

## CHAPTER XXX

### TWO SCENES

#### Scene the First

Some months had gone by, and Alkmaar, that heroic little city of the north, had turned the flood of Spanish victory. Full of shame and rage, the armies of Philip and of Valdez marched upon Leyden, and from November, 1573, to the end of March, 1574, the town was besieged. Then the soldiers were called away to fight Louis of Nassau, and the leaguer was raised till, on the fatal field of Mook Heath, the gallant Louis, with his brother Henry and four thousand of their soldiers, perished, defeated by D'Avila. Now once more the victorious Spaniards threatened Leyden.

In a large bare room of the Stadthuis of that city, at the beginning of the month of May, a man of middle-age might have been seen one morning walking up and down, muttering to himself as he walked. He was not a tall man and rather thin in figure, with brown eyes and beard, hair tinged with grey, and a wide brow lined by thought. This was William of Orange, called the Silent, one of the greatest and most noble of human beings who ever lived in any age; the man called forth by God to whom Holland owes its liberties, and who for ever broke the hideous yoke of religious fanaticism among the Teuton races.

Sore was his trouble on this May morning. But last month two more of his brothers had found death beneath the sword of the Spaniard, and now this same Spaniard, with whom he had struggled for all these weary years, was marching in his thousands upon Leyden.

"Money," he was muttering to himself. "Give me money, and I will save the city yet. With money ships can be built, more men can be raised, powder can be bought. Money, money, money--and I have not a ducat! All gone, everything, even to my mother's trinkets and the plate upon my table. Nothing is left, no, not the credit to buy a dozen geldings."

As he thought thus one of his secretaries entered the room.

"Well, Count," said the Prince, "have you been to them all?"

"Yes, sir."

"And with what success?"

"The burgomaster, van de Werff, promises to do everything he can, and will, for he is a man to lean on, but money is short. It has all left the country and there is not much to get."

"I know it," groaned Orange, "you can't make a loaf from the crumbs beneath the table. Is the proclamation put up inviting all good citizens

to give or lend in this hour of their country's need?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, Count, you can go; there is nothing more to do. We will ride for Delft to-night."

"Sir," said the secretary, "there are two men in the courtyard who wish to see you."

"Are they known?"

"Oh yes, perfectly. One is Foy van Goorl, who went through the siege of Haarlem and escaped, the son of the worthy burgher, Dirk van Goorl, whom they did to death yonder in the Gevangenhuis; and the other a Friesland giant of a man called Red Martin, his servant, of whose feats of arms you may have heard. The two of them held a shot tower in this town against forty or fifty Spaniards, and killed I don't know how many."

The Prince nodded. "I know. This Red Martin is a Goliath, a brave fellow. What do they want?"

"I am not sure," said the secretary with a smile, "but they have brought a herring-cart here, the Frisian in the shafts for a horse, and the Heer van Goorl pushing behind. They say that it is laden with ammunition for the service of their country."

"Then why do they not take it to the Burgomaster, or somebody in authority?"

"I don't know, but they declare that they will only deliver it to you in person."

"You are sure of your men, Count? You know," he added, with a smile, "I have to be careful."

"Quite, they were identified by several of the people in the other room."

"Then admit them, they may have something to say."

"But, sir, they wish to bring in their cart."

"Very well, let them bring it in if it will come through the door," answered the Prince, with a sigh, for his thoughts were far from these worthy citizens and their cart.

Presently the wide double doors were opened, and Red Martin appeared, not as he was after the siege of Haarlem, but as he used to be, well-covered and bland, with a beard even longer and more fiery than of yore. At the moment he was strangely employed, for across his great breast lay the broad belly-band of a horse, and by its means, harnessed

between the shafts, he dragged a laden cart covered with an old sail. Moreover the load must have been heavy, for notwithstanding his strength and that of Foy, no weakling, who pushed behind, they had trouble in getting the wheels up a little rise at the threshold.

Foy shut the doors, then they trundled their cart into the middle of the great room, halted and saluted. So curious was the sight, and so inexplicable, that the Prince, forgetting his troubles for a minute, burst out laughing.

"I daresay it looks strange, sir," said Foy, hotly, the colour rising to the roots of his fair hair, "but when you have heard our story I am not sure that you will laugh at us."

"Mynheer van Goorl," said the Prince with grave courtesy, "be assured that I laugh at no true men such as yourself and your servant, Martin the Frisian, and least of all at men who could hold yonder shot tower against fifty Spaniards, who could escape out of Haarlem and bring home with them the greatest devil in Don Frederic's army. It was your equipage I laughed at, not yourselves," and he bowed slightly first to the one and then to the other.

"His Highness thinks perhaps," said Martin, "that the man who does an ass's work must necessarily be an ass," at which sally the Prince laughed again.

"Sir," said Foy, "I crave your patience for a while, and on no mean matter. Your Highness has heard, perhaps, of one Hendrik Brant, who perished in the Inquisition."

"Do you mean the goldsmith and banker who was said to be the richest man in the Netherlands?"

"Yes, sir, the man whose treasure was lost."

"I remember--whose treasure was lost--though it was reported that some of our own people got away with it," and his eyes wandered wonderingly to the sail which hid the burden on the cart.

"Sir," went on Foy, "you heard right; Red Martin and I, with a pilot man who was killed, were they who got away with it, and by the help of the waterwife, who now is dead, and who was known as Mother Martha, or the Mare, we hid it in Haarlemer Meer, whence we recovered it after we escaped from Haarlem. If you care to know how, I will tell you later, but the tale is long and strange. Elsa Brant was with us at the time----"

"She is Hendrik Brant's only child, and therefore the owner of his wealth, I believe?" interrupted the Prince.

"Yes, sir, and my affianced wife."

"I have heard of the young lady, and I congratulate you. Is she in Leyden?"

"No, sir, her strength and mind were much broken by the horrors which she passed through in the siege of Haarlem, and by other events more personal to her. Therefore, when the Spaniards threatened their first leaguer of this place, I sent her and my mother to Norwich in England, where they may sleep in peace."

"You were wise indeed, Heer van Goorl," replied the Prince with a sigh, "but it seems that you stopped behind?"

"Yes, sir, Martin and I thought it our duty to see this war out. When Leyden is safe from the Spaniards, then we go to England, not before."

"When Leyden is safe from the Spaniards----" and again the Prince sighed, adding, "well, you have a true heart, young sir, and a right spirit, for which I honour both of you. But I fear that things being thus the Jufvrouw cannot sleep so very peacefully in Norwich after all."

"We must each bear our share of the basket," answered Foy sadly; "I must do the fighting and she the watching."

"It is so, I know it, who have both fought and watched. Well, I hope that a time will come when you will both of you do the loving. And now for the rest of the story."

"Sir, it is very short. We read your proclamation in the streets this morning, and learned from it for certain what we have heard before, that you are in sore want of money for the defence of Leyden and the war at large. Therefore, hearing that you were still in the city, and believing this proclamation of yours to be the summons and clear command for which we waited, we have brought you Hendrik Brant's treasure. It is there upon the cart."

The Prince put his hand to his forehead and reeled back a step.

"You do not jest with me, Foy van Goorl?" he said.

"Indeed no."

"But stay; this treasure is not yours to give, it belongs to Elsa Brant."

"Sir, the legal title to it is in myself, for my father was Brant's lawful heir and executor, and I inherit his rights. Moreover, although a provision for her is charged upon it, it is Elsa's desire--I have it written here under her hand and witnessed--that the money should be used, every ducat of it, for the service of the country in such way as I might find good. Lastly, her father, Hendrik Brant, always believed that this wealth of his would in due season be of such service. Here is a copy of his will, in which he directs that we are to apply 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 shall reveal to us.' When he gave us charge of it also, his words to me were: 'I am certain that thousands and tens of thousands of our folk will live to bless the gold of Hendrik Brant.' On that belief too, thinking that God put it into his mind, and would reveal His purpose in His own hour, we have acted all of us, and therefore for the sake of this stuff we have gone to death and torture. Now it has come about as Brant foretold; now we understand why all these things have happened, and why we live, this man and I, to stand before you, sir, to-day, with the hoard unminished by a single florin, no, not even by Martin's legacy."

"Man, you jest, you jest!" said Orange.

Foy made a sign, and Martin going to the cart, pulled off the sail-cloth, revealing the five mud-stained barrels painted, each of them, with the mark B. There, too, ready for the purpose, were a hammer, mallet, and chisel. Resting the shafts of the cart upon a table, Martin climbed into it, and with a few great blows of the mallet, drove in the head of a cask selected at hazard. Beneath appeared wool, which he removed, not without fear lest there might be some mistake; then, as he could wait no longer, he tilted the barrel up and shot its contents out upon the floor.

As it chanced this was the keg that contained the jewels into which,

foreseeing troublous days, from time to time Brant had converted the most of his vast wealth. Now in one glittering stream of red and white and blue and green, breaking from their cases and wrappings that the damp had rotted, save for those pearls, the most valuable of them all, which were in the watertight copper box--they fell jingling to the open floor, where they rolled hither and thither like beans shot from a sack in the steading.

"I think there is only this one tub of jewels," said Foy quietly; "the rest, which are much heavier, are full of gold coin. Here, sir, is the inventory so that you may check the list and see that we have kept back nothing."

But William of Orange heeded him not, only he looked at the priceless gems and muttered, "Fleets of ships, armies of men, convoys of food, means to bribe the great and buy goodwill--aye, and the Netherlands themselves wrung from the grip of Spain, the Netherlands free and rich and happy! O God! I thank Thee Who thus hast moved the hearts of men to the salvation of this Thy people from sore danger."

Then in the sudden ecstasy of relief and joy, the great Prince hid his face in his hands and wept.

Thus it came about that the riches of Hendrik Brant, when Leyden lay

at her last gasp, paid the soldiers and built the fleets which, in due time, driven by a great wind sent suddenly from heaven across the flooded meadows, raised the dreadful siege and signed the doom of Spanish rule in Holland. Therefore it would seem that not in vain was Hendrik Brant stubborn and foresighted, that his blood and the blood of Dirk van Goorl were not shed in vain; that not in vain also did Elsa suffer the worst torments of a woman's fear in the Red Mill on the marshes; and Foy and Martin play their parts like men in the shot-tower, the Gevangenhuis and the siege, and Mother Martha the Sword find a grave and rest in the waters of the Haarlem Meer.

There are other morals to this story also, applicable, perhaps, to our life to-day, but the reader is left to guess them.

#### Scene the Second

Leyden is safe at last, and through the broken dykes Foy and Martin, with the rescuing ships, have sailed, shouting and red-handed, into her famine-stricken streets. For the Spaniards, those that are left of them, are broken and have fled away from their forts and flooded trenches.

So the scene changes from warring, blood-stained, triumphant Holland to the quiet city of Norwich and a quaint gabled house in Tombland almost beneath the shadow of the tall spire of the cathedral, which now for about a year had been the home of Lysbeth van Goorl and Elsa Brant. Here

to Norwich they had come in safety in the autumn of 1573 just before the first siege of Leyden was begun, and here they had dwelt for twelve long, doubtful, anxious months. News, or rather rumours, of what was passing in the Netherlands reached them from time to time; twice even there came letters from Foy himself, but the last of these had been received many weeks ago just as the iron grip of the second leaguer was closing round the city. Then Foy and Martin, so they learned from the letter, were not in the town but with the Prince of Orange in Delft, working hard at the fleet which was being built and armed for its relief.

After this there was a long silence, and none could tell what had happened, although a horrible report reached them that Leyden had been taken, sacked, and burnt, and all its inhabitants massacred. They lived in comfort here in Norwich, for the firm of Munt and Brown, Dirk van Goorl's agents, were honest, and the fortune which he had sent over when the clouds were gathering thick, had been well invested by them and produced an ample revenue. But what comfort could there be for their poor hearts thus agonised by doubts and sickening fears?

One evening they sat in the parlour on the ground floor of the house, or rather Lysbeth sat, for Elsa knelt by her, her head resting upon the arm of the chair, and wept.

"Oh! it is cruel," she sobbed, "it is too much to bear. How can you be so calm, mother, when perhaps Foy is dead?"

"If my son is dead, Elsa, that is God's Will, and I am calm, because now, as many a time before, I resign myself to the Will of God, not because I do not suffer. Mothers can feel, girl, as well as sweethearts."

"Would that I had never left him," moaned Elsa.

"You asked to leave, child; for my part I should have bided the best or the worst in Leyden."

"It is true, it is because I am a coward; also he wished it."

"He wished it, Elsa, therefore it is for the best; let us await the issue in patience. Come, our meal is set."

They sat themselves down to eat, these two lonely women, but at their board were laid four covers as though they expected guests. Yet none were bidden--only this was Elsa's fancy.

"Foy and Martin might come," she said, "and be vexed if it seemed that we did not expect them." So for the last three months or more she had always set four covers at the table, and Lysbeth did not gainsay her. In her heart she too hoped that Foy might come.

That very night Foy came, and with him Red Martin, the great sword Silence still strapped about his middle.

"Hark!" said Lysbeth suddenly, "I hear my son's footsteps at the door. It seems, Elsa, that, after all, the ears of a mother are quicker than those of a lover."

But Elsa never heard her, for now--now at length, she was wrapped in the arms of Foy; the same Foy, but grown older and with a long pale scar across his forehead.

"Yet," went on Lysbeth to herself, with a faint smile on her white and stately face, "the son's lips are for the lover first."

An hour later, or two, or three, for who reckoned time that night when there was so much to hear and tell, while the others knelt before her, Foy and Elsa hand in hand, and behind them Martin like a guardian giant, Lysbeth put up her evening prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

"Almighty God," she said in her slow, sonorous voice, "Thy awful Hand that by my own faithless sin took from me my husband, hath given back his son and mine who shall be to this child a husband, and for us as for our country over sea, out of the night of desolation is arisen a dawn of peace. Above us throughout the years is Thy Everlasting Will, beneath us when our years are done, shall by Thy Everlasting Arms. So for the

bitter and the sweet, for the evil and the good, for the past and for the present, we, Thy servants, render Thee glory, thanks, and praise, O God of our fathers, That fashioneth us and all according to Thy desire, remembering those things which we have forgotten and foreknowing those things which are not yet. Therefore to Thee, Who through so many dreadful days hast led us to this hour of joy, be glory and thanks, O Lord of the living and the dead. Amen."

And the others echoed "To Thee be glory and thanks, O Lord of the living and the dead. Amen."

Then, their prayer ended, the living rose, and, with separations done and fears appeased at last, leant towards each other in the love and hope of their beautiful youth.

But Lysbeth sat silent in the new home, far from the land where she was born, and turned her stricken heart towards the dead.

FINIS

