

CHAPTER XX

IN THE GEVANGENHUIS

When Adrian left the factory he ran on to the house in the Bree Straat.

"Oh! what has happened?" said his mother as he burst into the room where she and Elsa were at work.

"They are coming for him," he gasped. "The soldiers from the Gevangenhuis. Where is he? Let him escape quickly--my stepfather."

Lysbeth staggered and fell back into her chair.

"How do you know?" she asked.

At the question Adrian's head swam and his heart stood still. Yet his lips found a lie.

"I overheard it," he said; "the soldiers are attacking Foy and Martin in the factory, and I heard them say that they were coming here for him."

Elsa moaned aloud, then she turned on him like a tiger, asking:

"If so, why did you not stay to help them?"

"Because," he answered with a touch of his old pomposity, "my first duty was towards my mother and you."

"He is out of the house," broke in Lysbeth in a low voice that was dreadful to hear. "He is out of the house, I know not where. Go, son, and search for him. Swift! Be swift!"

So Adrian went forth, not sorry to escape the presence of these tormented women. Here and there he wandered to one haunt of Dirk's after another, but without success, till at length a noise of tumult drew him, and he ran towards the sound. Presently he was round the corner, and this was what he saw.

Advancing down the wide street leading to the Gevangenhuis came a body of Spanish soldiers, and in the centre of them were two figures whom it was easy for Adrian to recognise--Red Martin and his brother Foy. Martin, although his bull-hide jerkin was cut and slashed and his helmet had gone, seemed to be little hurt, for he was still upright and proud, walking along with his arms lashed behind him, while a Spanish officer held the point of a sword, his own sword Silence, near his throat ready to drive it home should he attempt to escape. With Foy the case was different. At first Adrian thought that he was dead, for they were carrying him upon a ladder. Blood fell from his head and legs, while his doublet seemed literally to be rent to pieces with sword-cuts and dagger-thrusts; and in truth had it not been for the shirt of mail which he wore beneath, he must have been slain several times over. But Foy was

not dead, for as Adrian watched he saw his head turn upon the ladder and his hand rise up and fall again.

But this was not all, for behind appeared a cart drawn by a grey horse, and in it were the bodies of Spanish soldiers--how many Adrian could not tell, but there they lay with their harness still on them. After these again, in a long and melancholy procession, marched other Spanish soldiers, some of them sorely wounded, and, like Foy, carried upon doors or ladders, and others limping forward with the help of their comrades. No wonder that Martin walked proudly to his doom, since behind him came the rich harvest of the sword Silence. Also, there were other signs to see and hear, since about the cavalcade surged and roared a great mob of the citizens of Leyden.

"Bravo, Martin! Well fought, Foy van Goor!" they shouted, "We are proud of you! We are proud of you!" Then from the back of the crowd someone cried, "Rescue them!" "Kill the Inquisition dogs!" "Tear the Spaniards to pieces!"

A stone flew through the air, then another and another, but at a word of command the soldiers faced about and the mob drew back, for they had no leader. So it went on till they were within a hundred yards of the Gevangenhuis.

"Don't let them be murdered," cried the voice. "A rescue! a rescue!" and with a roar the crowd fell upon the soldiers. It was too late, for the

Spaniards, trained to arms, closed up and fought their way through, taking their prisoners with them. But they cost them dear, for the wounded men, and those who supported them, were cut off. They were cut off, they were struck down. In a minute they were dead, every one of them, and although they still held its fortresses and walls, from that hour the Spaniards lost their grip of Leyden, nor did they ever win it back again. From that hour to this Leyden has been free. Such were the first fruits of the fight of Foy and Martin against fearful odds.

The great doors of oak and iron of the Gevangenhuis clashed to behind the prisoners, the locks were shot, and the bars fell home, while outside raved the furious crowd.

The place was not large nor very strong, merely a drawbridge across the narrow arm of a moat, a gateway with a walled courtyard beyond, and over it a three-storied house built in the common Dutch fashion, but with straight barrel windows. To the right, under the shadow of the archway, which, space being limited, was used as an armoury, and hung with weapons, lay the court-room where prisoners were tried, and to the left a vaulted place with no window, not unlike a large cellar in appearance. This was the torture-chamber. Beyond was the courtyard, and at the back of it rose the prison. In this yard were waiting the new governor of the jail, Ramiro, and with him a little red-faced, pig-eyed man dressed in a rusty doublet. He was the Inquisitor of the district, especially empowered as delegate of the Blood Council and under various edicts and laws to try and to butcher heretics.

The officer in command of the troops advanced to make his report.

"What is all that noise?" asked the Inquisitor in a frightened, squeaky voice. "Is this city also in rebellion?"

"And where are the rest of you?" said Ramiro, scanning the thin files.

"Sir," answered the officer saluting, "the rest of us are dead. Some were killed by this red rogue and his companion, and the mob have the others."

Then Ramiro began to curse and to swear, as well he might, for he knew that when this story reached headquarters, his credit with Alva and the Blood Council would be gone.

"Coward!" he yelled, shaking his fist in the face of the officer.

"Coward to lose a score or more of men in taking a brace of heretics."

"Don't blame me, sir," answered the man sullenly, for the word stirred his bile, "blame the mob and this red devil's steel, which went through us as though we were wet clay," and he handed him the sword Silence.

"It fits the man," muttered Montalvo, "for few else could wield such a blade. Go hang it in the doorway, it may be wanted in evidence," but to himself he thought, "Bad luck again, the luck that follows me whenever I

pit myself against Lysbeth van Hout." Then he gave an order, and the two prisoners were taken away up some narrow stairs.

At the top of the first flight was a solid door through which they passed, to find themselves in a large and darksome place. Down the centre of this place ran a passage. On either side of the passage, dimly lighted by high iron-barred windows, were cages built of massive oaken bars, and measuring each of them eight or ten feet square, very dens such as might have served for wild beasts, but filled with human beings charged with offences against the doctrines of the Church. Those who chance to have seen the prison of the Inquisition at The Hague as it still stands to-day, will know what they were like.

Into one of these dreadful holes they were thrust, Foy, wounded as he was, being thrown roughly upon a heap of dirty straw in the corner. Then, having bolted and locked the door of their den, the soldiers left them.

As soon as his eyes grew accustomed to the light, Martin stared about him. The conveniences of the dungeon were not many; indeed, being built above the level of the ground, it struck the imagination as even more terrible than any subterranean vault devoted to the same dreadful purpose. By good fortune, however, in one corner of it stood an earthenware basin and a large jug of water.

"I will take the risk of its being poisoned," thought Martin to himself,

as lifting the jug he drank deep of it, for what between fighting, fire and fury there seemed to be no moisture left in him. Then, his burning thirst satisfied at last, he went to where Foy lay unconscious and began to pour water, little by little, into his mouth, which, senseless as he was, he swallowed mechanically and presently groaned a little. Next, as well as he could, Martin examined his comrade's wounds, to find that what had made him insensible was a cut upon the right side of the head, which, had it not been for his steel-lined cap, must certainly have killed him, but as it was, beyond the shock and bruise, seemed in no way serious.

His second hurt was a deep wound in the left thigh, but being on the outside of the limb, although he bled much it had severed no artery. Other injuries he had also upon the forearms and legs, also beneath the chain shirt his body was bruised with the blows of swords and daggers. But none of these were dangerous.

Martin stripped him as tenderly as he might and washed his wounds. Then he paused, for both of them were wearing garments of flannel, which is unsuitable for the dressing of hurts.

"You need linen," said a woman's voice, speaking from the next den.

"Wait awhile and I will give you my smock."

"How can I take your garment, lady, whoever you may be," answered Martin, "to bind about the limbs of a man even if he is wounded?"

"Take it and welcome," said the unknown in sweet, low tones, "I want it no more; they are going to execute me to-night."

"Execute you to-night?" muttered Martin.

"Yes," replied the voice, "in the court-room or one of the cellars, I believe, as they dare not do it outside because of the people. By beheading--am I not fortunate? Only by beheading."

"Oh! God, where art Thou?" groaned Martin.

"Don't be sorry for me," answered the voice, "I am very glad. There were three of us, my father, my sister, and I, and--you can guess--well, I wish to join them. Also it is better to die than to go through what I have suffered again. But here is the garment. I fear that it is stained about the neck, but it will serve if you tear it into strips," and a trembling, delicate hand, which held the linen, was thrust between the oaken bars.

Even in that light, however, Martin saw that the wrist was cut and swollen. He saw it, and because of that tender, merciful hand he registered an oath about priests and Spaniards, which, as it chanced, he lived to keep very thoroughly. Also, he paused awhile wondering whether if all this was of any good, wondering if it would not be best to let Foy die at once, or even to kill him.

"What are you thinking about, sir?" asked the lady on the other side of the bars.

"I am thinking," answered Martin, "that perhaps my young master here would be better dead, and that I am a fool to stop the bleeding."

"No, no," said the sweet voice, "do your utmost and leave the rest to God. It pleases God that I should die, which matters little as I am but a weak girl; it may please Him that this young man shall live to be of service to his country and his faith. I say, bind up his wounds, good sir."

"Perhaps you are right," answered Martin. "Who knows, there's a key to every lock, if only it can be found." Then he set to work upon Foy's wounds, binding them round with strips of the girl's garment dipped in water, and when he had done the best he could he clothed him again, even to the chain shirt.

"Are you not hurt yourself?" asked the voice presently.

"A little, nothing to speak of; a few cuts and bruises, that's all; this bull's hide turned their swords."

"Tell me whom you have been fighting," she said.

So, to while away the time while Foy still lay senseless, Martin told her the story of the attack upon the shot tower, of how they had driven the Spaniards down the ladder, of how they had drenched them with molten lead, and of their last stand in the courtyard when they were forced from the burning building.

"Oh! what a fearful fight--two against so many," said the voice with a ring of admiration in it.

"Yes," answered Martin, "it was a good fight--the hottest that ever I was in. For myself I don't much care, for they've paid a price for my carcass. I didn't tell you, did I, that the mob set on them as they haled us here and pulled four wounded men and those who carried them to bits? Oh! yes, they have paid a price, a very good price for a Frisian boor and a Leyden burgher."

"God pardon their souls," murmured the unknown.

"That's as He likes," said Martin, "and no affair of mine; I had only to do with their bodies and--" At this moment Foy groaned, sat up and asked for something to drink.

Martin gave him water from the pitcher.

"Where am I?" he asked, and he told him.

"Martin, old fellow," said Foy in an uncertain voice, "we are in a very bad way, but as we have lived through this"--here his characteristic hopefulness asserted itself--"I believe, I believe that we shall live through the rest."

"Yes, young sir," echoed the thin, faint notes out of the darkness beyond the bars, "I believe, too, that you will live through the rest, and I am praying that it may be so."

"Who is that?" asked Foy drowsily.

"Another prisoner," answered Martin.

"A prisoner who will soon be free," murmured the voice again through the blackness, for by now night had fallen, and no light came from the hole above.

Then Foy fell into sleep or stupor, and there was silence for a long while, until they heard the bolts and bars of the door of the dungeon creaking, and the glint of a lantern appeared floating on the gloom. Several men tramped down the narrow gangway, and one of them, unlocking their cage, entered, filled the jug of water from a leathern jack, and threw down some loaves of black bread and pieces of stockfish, as food is thrown to dogs. Having examined the pair of them he grunted and went away, little knowing how near he had been to death, for the heart of Martin was mad. But he let him go. Then the door of the next cell was

opened, and a man said, "Come out. It is time."

"It is time and I am ready," answered the thin voice. "Good-bye, friends, God be with you."

"Good-bye, lady," answered Martin; "may you soon be with God." Then he added, by an afterthought, "What is your name? I should like to know."

"Mary," she replied, and began to sing a hymn, and so, still singing the hymn, she passed away to her death. They never saw her face, they never learned who she might be, this poor girl who was but an item among the countless victims of perhaps the most hideous tyranny that the world has ever known--one of Alva's slaughtered sixty thousand. But many years afterwards, when Foy was a rich man in a freer land, he built a church and named it Mary's kirk.

The long night wore away in silence, broken only by the groans and prayers of prisoners in dens upon the same floor, or with the solemn rhythm of hymns sung by those above, till at length the light, creeping through the dungeon lattices, told them that it was morning. At its first ray Martin awoke much refreshed, for even there his health and weariness had brought sleep to him. Foy also awoke, stiff and sore, but in his right mind and very hungry. Then Martin found the loaves and the stockfish, and they filled themselves, washing down the meal with water, after which he dressed Foy's wounds, making a poultice for them out of the crumb of the bread, and doctored his own bruises as best he could.

It must have been ten o'clock or later when again the doors were opened, and men appeared who commanded that they should follow them.

"One of us can't walk," said Martin; "still, perhaps I can manage," and, lifting Foy in his arms as though he had been a baby, he passed with the jailers out of the den, down the stair, and into the court-room. Here, seated behind a table, they found Ramiro and the little, squeaky-voiced, red-faced Inquisitor.

"Heaven above us!" said the Inquisitor, "what a great hairy ruffian; it makes me feel nervous to be in the same place with him. I beg you, Governor Ramiro, instruct your soldiers to be watching and to stab him at the first movement."

"Have no fear, noble sir," answered Ramiro, "the villain is quite unarmed."

"I daresay, I daresay, but let us get on. Now what is the charge against these people? Ah! I see, heresy like the last upon the evidence of--oh! well, never mind. Well, we will take that as proved, and, of course, it is enough. But what more? Ah! here it is. Escaped from The Hague with the goods of a heretic, killed sundry of his Majesty's lieges, blew up others on the Haarlemer Meer, and yesterday, as we know for ourselves, committed a whole series of murders in resisting lawful arrest.

Prisoners, have you anything to say?"

"Plenty," answered Foy.

"Then save your trouble and my time, since nothing can excuse your godless, rebellious, and damnable behaviour. Friend Governor, into your hands I deliver them, and may God have mercy on their souls. See, by the way, that you have a priest at hand to shrive them at last, if they will be shriven, just for the sake of charity, but all the other details I leave to you. Torment? Oh! of course if you think there is anything to be gained by it, or that it will purify their souls. And now I will be going on to Haarlem, for I tell you frankly, friend Governor, that I don't think this town of Leyden safe for an honest officer of the law; there are too many bad characters here, schismatics and resisters of authority. What? The warrant not ready? Well, I will sign it in blank. You can fill it in. There. God forgive you, heretics; may your souls find peace, which is more, I fear, than your bodies will for the next few hours. Bah! friend Governor, I wish that you had not made me assist at the execution of that girl last night, especially as I understand she leaves no property worth having; her white face haunts my mind, I can't be rid of the look of those great eyes. Oh! these heretics, to what sorrow do they put us orthodox people! Farewell, friend Governor; yes, I think I will go out by the back way, some of those turbulent citizens might be waiting in front. Farewell, and temper justice with mercy if you can," and he was gone.

Presently Ramiro, who had accompanied him to the gate, returned. Seating

himself on the further side of the table, he drew his rapier and laid it before him. Then, having first commanded them to bring a chair in which Foy might sit, since he could not stand because of his wounded leg, he told the guard to fall back out of hearing, but to be ready should he need them.

"Not much dignity about that fellow," he said, addressing Martin and Foy in a cheerful voice; "quite different from the kind of thing you expected, I daresay. No hooded Dominican priests, no clerks taking notes, no solemnities, nothing but a little red-faced wretch, perspiring with terror lest the mob outside should catch him, as for my part I hope they may. Well, gentlemen, what can you expect, seeing that, to my knowledge, the man is a bankrupt tailor of Antwerp? However, it is the substance we have to deal with, not the shadow, and that's real enough, for his signature on a death warrant is as good as that of the Pope, or his gracious Majesty King Philip, or, for the matter of that, of Alva himself. Therefore, you are--dead men."

"As you would have been had I not been fool enough to neglect Martin's advice out in the Haarlemer Meer and let you escape," answered Foy.

"Precisely, my young friend, but you see my guardian angel was too many for you, and you did neglect that excellent counsel. But, as it happens, it is just about the Haarlemer Meer that I want to have a word with you."

Foy and Martin looked at each other, for now they understood exactly why they were there, and Ramiro, watching them out of the corners of his eyes, went on in a low voice:

"Let us drop this and come to business. You hid it, and you know where it is, and I am in need of a competence for my old age. Now, I am not a cruel man; I wish to put no one to pain or death; moreover, I tell you frankly, I admire both of you very much. The escape with the treasure on board of your boat Swallow, and the blowing up, were both exceedingly well managed, with but one mistake which you, young sir, have pointed out," and he bowed and smiled. "The fight that you made yesterday, too, was splendid, and I have entered the details of it in my own private diary, because they ought not to be forgotten."

Now it was Foy's turn to bow, while even on Martin's grim and impassive countenance flickered a faint smile.

"Naturally," went on Ramiro, "I wish to save such men, I wish you to go hence quite free and unharmed," and he paused.

"How can we after we have been condemned to death?" asked Foy.

"Well, it does not seem so difficult. My friend, the tailor--I mean the Inquisitor--who, for all his soft words, is a cruel man indeed, was in a hurry to be gone, and--he signed a blank warrant, always an incautious thing to do. Well, a judge can acquit as well as condemn, and this

one--is no exception. What is there to prevent me filling this paper in with an order for your release?"

"And what is there to show us that you would release us after all?" asked Foy.

"Upon the honour of a gentleman," answered Ramiro laying his hand on his heart. "Tell me what I want to know, give me a week to make certain necessary arrangements, and so soon as I am back you shall both of you be freed."

"Doubtless," said Foy, angrily, "upon such honour as gentlemen learn in the galleys, Senor Ramiro--I beg your pardon, Count Juan de Montalvo."

Ramiro's face grew crimson to the hair.

"Sir," he said, "were I a different sort of man, for those words you should die in a fashion from which even the boldest might shrink. But you are young and inexperienced, so I will overlook them. Now this bargaining must come to a head. Which will you have, life and safety, or the chance--which under the circumstances is no chance at all--that one day, not you, of course, but somebody interested in it, may recover a hoard of money and jewels?"

Then Martin spoke for the first time, very slowly and respectfully.

"Worshipful sir," he said, "we cannot tell you where the money is because we do not know. To be frank with you, nobody ever knew except myself. I took the stuff and sank it in the water in a narrow channel between two islands, and I made a little drawing of them on a piece of paper."

"Exactly, my good friend, and where is that piece of paper?"

"Alas! sir, when I was lighting the fuses on board the Swallow, I let it fall in my haste, and it is--in exactly the same place as are all your worship's worthy comrades who were on board that ship. I believe, however, that if you will put yourself under my guidance I could show your Excellency the spot, and this, as I do not want to be killed, I should be most happy to do."

"Good, simple man," said Ramiro with a little laugh, "how charming is the prospect that you paint of a midnight row with you upon those lonely waters; the tarantula and the butterfly arm in arm! Mynheer van Goorl, what have you to say?"

"Only that the story told by Martin here is true. I do not know where the money is, as I was not present at its sinking, and the paper has been lost."

"Indeed? I am afraid, then, that it will be necessary for me to refresh your memory, but, first, I have one more argument, or rather two. Has

it struck you that another life may hang upon your answer? As a rule men are loth to send their fathers to death."

Foy heard, and terrible as was the hint, yet it came to him as a relief, for he had feared lest he was about to say "your mother" or "Elsa Brant."

"That is my first argument, a good one, I think, but I have--another which may appeal even more forcibly to a young man and prospective heir. The day before yesterday you became engaged to Elsa Brant--don't look surprised; people in my position have long ears, and you needn't be frightened, the young lady will not be brought here; she is too valuable."

"Be so good as to speak plainly," said Foy.

"With pleasure. You see this girl is the heiress, is she not? and whether or no I find out the facts from you, sooner or later, in this way or that, she will doubtless discover where her heritage is hidden. Well, that fortune a husband would have the advantage of sharing. I myself labour at present under no matrimonial engagements, and am in a position to obtain an introduction--ah! my friend, are you beginning to see that there are more ways of killing a dog than by hanging him?"

Weak and wounded as he was, Foy's heart sank in him at the words of this man, this devil who had betrayed his mother with a mock marriage, and

who was the father of Adrian. The idea of making the heiress his wife was one worthy of his evil ingenuity, and why should he not put it into practice? Elsa, of course, would rebel, but Alva's officials in such days had means of overcoming any maidenly reluctance, or at least of forcing women to choose between death and degradation. Was it not common for them even to dissolve marriages in order to give heretics to new husbands who desired their wealth? There was no justice left in the land; human beings were the chattels and slaves of their oppressors. Oh God! what was there to do, except to trust in God? Why should they be tortured, murdered, married against their wills, for the sake of a miserable pile of pelf? Why not tell the truth and let the fellow take the money? He had measured up his man, and believed that he could drive a bargain with him. Ramiro wanted money, not lives. He was no fanatic; horrors gave him no pleasure; he cared nothing about his victims' souls. As he had betrayed his mother, Lysbeth, for cash, so he would be willing to let them all go for cash. Why not make the exchange?

Then distinct, formidable, overwhelming, the answer rose up in Foy's mind. Because he had sworn to his father that nothing which could be imagined should induce him to reveal this secret and betray this trust. And not only to his father, to Hendrik Brant also, who already had given his own life to keep his treasure out of the hands of the Spaniards, believing that in some unforeseen way it would advantage his own land and countrymen. No, great as was the temptation, he must keep the letter of his bond and pay its dreadful price. So again Foy answered,

"It is useless to try to bribe me, for I do not know where the money is."

"Very well, Heer Foy van Goorl, now we have a plain issue before us, but I will still try to protect you against yourself--the warrant shall remain blank for a little while."

Then he called aloud, "Sergeant, ask the Professor Baptiste to be so good as to step this way."