Lysbeth de Montalvo, a lady who had brought her reputed husband no luck. Often and often during dreary hours of reflection beneath tropic suns, for which the profession of galley-slave gave great leisure, the Senor Ramiro remembered that very energetic curse which his new affianced wife had bestowed upon him, a curse in which she prayed that through her he might live in heavy labour, that through her and hers he might be haunted by fears and misfortunes, and at the last die in misery. Looking back upon the past it would certainly seem that there had been virtue in this curse, for already through Lysbeth and his dealings with her, he had suffered the last degradation and the toil, which could not be called light, of nearly fourteen years of daily occupation in the galleys.

Well, he was clear of them, and thenceforward, the curse having

exhausted itself for the time being, he had prospered--at any rate to a moderate extent. But if once more he began to interfere with Lysbeth van Goorl and her relatives, might it not re-assert its power? That was one question. Was it worth while to take his risk on the chance of securing Brant's fortune? That was another. Brant, it was true, was only a cousin of Lysbeth's husband, but when once you meddled with a member of the family, it was impossible to know how soon other members would become mixed up in the affair.

The end may be guessed. The treasure was at hand and enormous, whereas the wrath of a Heavenly or an earthly king was problematical and far away. So greed, outstripping caution and superstitious fear, won the race, and Ramiro threw himself into the adventure with a resource and energy which in their way were splendid.

Now, as always, he was a man who hated violence for its own sake. It was no wish of his that the worthy Heer Brant should be unnecessarily burnt or tortured. Therefore through his intermediaries, as Brant had narrated in his letter, he approached him with a proposal which, under the circumstances, was liberal enough--that Brant should hand over two-thirds of his fortune to him and his confederates, on condition that he was assisted to escape with the remaining third. To his disgust, however, this obstinate Dutchman refused to buy his safety at the price of a single stiver. Indeed, he answered with rude energy that now as always he was in the hands of God, and if it pleased God that his life should be sacrificed and his great wealth divided amongst thieves, well,

it must be so, but he, at least, would be no party to the arrangement.

The details of the plots and counter-plots, the attack of the Ramiro company, the defences of Brant, the internecine struggles between the members of the company and the agents of the Government, if set out at length, would fill a considerable book. Of these we already know something, and the rest may be divined.

In the course of the affair Ramiro had made but one mistake, and that sprang from what he was wont to consider the weakness of his nature. Needless to say, it was that he had winked at the escape of Brant's daughter, Elsa. It may have been superstition that prompted him, or it may have been pity, or perhaps it was a certain oath of mercy which he had taken in an hour of need; at any rate, he was content that the girl should not share the doom which overshadowed her father. He did not think it at all likely that she would take with her any documents of importance, and the treasure, of course, she could not take; still, to provide against accidents he arranged for her to be searched upon the road.

As we know this search was a failure, and when on the morrow Black Meg arrived to make report and to warn him that Dirk van Goorl's son and his great serving-man, whose strength was known throughout the Netherlands, were on their road to The Hague, he was sure that after all the girl had carried with her some paper or message.

By this time the whereabouts of Brant's treasure had been practically solved. It was believed to lie in the string of vessels, although it was not known that one of these was laden with powder as well as gold. The plan of the Government agents was to search the vessels as they passed out to sea and seize the treasure as contraband, which would save much legal trouble, since under the law or the edicts wealth might not be shipped abroad by heretics. The plan of Ramiro and his friends was to facilitate the escape of the treasure to the open sea, where they proposed to swoop down upon it and convey it to more peaceful shores.

When Foy and his party started down the canal in the boat Ramiro knew that his opportunity had come, and at once unmoored the big ship and followed. The attempted stabbing of Foy was not done by his orders, as he wished the party to go unmolested and to be kept in sight. That was a piece of private malice on the part of Black Meg, for it was she who was dressed as a man. On various occasions in Leyden Foy had made remarks upon Meg's character which she resented, and about her personal appearance, which she resented much more, and this was an attempt to pay off old scores that in the issue cost her a finger, a good knife, and a gold ring which had associations connected with her youth.

At first everything had gone well. By one of the most daring and masterly manoeuvres that Ramiro had ever seen in his long and varied experience upon the seas, the little Swallow, with her crew of three men, had run the gauntlet of the fort which was warned and waiting for her; had sunk and sailed through the big Government boat and her crew of

lubberly soldiers, many of whom, he was glad to reflect, were drowned; had crushed the officer, against whom he had a personal grudge, like an egg-shell, and won through to the open sea. There he thought he was sure of her, for he took it for granted that she would run for the Norfolk coast, and knew that in the gale of wind which was blowing his larger and well-manned vessel could pull her down. But then the ill-luck--that ancient ill-luck which always dogged him when he began to interfere with the affairs of Lysbeth and her relatives--declared itself.

Instead of attempting to cross the North Sea the little Swallow hugged the coast, where, for various nautical reasons connected with the wind, the water, and the build of their respective ships, she had the legs of him. Next he lost her in the gut, and after that we know what happened. There was no disguising it; it was a most dreadful fiasco. To have one's vessel boarded, the expensive vessel in which so large a proportion of the gains of his honourable company had been invested, not only boarded, but fired, and the watchman stabbed by a single naked devil of unknown sex or character was bad enough. And then the end of it!

To have found the gold-laden ship, to have been gulled into attacking her, and--and--oh! he could scarcely bear to think of it! There was but one consolation. Although too late to save the others, even through the mist he had seen that wisp of smoke rising from the hold; yes, he, the experienced, had smelt a rat, and, warned by some half-divine intuition, had kept his distance with the result that he was still alive.

But the others! Those gallant comrades in adventure, where were they? Well, to be frank, he did not greatly care. There was another question of more moment. Where was the treasure? Now that his brain had cleared after the shock and turmoil it was evident to him that Foy van Goorl, Red Martin, and the white devil who had boarded his ship, would not have destroyed so much wealth if they could help it, and still less would they have destroyed themselves. Therefore, to pursue the matter to a logical conclusion, it seemed probable that they had spent the night in sinking or burying the money, and preparing the pretty trap into which he had walked. So the secret was in their hands, and as they were still alive very possibly means could be found to induce them to reveal its hiding-place. There was still hope; indeed, now that he came to weigh things, they were not so bad.

To begin with, almost all the shareholders in the affair had perished by the stern decree of Providence, and he was the natural heir of their interests. In other words, the treasure, if it was recovered, was henceforth his property. Further, when they came to hear the story, the Government would set down Brant's fortune as hopelessly lost, so that the galling competition from which he had suffered so much was at an end.

Under these circumstances what was to be done? Very soon, as he sailed away over the lake in the sweet air of the morning, the Senor Ramiro found an answer to the question.

The treasure had left The Hague, he must leave The Hague. The secret of its disposal was at Leyden, henceforth he must live at Leyden. Why not? He knew Leyden well. It was a pleasant place, but, of course, he might be recognised there; though, after so long, this was scarcely probable, for was not the Count de Montalvo notoriously dead and buried? Time and accident had changed him; moreover, he could bring art to the assistance of nature. In Leyden, too, he had confederates--Black Meg to wit, for one; also he had funds, for was he not the treasurer of the company that this very morning had achieved so remarkable and unsought-for an ascension?

There was only one thing against the scheme. In Leyden lived Lysbeth van Goorl and her husband, and with them a certain young man whose parentage he could guess. More, her son Foy knew the hiding-place of Brant's hoard, and from him or his servant Martin that secret must be won. So once again he was destined to match himself against Lysbeth--the wronged, the dreaded, the victorious Lysbeth, whose voice of denunciation still rang in his ear, whose eyes of fire still scorched his soul, the woman whom he feared above everything on earth. He fought her once for money, and, although he won the money, it had done him little good, for in the end she worsted him. Now, if he went to Leyden, he must fight her again for money, and what would be the issue of that war? Was it worth while to take the risk? Would not history repeat itself? If he hurt her, would she not crush him? But the treasure, that mighty treasure, which could give him so much, and, above all, could

restore to him the rank and station he had forfeited, and which he coveted more than anything in life. For, low as he had fallen, Montalvo could not forget that he had been born a gentleman.

He would take his chance; he would go to Leyden. Had he weighed the matter in the gloom of night, or even in a dull and stormy hour, perhaps--nay probably--he would have decided otherwise. But this morning the sun shone brightly, the wind made a merry music in the reeds; on the rippling surface of the lake the marsh-birds sang, and from the shore came a cheerful lowing of kine. In such surroundings his fears and superstitions vanished. He was master of himself, and he knew that all depended upon himself, the rest was dream and nonsense. Behind him lay the buried gold; before him rose the towers of Leyden, where he could find its key. A God! that haunting legend of a God of vengeance, in which priests and others affected to believe? Now that he came to think of it, what rubbish was here, for as any agent of the Inquisition knew well, the vengeance always fell upon those who trusted in this same God; a hundred torture dens, a thousand smoking fires bore witness to the fact. And if there was a God, why, recognising his personal merits, only this morning He had selected him out of many to live on and be the inheritor of the wealth of Hendrik Brant. Yes, he would go to Leyden and fight the battle out.

At the entry of the gut the Senor Ramiro landed from his boat. At first

he had thought of killing his companion, so that he might remain the sole survivor of the catastrophe, but on reflection he abandoned this idea, as the man was a faithful creature of his own who might be useful. So he bade him return to The Hague to tell the story of the destruction of the ship *Swallow* with the treasure, her attackers and her crew, whoever they might have been. He was to add, moreover, that so far as he knew the Captain Ramiro had perished also, as he, the steersman, was left alone in charge of the boat when the vessel blew up. Then he was to come to Leyden, bringing with him certain goods and papers belonging to him, Ramiro.

This plan seemed to have advantages. No one would continue to hunt for the treasure. No one except himself and perhaps Black Meg would know that Foy van Goorl and Martin had been on board the *Swallow* and escaped; indeed as yet he was not quite sure of it himself. For the rest he could either lie hidden, or if it proved desirable, announce that he still lived. Even if his messenger should prove faithless and tell the truth, it would not greatly matter, seeing that he knew nothing which could be of service to anybody.

And so the steersman sailed away, while Ramiro, filled with memories, reflections, and hopes, walked quietly through the Morsch Poort into the good city of Leyden.

That evening, but not until dark had fallen, two other travellers entered Leyden, namely, Foy and Martin. Passing unobserved through the quiet streets, they reached the side door of the house in the Bree Straat. It was opened by a serving-woman, who told Foy that his mother was in Adrian's room, also that Adrian was very much better. So thither, followed more slowly by Martin, went Foy, running upstairs three steps at a time, for had he not a great story to tell!

The interior of the room as he entered it made an attractive picture which even in his hurry caught Foy's eye and fixed itself so firmly in his mind that he never forgot its details. To begin with, the place was beautifully furnished, for his brother had a really good taste in tapestry, pictures, and other such adornments. Adrian himself lay upon a richly carved oak bed, pale from loss of blood, but otherwise little the worse. Seated by the side of the bed, looking wonderfully sweet in the lamplight, which cast shadows from the curling hair about her brows on to the delicate face beneath, was Elsa Brant. She had been reading to Adrian from a book of Spanish chivalry such as his romantic soul loved, and he, resting on his elbow in the snowy bed, was contemplating her beauty with his languishing black eyes. Yet, although he only saw her for a moment before she heard his entry and looked up, it was obvious to Foy that Elsa remained quite unconscious of the handsome Adrian's admiration, indeed, that her mind wandered far away from the magnificent adventures and highly coloured love scenes of which she was reading in her sweet, low voice. Nor was he mistaken, for, in fact, the poor child was thinking of her father.

At the further end of the room, talking together earnestly in the deep and curtained window-place, stood his mother and his father. Clearly they were as much preoccupied as the younger couple, and it was not difficult for Foy to guess that fears for his own safety upon his perilous errand were what concerned them most, and behind them other unnumbered fears. For the dwellers in the Netherlands in those days must walk from year to year through a valley of shadows so grim that our imagination can scarcely picture them.

"Sixty hours and he is not back," Lysbeth was saying.

"Martin said we were not to trouble ourselves before they had been gone for a hundred," answered Dirk consolingly.

Just then Foy, surveying them from the shadowed doorway, stepped forward, saying in his jovial voice:

"Sixty hours to the very minute."

Lysbeth uttered a little scream of joy and ran forward. Elsa let the book fall on to the floor and rose to do the same, then remembered and stood still, while Dirk remained where he was till the women had done their greetings, betraying his delight only by a quick rubbing of his hands. Adrian alone did not look particularly pleased, not, however, because he retained any special grudge against his brother for his share

in the fracas of a few nights before, since, when once his furious gusts of temper had passed, he was no malevolently minded man. Indeed he was glad that Foy had come back safe from his dangerous adventure, only he wished that he would not blunder into the bedroom and interrupt his delightful occupation of listening, while the beautiful Elsa read him romance and poetry.

Since Foy was gone upon his mission, Adrian had been treated with the consideration which he felt to be his due. Even his stepfather had taken the opportunity to mumble some words of regret for what had happened, and to express a hope that nothing more would be said about the matter, while his mother was sympathetic and Elsa most charming and attentive. Now, as he knew well, all this would be changed. Foy, the exuberant, unrefined, plain-spoken, nerve-shaking Foy, would become the centre of attention, and overwhelm them with long stories of very dull exploits, while Martin, that brutal bull of a man who was only fit to draw a cart, would stand behind and play the part of chorus, saying "Ja" and "Neen" at proper intervals. Well, he supposed that he must put up with it, but oh! what a weariness it was.

Another minute, and Foy was wringing him by the hand, saying in his loud voice, "How are you, old fellow? You look as well as possible, what are you lying in this bed for and being fed with pap by the women?"

"For the love of Heaven, Foy," interrupted Adrian, "stop crushing my fingers and shaking me as though I were a rat. You mean it kindly, I

know, but--" and Adrian dropped back upon the pillow, coughed and looked hectic and interesting.

Then both the women fell upon Foy, upbraiding him for his roughness, begging him to remember that if he were not careful he might kill his brother, whose arteries were understood to be in a most precarious condition, till the poor man covered his ears with his hands and waited till he saw their lips stop moving.

"I apologise," he said. "I won't touch him, I won't speak loud near him. Adrian, do you hear?"

"Who could help it?" moaned the prostrate Adrian.

"Cousin Foy," interrupted Elsa, clasping her hands and looking up into his face with her big brown eyes, "forgive me, but I can wait no longer. Tell me, did you see or hear anything of my father yonder at The Hague?"

"Yes, cousin, I saw him," answered Foy presently.

"And how was he--oh! and all the rest of them?"

"He was well."

"And free and in no danger?"

"And free, but I cannot say in no danger. We are all of us in danger nowadays, cousin," replied Foy in the same quiet voice.

"Oh! thank God for that," said Elsa.

"Little enough to thank God for," muttered Martin, who had entered the room and was standing behind Foy looking like a giant at a show. Elsa had turned her face away, so Foy struck backwards with all his force, hitting Martin in the pit of the stomach with the point of his elbow. Martin doubled himself up, recoiled a step and took the hint.

"Well, son, what news?" said Dirk, speaking for the first time.

"News!" answered Foy, escaping joyfully from this treacherous ground.

"Oh! lots of it. Look here," and plunging his hands into his pockets he produced first the half of the broken dagger and secondly a long skinny finger of unwholesome hue with a gold ring on it.

"Bah!" said Adrian. "Take that horrid thing away."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," answered Foy, shuffling the finger back into his pocket, "you don't mind the dagger, do you? No? Well, then, mother, that mail shirt of yours is the best that was ever made; this knife broke on it like a carrot, though, by the way, it's uncommonly sticky wear when you haven't changed it for three days, and I shall be glad enough to get it off."

"Evidently Foy has a story to tell," said Adrian wearily, "and the sooner he rids his mind of it the sooner he will be able to wash. I suggest, Foy, that you should begin at the beginning."

So Foy began at the beginning, and his tale proved sufficiently moving to interest even the soul-worn Adrian. Some portions of it he softened down, and some of it he suppressed for the sake of Elsa--not very successfully, indeed, for Foy was no diplomatist, and her quick imagination filled the gaps. Another part--that which concerned her future and his own--of necessity he omitted altogether. He told them very briefly, however, of the flight from The Hague, of the sinking of the Government boat, of the run through the gale to the Haarlem Mere with the dead pilot on board and the Spanish ship behind, and of the secret midnight burying of the treasure.

"Where did you bury it?" asked Adrian.

"I have not the slightest idea," said Foy. "I believe there are about three hundred islets in that part of the Mere, and all I know is that we dug a hole in one of them and stuck it in. However," he went on in a burst of confidence, "we made a map of the place, that is--" Here he broke off with a howl of pain, for an accident had happened.

While this narrative was proceeding, Martin, who was standing by him saying "Ja" and "Neen" at intervals, as Adrian foresaw he would, had

unbuckled the great sword Silence, and in an abstracted manner was amusing himself by throwing it towards the ceiling hilt downwards, and as it fell catching it in his hand. Now, most unaccountably, he looked the other way and missed his catch, with the result that the handle of the heavy weapon fell exactly upon Foy's left foot and then clattered to the ground.

"You awkward beast!" roared Foy, "you have crushed my toes," and he hopped towards a chair upon one leg.

"Your pardon, master," said Martin. "I know it was careless; my mother always told me that I was careless, but so was my father before me."

Adrian, overcome by the fearful crash, closed his eyes and sighed.

"Look," said Lysbeth in a fury, "he is fainting; I knew that would be the end of all your noise. If you are not careful we shall have him breaking another vessel. Go out of the room, all of you. You can finish telling the story downstairs," and she drove them before her as a farmer's wife drives fowls.

"Martin," said Foy on the stairs, where they found themselves together for a minute, for at the first signs of the storm Dirk had preceded them, "why did you drop that accursed great sword of yours upon my foot?"

"Master," counted Martin imperturbably, "why did you hit me in the pit of the stomach with your elbow?"

"To keep your tongue quiet."

"And what is the name of my sword?"

"Silence."

"Well, then, I dropped the sword 'Silence' for the same reason. I hope it hasn't hurt you much, but if it did I can't help it."

Foy wheeled round. "What do you mean, Martin?"

"I mean," answered the great man with energy, "that you have no right to tell what became of that paper which Mother Martha gave us."

"Why not? I have faith in my brother."

"Very likely, master, but that isn't the point. We carry a great secret, and this secret is a trust, a dangerous trust; it would be wrong to lay its burden upon the shoulders of other folk. What people don't know they can't tell, master."

Foy still stared at him, half in question, half in anger, but Martin made no further reply in words. Only he went through certain curious

motions, motions as of a man winding slowly and laboriously at something like a pump wheel. Foy's lips turned pale.

"The rack?" he whispered. Martin nodded, and answered beneath his breath,

"They may all of them be on it yet. You let the man in the boat escape, and that man was the Spanish spy, Ramiro; I am sure of it. If they don't know they can't tell, and though we know we shan't tell; we shall die first, master."

Now Foy trembled and leaned against the wall. "What would betray us?" he asked.

"Who knows, master? A woman's torment, a man's--" and he put a strange meaning into his voice, "a man's--jealousy, or pride, or vengeance. Oh! bridle your tongue and trust no one, no, not your father or mother, or sweetheart, or--" and again that strange meaning came into Martin's voice, "or brother."

"Or you?" queried Foy, looking up.

"I am not sure. Yes, I think you may trust me, though there is no knowing how the rack might change a man's mind."

"If all this be so," said Foy, with a flush of sudden passion, "I have

said too much already."

"A great deal too much, master. If I could have managed it I should have dropped the sword Silence on your toe long before. But I couldn't, for the Heer Adrian was watching me, and I had to wait till he closed his eyes, which he did to hear the better without seeming to listen."

"You are unjust to Adrian, Martin, as you always have been, and I am angry with you. Say, what is to be done now?"

"Now, master," replied Martin cheerfully, "you must forget the teaching of the Pastor Arentz, and tell a lie. You must take up your tale where you left it off, and say that we made a map of the hiding-place, but that--I--being a fool--managed to drop it while we were lighting the fuses, so that it was blown away with the ship. I will tell the same story."

"Am I to say this to my father and mother?"

"Certainly, and they will quite understand why you say it. My mistress was getting uneasy already, and that was why she drove us from the room. You will tell them that the treasure is buried but that the secret of its hiding-place was lost."

"Even so, Martin, it is not lost; Mother Martha knows it, and they all will guess that she does know it."

"Why, master, as it happened you were in such a hurry to get on with your story that I think you forgot to mention that she was present at the burying of the barrels. Her name was coming when I dropped the sword upon your foot."

"But she boarded and fired the Spanish ship--so the man Ramiro and his companion would probably have seen her."

"I doubt, master, that the only person who saw her was he whose gizzard she split, and he will tell no tales. Probably they think it was you or I who did that deed. But if she was seen, or if they know that she has the secret, then let them get it from Mother Martha. Oh! mares can gallop and ducks can dive and snakes can hide in the grass. When they can catch the wind and make it give up its secrets, when they can charm from sword Silence the tale of the blood which it has drunk throughout the generations, when they can call back the dead saints from heaven and stretch them anew within the torture-pit, then and not before, they will win knowledge of the hoard's hiding-place from the lips of the witch of Haarlem Meer. Oh! master, fear not for her, the grave is not so safe."

"Why did you not caution me before, Martin?"

"Because, master," answered Martin stolidly, "I did not think that you would be such a fool. But I forgot that you are young--yes, I forget that you are young and good, too good for the days we live in. It is my

fault. On my head be it."