HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

BY PIKE AND DYKE: A TALE OF THE RISE OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

George Henty

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Содержание

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PREFACE.

MY DEAR LADS,

In all the pages of history there is no record of a struggle so unequal, so obstinately maintained, and so long contested as that by which the men of Holland and Zeeland won their right to worship God in their own way, and also–although this was but a secondary consideration with them–shook off the yoke of Spain and achieved their independence. The incidents of the contest were of a singularly dramatic character. Upon one side was the greatest power of the time, set in motion by a ruthless bigot, who was determined either to force his religion upon the people of the Netherlands, or to utterly exterminate them. Upon the other were a scanty people, fishermen, sailors, and agriculturalists, broken up into communities with but little bond of sympathy, and no communication, standing only on the defensive, and relying solely upon the justice of their cause, their own stout hearts, their noble prince, and their one ally, the ocean. Cruelty, persecution, and massacre had converted this race of peace loving workers into heroes capable of the most sublime self sacrifices. Women and children were imbued with a spirit equal to that of the men,

fought as stoutly on the walls, and died as uncomplainingly from famine in the beleaguered towns. The struggle was such a long one that I have found it impossible to recount all the leading events in the space of a single volume; and, moreover, before the close, my hero, who began as a lad, would have grown into middle age, and it is an established canon in books for boys that the hero must himself be young. I have therefore terminated the story at the murder of William of Orange, and hope in another volume to continue the history, and to recount the progress of the war, when England, after years of hesitation, threw herself into the fray, and joined Holland in its struggle against the power that overshadowed all Europe, alike by its ambition and its bigotry. There has been no need to consult many authorities. Motley in his great work has exhausted the subject, and for all the historical facts I have relied solely upon him.

Yours very sincerely, G. A. HENTY

CHAPTER I

THE "GOOD VENTURE"

Rotherhithe in the year of 1572 differed very widely from the Rotherhithe of today. It was then a scattered village, inhabited chiefly by a seafaring population. It was here that the captains of many of the ships that sailed from the port of London had their abode. Snug cottages with trim gardens lay thickly along the banks of the river, where their owners could sit and watch the vessels passing up and down or moored in the stream, and discourse with each other over the hedges as to the way in which they were handled, the smartness of their equipage, whence they had come, or where they were going. For the trade of London was comparatively small in those days, and the skippers as they chatted together could form a shrewd guess from the size and appearance of each ship as to the country with which she traded, or whether she was a coaster working the eastern or southern ports.

Most of the vessels, indeed, would be recognized and the captains known, and hats would be waved and welcomes or adieus shouted as the vessels passed. There was something that savoured of Holland in the appearance of Rotherhithe; for it was with the Low Countries that the chief trade of England was carried on; and the mariners who spent their lives in journeying to and fro between London and the ports of Zeeland, Friesland,

and Flanders, who for the most part picked up the language of the country, and sometimes even brought home wives from across the sea, naturally learned something from their neighbours. Nowhere, perhaps, in and about London were the houses so clean and bright, and the gardens so trimly and neatly kept, as in the village of Rotherhithe, and in all Rotherhithe not one was brighter and more comfortable than the abode of Captain William Martin.

It was low and solid in appearance; the wooden framework was unusually massive, and there was much quaint carving on the beams. The furniture was heavy and solid, and polished with beeswax until it shone. The fireplaces were lined with Dutch tiles; the flooring was of oak, polished as brightly as the furniture. The appointments from roof to floor were Dutch; and no wonder that this was so, for every inch of wood in its framework and beams, floor and furniture, and had been brought across from Friesland by William Martin in his ship, the Good Venture. It had been the dowry he received with his pretty young wife, Sophie Plomaert.

Sophie was the daughter of a well-to-do worker in wood near Amsterdam. She was his only daughter, and although he had nothing to say against the English sailor who had won her heart, and who was chief owner of the ship he commanded, he grieved much that she should leave her native land; and he and her three brothers determined that she should always bear her former home in her recollection. They therefore prepared as her wedding gift a

facsimile of the home in which she had been born and bred. The furniture and framework were similar in every particular, and it needed only the insertion of the brickwork and plaster when it arrived. Two of her brothers made the voyage in the Good Venture, and themselves put the framework, beams, and flooring together, and saw to the completion of the house on the strip of ground that William Martin had purchased on the bank of the river.

Even a large summer house that stood at the end of the garden was a reproduction of that upon the bank of the canal at home; and when all was completed and William Martin brought over his bride she could almost fancy that she was still at home near Amsterdam. Ever since, she had once a year sailed over in her husband's ship, and spent a few weeks with her kinsfolk. When at home from sea the great summer house was a general rendezvous of William Martin's friends in Rotherhithe, all skippers like himself, some still on active service, others, who had retired on their savings; not all, however, were fortunate enough to have houses on the river bank; and the summer house was therefore useful not only as a place of meeting but as a lookout at passing ships.

It was a solidly built structure, inclosed on the land side but open towards the river, where, however, there were folding shutters, so that in cold weather it could be partially closed up, though still affording a sight of the stream. A great Dutch stove stood in one corner, and in this in winter a roaring fire was kept

up. There were few men in Rotherhithe so well endowed with this world's goods as Captain Martin. His father had been a trader in the city, but William's tastes lay towards the sea rather than the shop, and as he was the youngest of three brothers he had his way in the matter. When he reached the age of twenty-three his father died, and with his portion of the savings William purchased the principal share of the Good Venture, which ship he had a few months before come to command.

When he married he had received not only his house but a round sum of money as Sophie's portion. With this he could had he liked have purchased the other shares of the Good Venture; but being, though a sailor, a prudent man, he did not like to put all his eggs into one basket, and accordingly bought with it a share in another ship. Three children had been born to William and Sophie Martin–a boy and two girls. Edward, who was the eldest, was at the time this story begins nearly sixteen. He was an active well built young fellow, and had for five years sailed with his father in the Good Venture. That vessel was now lying in the stream a quarter of a mile higher up, having returned from a trip to Holland upon the previous day. The first evening there had been no callers, for it was an understood thing at Rotherhithe that a captain on his return wanted the first evening at home alone with his wife and family; but on the evening of the second day, when William Martin had finished his work of seeing to the unloading of his ship, the visitors began to drop in fast, and the summer house was well nigh as full as it could hold. Mistress

Martin, who was now a comely matron of six-and-thirty, busied herself in seeing that the maid and her daughters, Constance and Janet, supplied the visitors with horns of home brewed beer, or with strong waters brought from Holland for those who preferred them.

"You have been longer away than usual, Captain Martin," one of the visitors remarked.

"Yes," the skipper replied. "Trade is but dull, and though the Good Venture bears a good repute for speed and safety, and is seldom kept lying at the wharves for a cargo, we were a week before she was chartered. I know not what will be the end of it all. I verily believe that no people have ever been so cruelly treated for their conscience' sake since the world began; for you know it is not against the King of Spain but against the Inquisition that the opposition has been made. The people of the Low Countries know well enough it would be madness to contend against the power of the greatest country in Europe, and to this day they have borne, and are bearing, the cruelty to which they are exposed in quiet despair, and without a thought of resistance to save their lives. There may have been tumults in some of the towns, as in Antwerp, where the lowest part of the mob went into the cathedrals and churches and destroyed the shrines and images; but as to armed resistance to the Spaniards, there has been none.

"The first expeditions that the Prince of Orange made into the country were composed of German mercenaries, with a small body of exiles. They were scarce joined by any of the

country folk. Though, as you know, they gained one little victory, they were nigh all killed and cut to pieces. So horrible was the slaughter perpetrated by the soldiers of the tyrannical Spanish governor Alva, that when the Prince of Orange again marched into the country not a man joined him, and he had to fall back without accomplishing anything. The people seemed stunned by despair. Has not the Inquisition condemned the whole of the inhabitants of the Netherlands–save only a few persons specially named–to death as heretics? and has not Philip confirmed the decree, and ordered it to be carried into instant execution without regard to age or sex? Were three millions of men, women, and children ever before sentenced to death by one stroke of the pen, only because they refused to change their religion? Every day there are hundreds put to death by the orders of Alva's Blood Council, as it is called, without even the mockery of a trial."

There was a general murmur of rage and horror from the assembled party.

"Were I her queen's majesty," an old captain said, striking his fist on the table, "I would declare war with Philip of Spain tomorrow, and would send every man who could bear arms to the Netherlands to aid the people to free themselves from their tyrants.

"Ay, and there is not a Protestant in this land but would go willingly. To think of such cruelty makes the blood run through my veins as if I were a lad again. Why, in Mary's time there were two or three score burnt for their religion here in England, and

we thought that a terrible thing. But three millions of people! Why, it is as many as we have got in all these islands! What think you of this mates?"

"It is past understanding," another old sailor said. "It is too awful for us to take in."

"It is said," another put in, "that the King of France has leagued himself with Philip of Spain, and that the two have bound themselves to exterminate the Protestants in all their dominions, and as that includes Spain, France, Italy, the Low Countries, and most of Germany, it stands to reason as we who are Protestants ought to help our friends; for you may be sure, neighbours, that if Philip succeeds in the Low Countries he will never rest until he has tried to bring England under his rule also, and to plant the Inquisition with its bonfires and its racks and tortures here."

An angry murmur of assent ran round the circle.

"We would fight them, you may be sure," Captain Martin said, "to the last; but Spain is a mighty power, and all know that there are no soldiers in Europe can stand against their pikemen. If the Low Countries, which number as many souls as we, cannot make a stand against them with all their advantages of rivers, and swamps, and dykes, and fortified towns, what chance should we have who have none of these things? What I say, comrades, is this: we have got to fight Spain–you know the grudge Philip bears us–and it is far better that we should go over and fight the Spaniards in the Low Countries, side by side with the people

there, and with all the advantages that their rivers and dykes give, and with the comfort that our wives and children are safe here at home, than wait till Spain has crushed down the Netherlands and exterminated the people, and is then able, with France as her ally, to turn her whole strength against us. That's what I say."

"And you say right, Captain Martin. If I were the queen's majesty I would send word to Philip tomorrow to call off his black crew of monks and inquisitors. The people of the Netherlands have no thought of resisting the rule of Spain, and would be, as they have been before, Philip's obedient subjects, if he would but leave their religion alone. It's the doings of the Inquisition that have driven them to despair. And when one hears what you are telling us, that the king has ordered the whole population to be exterminated–man, woman, and child–no wonder they are preparing to fight to the last; for it's better to die fighting a thousand times, than it is to be roasted alive with your wife and children!"

"I suppose the queen and her councillors see that if she were to meddle in this business it might cost her her kingdom, and us our liberty," another captain said. "The Spaniards could put, they say, seventy or eighty thousand trained soldiers in the field, while, except the queen's own bodyguard, there is not a soldier in England; while their navy is big enough to take the fifteen or twenty ships the queen has, and to break them up to burn their galley fires."

"That is all true enough," Captain Martin agreed; "but our

English men have fought well on the plains of France before now, and I don't believe we should fight worse today. We beat the French when they were ten to one against us over and over, and what our fathers did we can do. What you say about the navy is true also. They have a big fleet, and we have no vessels worth speaking about, but we are as good sailors as the Spaniards any day, and as good fighters; and though I am not saying we could stop their fleet if it came sailing up the Thames, I believe when they landed we should show them that we were as good men as they. They might bring seventy thousand soldiers, but there would be seven hundred thousand Englishmen to meet; and if we had but sticks and stones to fight with, they would not find that they would have an easy victory."

"Yes, that's what you think and I think, neighbour; but, you see, we have not got the responsibility of it. The queen has to think for us all. Though I for one would be right glad if she gave the word for war, she may well hesitate before she takes a step that might bring ruin, and worse than ruin, upon all her subjects. We must own, too, that much as we feel for the people of the Low Countries in their distress, they have not always acted wisely. That they should take up arms against these cruel tyrants, even if they had no chance of beating them, is what we all agree would be right and natural; but when the mob of Antwerp broke into the cathedral, and destroyed the altars and carvings, and tore up the vestments, and threw down the Manes and the saints, and then did the same in the other churches in the town and in the

country round, they behaved worse than children, and showed themselves as intolerant and bigoted as the Spaniards themselves. They angered Philip beyond hope of forgiveness, and gave him something like an excuse for his cruelties towards them."

"Ay, ay, that was a bad business," Captain Martin agreed; "a very bad business, comrade. And although these things were done by a mere handful of the scum of the town the respectable citizens raised no hand to stop it, although they can turn out the town guard readily enough to put a stop to a quarrel between the members of two of the guilds. There were plenty of men who have banded themselves together under the name of 'the beggars,' and swore to fight for their religion, to have put these fellows down if they had chosen. They did not choose, and now Philip's vengeance will fall on them all alike."

"Well, what think you of this business, Ned?" one of the captains said, turning to the lad who was standing in a corner, remaining, as in duty bound, silent in the presence of his elders until addressed.

"Were I a Dutchman, and living under such a tyranny," Ned said passionately, "I would rise and fight to the death rather than see my family martyred. If none other would rise with me, I would take a sword and go out and slay the first Spaniard I met, and again another, until I was killed."

"Bravo, Ned! Well spoken, lad!" three or four of the captains said; but his father shook his head.

"Those are the words of hot youth, Ned; and were you living

there you would do as the others–keep quiet till the executioners came to drag you away, seeing that did you, as you say you would, use a knife against a Spaniard, it would give the butchers a pretext for the slaughtering of hundreds of innocent people."

The lad looked down abashed at the reproof, then he said: "Well, father, if I could not rise in arms or slay a Spaniard and then be killed, I would leave my home and join the sea beggars under La Marck."

"There is more reason in that," his father replied; "though La Marck is a ferocious noble, and his followers make not very close inquiry whether the ships they attack are Spanish or those of other people. Still it is hard for a man to starve; and when time passes and they can light upon no Spanish merchantmen, one cannot blame them too sorely if they take what they require out of some other passing ship. But there is reason at the bottom of what you say. Did the men of the sea coast, seeing that their lives and those of their families are now at the mercy of the Spaniards, take to their ships with those dear to them and continually harass the Spaniards, they could work them great harm, and it would need a large fleet to overpower them, and that with great difficulty, seeing that they know the coast and all the rivers and channels, and could take refuge in shallows where the Spaniards could not follow them. At present it seems to me the people are in such depths of despair, that they have not heart for any such enterprise. But I believe that some day or other the impulse will be given–some more wholesale butchery than usual will goad them to

madness, or the words of some patriot wake them into action, and then they will rise as one man and fight until utterly destroyed, for that they can in the end triumph over Spain is more than any human being can hope."

"Then they must be speedy about it, friend Martin," another said. "They say that eighty thousand have been put to death one way or another since Alva came into his government. Another ten years and there will be scarce an able bodied man remaining in the Low Country. By the way, you were talking of the beggars of the sea. Their fleet is lying at present at Dover, and it is said that the Spanish ambassador is making grave complaints to the queen on the part of his master against giving shelter to these men, whom he brands as not only enemies of Spain, but as pirates and robbers of the sea."

"I was talking with Master Sheepshanks," another mariner put in, "whose ships I sailed for thirty years, and who is an alderman and knows what is going on, and he told me that from what he hears it is like enough that the queen will yield to the Spanish request. So long as she chooses to remain friends with Spain openly, whatever her thoughts and opinions may be, she can scarcely allow her ports to be used by the enemies of Philip. It must go sorely against her high spirit; but till she and her council resolve that England shall brave the whole strength of Spain, she cannot disregard the remonstrances of Philip. It is a bad business, neighbours, a bad business; and the sooner it comes to an end the better. No one doubts that we shall have to fight Spain one of

these days, and I say that it were better to fight while our brethren of the Low Countries can fight by our side, than to wait till Spain, having exterminated them, can turn her whole power against us."

There was a general chorus of assent, and then the subject changed to the rates of freight to the northern ports. The grievous need for the better marking of shallows and dangers, the rights of seamen, wages, and other matters, were discussed until the assembly broke up. Ned's sisters joined him in the garden.

"I hear, Constance," the boy said to the elder, "there has been no news from our grandfather and uncles since we have been away."

"No word whatever, Ned. Our mother does not say much, but I know she is greatly troubled and anxious about it."

"That she may well be, Constance, seeing that neither quiet conduct nor feebleness nor aught else avail to protect any from the rage of the Spaniards. You who stay at home here only hear general tales of the cruelties done across the sea, but if you heard the tales that we do at their ports they would drive you almost to madness. Not that we hear much, for we have to keep on board our ships, and may not land or mingle with the people; but we learn enough from the merchants who come on board to see about the landing of their goods to make our blood boil. They do right to prevent our landing; for so fired is the sailors' blood by these tales of massacre, that were they to go ashore they would, I am sure, be speedily embroiled with the Spaniards.

"You see how angered these friends of our father are who are

Englishmen, and have no Dutch blood in their veins, and who feel only because they are touched by these cruelties, and because the people of the Low Country are Protestants; but with us it is different, our mother is one of these persecuted people, and we belong to them as much as to England. We have friends and relations there who are in sore peril, and who may for aught we know have already fallen victims to the cruelty of the Spaniards. Had I my will I would join the beggars of the sea, or I would ship with Drake or Cavendish and fight the Spaniards in the Indian seas. They say that there Englishmen are proving themselves better men than these haughty dons."

"It is very sad," Constance said; "but what can be done?"

"Something must be done soon," Ned replied gloomily. "Things cannot go on as they are. So terrible is the state of things, so heavy the taxation, that in many towns all trade is suspended. In Brussels, I hear, Alva's own capital, the brewers have refused to brew, the bakers to bake, the tapsters to draw liquors. The city swarms with multitudes of men thrown out of employment. The Spanish soldiers themselves have long been without pay, for Alva thinks of nothing but bloodshed. Consequently they are insolent to their officers, care little for order, and insult and rob the citizens in the streets. Assuredly something must come of this ere long; and the people's despair will become a mad fury. If they rise, Constance, and my father does not say nay, I will assuredly join them and do my best.

"I do not believe that the queen will forbid her subjects to

give their aid to the people of the Netherlands; for she allowed many to fight in France for Conde and the Protestants against the Guises, and she will surely do the same now, since the sufferings of our brothers in the Netherlands have touched the nation far more keenly than did those of the Huguenots in France. I am sixteen now, and my father says that in another year he will rate me as his second mate, and methinks that there are not many men on board who can pull more strongly a rope, or work more stoutly at the capstan when we heave our anchor. Besides, as we all talk Dutch as well as English, I should be of more use than men who know nought of the language of the country."

Constance shook her head. "I do not think, Ned, that our father would give you leave, at any rate not until you have grown up into a man. He looks to having you with him, and to your succeeding him some day in the command of the Good Venture, while he remains quietly at home with our mother."

Ned agreed with a sigh. "I fear that you are right, Constance, and that I shall have to stick to my trade of sailoring; but if the people of the Netherlands rise against their tyrants, it would be hard to be sailing backwards and forwards doing a peaceful trade between London and Holland whilst our friends and relatives are battling for their lives."

A fortnight later, the Good Venture filled up her hold with a cargo for Brill, a port where the united Rhine, Waal, and Maas flow into the sea. On the day before she sailed a proclamation was issued by the queen forbidding any of her subjects to supply De

la Marck and his sailors with meat, bread, or beer. The passage down the river was slow, for the winds were contrary, and it was ten days afterwards, the 31st of March, when they entered the broad mouth of the river and dropped anchor off the town of Brill. It was late in the evening when they arrived. In the morning an officer came off to demand the usual papers and documents, and it was not until nearly two o'clock that a boat came out with the necessary permission for the ship to warp up to the wharves and discharge her cargo.

Just as Captain Martin was giving the order for the capstan bars to be manned, a fleet of some twenty-four ships suddenly appeared round the seaward point of the land.

"Wait a moment, lads," the captain said, "half an hour will make no great difference in our landing. We may as well wait and see what is the meaning of this fleet. They do not look to me to be Spaniards, nor seem to be a mere trading fleet. I should not wonder if they are the beggars of the sea, who have been forced to leave Dover, starved out from the effect of the queen's proclamation, and have now come here to pick up any Spaniard they may meet sailing out."

The fleet dropped anchor at about half a mile from the town. Just as they did so, a ferryman named Koppelstok, who was carrying passengers across from the town of Maaslandluis, a town on the opposite bank a mile and a half away, was passing close by the Good Venture.

"What think you of yon ships?" the ferryman shouted to

Captain Martin.

"I believe they must be the beggars of the sea," the captain replied. "An order had been issued before I left London that they were not to be supplied with provisions, and they would therefore have had to put out from Dover. This may well enough be them."

An exclamation of alarm broke from the passengers, for the sea beggars were almost as much feared by their own countrymen as by the Spaniards, the latter having spared no pains in spreading tales to their disadvantage. As soon as the ferryman had landed his passengers he rowed boldly out towards the fleet, having nothing of which he could be plundered, and being secretly well disposed towards the beggars. The first ship he hailed was that commanded by William de Blois, Lord of Treslong, who was well known at Brill, where his father had at one time been governor.

His brother had been executed by the Duke of Alva four years before, and he had himself fought by the side of Count Louis of Nassau, brother to the Prince of Orange, in the campaign that had terminated so disastrously, and though covered with wounds had been one of the few who had escaped from the terrible carnage that followed the defeat at Jemmingen. After that disaster he had taken to the sea, and was one of the most famous of the captains of De la Marck, who had received a commission of admiral from the Prince of Orange.

"We are starving, Koppelstok; can you inform us how we can get some food? We have picked up two Spanish traders on our

way here from Dover, but our larders were emptied before we sailed, and we found but scant supply on board our prizes."

"There is plenty in the town of Brill," the ferryman said; "but none that I know of elsewhere. That English brig lying there at anchor may have a few loaves on board."

"That will not be much," William de Blois replied, "among five hundred men, still it will be better than nothing. Will you row and ask them if they will sell to us?"

"You had best send a strongly armed crew," Koppelstok replied. "You know the English are well disposed towards us, and the captain would doubtless give you all the provisions he had to spare; but to do so would be to ruin him with the Spaniards, who might confiscate his ship. It were best that you should make a show of force, so that he could plead that he did but yield to necessity."

Accordingly a boat with ten men rowed to the brig, Koppelstok accompanying it. The latter climbed on to the deck.

"We mean you no harm, captain," he said; "but the men on board these ships are well nigh starving. The Sieur de Treslong has given me a purse to pay for all that you can sell us, but thinking that you might be blamed for having dealings with him by the authorities of the town, he sent these armed men with me in order that if questioned you could reply that they came forcibly on board."

"I will willingly let you have all the provisions I have on board," Captain Martin said; "though these will go but a little

way among so many, seeing that I only carry stores sufficient for consumption on board during my voyages."

A cask of salt beef was hoisted up on deck, with a sack of biscuits, four cheeses, and a side of bacon. Captain Martin refused any payment.

"No," he said, "my wife comes from these parts, and my heart is with the patriots. Will you tell Sieur de Treslong that Captain Martin of the Good Venture is happy to do the best in his power for him and his brave followers. That, Ned," he observed, turning to his son as the boat rowed away, "is a stroke of good policy. The value of the goods is small, but just at this moment they are worth much to those to whom I have given them. In the first place, you see, we have given aid to the good cause, in the second we have earned the gratitude of the beggars of the sea, and I shall be much more comfortable if I run among them in the future than I should have done in the past. The freedom to come and go without molestation by the sea beggars is cheaply purchased at the price of provisions which do not cost many crowns."

On regaining the Sieur de Treslong's ship some of the provisions were at once served out among the men, and the rest sent off among other ships, and William de Blois took Koppelstok with him on board the admiral's vessel.

"Well, De Blois, what do you counsel in this extremity?" De la Marck asked.

"I advise," the Lord of Treslong replied, "that we at once send a message to the town demanding its surrender."

"Are you joking or mad, Treslong?" the admiral asked in surprise. "Why, we can scarce muster four hundred men, and the town is well walled and fortified."

"There are no Spanish troops here, admiral, and if we put a bold front on the matter we may frighten the burghers into submission. This man says he would be willing to carry the summons. He says the news as to who we are has already reached them by some passengers he landed before he came out, and he doubts not they are in a rare panic."

"Well, we can try," the admiral said, laughing; "it is clear we must eat, even if we have to fight for it; and hungry as we all are, we do not want to wait."

Treslong gave his ring to Koppelstok to show as his authority, and the fisherman at once rowed ashore. Stating that the beggars of the sea were determined to take the town, he made his way through the crowd of inhabitants who had assembled at the landing place, and then pushed on to the town hall, where the magistrates were assembled. He informed them that he had been sent by the Admiral of the Fleet and the Lord of Treslong, who was well known to them, to demand that two commissioners should be sent out to them on behalf of the city to confer with him. The only object of those who sent him was to free the land from the crushing taxes, and to overthrow the tyranny of Alva and the Spaniards. He was asked by the magistrates what force De la Marck had at his disposal, and replied carelessly that he could not say exactly, but that there might be five thousand in all.

This statement completed the dismay that had been caused at the arrival of the fleet. The magistrates agreed that it would be madness to resist, and determined to fly at once. With much difficulty two of them were persuaded to go out to the ship as deputies, and as soon as they set off most of the leading burghers prepared instantly for flight. The deputies on arriving on board were assured that no injury was intended to the citizens or private property, but only the overthrow of Alva's government, and two hours were given them to decide upon the surrender of the town.

During this two hours almost all the inhabitants left the town, taking with them their most valuable property. At the expiration of the time the beggars landed. A few of those remaining in the city made a faint attempt at resistance; but Treslong forced an entrance by the southern gate, and De la Marck made a bonfire against the northern gate and then battered it down with the end of an old mast. Thus the patriots achieved the capture of the first town, and commenced the long war that was to end only with the establishment of the Free Republic of the Netherlands. No harm was done to such of the inhabitants of the town as remained. The conquerors established themselves in the best of the deserted houses; they then set to work to plunder the churches. The altars and images were all destroyed; the rich furniture, the sacred vessels, and the gorgeous vestments were appropriated to private use. Thirteen unfortunates, among them some priests who had been unable to effect their escape, were seized and put to death by De la Marck.

He had received the strictest orders from the Prince of Orange to respect the ships of all neutral nations, and to behave courteously and kindly to all captives he might take. Neither of these injunctions were obeyed. De la Marck was a wild and sanguinary noble; he had taken a vow upon hearing of the death of his relative, the Prince of Egmont, who had been executed by Alva, that he would neither cut his hair nor his beard until that murder should be revenged, and had sworn to wreak upon Alva and upon Popery the deep vengeance that the nobles and peoples of the Netherlands owed them. This vow he kept to the letter, and his ferocious conduct to all priests and Spaniards who fell into his hands deeply sullied the cause for which he fought.

Upon the day after the capture of the city, the Good Venture went into the port. The inhabitants, as soon as they learned that the beggars of the sea respected the life and property of the citizens, returned in large numbers, and trade was soon re-established. Having taken the place, and secured the plunder of the churches and monasteries, De la Marck would have sailed away upon other excursions had not the Sieur de Treslong pointed out to him the importance of Brill to the cause, and persuaded him to hold the place until he heard from the Prince of Orange.

CHAPTER II

TERRIBLE NEWS

A few days after Brill had been so boldly captured, Count Bossu advanced from Utrecht against it. The sea beggars, confident as they were as to their power of meeting the Spaniards on the seas, knew that on dry land they were no match for the well trained pikemen; they therefore kept within the walls. A carpenter, however, belonging to the town, who had long been a secret partisan of the Prince of Orange, seized an axe, dashed into the water, and swam to the sluice and burst open the gates with a few sturdy blows. The sea poured in and speedily covered the land on the north side of the city.

The Spaniards advanced along the dyke to the southern gate, but the sea beggars had hastily moved most of the cannon on the wall to that point, and received the Spaniards with so hot a fire that they hesitated. In the meantime the Lord of Treslong and another officer had filled two boats with men and rowed out to the ships that had brought the enemy, cut some adrift, and set others on fire. The Spaniards at the southern gate lost heart; they were exposed to a hot fire, which they were unable to return. On one side they saw the water rapidly rising above the level of the dyke on which they stood, on the other they perceived their only means of retreat threatened. They turned, and in desperate haste retreated along the causeway now under water. In their haste

many slipped off the road and were drowned, others fell and were smothered in the water, and the rest succeeded in reaching such of the vessels as were still untouched, and with all speed returned to Utrecht.

From the highest point of the masts to which they could climb, Captain Martin, Ned, and the crew watched the struggle. Ned had begged his father to let him go along the walls to the south gate to see the conflict, but Captain Martin refused.

"We know not what the upshot of the business may be," he said. "If the Spaniards, which is likely enough, take the place, they will slaughter all they meet, and will not trouble themselves with questioning anyone whether he is a combatant or a spectator. Besides, when they have once taken the town, they will question all here, and it would be well that I should be able to say that not only did we hold ourselves neutral in the affair, but that none of my equipage had set foot on shore today. Lastly, it is my purpose and hope if the Spaniards capture the place, to take advantage of the fact that all will be absorbed in the work of plunder, and to slip my hawsers and make off. Wind and tide are both favourable, and doubtless the crews of their ships will, for the most part, land to take part in the sack as soon as the town is taken."

However, as it turned out, there was no need of these precautions; the beggars were victorious and the Spaniards in full flight, and great was the rejoicing in Brill at this check which they had inflicted upon their oppressors. Bossu, retiring from Brill, took his way towards Rotterdam. He found its gates closed;

the authorities refused to submit to his demands or to admit a garrison. They declared they were perfectly loyal, and needed no body of Spanish troops to keep them in order. Bossu requested permission for his troops to pass through the city without halting. This was granted by the magistrates on condition that only a corporal's company should be admitted at a time. Bossu signed an agreement to this effect. But throughout the whole trouble the Spaniards never once respected the conditions they had made and sworn to with the inhabitants, and no sooner were the gates opened than the whole force rushed in, and the usual work of slaughter, atrocity, and plunder commenced. Within a few minutes four hundred citizens were murdered, and countless outrages and cruelties perpetrated upon the inhabitants.

Captain Martin completed the discharging of his cargo two days after Bossu made his ineffectual attempt upon the town. A messenger had arrived that morning from Flushing, with news that as soon as the capture of Brill had become known in that seaport, the Seigneur de Herpt had excited the burghers to drive the small Spanish garrison from the town.

Scarcely had they done so when a large reinforcement of the enemy arrived before the walls, having been despatched there by Alva, to complete the fortress that had been commenced to secure the possession of this important port at the mouth of the Western Scheldt. Herpt persuaded the burghers that it was too late to draw back now. They had done enough to draw the vengeance of the Spaniards upon them; their only hope now was

to resist to the last. A half witted man in the crowd offered, if any one would give him a pot of beer, to ascend the ramparts and fire two pieces of artillery at the Spanish ships.

The offer was accepted, and the man ran up to the ramparts and discharged the guns. A sudden panic seized the Spaniards, and the whole fleet sailed away at once in the direction of Middelburg.

The governor of the island next day arrived at Flushing and was at once admitted. He called the citizens together to the market place and there addressed them, beseeching them to return to their allegiance, assuring them that if they did so the king, who was the best natured prince in all Christendom, would forget and forgive their offenses. The effect of the governor's oratory was sadly marred by the interruptions of De Herpt and his adherents, who reminded the people of the fate that had befallen other towns that had revolted, and scoffed at such good nature as the king displayed in the scores of executions daily taking place throughout the country.

The governor, finding his efforts unavailing, had left the town, and as soon as he did so the messenger was sent off to Brill, saying that the inhabitants of Flushing were willing to provide arms and ammunition if they would send them men experienced in partisan warfare. Two hundred of the beggars, under the command of Treslong, accordingly started the next day for Flushing. The Good Venture threw off her hawsers from the wharf at about the same time that these were starting, and for

some time kept company with them.

"Did one ever see such a wild crew?" Captain Martin said, shaking his head. "Never, I believe, did such a party set out upon a warlike adventure."

The appearance of Treslong's followers was indeed extraordinary. Every man was attired in the gorgeous vestments of the plundered churches–in gold and embroidered cassocks, glittering robes, or the sombre cowls and garments of Capuchin friars. As they sailed along their wild sea songs rose in the air, mingled with shouts for vengeance on the Spaniards and the Papacy.

"One would not think that this ribald crew could fight," Captain Martin went on; "but there is no doubt they will do so. They must not be blamed altogether; they are half maddened by the miseries and cruelties endured by their friends and relations at the hands of the Spaniards. I knew that when at last the people rose the combat would be a terrible one, and that they would answer cruelty by cruelty, blood by blood. The Prince of Orange, as all men know, is one of the most clement and gentle of rulers. All his ordinances enjoin gentle treatment of prisoners, and he has promised every one over and over again complete toleration in the exercise of religion; but though he may forgive and forget, the people will not.

"It is the Catholic church that has been their oppressor. In its name tens of thousands have been murdered, and I fear that the slaughter of those priests at Brill is but the first of a series of

bloody reprisals that will take place wherever the people get the upper hand."

A fresh instance of this was shown a few hours after the Good Venture put into Flushing. A ship arrived in port, bringing with it Pacheco, the Duke of Alva's chief engineer, an architect of the highest reputation. He had been despatched by the duke to take charge of the new works that the soldiers had been sent to execute, and ignorant of what had taken place he landed at the port. He was at once seized by the mob. An officer, willing to save his life, took him from their hands and conducted him to the prison; but the populace were clamorous for his blood, and Treslong was willing enough to satisfy them and to avenge upon Alva's favourite officer the murder of his brother by Alva's orders. The unfortunate officer was therefore condemned to be hung, and the sentence was carried into effect the same day.

A few days later an officer named Zeraerts arrived at Flushing with a commission from the Prince of Orange as Governor of the Island of Walcheren. He was attended by a small body of French infantry, and the force under his command speedily increased; for as soon as it was known in England that Brill and Flushing had thrown off the authority of the Spaniards, volunteers from England began to arrive in considerable numbers to aid their fellow Protestants in the struggle before them.

The Good Venture had stayed only a few hours in Flushing. In the present condition of affairs there was no chance of obtaining a cargo there, and Captain Martin therefore thought it better not

to waste time, but to proceed at once to England in order to learn the intention of the merchants for whom he generally worked as to what could be done under the changed state of circumstances that had arisen.

Every day brought news of the extension of the rising. The Spanish troops lay for the most part in Flanders, and effectually deterred the citizens of the Flemish towns from revolting; but throughout Holland, Zeeland, and Friesland the flame of revolt spread rapidly. The news that Brill and Flushing had thrown off the Spanish yoke fired every heart. It was the signal for which all had been so long waiting. They knew how desperately Spain would strive to regain her grip upon the Netherlands, how terrible would be her vengeance if she conquered; but all felt that it was better to die sword in hand than to be murdered piecemeal. And accordingly town after town rose, expelled the authorities appointed by Spain and the small Spanish garrisons, and in three months after the rising of Brill the greater part of the maritime provinces were free. Some towns, however, still remained faithful to Spain. Prominent among these was Amsterdam, a great trading city, which feared the ruin that opposition to Alva might bring upon it, more than the shame of standing aloof when their fellow countrymen were fighting for freedom and the right to worship God in their own way.

On the 23rd of May, Louis of Nassau, with a body of troops from France, captured the important town of Mons by surprise, but was at once beleaguered there by a Spanish army.

In June the States of Holland assembled at Dort and formally renounced the authority of the Duke of Alva, and declared the Prince of Orange, the royally appointed stadtholder, the only legal representative of the Spanish crown in their country; and in reply to an eloquent address of Sainte Aldegonde, the prince's representative, voted a considerable sum of money for the payment of the army the prince was raising in Germany. On the 19th of June a serious misfortune befell the patriot cause. A reinforcement of Huguenot troops, on the way to succour the garrison of Mons, were met and cut to pieces by the Spaniards, and Count Louis, who had been led by the French King to expect ample succour and assistance from him, was left to his fate.

On the 7th of July the Prince of Orange crossed the Rhine with 14,000 foot and 7,000 horse. He advanced but a short distance when the troops mutinied in consequence of their pay being in arrears, and he was detained four weeks until the cities of Holland guaranteed their payment for three months. A few cities opened their gates to him; but they were for the most part unimportant places, and Mechlin was the only large town that admitted his troops. Still he pressed on toward Mons, expecting daily to be joined by 12,000 French infantry and 3,000 cavalry under the command of Admiral Coligny.

The prince, who seldom permitted himself to be sanguine, believed that the goal of his hopes was reached, and that he should now be able to drive the Spaniards from the Netherlands. But as he was marching forward he received tidings that showed

him that all his plans were shattered, and that the prospects were darker than they had ever before been. While the King of France had throughout been encouraging the revolted Netherlanders, and had authorized his minister to march with an army to their assistance, he was preparing for a deed that would be the blackest in history, were it not that its horrors are less appalling than those inflicted upon the captured cities of the Netherlands by Alva. On St. Bartholomew's Eve there was a general massacre of the Protestants in Paris, followed by similar massacres throughout France, the number of victims being variously estimated at from twenty-five to a hundred thousand.

Protestant Europe was filled with horror at this terrible crime. Philip of Spain was filled with equal delight. Not only was the danger that seemed to threaten him in the Netherlands at once and forever, as he believed, at an end, but he saw in this destruction of the Protestants of France a great step in the direction he had so much at heart–the entire extirpation of heretics throughout Europe. He wrote letters of the warmest congratulation to the King of France, with whom he had formerly been at enmity; while the Pope, accompanied by his cardinals, went to the church of St. Mark to render thanks to God for the grace thus singularly vouchsafed to the Holy See and to all Christendom. To the Prince of Orange the news came as a thunderclap. His troops wholly lost heart, and refused to keep the field. The prince himself almost lost his life at the hands of the mutineers, and at last, crossing the Rhine, he disbanded

his army and went almost alone to Holland to share the fate of the provinces that adhered to him. He went there expecting and prepared to die.

"There I will make my sepulcher," was his expression in the letter in which he announced his intention to his brother. Count Louis of Nassau had now nothing left before him but to surrender. His soldiers, almost entirely French, refused any longer to resist, now that the king had changed his intentions, and the city was surrendered, the garrison being allowed to retire with their weapons.

The terms of the capitulation were so far respected; but instead of the terms respecting the townspeople being adhered to, a council of blood was set up, and for many months from ten to twenty of the inhabitants were hanged, burned, or beheaded every day. The news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, of the treachery of the King of France towards the inhabitants of the Netherlands, and of the horrible cruelties perpetrated upon the inhabitants of Mechlin and other towns that had opened their gates to the Prince of Orange, excited the most intense indignation among the people of England.

The queen put on mourning, but was no more inclined than before to render any really efficient aid to the Netherlands. She allowed volunteers to pass over, furnished some meagre sums of money, but held aloof from any open participation in the war; for if before, when France was supposed to be favourable to the Netherlands and hostile to Spain, she felt unequal to a war with

the latter power, still less could she hope to cope with Spain when the deed of St. Bartholomew had reunited the two Catholic monarchs.

Captain Martin, married to a native of the Netherlands, and mixing constantly with the people in his trade, was naturally ardent, even beyond the majority of his countrymen, in their cause, and over and over again declared that were he sailing by when a sea fight was going on between the Dutch and the Spaniards, he would pull down his English flag, hoist that of Holland, and join in the fray; and Ned, as was to be expected, shared to the utmost his father's feelings on the subject. Early in September the Good Venture started with a cargo for Amsterdam, a city that almost alone in Holland adhered to the Spanish cause.

Sophie Martin was pleased when she heard that this was the ship's destination; for she was very anxious as to the safety of her father and brothers, from whom she had not heard for a long time. Postage was dear and mails irregular. Few letters were written or received by people in England, still more seldom letters sent across the sea. There would, therefore, under the ordinary circumstances, have been no cause whatever for uneasiness had years elapsed without news coming from Amsterdam; and, indeed, during her whole married life Sophie Martin had only received one or two letters by post from her former home, although many communications had been brought by friends of her husband's trading there. But as many weeks seldom passed

without the Good Venture herself going into Amsterdam, for that town was one of the great trading centres of Holland, there was small occasion for letters to pass. It happened, however, that from one cause or another, eighteen months had passed since Captain Martin's business had taken him to that port, and no letter had come either by post or hand during that time.

None who had friends in the Netherlands could feel assured that these must, either from their station or qualities, be safe from the storm that was sweeping over the country. The poor equally with the rich, the artisan equally with the noble, was liable to become a victim of Alva's Council of Blood. The net was drawn so as to catch all classes and conditions; and although it was upon the Protestants that his fury chiefly fell, the Catholics suffered too, for pretexts were always at hand upon which these could also be condemned.

The Netherlands swarmed with spies and informers, and a single unguarded expression of opinion was sufficient to send a man to the block. And, indeed, in a vast number of cases, private animosity was the cause of the denunciation; for any accusation could be safely made where there was no trial, and the victims were often in complete ignorance as to the nature of the supposed crime for which they were seized and dragged away to execution.

When the vessel sailed Sophie Martin gave her husband a letter to her father and brothers, begging them to follow the example of thousands of their countrymen, and to leave the land where life and property were no longer safe, and to come over to

London. They would have no difficulty in procuring work there, and could establish themselves in business and do as well as they had been doing at home.

They had, she knew, money laid by in London; for after the troubles began her father had sold off the houses and other property he had purchased with his savings, and had transmitted the result to England by her husband, who had intrusted it for investment to a leading citizen with whom he did business. As this represented not only her father's accumulations but those of her brothers who worked as partners with him, it amounted to a sum that in those days was regarded as considerable.

"I feel anxious, Ned," Captain Martin said as he sailed up the Zuider Zee towards the city, "as to what has befallen your grandfather and uncles. I have always made the best of the matter to your mother, but I cannot conceal from myself that harm may have befallen them. It is strange that no message has come to us through any of our friends trading with the town, for your uncles know many of my comrades and can see their names in the shipping lists when they arrive. They would have known how anxious your mother would be at the news of the devil's work that is going on here, and, being always tender and thoughtful for her, would surely have sent her news of them from time to time as they had a chance. I sorely fear that something must have happened. Your uncles are prudent men, going about their work and interfering with none; but they are men, too, who speak their mind, and would not, like many, make a false show of affection

when they feel none.

"Well, well; we shall soon know. As soon as the ship is moored and my papers are declared in order, you and I will go over to Vordwyk and see how they are faring. I think not that they will follow your mother's advice and sail over with us; for it was but the last time I saw them that they spoke bitterly against the emigrants, and said that every man who could bear arms should, however great his danger, wait and bide the time until there was a chance to strike for his religion and country. They are sturdy men these Dutchmen, and not readily turned from an opinion they have taken up; and although I shall do my best to back up your mother's letter by my arguments, I have but small hope that I shall prevail with them."

In the evening they were moored alongside the quays of Amsterdam, at that time one of the busiest cities in Europe. Its trade was great, the wealth of its citizens immense. It contained a large number of monasteries, its authorities were all Catholics and devoted to the cause of Spain, and although there were a great many well wishers to the cause of freedom within its walls, these were powerless to take action, and the movement which, after the capture of Brill and Flushing, had caused almost all the towns of Holland to declare for the Prince of Orange, found no echo in Amsterdam. The vessel anchored outside the port, and the next morning after their papers were examined and found in order she ranged up alongside the crowded tiers of shipping. Captain Martin went on shore with Ned, visited the merchants

to whom his cargo was consigned, and told them that he should begin to unload the next day.

He then started with Ned to walk to Vordwyk, which lay two miles away. On reaching the village they stopped suddenly. The roof of the house they had so often visited was gone, its walls blackened by fire. After the first exclamation of surprise and regret they walked forward until opposite the ruin, and stood gazing at it. Then Captain Martin stepped up to a villager, who was standing at the door of his shop, and asked him when did this happen, what had become of the old man Plomaert?

"You are his son-in-law, are you not?" the man asked in reply. "I have seen you here at various times." Captain Martin nodded. The man looked round cautiously to see that none were within sound of his voice.

"You have not heard, then?" he said. "It was a terrible business, though we are growing used to it now. One day, it is some eight months since, a party of soldiers came from Amsterdam and hauled away my neighbour Plomaert and his three sons. They were denounced as having attended the field preaching a year ago, and you know what that means."

"And the villains murdered them?" Captain Martin asked in horror stricken tones.

The man nodded. "They were hung together next day, together with Gertrude, the wife of the eldest brother. Johan was, as you know, unmarried. Elizabeth, the wife of Louis, lay ill at the time, or doubtless she would have fared the same as the rest. She has

gone with her two daughters to Haarlem, where her family live. All their property was, of course, seized and confiscated, and the house burnt down; for, as you know, they all lived together. Now, my friend, I will leave you. I dare not ask you in for I know not who may be watching us, and to entertain even the brother-in-law of men who have been sent to the gallows might well cost a man his life in our days."

Then Captain Martin's grief and passion found vent in words, and he roundly cursed the Spaniards and their works, regardless of who might hear him; then he entered the garden, visited the summer house where he had so often talked with the old man and his sons, and then sat down and gave full vent to his grief. Ned felt almost stunned by the news; being so often away at sea he had never given the fact that so long a time had elapsed since his mother had received a letter from her family much thought. It had, indeed, been mentioned before him; but, knowing the disturbed state of the country, it had seemed to him natural enough that his uncles should have had much to think of and trouble them, and might well have no time for writing letters. His father's words the evening before had for the first time excited a feeling of real uneasiness about them, and the shock caused by the sight of the ruined house, and the news that his grandfather, his three uncles, and one of his aunts, had been murdered by the Spaniards, completely overwhelmed him.

"Let us be going, Ned," his father said at last; "there is nothing for us to do here, let us get back to our ship. I am a peaceable

man, Ned, but I feel now as if I could join the beggars of the sea, and go with them in slaying every Spaniard who fell into their hands. This will be terrible news for your mother, lad."

"It will indeed," Ned replied. "Oh, father, I wish you would let me stay here and join the prince's bands and fight for their freedom. There were English volunteers coming out to Brill and Flushing when we sailed from the Thames, and if they come to fight for Holland who have no tie in blood, why should not I who am Dutch by my mother's side and whose relations have been murdered?"

"We will talk of it later on, Ned," his father said. "You are young yet for such rough work as this, and this is no common war. There is no quarter given here, it is a fight to the death. The Spaniards slaughter the Protestants like wild beasts, and like wild beasts they will defend themselves. But if this war goes on till you have gained your full strength and sinew I will not say you nay. As you say, our people at home are ready to embark in a war for the cause of liberty and religion, did the queen but give the word; and when others, fired solely by horror at the Spaniards' cruelty, are ready to come over here and throw in their lot with them, it seems to me that it will be but right that you, who are half Dutch and have had relatives murdered by these fiends, should come over and side with the oppressed. If there is fighting at sea, it may be that I myself will take part with them, and place the Good Venture at the service of the Prince of Orange. But of that we will talk later on, as also about yourself. When you are eighteen

you will still be full young for such work."

As they talked they were walking fast towards Amsterdam. "We will go straight on board, Ned; and I will not put my foot ashore again before we sail. I do not think that I could trust myself to meet a Spaniard now, but should draw my knife and rush upon him. I have known that these things happened, we have heard of these daily butcherings, but it has not come home to me as now, when our own friends are the victims."

Entering the gate of the town they made their way straight down to the port, and were soon on board the Good Venture where Captain Martin retired to his cabin. Ned felt too restless and excited to go down at present; but he told the crew what had happened, and the exclamations of anger among the honest sailors were loud and deep. Most of them had sailed with Captain Martin ever since he had commanded the Good Venture, and had seen the Plomaerts when they had come on board whenever the vessel put in at Amsterdam. The fact that there was nothing to do, and no steps to take to revenge the murders, angered them all the more.

"I would we had twenty ships like our own, Master Ned," one of them said. "That would give us four hundred men, and with those we could go ashore and hang the magistrates and the councillors and all who had a hand in this foul business, and set their public buildings in a flame, and then fight our way back again to the port."

"I am afraid four hundred men would not be able to do it here

as they did at Brill. There was no Spanish garrison there, and here they have a regiment; and though the Spaniards seem to have the hearts of devils rather than men, they can fight."

"Well, we would take our chance," the sailor replied. "If there was four hundred of us, and the captain gave the word, we would show them what English sailors could do, mates–wouldn't we?"

"Aye, that would we;" the others growled in a chorus.

The next morning the work of unloading began. The sailors worked hard; for, as one of them said, "This place seems to smell of blood–let's be out of it, mates, as soon as we can." At four in the afternoon a lad of about Ned's age came on board. He was the son of the merchant to whom the larger part of the cargo of the Good Venture was consigned.

"I have a letter that my father charged me to give into your hands, Captain Martin. He said that the matter was urgent, and begged me to give it you in your cabin. He also told me to ask when you think your hold will be empty, as he has goods for you for the return voyage."

"We shall be well nigh empty by tomorrow night," Captain Martin said, as he led the way to his cabin in the poop. "The men have been working faster than usual, for it generally takes us three days to unload."

"I do not think my father cared about that," the lad said when he entered the cabin; "it was but an excuse for my coming down here, and he gave me the message before all the other clerks. But methinks that the letter is the real object of my coming."

Captain Martin opened the letter. Thanks to his preparation for taking his place in his father's business, he had learnt to read and write; accomplishments by no means general among sea captains of the time.

"It is important, indeed," he said, as he glanced through the letter. It ran as follows: "Captain Martin,–A friend of mine, who is one of the council here, has just told me that at the meeting this afternoon a denunciation was laid against you for having publicly, in the street of Vordwyk, cursed and abused his Majesty the King of Spain, the Duke of Alva, the Spaniards, and the Catholic religion. Some were of opinion that you should at once be arrested on board your ship, but others thought that it were better to wait and seize you the first time you came on shore, as it might cause trouble were you taken from under the protection of the British flag. On shore, they urged, no question could arise, especially as many English have now, although the two nations are at peace, openly taken service under the Prince of Orange.

"I have sent to tell you this, though at no small risk to myself were it discovered that I had done so; but as we have had dealings for many years together, I think it right to warn you. I may say that the counsel of those who were for waiting prevailed; but if, after a day or two, they find that you do not come ashore, I fear they will not hesitate to arrest you on your own vessel. Please to destroy this letter at once after you have read it, and act as seems best to you under the circumstances. I send this to you by my son's hand, for there are spies everywhere, and in these days one

can trust no one."

"I am much obliged to you, young sir, for bringing me this letter. Will you thank your father from me, and say that I feel deeply indebted to him, and will think over how I can best escape from this strait. Give him the message from me before others, that I shall be empty and ready to receive goods by noon on the day after tomorrow."

When the lad had left, Captain Martin called in Ned and William Peters, his first mate, and laid the case before them.

"It is an awkward business, Captain Martin," Peters said. "You sha'n't be arrested on board the Good Venture, as long as there is a man on board can wield a cutlass; but I don't know whether that would help you in the long run.

"Not at all, Peters. We might beat off the first party that came to take me, but it would not be long before they brought up a force against which we should stand no chance whatever. No, it is not by fighting that there is any chance of escape. It is evident by this that I am safe for tomorrow; they will wait at least a day to see if I go ashore, which indeed they will make certain I shall do sooner or later. As far as my own safety is concerned, and that of Ned here, who, as he was with me, is doubtless included in the denunciation, it is easy enough. We have only to get into the boat after dark, to muffle the oars, and to row for Haarlem, which lies but ten miles away, and has declared for the Prince of Orange. But I do not like to leave the ship, for if they found us gone they might seize and declare it confiscated. And although,

when we got back to England, we might lay a complaint before the queen, there would be no chance of our getting the ship or her value from the Spaniards. There are so many causes of complaint between the two nations, that the seizure of a brig would make no difference one way or another. The question is, could we get her out?"

"It would be no easy matter," Peters said, shaking his head. "That French ship that came in this afternoon has taken up a berth outside us, and there would be no getting out until she moved out of the way. If she were not there it might be tried, though it would be difficult to do so without attracting attention. As for the Spanish war vessels, of which there are four in the port, I should not fear them if we once got our sails up, for the Venture can sail faster than these lubberly Spaniards; but they would send rowboats after us, and unless the wind was strong these would speedily overhaul us."

"Well, I must think it over," Captain Martin said. "I should be sorry indeed to lose my ship, which would be well nigh ruin to me, but if there is no other way we must make for Haarlem by boat."

The next day the work of unloading continued. In the afternoon the captain of the French ship lying outside them came on board. He had been in the habit of trading with Holland, and addressed Captain Martin in Dutch.

"Are you likely to be lying here long?" he asked. "I want to get my vessel alongside the wharf as soon as I can, for it is slow work

unloading into these lighters. There are one or two ships going out in the morning, but I would rather have got in somewhere about this point if I could, for the warehouses of Mynheer Strous, to whom my goods are consigned, lie just opposite."

"Will you come down into my cabin and have a glass of wine with me," Captain Martin said, "and then we can talk it over?"

Captain Martin discovered, without much trouble, that the French captain was a Huguenot, and that his sympathies were all with the people of the Netherlands.

"Now," he said, "I can speak freely to you. I was ashore the day before yesterday, and learned that my wife's father, her three brothers, and one of their wives have been murdered by the Spaniards. Well, you can understand that in my grief and rage I cursed the Spaniards and their doings. I have learnt that some spy has denounced me, and that they are only waiting for me to set foot on shore to arrest me, and you know what will come after that; for at present, owing to the volunteers that have come over to Brill and Flushing, the Spaniards are furious against the English. They would rather take me on shore than on board, but if they find that I do not land they will certainly come on board for me. They believe that I shall not be unloaded until noon tomorrow, and doubtlessly expect that as soon as the cargo is out I shall land to arrange for a freight to England. Therefore, until tomorrow afternoon I am safe, but no longer. Now, I am thinking of trying to get out quietly tonight; but to do so it is necessary that you should shift your berth a ship's length one way or the other. Will

you do this for me?"

"Certainly I will, with pleasure," the captain replied. "I will give orders at once."

"No, that will never do," Captain Martin said. "They are all the more easy about me because they know that as long as your ship is there I cannot get out, but if they saw you shifting your berth it would strike them at once that I might be intending to slip away. You must wait until it gets perfectly dark, and then throw off your warps and slacken out your cable as silently as possible, and let her drop down so as to leave me an easy passage. As soon as it is dark I will grease all my blocks, and when everything is quiet try to get her out. What wind there is is from the southwest, which will take us well down the Zuider Zee."

"I hope you may succeed," the French captain said. "Once under sail you would be safe from their warships, for you would be two or three miles away before they could manage to get up their sails. The danger lies in their rowboats and galleys."

"Well, well, we must risk it," Captain Martin said. "I shall have a boat alongside, and if I find the case is desperate we will take to it and row to the shore, and make our way to Haarlem, where we should be safe."

Ned, who had been keeping a sharp lookout all day, observed that two Spanish officials had taken up their station on the wharf, not far from the ship. They appeared to have nothing to do, and to be indifferent to what was going on. He told his father that he thought that they were watching. Presently the merchant himself

came down to the wharf. He did not come on board, but spoke to Captain Martin as he stood on the deck of the vessel, so that all around could hear his words.

"How are you getting on, Captain Martin?" he asked in Dutch.

"Fairly well," Captain Martin replied. "I think if we push on we shall have her empty by noon tomorrow."

"I have a cargo to go back with you, you know," the merchant said, "and I shall want to see you at the office, if you will step round tomorrow after you have cleared."

"All right, Mynheer, you may expect me about two o'clock.

"But you won't see me," he added to himself.

The merchant waved his hand and walked away, and a few minutes later the two officials also strolled off.

"That has thrown dust into their eyes," Captain Martin said, "and has made it safe for Strous. He will pretend to be as surprised as any one when he hears I have gone."

CHAPTER III

A FIGHT WITH THE SPANIARDS

As soon as it became dark, and the wharves were deserted, Captain Martin sent two sailors aloft with grease pots, with orders that every block was to be carefully greased to ensure its running without noise. A boat which rowed six oars was lowered noiselessly into the water, and flannel was bound round the oars. The men, who had been aware of the danger that threatened their captain, sharpened the pikes and axes, and declared to each other that whether the captain ordered it or not no Spaniards should set foot on board as long as one of them stood alive on the decks. The cook filled a great boiler with water and lighted a fire under it, and the carpenter heated a caldron of pitch without orders.

"What are you doing, Thompson?" the captain asked, noticing the glow of the fire as he came out of his cabin.

The sailor came aft before he replied, "I am just cooking up a little hot sauce for the dons, captain. We don't ask them to come, you know; but if they do, it's only right that we should entertain them."

"I hope there will be no fighting, lad," the captain said.

"Well, your honour, that ain't exactly the wish of me and my mates. After what we have been hearing of, we feel as we sha'n't be happy until we have had a brush with them 'ere Spaniards. And as to fighting, your honour; from what we have heard, Captain

Hawkins and others out in the Indian seas have been ashowing them that though they may swagger on land they ain't no match for an Englishman on the sea. Anyhow, your honour, we ain't going to stand by and see you and Master Ned carried away by these 'ere butchering Spaniards.

"We have all made up our minds that what happens to you happens to all of us. We have sailed together in this ship the Good Venture for the last seventeen or eighteen years, and we means to swim or sink together. No disrespect to you, captain; but that is the fixed intention of all of us. It would be a nice thing for us to sail back to the port of London and say as we stood by and saw our captain and his son carried off to be hung or burnt or what not by the Spaniards, and then sailed home to tell the tale. We don't mean no disrespect, captain, I says again; but in this 'ere business we take our orders from Mr. Peters, seeing that you being consarned as it were in the affair ain't to be considered as having, so to speak, a right judgment upon it."

"Well, well, we shall see if there is a chance of making a successful fight," Captain Martin said, unable to resist a smile at the sailor's way of putting it.

The night was dark, and the two or three oil lamps that hung suspended from some of the houses facing the port threw no ray of light which extended to the shipping. It was difficult to make out against the sky the outline of the masts of the French vessel lying some twenty yards away; but presently Ned's attention was called towards her by a slight splash of her cable. Then he heard

the low rumble as the ropes ran out through the hawse holes, and saw that the masts were slowly moving. In two or three minutes they had disappeared from his sight. He went into the cabin.

"The Frenchman has gone, father; and so noiselessly that I could hardly hear her. If we can get out as quietly there is little fear of our being noticed."

"We cannot be as quiet as that, Ned. She has only to slack away her cables and drift with the tide that turned half an hour ago, we have got to tow out and set sail. However, the night is dark, the wind is off shore, and everything is in our favour. Do you see if there be anyone about on the decks of the ships above and below us."

Ned went first on to the stern, and then to the bow. He could hear the voices of men talking and singing in the forecastles, but could hear no movement on the deck of either ship. He went down and reported to his father.

"Then, I think, we may as well start at once, Ned. There are still sounds and noises in the town, and any noise we may make is therefore less likely to be noticed than if we waited until everything was perfectly still."

The sailors were all ready. All were barefooted so as to move as noiselessly as possible. The four small cannon that the Good Venture carried had been loaded to the muzzle with bullets and pieces of iron. A search had been made below and several heavy lumps of stone, a part of the ballast carried on some former occasion, brought up and placed at intervals along the bulwarks.

The pikes had been fastened by a loose lashing to the mast, and the axes leaned in readiness against the cannon.

"Now, Peters," Captain Martin said, "let the boat be manned. Do you send a man ashore to cast off the hawser at the bow. Let him take a line ashore with him so as to ease the hawser off, and not let the end fall in the water. The moment he has done that let him come to the stern and get on board there, and do you and he get the plank on board as noiselessly as you can. As soon as the bow hawser is on board I will give the men in the boat the word to row. Ned will be on board her, and see that they row in the right direction. The moment you have got the plank in get out your knife and cut the stern warp half through, and directly her head is out, and you feel the strain, sever it. The stern is so close to the wharf that the end will not be able to drop down into the water and make a splash."

Ned's orders were that as soon as the vessel's head pointed seaward he was to steer rather to the right, so as to prevent the stream, which, however, ran but feebly, from carrying her down on the bows of the French ship. Once beyond the latter he was to go straight out, steering by the lights on shore. The men were enjoined to drop their oars as quietly as possible into the water at each stroke, and to row deeply, as having the vessel in tow they would churn up the water unless they did so. The boat rowed off a stroke or two, and then, as the rope tightened, the men sat quiet until Captain Martin was heard to give the order to row in a low tone; then they bent to their oars. Peters had chosen the six best

rowers on board the ship for the purpose, and so quietly did they dip their oars in the water that Captain Martin could scarce hear the sound, and only knew by looking over the other side, and seeing that the shore was receding, that the ship was in motion. Two minutes later Peters came forward.

"I have cut the warp, Captain Martin, and she is moving out. I have left Watson at the helm." Scarce a word was spoken for the next five minutes. It was only by looking at the light ashore that they could judge the progress they were making. Every one breathed more freely now the first danger was over. They had got out from their berth without attracting the slightest notice, either from the shore or from the ships lying next to them. Their next danger was from the ships lying at anchor off the port waiting their turn to come in. Were they to run against one of these, the sound of the collision, and perhaps the breaking of spars and the shouts of the crew, would certainly excite attention from the sentries on shore.

So far the boat had been rowing but a short distance in advance of the end of the bowsprit, but Captain Martin now made his way out to the end of that spar, and told Ned that he was going to give him a good deal more rope in order that he might keep well ahead, and that he was to keep a sharp lookout for craft at anchor. Another quarter of an hour passed, and Captain Martin thought that they must now be beyond the line of the outer shipping. They felt the wind more now that they were getting beyond the shelter of the town, and its effect upon the hull and spars made the work

lighter for those in the boat ahead.

"Now, Peters, I think that we can safely spread the foresail and call them in from the boat."

The sail had been already loosed and was now let fall; it bellied out at once.

"Haul in the sheets, lads," Captain Martin said, and going forward gave a low whistle. A minute later the boat was alongside. "Let her drop astern, Peters," the captain said, as Ned and the rowers clambered on board; "we may want her presently. Hullo! what's that? It's one of the guard boats, I do believe, and coming this way." The men heard the sound of coming oars, and silently stole to the mast and armed themselves with the pikes, put the axes in their belts, and ranged themselves along by the side of the ship towards which the boat was approaching. "Will she go ahead of us or astern?" Captain Martin whispered to the mate.

"I cannot tell yet, sir. By the sound she seems making pretty nearly straight for us."

"How unfortunate," Captain Martin murmured; "just as it seemed that we were getting safely away."

In another minute the mate whispered, "She will go astern of us, sir, but not by much."

"I trust that she will not see us," the captain said. "But now we are away from the town and the lights, it doesn't seem so dark, besides their eyes are accustomed to it."

There was dead silence in the ship as the boat approached. She

was just passing the stern at the distance of about a ship's length, when there was a sudden exclamation, and a voice shouted, "What ship is that? Where are you going?" Captain Martin replied in Dutch. "We are taking advantage of the wind to make to sea."

"Down with that sail, sir!" the officer shouted: "this is against all regulations. No ship is permitted to leave the port between sunrise and sunset. Pull alongside, lads; there is something strange about this!"

"Do not come alongside," Captain Martin said sternly. "We are peaceable traders who meddle with no one, but if you interfere with us it will be the worse for you."

"You insolent hound!" the officer exclaimed furiously, "do you dare to threaten me. Blow your matches, lads, and shoulder your arquebuses. There is treason and rebellion here."

Those on board saw six tiny sparks appear, two in the bow and four in the stern. A minute later the boat dashed alongside. As it did so three great pieces of stone were cast into it, knocking down two of the rowers.

"Fire!" the officer exclaimed as he sprang up to climb the ship's side. The six muskets were discharged, and the men rose to follow their leader, when there was a cry from the rowers "The boat is sinking! She is staved in!"

At the same moment the officer fell back thrust through with a pike. Two of the soldiers were cut down with axes, the other sprang back into the sinking boat, which at once drifted astern.

"Up with her sails, lads!" Captain Martin shouted; "it is a question of speed now. The alarm is spread on shore already." The sentries of the various batteries were discharging their muskets and shouting, and the roll of a drum was heard almost immediately. The crew soon had every stitch of sail set upon the brig. She was moving steadily through the water; but the wind was still light, although occasionally a stronger puff gave ground for hope that it would ere long blow harder.

"They will be some time before they make out what it is all about, Peters," Captain Martin said. "The galleys will be manned, and will row to the spot where the firing was heard. Some of the men in the boat are sure to be able to swim, and will meet them as they come out and tell them what has happened. The worst of it is, the moon will be up in a few minutes. I forgot all about that. That accounts for its being lighter. However, we have got a good start. One or two guard boats may be out here in a quarter of an hour, but it will take the galleys twice as long to gather their crews and get out. It all depends on the wind. It is lucky it is not light yet, or the batteries might open on us; I don't think now they will get sight of us until we are fairly out of range."

Now that there was no longer occasion for silence on board the Good Venture, the crew laughed and joked at the expense of the Spaniards. They were in high spirits at their success, and their only regret was that the brush with their pursuers had not been a more serious one. It was evident from the talk that there was quite as much hope as fear in the glances that they cast astern,

and that they would have been by no means sorry to see a foe of about their own strength in hot pursuit of them. A quarter of an hour after the shattered boat had dropped astern the moon rose on the starboard bow. It was three-quarters full, and would assuredly reveal the ship to those on shore. Scarcely indeed did it show above the horizon when there was the boom of a gun astern, followed a second or two later by a heavy splash in the water close alongside.

"That was a good shot," Captain Martin said; "but luck rather than skill I fancy. There is little chance of their hitting us at this distance. We must be a mile and a half away; don't you think so, Peters?"

"Quite that, captain; and they must have given their gun a lot of elevation to carry so far. I almost wonder they wasted their powder."

"Of course they can't tell in the least who they are firing at," the captain said. "They cannot have learnt anything yet, and can have only known that there was firing off the port, and that a craft is making out. We may be one of the sea beggars' vessels for anything they know, and may have come in to carry off a prize from under their very noses."

"That is so," the mate replied; "but the gun may have been fired as a signal as much as with any hope of hitting us."

"So it may, so it may, Peters; I did not think of that. Certainly that is likely enough. We know they have several ships cruising in the Zuider Zee keeping a lookout for the beggars. On a night

like this, and with the wind astern, the sound will be heard miles away. We may have trouble yet. I was not much afraid of the galleys, for though the wind is so light we are running along famously. You see we have nothing in our hold, and that is all in our favour so long as we are dead before the wind. Besides, if the galleys did come up it would probably be singly, and we should be able to beat them off, for high out of water as we are they would find it difficult to climb the sides; but if we fall in with any of their ships it is a different matter altogether."

Four or five more shots were fired, but they all fell astern; and as they were fully two miles and a half away when the last gun was discharged, and the cannoneers must have known that they were far out of range, Captain Martin felt sure that the mate's idea was a correct one, and that the cannon had been discharged rather as a signal than with any hope of reaching them.

"Ned, run up into the foretop," the captain said, "and keep a sharp lookout ahead. The moon has given an advantage to those who are on our track behind, but it gives us an advantage as against any craft there may be ahead of us. We shall see them long before they can see us."

Peters had been looking astern when the last gun was fired, and said that by its flash he believed that he had caught sight of three craft of some kind or other outside the ships moored off the port.

"Then we have two miles' start if those are their galleys," the captain said. "We are stealing through the water at about the rate

of four knots, and perhaps they may row six, so it will take them an hour to come up."

"Rather more than that, I should say, captain, for the wind at times freshens a little. It is likely to be an hour and a half before they come up."

"All the better, Peters. They will have learnt from those they picked up from that boat that we are not a large craft, and that our crew probably does not exceed twenty men; therefore, as those galleys carry about twenty soldiers besides the twenty rowers, they will not think it necessary to keep together, but will each do his best to overtake us. One of them is sure to be faster than the others, and if they come up singly I think we shall be able to beat them off handsomely. It is no use discussing now whether it is wise to fight or not. By sinking that first boat we have all put our heads in a noose, and there is no drawing back. We have repulsed their officers with armed force, and there will be no mercy for any of us if we fall into their hands."

"We shall fight all the better for knowing that," Peters said grimly. "The Dutchmen are learning that, as the Spaniards are finding to their cost. There is nothing like making a man fight than the knowledge that there is a halter waiting for him if he is beaten."

"You had better get two of the guns astern, Peters, so as to fire down into them as they come up. You may leave the others, one on each side, for the present, and run one of them over when we see which side they are making for. Ah! that's a nice little

puff. If it would but hold like that we should show them our heels altogether."

In two or three minutes the puff died out and the wind fell even lighter than before.

"I thought that we were going to have more of it," the captain said discontentedly; "it looked like it when the sun went down."

"I think we shall have more before morning," Peters agreed; "but I am afraid it won't come in time to help us much."

As the moon rose they were able to make out three craft astern of them. Two were almost abreast of each other, the third some little distance behind.

"That is just what I expected, Peters; they are making a race of it. We shall have two of them on our hands at once; the other will be too far away by the time they come up to give them any assistance. They are about a mile astern now, I should say, and unless the wind freshens up a bit they will be alongside in about twenty minutes. I will give you three men here, Peters. As soon as we have fired load again, and then slew the guns round and run them forward to the edge of the poop, and point them down into the waist. If the Spaniards get on board and we find them too strong for us, those of us who can will take to the forecastle, the others will run up here. Then sweep the Spaniards with your guns, and directly you have fired charge down among them with pike and axe. We will do the same, and it is hard if we do not clear the deck of them."

Just at this moment Ned hailed them from the top. "There is

a ship nearly ahead of us, sir; she is lying with her sails brailed up, evidently waiting."

"How far is she off, do you think, Ned?"

"I should say she is four miles away," Ned replied.

"Well, we need not trouble about her for the present; there will be time to think about her when we have finished with these fellows behind. You can come down now, Ned."

In a few words the captain now explained his intentions to his men.

"I hope, lads, that we shall be able to prevent their getting a footing on the deck; but if they do, and we find we can't beat them back, as soon as I give the word you are to take either to the forecastle or to the poop. Mr. Peters will have the two guns there ready to sweep them with bullets. The moment he has fired give a cheer and rush down upon them from both sides. We will clear them off again, never fear. Ned, you will be in charge in the waist until I rejoin you. Get ready to run one of the guns over the instant I tell you on which side they are coming up. Depress them as much as you can. I shall take one gun and you take the other, and be sure you don't fire until you see a boat well under the muzzle of your gun. Mind it's the boat you are to aim at, and not the men."

Captain Martin again ascended to the poop and joined Peters. The two boats were now but a few hundred yards astern, and they could hear the officers cheering on the rowers to exert themselves to the utmost. The third boat was fully a quarter of a mile behind

the leaders. When they approached within a hundred yards a fire of musketry was opened.

"Lie down under the bulwarks, men," Captain Martin said to the three sailors. "It is no use risking your lives unnecessarily. I expect one boat will come one side and one the other, Peters. If they do we will both take the one coming up on the port side. One of us may miss, and it is better to make sure of one boat if we can. I think we can make pretty sure of beating off the other. Yes, there they are separating. Now work your gun round a bit, so that it bears on a point about twenty yards astern and a boat's length on the port side. I will do the same. Have you done that?"

"Yes, I think I have about got it, sir."

"Very well, then. Stoop down now, or we may get hit before it is time to fire."

The bulwarks round the poop were only about a foot high, but sitting back from them the captain and the mate were protected from the bullets that were now singing briskly over the stern of the ship.

"They are coming up, Peters," Captain Martin said. "Now kneel up and look along your gun; get your match ready, and do not fire till you see right into the boat, then clap on your match whether I fire or not."

The boat came racing along until when within some twenty yards of the stern, the cannons were discharged almost simultaneously. The sound was succeeded by a chorus of screams and yells; the contents of both guns had struck the boat fairly

midships, and she sank almost instantly. As soon as they had fired Captain Martin ran forward and joined the crew in the waist. He had already passed the word to Ned to get both guns over to the starboard side, and he at once took charge of one while Ned stood at the other. The Spaniards had pushed straight on without waiting to pick up their drowning comrades in the other boat, and in a minute were alongside. So close did the helmsman bring the boat to the side that the guns could not be depressed so as to bear upon her, and a moment later the Spaniards were climbing up the sides of the vessel, the rowers dropping their oars and seizing axes and joining the soldiers.

"Never mind the gun, Ned; it is useless at present. Now, lads, drive them back as they come up."

With pike and hatchet the sailors met the Spaniards as they tried to climb up. The cook had brought his caldron of boiling water to the bulwarks, and threw pailful after pailful down into the boat, while the carpenter bailed over boiling pitch with the great ladle. Terrible yells and screams rose from the boat, and the soldiers in vain tried to gain a footing upon the ship's deck. As they appeared above the level of the bulwarks they were met either with thrust of pike or with a crashing blow from an axe, and it was but three or four minutes from the moment that the fight began that the boat cast off and dropped behind, more than half those on board being killed or disabled. A loud cheer broke from the crew.

"Shall I run the guns back to the stern again," Peters asked

from above, "and give them a parting dose?"

"No, no," Captain Martin said, "let them go, Peters; we are fighting to defend ourselves, and have done them mischief enough. See what the third boat is doing, though."

"They have stopped rowing," Peters said, after going to the stern. "I think they are picking up some swimmers from the boat we sank. There cannot be many of them, for most of the rowers would have been killed by our discharges, and the soldiers in their armour will have sunk at once."

Captain Martin now ascended to the poop. In a short time the boat joined that which had dropped astern, which was lying helpless in the water, no attempt having been made to man the oars, as most of the unwounded men were scalded more or less severely. Their report was evidently not encouraging, and the third boat made no attempt to pursue. Some of her oarsmen were shifted to the other boat, and together they turned and made back for Amsterdam.

"Now then for this vessel ahead," Captain Martin said; "that is a much more serious business than the boats."

The vessel, which was some two miles ahead of them, had now set some of her sails, and was heading towards them.

"They can make us out now plainly enough, Peters, and the firing will of course have told them we are the vessel that they are in search of. I don't think that there is any getting away from them."

"I don't see that there is," the mate agreed. "Whichever way

we edged off they could cut us off. The worst of it is, no doubt she has got some big guns on board, and these little things of ours are of no good except at close quarters. It would be no use trying to make a running fight with her?"

"Not in the least, Peters. We had better sail straight at her."

"You don't mean to try and carry her by boarding?" Peters asked doubtfully. "She looks a large ship, and has perhaps a hundred and fifty men on board; and though the Spaniards are no sailors they can fight on the decks of their ships."

"That is so, Peters. What I think of doing is to bear straight down upon her as if I intended to board. We shall have to stand one broadside as we come up, and then we shall be past her, and with our light draught we should run right away from her with this wind. There is more of it than there was, and we are slipping away fast. Unless she happens to knock away one of our masts we shall get away from her."

When they were within half a mile of the Spanish ship they saw her bows bear off.

"Lie down, lads," the captain ordered, "she is going to give us a broadside. When it is over start one of those sea beggar songs you picked up at Brill; that will startle them, and they will think we are crowded with men and going to board them."

A minute later eight flashes of fire burst from the Spanish ship, now lying broadside to them. One shot crashed through the bulwarks, two others passed through the sails, the rest went wide of their mark. As soon as it was over the crew leapt to their feet

and burst into one of the wild songs sung by the sea beggars.

"Keep our head straight towards her, Peters," Captain Martin said. "They will think we mean to run her down, and it will flurry and confuse them."

Loading was not quick work in those days, and the distance between the vessels was decreased by half before the guns were again fired. This time it was not a broadside; the guns went off one by one as they were loaded, and the aim was hasty and inaccurate, for close as they were not a shot struck the hull of the Good Venture, though two or three went through the sails. In the bright moonlight men could be seen running about and officers waving their arms and giving orders on board the Spaniard, and then her head began to pay off.

"We have scared them," Captain Martin laughed. "They thought we were going to run them down. They know the sea beggars would be quite content to sink themselves if they could sink an enemy. Follow close in her wake, Peters, and then bear off a little as if you meant to pass them on their starboard side; then when you get close give her the helm sharp and sweep across her stern. We will give her the guns as we pass, then bear off again and pass her on her port side; the chances are they will not have loaded again there."

The Spanish ship was little more than a hundred yards ahead. When she got before the wind again Captain Martin saw with satisfaction that the Good Venture sailed three feet to her two. The poop and stern galleries of the Spaniard were clustered with

soldiers, who opened a fire with their muskets upon their pursuer. The men were all lying down now at their guns, which were loaded with musket balls to their muzzles.

"Elevate them as much as you can. She is much higher out of the water than we are. Now, Peters, you see to the guns, I will take the helm."

"I will keep the helm, sir," the mate replied.

"No, you won't, Peters; my place is the place of danger. But if you like you can lie under the bulwark there after you have fired, and be ready to take my place if you see me drop. Now, lads, get ready."

So saying the captain put down the tiller. The Good Venture swept round under the stern of the Spaniard at a distance of some forty yards, and as she did so the guns loaded with bullets to the muzzle were fired one after the other. The effect was terrible, and the galleries and poop were swept by the leaden shower. Then the captain straightened the helm again. The crew burst into the wild yells and cries the beggars raised when going into battle. The Spaniards, confused by the terrible slaughter worked by the guns of their enemies, and believing that they were about to be boarded on the port side by a crowd of desperate foemen, hastily put up the tiller, and the ship bore away as the Good Venture swept up, presenting her stern instead of her broadside to them.

To the momentary relief of the Spaniards their assailant instead of imitating their maneuvers kept straight upon her course before the wind, and instead of the wild cries of the

beggars a hearty English cheer was raised. As Captain Martin had expected, the guns on the port side had not been reloaded after the last discharge, and the Good Venture was two or three hundred yards away before the Spaniards recovered from their surprise at what seemed the incomprehensible maneuver of their foes, and awoke to the fact that they had been tricked, and that instead of a ship crowded with beggars of the sea their supposed assailant had been an English trader that was trying to escape from them.

A dozen contradictory orders were shouted as soon as the truth dawned upon them. The captain had been killed by the discharge of grape, and the first lieutenant severely wounded. The officer in command of the troops shouted to his men to load the guns, only to find when this was accomplished that the second lieutenant of the ship had turned her head in pursuit of the enemy, and that not a single gun would bear. There was a sharp altercation between the two authorities, but the military chief was of the highest rank.

"Don't you see," he said furiously, "that she is going away from us every foot. She was but a couple of hundred yards away when I gave the order to load, and now she is fully a quarter of a mile."

"If I put the helm down to bring her broadside on," the seaman said, "she will be half a mile ahead before we can straighten up and get in her wake again; and unless you happen to cripple her she will get away to a certainty."

"She will get away anyhow," the soldier roared, "if we don't cripple her. Put your helm down instantly."

The order was given and the ship's head swayed round. There was a flapping of sails and a rattling of blocks, and then a broadside was fired; but it is no easy matter for angry and excited men to hit a mast at the distance of nearly half a mile. One of the shots ploughed up the deck within a yard of the foot of the mainmast, another splintered a boat, three others added to the holes in the sails, but no damage of importance was done. By the time the Spaniard had borne round and was again in chase, the Good Venture was over half a mile ahead.

"It is all over now, captain," Peters said as he went aft. "Unless we light upon another of these fellows, which is not likely, we are safe."

"Are any of the men hit, Peters?"

"The carpenter was knocked down and stunned by a splinter from the boat, sir; but I don't think it is serious."

"Thank God for that," the captain said. "Now, will you take the helm?" There was something in the voice that startled the mate.

"Is anything the matter, sir? Don't say you are hit."

"I am hit, Peters, and I fear rather badly; but that matters little now that the crew and ship are safe."

Peters caught the captain, for he saw that he could scarce stand, and called two men to his assistance. The captain was laid down on the deck.

"Where are you hit, sir?"

"Halfway between the knee and the hip," Captain Martin

replied faintly. "If it hadn't been for the tiller I should have fallen, but with the aid of that I made shift to stand on the other leg. It was just before we fired, at the moment when I put the helm down."

"Why didn't you call me?" Peters said reproachfully.

"It was of no good getting two of us hit, Peters; and as long as I could stand to steer I was better there than you."

Ned came running aft as the news was passed along that the captain was wounded, and threw himself on his knees by his father's side.

"Bear up, Ned; bear up like a man," his father said. "I am hit hard, but I don't know that it is to death. But even if it is, it is ten thousand times better to die in battle with the Spaniards than to be hung like a dog, which would have befallen me and perhaps all of us if they had taken us."

By Peters' directions a mattress was now brought up, and the captain carried down to his cabin. There was no thought on board now of the pursuers astern, or of possible danger lying ahead. The news that Captain Martin was badly wounded damped all the feelings of triumph and enthusiasm which the crew had before been feeling at the success with which they had eluded the Spaniard while heavily punishing her. As soon as the captain was laid on a sofa Peters examined the wound. It was right in front of the leg, some four inches above the knee.

"There is nothing to be done for it," Captain Martin said. "It has smashed the bone, I am sure."

"I am afraid it has, captain," Peters said ruefully; "and it is no use my saying that it has not. I think, sir, we had best put in at Enkhuizen. We are not above four or five miles from it now, and we shall find surgeons there who will do all they can for you."

"I think that will be the best plan, Peters."

The orders were given at once, and the ship's course altered, and half an hour later the lights of Enkhuizen were seen ahead.

CHAPTER IV

WOUNDED

They dropped anchor a short distance off the port, and then lit some torches and waved them.

"The firing is sure to have been heard," Peters said, "and they will be sending off to know what is going on, otherwise there would have been small chance of getting in tonight."

As the mate anticipated, the sound of oars was soon heard, and a large boat rowed out towards them. It stopped at a distance of a hundred yards, and there was a shout of "What ship is that?"

"The English brig Good Venture. We pray you to allow us to bring our captain, who has been sorely wounded by the Spaniards, on shore."

"What has been the firing we have heard? We could see the flashes across the water."

"We have been twice engaged," Peters shouted; "first with two Spanish galleys, and then with a large ship of war, which we beat off with heavy loss."

"Well done, Englishmen!" the voice exclaimed, and the boat at once rowed out to the brig. "You cannot come in tonight," the Dutch official said, "for the chain is up across the harbour, and the rule is imperative and without exception; but I will gladly take your captain on shore, and he shall have, I promise you, the best surgical aid the town can give him. Is he the only one hurt?"

"One of the men has been injured with a splinter, but he needs but bandaging and laying up for a few days. We have had a shot or two through our bulwarks, and the sails are riddled. The captain's son is below with him; he acts as second mate, and will tell you all about this affair into which we were forced."

"Very well; we will take him ashore with us then. There is quite an excitement there. The news that a sea fight was going on brought all the citizens to the walls."

The mattress upon which Captain Martin was lying was brought out and lowered carefully into the stern of the boat. Ned took his seat beside it, and the boat pushed off. Having passed the forts they entered the port and rowed to the landing place. A number of citizens, many of them carrying torches, were assembled here.

"What is the news?" a voice asked as the boat approached.

"It is an English ship, burgomaster. She has been hotly engaged; first with Spanish galleys, and then with a warship, which was doubtless the one seen beating up this afternoon. She sank one of the galleys and beat off the ship." A loud cheer broke from the crowd. When it subsided the official went on: "I have the English captain and his son on board. The captain is sorely wounded, and I have promised him the best medical aid the town can give him."

"That he shall have," the burgomaster said. "Let him be carried to my house at once. Hans Leipart, do you hurry on and tell my wife to get a chamber prepared instantly. You have heard

who it is, and why he is coming, and I warrant me she will do her best to make the brave Englishman comfortable. Do two others of you run to Doctors Zobel and Harreng, and pray them to hasten to my house. Let a stretcher be fetched instantly from the town hall."

As soon as the stretcher was brought the mattress was placed on it, and six of the sailors carried it on shore. The crowd had by this time greatly increased, for the news had rapidly spread. Every head was bared in token of sympathy and respect as the litter was brought up. The crowd fell back and formed a lane, and, led by the burgomaster, the sailors carried the wounded man into the town. He was taken upstairs to the room prepared for him, and the surgeons were speedily in attendance. Medicine in those days was but a primitive science, but the surgery, though rough and rude, was far ahead of the sister art. Wars were of such constant occurrence that surgeons had ample opportunity for practice; and simple operations such as the amputation of limbs, were matters of very common occurrence. It needed but a very short examination by the two surgeons to enable them to declare that the leg must at once be amputated.

"The bone appears to be completely smashed," one of them said. "Doubtless the ball was fired at a very short distance." A groan burst from Ned when he heard the decision.

"I knew that it would be so, Ned," his father said. "I never doubted it for a moment. It is well that I have been able to obtain aid so speedily. Better a limb than life, my boy. I did not wince

when I was hit, and with God's help I can stand the pain now. Do you go away and tell the burgomaster how it all came about, and leave me with these gentlemen."

As soon as Ned had left the room, sobbing in spite of his efforts to appear manly, the captain said: "Now, gentlemen, since this must be done, I pray you to do it without loss of time. I will bear it as best I can, I promise you; and as three or four and twenty years at sea makes a man pretty hard and accustomed to rough usage, I expect I shall stand it as well as another."

The surgeons agreed that there was no advantage in delay, and indeed that it was far better to amputate it before fever set in. They therefore returned home at once for their instruments, the knives and saws, the irons that were to be heated white hot to stop the bleeding, and the other appliances in use at the time. Had Ned been aware that the operation would have taken place so soon, he would have been unable to satisfy the curiosity of the burgomaster and citizens to know how it had happened that an English trader had come to blows with the Spaniards; but he had no idea that it would take place that night, and thought that probably some days would elapse before the surgeons finally decided that it was necessary to amputate it.

One of the surgeons had, at the captain's request, called the burgomaster aside as he left the house, and begged him to keep the lad engaged in conversation until he heard from him that all was over. This the burgomaster willingly promised to do; and as many of the leading citizens were assembled in the parlour to

hear the news, there was no chance of Ned's slipping away.

"Before you begin to tell us your story, young sir, we should be glad to know how it is that you speak our language so well; for indeed we could not tell by your accent that you are not a native of these parts, which is of course impossible, seeing that your father is an Englishman and captain of the ship lying off there."

"My mother comes from near here," Ned said. "She is the daughter of Mynheer Plomaert, who lived at Vordwyk, two miles from Amsterdam. She went over to England when she married my father, but when he was away on his voyages she always spoke her own language to us children, so that we grew to speak it naturally as we did English."

Ned then related the news that met them on their arrival at his grandfather's home, and the exclamation of fury on the part of his father.

"It is a common enough story with us here," the burgomaster said, "for few of us but have lost friends or relatives at the hands of these murderous tyrants of ours. But to you, living in a free land, truly it must have been a dreadful shock; and I wonder not that your father's indignation betrayed him into words which, if overheard, might well cost a man his life in this country."

"They were overheard and reported," Ned said; and then proceeded to relate the warning they had received, the measures they had taken to get off unperceived, the accidental meeting with the guard boat and the way in which it had been sunk, the pursuit by the galleys and the fight with them, and then the

encounter with the Spanish ship of war.

"And you say your father never relaxed his hold of the tiller when struck!" the burgomaster said in surprise. "I should have thought he must needs have fallen headlong to the ground."

"He told me," Ned replied, "that at the moment he was hit he was pushing over the tiller, and had his weight partly on that and partly on his other leg. Had it been otherwise he would of course have gone down, for he said that for a moment he thought his leg had been shot off."

When Ned finished his narrative the burgomaster and magistrates were loud in their exclamations of admiration at the manner in which the little trader had both fought and deceived her powerful opponent.

"It was gallantly done indeed," the burgomaster said. "Truly it seems marvellous that a little ship with but twenty hands should have fought and got safely away from the Don Pedro, for that was the ship we saw pass this afternoon. We know her well, for she has often been in port here before we declared for the Prince of Orange a month ago. The beggars of the sea themselves could not have done better,–could they, my friends? though we Dutchmen and Zeelanders believe that there are no sailors that can match our own."

The story had taken nearly an hour to tell, and Ned now said:

"With your permission, sir, I will now go up to my father again."

"You had best not go for the present," the burgomaster said.

"The doctor asked me to keep you with me for awhile, for that he wished his patient to be entirely undisturbed. He is by his bedside now, and will let me know at once if your father wishes to have you with him."

A quarter of an hour later a servant called the burgomaster out. The surgeon was waiting outside.

"It is finished," he said, "and he has borne it well. Scarce a groan escaped him, even when we applied the hot irons; but he is utterly exhausted now, and we have given him an opiate, and hope that he will soon drop off to sleep. My colleague will remain with him for four hours, and then I will return and take his place. You had best say nothing to the lad about it. He would naturally want to see his father; we would much rather that he should not. Therefore tell him, please, that his father is dropping off to sleep, and must not on any account be disturbed; and that we are sitting up with him by turns, and will let him know at once should there be any occasion for his presence."

Ned was glad to hear that his father was likely to get off to sleep; and although he would gladly have sat up with him, he knew that it was much better that he should have the surgeon beside him. The burgomaster's wife, a kind and motherly woman, took him aside into a little parlour, where a table was laid with a cold capon, some manchets of bread, and a flask of the burgomaster's best wine. As Ned had eaten nothing since the afternoon, and it was now past midnight, he was by no means sorry to partake of some refreshment. When he had finished

he was conducted to a comfortable little chamber that had been prepared for him, and in spite of his anxiety about his father it was not long before he fell asleep.

The sun was high before he awoke. He dressed himself quickly and went downstairs, for he feared to go straight to his father's room lest he might be sleeping.

"You have slept well," the burgomaster's wife said with a smile; "and no wonder, after your fatigues. The surgeon has just gone, and I was about to send up to wake you, for he told me to tell you that your father had passed a good night, and that you can now see him."

Ned ran upstairs, and turning the handle of the door very quietly entered his father's room. Captain Martin was looking very pale, but Ned thought that his face had not the drawn look that had marked it the evening before.

"How are you, my dear father?"

"I am going on well, Ned; at least so the doctors say. I feel I shall be but a battered old hulk when I get about again; but your mother will not mind that, I know."

"And do the doctors still think that they must take the leg off?" Ned asked hesitatingly.

"That was their opinion last night, Ned, and it was my opinion too; and so the matter was done off hand, and there is an end of it."

"Done offhand?" Ned repeated. "Do you mean"–and he hesitated.

"Do I mean that they have taken it off? Certainly I do, Ned. They took it off last night while you were downstairs in the burgomaster's parlour; but I thought it would be much better for you not to know anything about it until this morning. Yes, my boy, thank God, it is all over! I don't say that it wasn't pretty hard to bear; but it had to be done, you know, and the sooner it was over the better. There is nothing worse than lying thinking about a thing."

Ned was too affected to speak; but with tears streaming down his cheeks, leant over and kissed his father. The news had come as a shock to him, but it seemed to have lifted a weight from his mind. The worst was over now; and although it was terrible to think that his father had lost his leg, still this seemed a minor evil after the fear that perhaps his life might be sacrificed. Knowing that his father should not be excited, or even talk more than was absolutely necessary, Ned stayed but a few minutes with him, and then hurried off to the ship, where, however, he found that the news that the captain's leg had been amputated, and that the doctors hoped that he would go on well, had been known some hours before; as Peters had come on shore with the first dawn of daylight for news, and heard from the burgomaster's servant that the amputation had taken place the evening before, and an hour later had learned from the lips of the doctor who had been watching by the captain's bedside, that he had passed a fairly good night, and might so far be considered to be doing well.

"What do you think we had better do, Master Ned? Of course

it will be for the captain to decide; but in these matters it is always best to take counsel beforehand. For although it is, of course, what he thinks in the matter will be done, still it may be that we might direct his thoughts; and the less thinking he does in his present state the better."

"What do you mean as to what is to be done, Peters?"

"Well, your father is like to be here many weeks; indeed, if I said many months I don't suppose it would be far from the truth. Things never go on quite smooth. There are sure to be inflammations, and fever keeps on coming and going; and if the doctor says three months, like enough it is six."

"Of course I shall stay here and nurse him, Peters."

"Well, Master Ned, that will be one of the points for the captain to settle. I do not suppose he will want the Good Venture to be lying idle all the time he is laid up; and though I can sail the ship, the trading business is altogether out of my line. You know all the merchants he does business with, going ashore, as you most always do with him; I doubt not that you could fill his place and deal with them just the same as if he was here."

"But I cannot leave him at present."

"No, no, Master Ned; no one would think of it. Now, what I have been turning over in my mind is, that the best thing for the captain and for you and your good mother is that I should set sail in the Venture without the loss of a day and fetch her over. If the wind is reasonable, and we have good luck, we may be back in ten days or so. By that time the captain may be well enough to

think where we had better go for a cargo, and what course had best be taken about things in general."

"I think that would certainly be the best plan, Peters; and I will suggest it to my father at once. He is much more likely to go on well if my mother is with him, and she would be worrying sadly at home were she not by his side. Besides, it will be well for her to have something to occupy her, for the news of what has befallen her father and brothers will be a terrible blow to her. If I put it in that way to him I doubt not that he will agree to the plan; otherwise, he might fear to bring her out here in such troubled times, for there is no saying when the Spaniards will gather their army to recover the revolted cities, or against which they will first make their attempts. I will go back at once, and if he be awake I will tell him that you and I agree that it will be best for you to sail without loss of an hour to fetch my mother over, and that we can then put off talking about other matters until the ship returns."

Ned at once went back to his father's bedroom. He found the captain had just awoke from a short sleep.

"Father, I do not want to trouble you to think at present, but will tell you what Master Peters and I, who have been laying our heads together, concluded is best to be done. You are likely to be laid up here for some time, and it will be far the best plan for the Good Venture to sail over and fetch mother to nurse you."

"I shall get on well enough, Ned. They are kindly people here; and regarding our fight with the Spaniards as a sign of our friendship and goodwill towards them, they will do all in their

power for me."

"Yes, father, I hope, indeed, that you will go on well; and I am sure that the good people here will do their best in all ways for you, and of course I will nurse you to the best of my power, though, indeed, this is new work for me; but it was not so much you as mother that we were thinking of. It will be terrible for her when the news comes that her father and brothers are all killed, and that you are lying here sorely wounded. It will be well nigh enough to drive her distraught. But if she were to come over here at once she would, while busying about you, have less time to brood over her griefs; and, indeed, I see not why she should be told what has happened at Vordwyk until she is here with you, and you can break it to her. It will come better from your lips, and for your sake she will restrain her grief."

"There is a great deal in what you say, Ned, and, indeed, I long greatly to have her with me; but Holland is no place at present to bring a woman to, and I suppose also that she would bring the girls, for she could not well leave them in a house alone. There are plenty of friends there who would be glad to take them in; but that she could decide upon herself. However, as she is a native here she will probably consider she may well run the same risks as the rest of her countrywomen. They remain with their fathers and husbands and endure what perils there may be, and she will see no reason why she should not do the same."

"What we propose is that the Venture should set sail at once and fetch my mother over, and the girls, if she sees fit to bring

them. I shall of course stay here with you until the brig returns, and by that time you will, I hope, be strong enough to talk over what had best be done regarding the ship and business generally."

"Well, have your way, Ned. At present I cannot think over things and see what is best; so I will leave the matter in your hands, and truly I should be glad indeed to have your mother here with me."

Well content to have obtained the permission Ned hurried from the room.

"Has the burgomaster returned?" he asked when he reached the lower storey.

"He has just come in, and I was coming up to tell you that dinner is served."

"Is it eleven o'clock already?" Ned exclaimed. "I had no idea it was so late." He entered the room and bowed to the burgomaster and his wife.

"Worshipful sir," he said, "I have just obtained leave from my father to send our ship off to London to fetch hither my mother to come to nurse him. I trust that by the time she arrives he will be able to be moved, and then they will take lodgings elsewhere, so as not to trespass longer upon your great kindness and hospitality."

"I think that it is well that your mother should come over," the burgomaster said; "for a man who has had the greater part of his leg taken off cannot be expected to get round quickly. Besides, after what you told us last night about the misfortune that has

befallen her family, it were best that she should be busied about her husband, and so have little time to brood over the matter. As to hospitality, it would be strange indeed if we should not do all that we could for a brave man who has been injured in fighting our common enemy. Send word to your mother that she will be as welcome as he is, and that we shall be ready in all respects to arrange whatever she may think most convenient and comfortable. And now you had best sit down and have your meal with us. As soon as it is over I will go down with you to the wharf, and will do what I can to hasten the sailing of your ship. I don't think," he went on, when they had taken their seats at table, "that there is much chance of her meeting another Spaniard on her way out to sea, for we have news this morning that some ships of the beggars have been seen cruising off the entrance, and the Spaniards will be getting under shelter of their batteries at Amsterdam. I hear they are expecting a fleet from Spain to arrive soon to aid in their operations against our ports. However, I have little fear that they will do much by sea against us. I would we could hold our own as well on the land as we can on the water."

Ned found the meal extremely long and tedious, for he was fretting to be off to hasten the preparations on board the Good Venture, and he was delighted when at last the burgomaster said:

"Now, my young friend, we will go down to the wharf together."

But although somewhat deliberate, the burgomaster proved a valuable assistant. When he had told Ned that he would do what

he could to expedite the sailing of the ship, the lad had regarded it as a mere form of words, for he did not see how he could in any way expedite her sailing. As soon, however, as they had gone on board, and Ned had told Peters that the captain had given his consent to his sailing at once, the burgomaster said: "You can scarce set sail before the tide turns, Master Peters, for the wind is so light that you would make but little progress if you did. From what Master Martin tells me you came off so hurriedly from Amsterdam that you had no time to get ballast on board. It would be very venturesome to start for a voyage to England unless with something in your hold. I will give orders that you shall be furnished at once with sandbags, otherwise you would have to wait your turn with the other vessels lying here; for ballast is, as you know, a rare commodity in Holland, and we do not like parting even with our sand hills. In the meantime, as you have well nigh six hours before you get under way, I will go round among my friends and see if I cannot procure you a little cargo that may pay some of the expenses of your voyage."

Accordingly the burgomaster proceeded at once to visit several of the principal merchants, and, representing that it was the clear duty of the townsfolk to do what they could for the men who had fought so bravely against the Spaniards, he succeeded in obtaining from them a considerable quantity of freight upon good terms; and so zealously did he push the business that in a very short time drays began to arrive alongside the Good Venture, and a number of men were speedily at work in transferring the

contents to her hold, and before evening she had taken on board a goodly amount of cargo.

Ned wrote a letter to his mother telling her what had taken place, and saying that his father would be glad for her to come over to be with him, but that he left it to her to decide whether to bring the girls over or not. He said no word of the events at Vordwyk; but merely mentioned they had learned that a spy had denounced his father to the Spaniards as having used expressions hostile to the king and the religious persecutions, and that on this account he would have been arrested had he not at once put to sea. Peters was charged to say nothing as to what he had heard about the Plomaerts unless she pressed him with questions. He was to report briefly that they were so busy with the unloading of the ship at Amsterdam that Captain Martin had only once been ashore, and leave it to be inferred that he only landed to see the merchants to whom the cargo was consigned.

"Of course, Peters, if my mother presses you as to whether any news has been received from Vordwyk, you must tell the truth; but if it can be concealed from her it will be much the best. She will have anxiety enough concerning my father."

"I will see," Peters said, "what can be done. Doubtless at first she will be so filled with the thought of your father's danger that she will not think much of anything else; but on the voyage she will have time to turn her thoughts in other directions, and she is well nigh sure to ask about her father and brothers. I shall be guided in my answers by her condition. Mistress Martin is a

sensible woman, and not a girl who will fly into hysterics and rave like a madwoman.

"It may be too, she will feel the one blow less for being so taken up with the other; however, I will do the best I can in the matter, Master Ned. Truly your friend the burgomaster is doing us right good service. I had looked to lose this voyage to England, and that the ten days I should be away would be fairly lost time; but now, although we shall not have a full hold, the freight will be ample to pay all expenses and to leave a good profit beside."

As soon as the tide turned the hatches were put on, the vessel was warped out from her berth, and a few minutes later was under sail.

Ned had been busy helping to stow away the cargo as fast as it came on board, twice running up to see how his father was getting on. Each time he was told by the woman whom the burgomaster had now engaged to act as nurse, that he was sleeping quietly. When he returned after seeing the Good Venture fairly under way, he found on peeping quietly into the room that Captain Martin had just woke.

"I have had a nice sleep, Ned," he said, as the lad went up to his bedside. "I see it is already getting dark. Has the brig sailed?"

"She has just gone out of port, father. The wind is light and it was no use starting until tide turned; although, indeed, the tides are of no great account in these inland waters. Still, we had to take some ballast on board as our hold was empty, and they might meet with storms on their way home; so they had to wait for

that. But, indeed, after all, they took in but little ballast, for the burgomaster bestirred himself so warmly in our favour that the merchants sent down goods as fast as we could get them on board, and short as the time was, the main hold was well nigh half full before we put on the hatches; so that her voyage home will not be without a good profit after all."

"That is good news, Ned; for although as far as I am concerned the money is of no great consequence one way or the other, I am but part owner, and the others might well complain at my sending the ship home empty to fetch my wife instead of attending to their interests."

"I am sure they would not have done that, father, seeing how well you do for them, and what good money the Venture earns. Why, I have heard you say she returns her value every two years. So that they might well have gone without a fortnight's earnings without murmuring."

"I don't suppose they would have murmured, Ned, for they are all good friends of mine, and always seem well pleased with what I do for them. Still, in matters of business it is always well to be strict and regular; and I should have deemed it my duty to have calculated the usual earnings of the ship for the time she was away, and to have paid my partners their share as if she had been trading as usual. It is not because the ship is half mine and that I and my partners make good profit out of her, that I have a right to divert her from her trade for my own purposes. As you say, my partners might be well content to let me do so; but that

is not the question, I should not be content myself.

"We should always in business work with a good conscience, being more particular about the interests of those who trust us than of our own. Indeed, on the bare ground of expediency it is best to do so; for then, if misfortune happens, trade goes bad, or your vessel is cast away, they will make good allowance for you, knowing that you are a loser as well as they, and that at all times you have thought as much of them as of yourself. Lay this always to heart, lad. It is unlikely that I shall go to sea much more, and ere long you will be in command of the Good Venture. Always think more of the interests of those who trust you than of your own.

"They have put their money into the ship, relying upon their partner's skill and honesty and courage. Even at a loss to yourself you should show them always that this confidence is not misplaced. Do your duty and a little more, lad. Most men do their duty. It is the little more that makes the difference between one man and the other. I have tried always to do a little more, and I have found my benefit from it in the confidence and trust of my partners in the ship, and of the merchants with whom I do business. However, I am right glad that the ship is not going back empty. I shall reckon how much we should have received for the freight that was promised me at Amsterdam, then you will give me an account of what is to be paid by the merchants here. The difference I shall make up, as is only right, seeing that it is entirely from my own imprudence in expressing my opinion

upon affairs particular to myself, and in no way connected with the ship, that I was forced to leave without taking in that cargo."

Ned listened in silence to his father's words, and resolved to lay to heart the lessons they conveyed. He was proud of the high standing and estimation in which his father was held by all who knew him, and he now recognized fully for the first time how he had won that estimation. It was not only that he was a good sailor, but that in all things men were assured that his honour could be implicitly relied upon, and that he placed the interest of his employers beyond his own.

After the first day or two Ned could see but little change in his father's condition; he was very weak and low, and spoke but seldom. Doubtless his bodily condition was aggravated now by the thought that must be ever present to him–that his active career was terminated. He might, indeed, be able when once completely cured to go to sea again, but he would no longer be the active sailor he had been; able to set an example of energy to his men when the winds blew high and the ship was in danger. And unless fully conscious that he was equal to discharging all the duties of his position, Captain Martin was not the man to continue to hold it.

Ned longed anxiously for the return of the Good Venture. He knew that his mother's presence would do much for his father, and that whatever her own sorrows might be she would cheer him. Captain Martin never expressed any impatience for her coming; but when each morning he asked Ned, the first

thing, which way the wind was blowing, his son knew well enough what he was thinking of. In the meantime Ned had been making inquiries, and he arranged for the hire of a comfortable house, whose inhabitants being Catholics, had, when Enkhuizen declared for the Prince of Orange, removed to Amsterdam. For although the Prince insisted most earnestly and vigorously that religious toleration should be extended to the Catholics, and that no one should suffer for their religion, all were not so tolerant; and when the news arrived of wholesale massacres of Protestants by Alva's troops, the lower class were apt to rise in riot, and to retaliate by the destruction of the property of the Catholics in their towns.

Ned had therefore no difficulty in obtaining the use of the house, on extremely moderate terms, from the agent in whose hands its owner had placed his affairs in Enkhuizen. The burgomaster's wife had at his request engaged two female servants, and the nurse would of course accompany her patient. The burgomaster and his wife had both protested against any move being made; but Ned, although thanking them earnestly for their hospitable offer, pointed out that it might be a long time before his father could be about, that it was good for his mother to have the occupation of seeing to the affairs of the house to divert her thoughts from the sick bed, and, as it was by no means improbable that she would bring his sisters with her, it would be better in all respects that they should have a house of their own. The doctors having been consulted, agreed that it would be better

for the wounded man to be among his own people, and that no harm would come of removing him carefully to another house.

"A change, even a slight one, is often a benefit," they agreed; "and more than counterbalances any slight risk that there may be in a patient's removal from one place to another, providing that it be gently and carefully managed."

Therefore it was arranged that as soon as the Good Venture was seen approaching, Captain Martin should be carried to his new abode, where everything was kept prepared for him, and that his wife should go direct to him there.

CHAPTER V

NED'S RESOLVE

On the ninth morning after the departure of the brig Ned was up as soon as daylight appeared, and made his way to the walls. The watchman there, with whom he had had several talks during the last two days, said:

"There is a brig, hull down, seaward, and I should say that she is about the size of the one you are looking for. She looks, too, as if she were heading for this port."

"I think that is she," Ned said, gazing intently at the distant vessel. "It seems to me that I can make out that her jib is lighter in colour than the rest of her canvas. If that is so I have no doubt about its being the Good Venture, for we blew our jib away in a storm off Ostend, and had a new one about four months ago."

"That is her then, young master," the watchman said, shading his eyes and looking intently at the brig. "Her jib is surely of lighter colour than the rest of her canvas."

With this confirmation Ned at once ran round to the house he had taken, and told the servants to have fires lighted, and everything in readiness for the reception of the party.

"My father," he said, "will be brought here in the course of an hour or so. My mother will arrive a little later."

Ned then went round to the doctor, who had promised that he would personally superintend the removing of his patient, and

would bring four careful men and a litter for his conveyance. He said that he would be round at the burgomaster's in half an hour. Ned then went back to his father. Captain Martin looked round eagerly as he entered.

"Yes, father," Ned said, answering the look; "there is a brig in sight, which is, I am pretty sure, the Good Venture. She will be in port in the course of a couple of hours. I have just been round to Doctor Harreng, and he will be here in half an hour with the litter to take you over to the new house."

Captain Martin gave an exclamation of deep thankfulness, and then lay for some time with his eyes closed, and spoke but little until the arrival of the doctor and the men with the litter.

"You must first of all drink this broth that has just been sent up for you," the surgeon said, "and then take a spoonful of cordial. It will be a fatigue, you know, however well we manage it; and you must be looking as bright and well as you can by the time your good wife arrives, else she will have a very bad opinion of the doctors of Enkhuizen."

Captain Martin did as he was ordered. The men then carefully raised the mattress with him upon it, and placed it upon the litter.

"I think we will cover you up altogether," the doctor said, "as we go along through the streets. The morning air is a good deal keener than the atmosphere of this room, and you won't want to look about."

The litter was therefore completely covered with a blanket, and was then lifted and taken carefully down the broad staircase

and through the streets. The burgomaster's wife had herself gone on before to see that everything was comfortably prepared, and when the bed was laid down on the bedstead and the blanket turned back Captain Martin saw a bright room with a fire burning on the hearth, and the burgomaster's wife and nurse beside him, while Ned and the doctor were at the foot of the bed.

"You have not suffered, I hope, in the moving, Captain Martin?" the burgomaster's wife asked.

"Not at all," he said. "I felt somewhat faint at first, but the movement has been so easy that it soon passed off. I was glad my head was covered, for I do not think that I could have stood the sight of the passing objects."

"Now you must drink another spoonful of cordial," the doctor said, "and then lie quiet. I shall not let you see your wife when she arrives if your pulse is beating too rapidly. So far you have been going on fairly, and we must not have you thrown back."

"I shall not be excited," Captain Martin replied. "Now that I know the vessel is in sight I am contented enough; but I have been fearing lest the brig might fall in with a Spaniard as she came through the islands, and there would be small mercy for any on board had she been detected and captured. Now that I know she is coming to port safely, I can wait quietly enough. Now, Ned, you can be off down to the port."

The doctor went out with Ned and charged him strictly to impress upon his mother the necessity for self restraint and quiet when she saw her husband.

"I am not over satisfied with his state," he said, "and much will depend on this meeting. If it passes off well and he is none the worse for it tomorrow, I shall look to see him mend rapidly; but if, on the other hand, he is agitated and excited, fever may set in at once, and in that case, weak as he is, his state will be very serious."

"I understand, sir, and will impress it upon my mother; but I do not think you need fear for her. Whatever she feels she will, I am sure, carry out your instructions."

Ned went down to the port. He found that the brig was but a quarter of a mile away. He could make out female figures on board, and knew that, as he had rather expected would be the case, his mother had brought his sisters with her. Jumping into a boat he was rowed off to the vessel, and climbing the side was at once in his mother's arms. Already he had answered the question that Peters had shouted before he was halfway from the shore, and had replied that his father was going on as well as could be expected. Thus when Ned leapt on board his mother and the girls were in tears at the relief to the anxiety that had oppressed them during the voyage lest they should at its end find they had arrived too late.

"And he is really better?" were Mrs. Martin's first words as she released Ned from her embrace.

"I don't know that he is better, mother, but he is no worse. He is terribly weak; but the doctor tells me that if no harm comes to him from his agitation in meeting you, he expects to see him

mend rapidly. He has been rather fretting about your safety, and I think that the knowledge that you are at hand has already done him good. His voice was stronger when he spoke just before I started than it has been for some days. Only, above all things, the doctor says you must restrain your feelings and be calm and quiet when you first meet him. And now, girls, how are you both?" he asked turning to them. "Not very well, I suppose; for I know you have always shown yourselves bad sailors when you have come over with mother."

"The sea has not been very rough," Janet said; "and except when we first got out to sea we have not been ill."

"What are you going to do about the girls?" Mrs. Martin asked. "Of course I must go where your father is, but I cannot presume upon the kindness of strangers so far as to quarter the girls upon them."

"That is all arranged, mother. Father agreed with me that it would not be pleasant for any of you being with strangers, and I have therefore taken a house; and he has just been moved there, so you will have him all to yourself."

"That is indeed good news," Mrs. Martin said. "However kind people are, one is never so comfortable as at home. One is afraid of giving trouble, and altogether it is different. I have heard all the news, my boy. Master Peters tried his best to conceal it from me, but I was sure by his manner that there was something wrong. It was better that I should know at once," she went on, wiping her eyes. "Terrible as it all is, I have scarce time to think about it

now when my mind is taken up with your father's danger. And it hardly came upon me even as a surprise, for I have long felt that some evil must have befallen them or they would have assuredly managed to send me word of themselves before now."

By this time the Good Venture had entered the port, and had drawn up close beside one of the wharves. As soon as the sails were lowered and the warps made fast, Peters directed three of the seamen to bring up the boxes from the cabin, and to follow him. Ned then led the way to the new house.

"I will go up first, mother, and tell them that you have come."

Mrs. Martin quietly removed her hat and cloak, followed Ned upstairs, and entered her husband's room with a calm and composed face.

"Well, my dear husband," she said almost cheerfully, "I have come to nurse you. You see when you get into trouble it is us women that you men fall back upon after all."

The doctor, who had retired into the next room when he heard that Mrs. Martin had arrived, nodded his head with a satisfied air. "She will do," he said. "I have not much fear for my patient now."

Ned, knowing that he would not be wanted upstairs for some time, went out with Peters after the baggage had been set down in the lower room.

"So you had a fine voyage of it, Peters?"

"We should have been better for a little more wind, both coming and going," the mate said; "but there was nothing much

to complain of."

"You could not have been long in the river then, Peters?"

"We were six and thirty hours in port. We got in at the top of tide on Monday morning, and went down with the ebb on Tuesday evening. First, as in duty bound, I went to see our good dame and give her your letter, and answer her questions. It was a hard business that, and I would as lief have gone before the queen herself to give her an account of things as to have gone to your mother. Of course I hoisted the flag as we passed up the river. I knew that some of them were sure to be on watch at Rotherhithe, and that they would run in and tell her that the Good Venture was in port again. I had rather hoped that our coming back so soon might lead her to think that something was wrong, for she would have known that we could scarce have gone to Amsterdam and discharged, loaded up again, and then back here, especially as the wind had been light ever since she sailed. And sure enough the thought had struck her; for when I caught sight of the garden gate one of your sisters was there on the lookout, and directly she saw me she ran away in. I hurried on as fast as I could go then, for I knew that Mistress Martin would be sorely frightened when she heard that it was neither your father nor you. As I got there your mother was standing at the door. She was just as white as death. 'Cheer up, mistress,' I said as cheery as I could speak. 'I have bad news for you, but it might have been a deal worse. The captain's got a hurt, and Master Ned is stopping to nurse him.'

"She looked at me as if she would read me through. 'That's the

truth as I am a Christian man, mistress,' I said. 'It has been a bad business, but it might have been a deal worse. The doctor said that he was doing well.' Then your mother gave a deep sigh, and I thought for a moment she was going to faint, and ran forward to catch her; but she seemed to make an effort and straighten herself up, just as I have seen the brig do when a heavy sea has flooded her decks and swept all before it.

"'Thanks be to the good God that he is not taken from me,' she said. 'Now I can bear anything. Now, Peters, tell me all about it.'

"'I ain't good at telling a story, Mistress Martin,' I said; 'but here is Master Ned's letter. When you have read that maybe I can answer questions as to matters of which he may not have written. I will stand off and on in the garden, ma'am, and then you can read it comfortable like indoors, and hail me when you have got to the bottom of it.' It was not many minutes before one of your sisters called me in. They had all been crying, and I felt more uncomfortable than I did when those Spanish rascals gave us a broadside as I went in, for I was afraid she would so rake me with questions that she would get out of me that other sad business; and it could hardly be expected that even the stoutest ship should weather two such storms, one after the other.

"'I don't understand it all, Master Peters,' she said, 'for my son gives no good reason why the Spaniards should thus have attacked an English ship; but we can talk of that afterwards. All that matters at present is, that my husband has been wounded and has lost his leg, and lies in some danger; for although Ned clearly

makes the best of it, no man can suffer a hurt like that without great risk of life. He wishes me to go over at once. As to the girls, he says I can take them with me or leave them with a friend here. But they wish, as is natural, greatly to go; and it were better for all reasons that they did so. Were they left here they would be in anxiety about their father's state, and as it may be long before he can be moved I should not like to leave them in other charge than my own. When will you be ready to sail again?"

"'I shall be ready by tomorrow evening's tide, Mistress Martin,' I said. 'I have cargo on board that I must discharge, and must have carpenters and sailmakers on board to repair some of the damages we suffered in this action. I do not think I can possibly be ready to drop down the river before high water tomorrow, which will be about six o'clock. I will send a boat to the stairs here at half past five to take you and your trunks on board.'

"'We shall be ready,' she said. 'As Ned says that my husband is well cared for in the house of the burgomaster, and has every comfort and attention, there is nothing I need take over for him.' I said that I was sure he had all he could require, and that she need take no trouble on that score; and then said that with her permission I would go straight back on board again, seeing there was much to do, and that it all came on my shoulders just at present.

"I had left the bosun in charge, and told him to get the hatches off and begin to get up the cargo as soon as he had stowed the

sails and made all tidy; for I had not waited for that, but had rowed ashore as soon as the anchor was dropped. So without going back to the brig I crossed the river and landed by the steps at the bridge, and took the letters to the merchants for whom I had goods, and prayed them to send off boats immediately, as it was urgent for me to discharge as soon as possible; then I went to the merchants whose names you had given me, and who ship goods with us regularly, to tell them that the Venture was in port but would sail again tomorrow evening, and would take what cargo they could get on board for Enkhuizen or any of the seaward ports, but not for Amsterdam or other places still in the hands of the Spaniards.

"Then I went to the lord mayor and swore an information before him to lay before the queen and the council that the Spaniards had wantonly, and without offence given, attacked the Good Venture and inflicted much damage upon her, and badly wounded her captain; and would have sunk her had we not stoutly defended ourselves and beat them off. I was glad when all that was over, Master Ned; for, as you know, I know nought about writing. My business is to sail the ship under your father's orders; but as to talking with merchants who press you with questions, and seem to think that you have nought to do but to stand and gossip, this is not in my way, and I wished sorely that you had been with me, and could have taken all this business into your hands.

"Then I went down to the wharves, and soon got some

carpenters at work to mend the bulwarks and put some fresh planks on the deck where the shot had ploughed it up. Luckily enough I heard of a man who had some sails that he had bought from the owners of a ship which was cast away down near the mouth of the river. They were a little large for the Venture; but I made a bargain with him in your father's name, and got them on board and set half a dozen sailmakers to work upon them, and they were ready by the next afternoon. The others will do again when they have got some new cloths in, and a few patches; but if we had gone out with a dozen holes in them the first Spaniard who saw us, and who had heard of our fight with the Don Pedro, would have known us at once.

"I was thankful, I can tell you, when I got on board again. Just as I did so some lighters came out, and we were hard at work till dusk getting out the cargo. The next morning at daylight fresh cargo began to come out to us, and things went on well, and would have gone better had not people come on board pestering me with questions about our fight with the Spaniards. And just at noon two of the queen's officers came down and must needs have the whole story from beginning to end; and they had brought a clerk with them to write it down from my lips. They said we had done right gallantly, and that no doubt I should be wanted the next day at the royal council to answer other questions touching the affair. You may be sure I said no word about the fact that in six hours we should be dropping down the river; for like enough if I had they would have ordered me not to go, and as I should

have gone whether they had or not–seeing that Captain Martin was looking for his wife, and that the mistress was anxious to be off–it might have led to trouble when I got back again.

"By the afternoon we had got some thirty tons of goods on board, and although that is but a third of what she would carry, I was well content that we had done so much. After the new sails had come on board I had put a gang to work to bend them, and had all ready and the anchor up just as the tide turned. We had not dropped down many hundred yards when the boat with Mistress Martin and your sisters came alongside; and thankful I was when it came on dark and we were slipping down the river with a light southwesterly wind, for I had been on thorns all the afternoon lest some messenger might arrive from the council with orders for me to attend there. I did not speak much to your mother that evening, for it needs all a man's attention to work down the river at night.

"The next morning I had my breakfast brought up on deck instead of going down, for, as you may guess, I did not want to have your mother questioning me; but presently your sister came up with a message to me that Mistress Martin would be glad to have a quarter of an hour's conversation with me as soon as duty would permit me to leave deck. So after awhile I braced myself up and went below, but I tell you that I would rather have gone into action again with the Don Pedro. She began at once, without parley or courtesies, by firing a broadside right into me.

"'I don't think, Master Peters, that you have told me yet all

there is to be told.'

"That took me between wind and water, you see. However, I made a shift to bear up.

"'Well, Mistress Martin,' says I, 'I don't say as I have given you all particulars. I don't know as I mentioned to you as Joe Wiggins was struck down by a splinter from the longboat and was dazed for full two hours, but he came round again all right, and was fit for duty next day.'

"Mrs. Martin heard me quietly, and then she said:

"'That will not do, John Peters; you know well what I mean. You need not fear to tell me the news; I have long been fearing it. My husband is not one to talk loosely in the streets and to bring upon himself the anger of the Spaniards. He must have had good cause before he said words that spoken there would place his life in peril. What has happened at Vordwyk?"

"Well, Master Ned, I stood there as one struck stupid. What was there to say? I am a truthful man, but I would have told a lie if I had thought it would have been any good. But there she was, looking quietly at me, and I knew as she would see in a moment whether I was speaking truth or not. She waited quiet ever so long and at last I said:

"'The matter is in this wise, Mistress Martin. My orders was I was to hold my tongue about all business not touching the captain or the affairs of this ship. When you sees the captain it's for you to ask him questions, and for him to answer if he sees right and good to do so.'

"She put her hand over her face and sat quiet for some time, and when she looked up again her eyes were full of tears and her cheeks wet; then she said in a low tone:

"'All, Peters,–are they all gone?'

"Well, Master Ned, I was swabbing my own eyes; for it ain't in a man's nature to see a woman suffering like that, and so quiet and brave, without feeling somehow as if all the manliness had gone out of him. I could not say nothing. What could I say, knowing what the truth was? Then she burst out a-crying and a-sobbing, and I steals off without a word, and goes on deck and sets the men a-hauling at the sheets and trimming the sails, till I know there was not one of them but cussed me in his heart and wished that the captain was back again.

"Mistress Martin did not say no word about it afterwards. She came up on deck a few times, and asked me more about the captain, and how he looked, and what he was doing when he got his wound. And of course I told her all about it, full and particular, and how he had made every one else lie down, and stood there at the tiller as we went under the stern of the Spaniard, and that none of us knew he was hit until it was all over; and how we had peppered them with our four carronades, and all about it. But mostly she stopped down below till we hauled our wind and headed up the Zuider Zee towards Enkhuizen."

"Well, now it is all over, Peters," Ned said, "there is no doubt that it is better she should have heard the news from you instead of my father having to tell her."

"I don't deny that that may be so, Master Ned, now that it is all over and done; but never again will John Peters undertake a job where he is got to keep his mouth shut when a woman wants to get something out of him. Lor' bless you, lad, they just see right through you; and you feel that, twist and turn as you will, they will get it out of you sooner or later. There, I started with my mind quite made up that orders was to be obeyed, and that your mother was to be kept in the dark about it till she got here; and I had considered with myself that in such a case as this it would be no great weight upon my conscience if I had to make up some kind of a yarn that would satisfy her; and yet in three minutes after she got me into that cabin she was at the bottom of it all."

"You see, she has been already very uneasy at not hearing for so long from her father and brothers, Peters; and that and the fact that my father had spoken openly against the Spanish authorities set her upon the track, and enabled her to put the questions straightforwardly to you."

"I suppose that was it, sir. And now, has the captain said anything about what is going to be done with the ship till he gets well?"

"Nothing whatever, Peters. He has spoken very little upon any subject. I know he has been extremely anxious for my mother to arrive, though he has said but little about it. I fancy that for the last few days he has not thought that he should recover. But the doctor told me I must not be uneasy upon that ground, for that he was now extremely weak, and men, even the bravest and

most resolute when in health, are apt to take a gloomy view when utterly weak and prostrate. His opinion was that my mother's coming would probably cheer him up and enable him to rally.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.