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A GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE

A GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE



By

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"UNDER CASTLE WALLS"



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A GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I

RAOUL'S INTENTIONS

IN a muniment room in the West Country there is one bulky manuscript three hundred years old.

It is written in a jargon of some four languages and there are weird words in it which seem to be Flemish slang of the 16th century. It tells of a certain Raoul and the author has called it in an effort at Latin *Historia de Me Ipso*. This is the Raoul who appears in the Devonshire county records as Raoul Bonfortune. He was not a grammarian, but he was, if you believe him, something of a man.

The first thing in his life that Raoul remembered was sitting in the gutter. While he sat he felt that it was unprecedented and illegal. But his father did not care. His father was lying in the gutter beside him, still and quiet. When Raoul pulled at his father's hand, the arm moved away from the shoulder and a red hole came, very curious to see.

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Raoul had never known that his father was made like that. He cuddled that still body, talking to it, wondering; and then he was rolled over by a dog. It was white with black spots, a long, lean beast, but Raoul when he had turned face upward again was pleased with it and held out his small hand. There was a click of teeth as the brute snapped and missed.

A man, who looked as wide as he was long, came swaggering down the alley. Fur cloaks were flung over his left shoulder and beneath them his corselet glittered dull. Chains of gold and jewels were twisted about his left arm carelessly. This man saw the dog and the dead and the little child. He said something and he kicked. The dog fled yelping and Raoul flung himself on the man's leg and beat it and bit it—because he had liked the dog. The man gave a great laugh and tossed Raoul up to his shoulder among the furs and swaggered on.

That must have been at the sack of St. Quentin, after Coligny had fought at hand-grips with a score, and Philip the Spaniard had had all the men of the township slain. Raoul's wide man was Taddeo of Brescia, condottiere and complete scoundrel. Taddeo's deeds make a gruesome chapter in the gruesome history of the days when Alva was trying to

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drown the Dutchmen in their own blood. And Raoul was his page for sixteen years.

That is the way Raoul was made.

In the autumn of 1573, in the days when the Dutchmen first made head against Alva's fury, Raoul considered himself a man. Taddeo did not agree and Raoul wore an unhealed wound on his temple as he rode a horse's length behind Taddeo under the bare poplars. The Spaniards were drawing back into winter quarters and Taddeo led the van-guard. A brace of laden wagons labored ostentatiously across the line of march, and Taddeo who despised no booty howled to them to halt. But the peasant wagoners urged their teams on. So Taddeo cursed and charged down upon them. Only Raoul with the slash raw red in his temple saw no need to follow. Taddeo's men and the fleeing wagoners came in a heap between two dykes, two dykes that suddenly blazed yellow and roared with musketry. In a few minutes all was done. Taddeo's company was a tumbled mass on the wet, brown earth.

"So Messer Taddeo has gone to the devil," said Raoul. "I do not envy the devil." Raoul shaded his eyes and surveyed the situation. Those efficient musketeers who had settled Messer Taddeo's account with this world were now giving all their energy

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to retreat; the main body of the Spaniards was hurrying up; but Raoul had the time he needed. He rode on to plunder the dead.

They were unsatisfactory. "As mean dead as alive," grunted Raoul, rising with aching back. You may see him, a small man of long arm and leg, black haired and swarthy. His buff coat and his boots were dirty and ragged. He stood over his dead master and counted a poor handful of ducats, weighed two golden chains and a crucifix, and pouched them with a sneer. Then, for the Spaniards were now coming close, he removed himself.

Beyond a clump of willows he found fortune. It was a little party of wayfarers, two women and a man, muddy and limping. Raoul struck in front of them, reined up and laughed. "Halt!" says he. "I only want all you have."

The man, with a muttered something in Dutch, heaved up a bill hook. Raoul still laughing (that was a trick of Taddeo's) leant forward with his pistol clear of his horse's ears. "Are you ready for hell my friend?" he asked.

One of the women embraced Raoul's right leg.

"Save us!" she cried, "save us! we have money."

"There is the less reason to save you, my fair," said Raoul.

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“Oh, save us and we will pay!”

“That is certain in any case, my fair,” said Raoul, and looked down at her laughing. She was dressed in a peasant girl's frieze, but she was small of body as a peasant should not be and her little hands and her brow were milk white. The coil of maidenhood lay on her brown hair.

“But let us be amiable,” Raoul concluded. “From whom do you wish to be saved?”

“From the Spaniards.”

“Oho,” says Raoul, “that will cost you dear, my dear.”

“I will give you all I have,” the girl cried.

“You spare me the pains of taking it,” said Raoul and held out his hand.

The man and the other woman started forward crying “Mistress! Mistress!” but she thrust a silken purse into Raoul's hand. Raoul dandled it and was shrugging his shoulders at the weight of it when:

“I trust you, sir,” she said.

“'Tis foolish in you, my fair,” Raoul laughed.

“I trust you,” she said again.

Raoul stood up in his stirrups and surveyed circumstances. The Spaniards were close now and the little willow clump could not avail to hide them. The only hope was the falling twilight and the mist.

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“Come!” said Raoul and led on towards the shadow of the long dyke.

One wonders what he meant to do and suspects that he did not himself know. His very curious “History of Myself” protests that what he did was “inevitable, even to him.” That is the charitable view. At least it was not wholly his fault.

They had scarce begun to move when the older woman protested that she could move no more and to show her good faith sat down in the mud. The girl hung over her, begged her take heart and toil on till dark at least. But she would not.

“Eh, leave her,” cried Raoul.

“To them, sir?” the girl turned on him fiercely. “To Spaniards?”

“She is not beautiful. They will only kill her,” said Raoul.

“Never!”

“On the contrary soon,” laughed Raoul. For now they had been seen, now a quartette of horsemen was galloping down upon them. “So. This game is played,” said Raoul, and made up his mind. He shouted a Spanish welcome to the Spaniards.

“Ah! They—they are Spaniards?” the girl gasped, starting up.

Raoul nodded.

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"And they will take us?"

Raoul laughed.

"Yes, they will take us and then—"

"Ah, then—" said Raoul calmly and shrugged.

She ran to him and tried to snatch his hand. "Oh, save us, save us!"

Raoul shrugged his shoulders.

Then in a very pitiful voice, "But you promised," she cried, "you promised!"

"*No, corbleu!*"

She staggered back, caught at the man with the bill hook, a square, solid Hollander. "Jan," she sobbed, "Jan, save me, kill me!"

The fellow groaned out something and plucked at his knife. It was raised, it was at her white throat and she plucked her dress away to welcome it when Raoul smote with his pistol butt on the man's head and the man reeled sideways a pace and fell. "A meddlesome person," said Raoul and caught the girl as she staggered and would have fled. And he held her, sobbing wildly, struggling; he held her till the Spaniards were upon them and snatched her away.

"A good day, gentlemen," said Raoul.

"In the name of the devil who are you?"

"I am Messer Taddeo's company."

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“Then where are the rest of you?”

“They grill with the devil.”

The Spaniards looked at each other. “The devil has them all?”

“Yes, poor fellow,” said Raoul sadly.

There was a grim laugh and: “What is this white piece of goods then?” as one of them shook the girl.

Before Raoul could answer, “She is for your master,” said a new voice. The Spaniards turned in their saddles. It was the older woman, risen now from the mud, in aspect well content. And while they stared:

“But certainly,” Raoul chimed in: “I convey her to Don Julian. He has a taste.”

“You!” the girl shrieked (Raoul here records that her eyes were grey-blue, like steel). “Ah, you knave, you knave.”

Raoul bowed to her.

The Spaniards laughed loud, while she struggled, crimson and panting in their grip.

She cried madly for help, she cried to the woman and then to God, and the woman answered smoothly.

“It were best to be quiet, mistress. They say Don Julian is gentle.”

That stirred the Spaniards to mirth again. They

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wheeled round and the girl, sobbing out her shame, was dragged on between two of them. Her woman, quite composed, followed behind. And Raoul led the way with the air (he says it himself) of a conqueror.

The Spanish tents were rising in the gloom, foul, tattered brown canvas, ill pitched. Fires cracked and sputtered and smoked. A swearing throng beset the food wagons and men fought each other for their rations. All was ill-found, ill-ordered and the curse of Babel was on the army. Spanish, German, Flemish, French, Italian—each company had a different tongue and scarce knew three words of its neighbor's.

A halberdier lounged on his weapon before the general's tent. The little troop dismounted and men in their shirts, bare-necked, bare-armed, came scrambling up to jeer at the women. Dead weight on two men's arms, the girl was dragged in to Don Julian d'Oquendo, and from without came the soldier's guffaw. Don Julian, fair haired, lean of face, sat in gorgeous attire by a pasty and a flask of wine.

Raoul strode in front: "I have the honor to offer to your Excellency—" and he waved his hand to the girl. But he did not look at her.

Don Julian stared at him with an instant's contempt.

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Then, "Who are you, knave?" he said carelessly as he rose and walked to the girl.

"I aspire to be the servant of your Excellency."

Don Julian took the girl's chin in his hand and tilted her thin face to the light. She tried to shrink away, but the two Spaniards thrust her forward. She quivered like a branch in the wind. And he laughed.

"I hope that I please your Excellency's taste," said Raoul.

Don Julian stepped back and looked at the girl through half closed eyes as if she were a picture.

Then he laughed again. "What is her price?" he asked.

"Less than fifty ducats would insult your Excellency's love of beauty."

Raoul says that the girl turned and looked at him. He saw her eyes and moved back. He was very glad of that afterwards.

"Señor Don Julian—" it was a Flemish voice. The older woman hurried forward. "He is a rogue, I——"

"Ah, Mother Martha!" cried Don Julian. "What? Is it your lass?" His eyes brightened and he tapped the girl's white cheek. "And so you are Elsa Sonoy, my dear."

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"If it please you, señor," cried Mother Martha. "And I brought her, not this rogue, and——"

"Martha! You!" the girl's voice rang wild in the last anguish of broken trust.

Don Julian's thin lips drew back from his teeth.

"Your faithful foster mother, maiden Elsa, who values you at five hundred ducats. *Madre Dios*, but it is a little dear."

Mother Martha began to protest. The girl was worn out with a long journey. She needed rest and food. In the morning—in the morning—and Elsa at last hung limp on the Spaniards' arms, fainting.

Don Julian shrugged his shoulders over her.

"There is too little blood in her," said he, then turned to the soldiers. "Clear the next tent, you, and bear her in. Comfort her, Mother Martha. By the Virgin, you should do it well."

Two of them lifted the girl and as they turned Don Julian thought again of Raoul. "Now, rascal, what are you?"

"A poor gentleman, Excellency, who needs fifty ducats."

"Ugh, the knave!" Mother Martha turned her honest head. "Why, señor, he would have helped her to the Dutch."

"So," said Don Julian. "Lash me the——"

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But Raoul had drawn back before. Raoul was nearest of them all to the outer air and he sprang away and flung himself on a horse and flogged it through the camp. Scattering camp fires, riding down men, he thundered on till he was lost in the mist and the blackness.

Then he checked and listened, hand to his ear. There was no following sound, none hunted him. He was not worth hunting. Raoul sat still in the mist and thought.

You are not to suppose him fired by the maiden's plight, consumed with chivalric wrath. "I was never," says he, and you fancy him proud of it, "I was never a man of indignations." The girl's aspen bosom, the grey face and the eyes that stabbed—perhaps they were with him there in the mist, but Raoul was not the man to go to death for a stray girl's shame. One fancies that if Don Julian had but given him those fifty ducats Raoul would have ridden happily off, a paid scoundrel. At least Raoul himself thanks God after his own fashion that Don Julian denied him. "Had he paid me, my life had never begun. And so my salutes to Don Julian—who is where he is—" says Raoul. Don Julian would give nothing; a man owed it to himself to take. Raoul sat thinking.

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“Always,” says he in that “History of Myself,” “always I had an eye and a mind for ground. Once seen I knew it forever or by day or by night.” He had, in fact, a dog’s sense of place and direction. Wrapped in the wet darkness, he saw clear all around him, the line of poplars close by, the willow clump a gunshot off, the dykes and the sluggish river. He knew the oblong camp, the post of the cavalry on either horn, the park of the guns and powder in the midst of the rearward line.

At last Raoul gathered up his reins and rode down to Taddeo’s dead company. There he dismounted and stooping low, reins over his arm, wandered about till he found two good muskets. With these flung about him, he rode off, the scattered, riderless horses of Taddeo’s men neighing at him out of the mist. And then something bulky leapt at him, big hands gripped his bridle arm, a great weight dragged him down: “Butcher, I have you now,” growled a hoarse Dutch voice.

“I was looking for you,” said Raoul placidly, as he put his dagger to the man’s throat and let him feel the point of it. “Do not make me kill you.”

The man dropped off him and Raoul reined swiftly away. He remembered the bill hook. “If you will not be so stupid you shall save her.”

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“You are a liar and a rogue. And the Spaniards have taken her.”

“I am what I am. And you shall take her again.”

“It is now no use,” the Dutchman groaned, “they have had her in their camp. . . . *Ach, Gott!* Why did you not let me kill her?”

“It is always worth while to live, *corbleu*. Also you can kill her yet. That is her affair. I suppose you have not had the sense to catch a horse.”

“I do not want a horse,” said the Dutchman dully.

“An ass would be more akin,” muttered Raoul and then whistled low.

The horses knew him, there was a scurry of hoofs and soon he had a pair of bridles in his hands. “Suit yourself, my friend—and follow.”

“I do not trust you,” growled the Dutchman.

“At last you show sense,” said Raoul and went off into the dark. The Dutchman lumbered after him.

Raoul fetched a wide compass round the camp and, come to rearward, halted and gazed. The damp wood fires were dying. Silence was falling upon the tents. The men had gorged like beasts and like beasts were drowsy. Raoul stooped and behind the Dutchman’s width struck a spark and caught it on a slow match and blew till the red glow came. Then

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he hid it and, stealthily moving behind the poplars, they two drew nearer. A gunshot off the rearward tents Raoul halted and dismounted and put his bridle in the Dutchman's hand and crept on with his muskets. It was a true mercenaries' camp. Scarce one sentry stood at his post and nearer and nearer came Raoul, silent, unseen. The powder wagons loomed large before him. Beneath the canvas he could make out the curve of the barrels. He flung himself down and cuddled a musket stock into his shoulder. One bulging barrel came clear in line, he touched the slow match and the musket flashed and spoke. And then as he caught the other and fired at a venture, a great flame belched from the powder wagon, a dull roar came and Raoul cast muskets away and ran like a hare to his horse and sprang to the saddle, and muttering "Follow!" went off at speed.

Roaring, flaming tumult he left behind. Yellow fire shot up through the mist, and the tents leapt sudden into view. Over them, about them, blazing splinters hurled and hissed, maddened horses broke from their pickets and charged over tents and men, and still the powder shot forth fresh flame and roar and the soldiers fled hither and hither, cursing in many tongues, helpless.

But Raoul had galloped round the camp and he

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sprang down and tethered his horse to a poplar and ran in on foot. And the Dutchman went with him still. No one heeded them. All men were running wildly in that hour. Only Raoul was quite sure of his purpose. He held the Dutchman's arm as he ran and "Kill her or save her, there she is," he muttered and jerked him round at the tent where Elsa lay. Then Raoul himself ran. He sought things more profitable than a maiden in peril.

Raoul peeped into Don Julian's tent. It was empty of men and he sprang in—then through a bustling minute feared it was empty of money, too—at last he found saddle bags. They were weighty. They jingled. Raoul chuckled and ran with his pay.

And then he came upon fate. The Dutchman had found Elsa, had borne her out, but Mother Martha clung to him and screamed; and as she screamed a pair of Walloon troopers came running and caught at Elsa. Raoul had to make the choice of his life and no time to make it. . . . He saw that white face tortured again. . . . He flung his money away, his rapier flamed into the fight.

One man went down with a hiss and a cough, the other sprang back yelling for help. Raoul tore Elsa from the Dutchman's arms, cast her over his

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shoulder and ran. And the Dutchman flung Mother Martha at the Walloon and lumbered after him.

Tents and men stood out black against the yellow glare and the light spread over the plain, but beneath the long dykes the mist loomed in darker shadow. Raoul mounted and made for the blackness of it, spurring, *ventre à terre*. There were scorched frenzied horses galloping every way, there was no man in time to see which way he had gone and soon he had left a mile behind.

Then he drew rein and, as the speed checked, the Dutchman came up alongside.

“Mistress,” he gasped, “mistress, is it well?”

“Oh, now he will want to kill her, I suppose,” thought Raoul and moved the little light body till he could come at his dagger.

The girl leant over, her face white in the gloom: “Oh, Jan, thank God, thank God, I . . . ”

“In fact,” says Raoul, pushing his dagger home, “in fact God has been something to-night.”

“And you, sir—” her arm clasped him closer, “you—”

“I also,” said Raoul modestly.

Her brown hair, all disordered, fell rippling fragrant over his arm, but still she was crowned with the coif of her maidenhood. Her arm was about him, he

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clasped her close, her breast warm to his, her round cheek white upon his shoulder. So they rode on through the night.

The Dutchman rolled in his saddle, dozing, wearied out, but still Raoul led on erect and lithe. . . . The easy motion lulled the girl to rest in his arms. Her head drooped back and showed him the gentle curve of her throat; he felt the slow deep surge of her bosom. And again and again Raoul looked down at her, his pulses tingling . . . she was fair and fit for a man's desire and he held her at his will. . . . The darkness wrapped him round. . . .

"Halt and speak!" a Dutch challenge rang sharp.

The girl started in his arms as Raoul reined up. "*Vive le gens!*" Raoul shouted, the Dutchman's own war cry.

And the wide Dutchman beside him awoke and "*Vive le gens!*" roared he, too.

There was a sound of hurrying feet and a quick, low parley. Then "Forward, one!"

"Go you," said Raoul and the Dutchman went.

"Is all well, sir?" the girl whispered anxiously.

Raoul looked down into her eyes. "Yes. By chance."

"Ah, sir, not by chance, indeed."

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“Well—I am certainly very remarkable,” said Raoul.

In front, in the darkness there was much talk and a lantern came and was held aloft. At last they cried to Raoul and Raoul rode on sedate, stately. The man with the lantern took his bridle and led to a tent while the guard followed behind.

Another lantern hung from the tent pole and displayed to Raoul and the maid and the Dutchman a little, wiry man in buff coat and breeches. His hair was cropped close and his beard, his keen face was tanned to the tint of his hair and out of it looked two green-grey eyes very bright.

“Whom,” enquired Raoul, “have I the honor to behold?”

“Colonel Newstead,” said the little man: and at once Raoul understood the fate of Taddeo. The English free lance had dealt with greater soldiers than Messer Taddeo. Raoul bowed to him as to a master of craft. The Englishman did not appear very grateful.

His curious eyes were set upon Elsa. “You, lady, are Mistress Elsa Sonoy?” he asked, and the girl curtsied to him. “Diedrich Sonoy’s daughter is honored in my camp and honored,” he bowed, “for her own sake.” A blush stole up under her curls.

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Newstead turned away and gave a swift inaudible order to the lieutenant of the guard—who saluted and departed. “But you should have been safe in Leyden, Mistress Elsa?”

“I was. I was. But they told me—Martha—Martha said she had news that Eric was sick—and—and—” she blushed darker.

Raoul was near saying that he admired Mother Martha. To use the girl’s love to sell her to shame was a device that impressed him.

“So—so Martha—” Elsa stammered.

“I do hope that she is now joyous with Don Julian,” Raoul remarked.

“And—and I was going—”

Buff coat flying loose, hair all awry, a sturdy young fellow broke into the tent crying “Elsa!” and she turned and swayed and fell into his arms sobbing and laughing. Raoul watched. Raoul saw the girl he had held to his breast kissed on her mouth and her eyes and answering her love’s kisses.

“I always meant it,” said Raoul slowly. “I always meant it, *mordieu*,” and moving saw that Newstead’s curious eyes examined him.

“I continue the history—” said Raoul in a hurry: and did so with an artistic scarcity of detail.

“So,” he concluded, “I attended till dark. I

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devised a little *camisads*. Colonel, here are we. But we should like some supper. At least," he looked sideways at the lovers. "I——"

The Dutchman fell asleep over the meat and Raoul himself endured only a little—then slept till the sun was high.

It was the next day that Newstead asked him his name. "I call myself Raoul. My father was in such haste to die that he told me no other."

"There is something," said Newstead, looking Raoul in the eye, 'something I do not offer to every man.'" He tapped the faded rosette of orange and white and blue that he wore on his left breast. "Will you take service with me?"

Raoul waited a while. "With you, sir, before any man. But with no man at all. I have taken service with the wide world."

And Newstead looked at him a long time (says Raoul) and nodded at last. Then: "You are what will some day be a man," said he.

Which somewhat annoyed Raoul.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILDREN OF LEYDEN

I HAVE heard your moralist sniff and call Raoul a scoundrel. That is no affair of mine, who have no commission to moralize. It suffices to me that Raoul was a man who, after the fashion of his time and power of his place, achieved certain matters of note. In his thoughts, in his deeds, you may find (was he not unique!) evil and good commingled. He is shocking, I suppose, because he tells of both frankly and is not ashamed. You read his "History of Myself" and doubt that he would not have cared to unsin one sin if he made himself another man by its loss. Do not mistake. Raoul did not cheat himself. What deeds were base he knew well enough, though they were his own. He was content to show the whole of his life and be judged. Humility was never a virtue of his.

When the Spanish leaguer was drawn about Leyden Raoul was, he assures you, "full grown in body and ripe of wit." An unkind person has called him a scoundrel of five feet five. He was consumed with an

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anxiety to sell himself, but he wanted a wonderful task as well as a wonderful price.

Valdez had set up his rest before Leyden, and the town was starving in his grip. Its fire signals shone through the dark across the flat lands of the Rhine mouth and cried aloud for help. William of Orange, William the Taciturn, brooding at Delft over the fate of his people, saw the red glare night by night; and at last, "*Liever bedorven dan verloren Land,*" said he, "Better drown the land than lose it," and bade open the sluices and break the dykes and call the ocean in aid. And the grey waves rose over the land, and Boisot brought his wild Zeelanders in two hundred row-boats of war to bear Leyden bread across the waters. By night and day, by land and wave, the Zeelanders fought the Grand Commander's armies, harpooned them like fishes, tore out their hearts and ate them.

It was all mighty noble and desperate. "Better drown the land than lose it"—doubtless—but the land would not be drowned. Long miles from Leyden town Boisot's war-boats lay stranded, and, between them and the shattered walls, the Spaniards lay in their lines dry and impregnable. Valdez had the town still in his grip, and the starving, perishing burghers looked out from Hengist's Tower and saw that

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even the sea had played them false, and fell at last upon despair. So the matter stood when the apples hung rosy in the orchard without the wall.

On a morning just before the dawn, when nerves are tightest strained, the guard at the Eastern Water-gate suffered a sore shock. They were all duly at their posts, two on high, four on the ground, peering out through the dim light to the Spanish pickets, when lo, a great gurgle and a sputtering behind them, and they turned to see one who had come into Leyden under water. They gathered round him and gaped speechless while he dripped. Their starved faces were like in the greyness to fleshless skulls.

“Oh, I belong to this world,” Raoul gasped. “But do you?”

“We are the guards,” says a stolid burgher.

“You are sure you are not corpses?”

“And we do not jest, fellow.”

“*Dieu merci!*” Raoul squeezed the water out of his breeches. “Graciously present me now to the illustrious burgomaster.”

“What have you to do with him?”

“I will tell him when I see him.”

They muttered a little, and then two of them took him, shedding a small stream of Rhine water, to the burgomaster’s house. Raoul was brought into the

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hall, and stood, he remarks, "on the tiles to drain."

Soon Adrian van der Werf, tall, gaunt, swarthy, stood before him in his bed-gown. "And you, sir?" he asked.

"I, sir? Why, I, sir, am Raoul"—he made a magnificent gesture—"Raoul de Tout le Monde."

The burgomaster was not impressed. "M. de Tout le Monde, your errand?"

Raoul fished out of his damp bosom a tiny oilskin packet, and presented it.

The burgomaster tore it open: then, "From the Prince!" says he, surprised, and looked at Raoul.

"As your intelligence perceives," says Raoul airily.

You will find that letter in the chroniclers. It promised all that man might do in aid. It begged the town hold out yet. It spoke of hope and courage and faith, as William the Taciturn well knew how.

The burgomaster read, and his hollow eye brightened. "I thank you, sir, I thank you," he said eagerly. "And now can I serve you?"

"Dry me and feed me."

"Why, sir, for the drying, willingly. And for food—you shall share all I have."

Raoul was brought to the cleanest room he had ever seen. In a little while the burgomaster came to

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him again with an armful of dry clothes, stood waiting while Raoul disrobed, seemed to desire to say something. "Sir—sir—" he hesitated—"you have come through the Spanish lines; you know their strength: do you think we may be relieved?"

Raoul in his shirt struck an attitude. "Master burgomaster," he cried, "do you think there is a God?"

"Ay, sir, ay." The burgomaster bowed his head and stood silent a moment. "I thank you," he said then, and went out.

"Ah," says Raoul, getting out of his shirt, "but I think there is a devil, too."

After a while a lean servant brought him a scrap of barley bread and a small steaming basin of stew. "Oh, you are too generous, friend," Raoul sneered.

"Then give me them back, master."

"Hum," says Raoul, and sniffed at the stew and probed it. "Now what may this be?"

"Better not ask," growled the servant.

Raoul rubbed his chin and stared. "Hum," says he again. "And what is the vintage of your wine?"

"All the wine is kept for the women and the sick," said the servant, and left him.

"For the women who do not like it; for the sick who cannot taste it. Bah—and again bah!" says

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Raoul peevishly and sniffed again at the stew. Then, "Come, Raoul, never be a coward," says he, and ate it up. Little the better of it, he lay back and gloomily stared at his legs, which were overwhelmed in the burgomaster's lengthy breeches.

A slip of a girl came in upon him, a dark-haired child with blue eyes big in a wan face. She stared straight at Raoul and said nothing.

"Well, my queen?"

"You are the man that has eaten father's dinner."

"By your majesty's leave—his breakfast."

"He does not have any breakfast," said the child.

Raoul laughed, and she stared at him still.

"You are just like what I thought," said she.

Raoul stood up in his over-long garments and, laughing, made her a splendid bow—arising from which he beheld through the window men dragging themselves up the trees in the market-place.

"Are the gentlemen bird-nesting?" he inquired.

"They are picking the leaves to eat them," said the solemn child.

"I wish them good appetite," said Raoul.

"I think you are a pig," said the child, and twirled round, her short skirts flying wide and her long braid of hair, and went out.

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Then Raoul, feeling that he could do nothing else in those flapping garments, went to sleep.

A noise in the market-place woke him. The lean burghers were crowded together and murmuring, shouting. Raoul lounged yawning to the window. Between two bare limes in the shadow of the church-tower stood the burgomaster, tall and gaunt, waving his hat for silence. The tumult died soon, and he spoke. Raoul opened the window. The deep voice came clear.

“ . . . I tell you I have made an oath to hold the city. May God give me strength to keep my oath! . . . Your threats do not move me. Here is my sword”—it gleamed in the sunlight—“plunge it into my breast and portion my flesh among you. Take my body to stay your hunger, but hope for no surrender while I am alive.” He ended, and a moment’s silence changed to a roar of assent.

“There is certainly not much meat on him,” said Raoul, and shut the window. Then he huddled himself together after his manner, and considered circumstances. He had eaten all the dinner there was, and was still hungry as a pike. That impressed him deeply.

Endued again in his own clothes, he spent the afternoon lounging about the town. He was passed with

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honor everywhere, the Prince's trusty messenger. Behold him swaggering round the wall, a truculent young bravo, small and swarthy, with a pair of keen black eyes under his broad-brimmed hat, and a vast void inside him.

There was a strange sunset that night. The western sky flamed dark gold with bars of grey clouds breaking across the light, and far away the waste of waters gleamed like a golden mirror. And the air was very still. Only as Raoul stood on the ramparts he seemed to feel (it was hardly hearing) some faint, dull sound, a sound that never grew louder nor ever ceased. Then the sun fell to the horizon, and sky and water paled, and the cloud-bank massed heavy and dark. Night came.

They were changing the guards at the gates. The sentries climbed down from the walls. And Raoul climbed down, too—but he climbed to the outer side.

Through the darkness he marched nonchalant to the Spanish camp. When the sentry challenged him, he waved a white kerchief (the burgomaster's, if you care to know), and, professing himself the burgomaster's envoy, was brought to the general's presence in Lammen House.

“What I want, Borgia, is a pentameter.” Those were the remarkable words that met him. Don Guz-

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man de Valdez turned in his chair. "Oh, you are the burgomaster's messenger. Tell me—tell me now—who wrote this hexameter:

'Fistula dulce canit volucrem cum decipit auceps.'

That is what your rascals answered me when I offered them terms of surrender is it not? Yes! it has style. But I will pay them with a pentameter that shall scarify them. Tell you them that, master messenger. Now: *At volucrem captum—at volucrem captum——*" Don Guzman de Valdez began to compose his pentameter.

His companion, a bull-necked Italian, glowered at Raoul: "What is your errand, fellow?"

"First, sir, to announce that I have told you a lie. I am not the burgomaster's messenger, but my own. My lie, sir, has achieved. I am in the presence of Don Guzman de Valdez."

Valdez laughed. "I think you will soon be in the devil's, master liar."

"I profess, sir, it could not be more entertaining."

Valdez laughed loud. "Pray try," said he, and took up a pistol and pointed it at Raoul's breast.

"Sir, you should have precedence thither," said Raoul quickly, but he did not flinch. "I have come out of Leyden very empty to tell you how you may get in."

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Valdez tossed his pistol away. "Expound, my little liar, expound."

"First, sir, I would not be thought anything but a great liar. Nevertheless, I now tell truth. Betwixt the Cowgate and the Tower of Burgundy the mortar is crumbling out of the wall and the wall is weak at the base. Turn your demicannons on that and"—he kissed his hands to the air—"and good night to Leyden. For the which salute I pray only your Excellency's gracious thanks—and a hundred golden florins."

Raoul concluded with a flourish and looked in triumph from one to the other. But Valdez was holding his narrow forehead and muttering what sounded like more Latin, and Borgia glowered and growled:

"Where is this Cowgate, fellow?"

"I will point your guns for you, colonel." Borgia grunted and looked at Valdez—who suddenly broke out:

"I have it!

'Ea lapsa repente ruinam
Cum sonitu trahit et Danaum super agmina late
Incidit.'

From the *Æneid*, the second *Æneid*." He smirked, Raoul also smirked. "Aha, you perceive the aptness!

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My little liar, you are a jewel. I am Neoptolemus, and Leyden is my Troy."

"Precisely, Excellency. But touching certain florins——"

"“Oh, curst greed of gold!”" quoted the classical Valdez, and leant back for a coffer and took a bag and tossed it to Raoul.

Raoul had no prejudices. He had turned traitor: he sold man and woman and child to the torture of a Spanish storm. Yes, but he filled his pockets and filled himself—and he slept the sleep of a little child. But that night the wind rose.

All night the west wind howled over Lammen and Leyderdorp, and when they woke the sky gloomed grey like dull steel, and the roaring air was wet. Westward the water heaved rough as the open sea and the crash of breakers came down wind. Borgia stood on the ramparts of Lammen, bull neck and head bare to the blast, and swore. For the water was nearer. The land was drowning. And Boisot's dare-devil fleet lay close.

So Borgia came down in a hurry and found Raoul, and began the new battery. But the work dragged. The ground was sodden and heavy, and it was not easy to build the emplacements or to move the guns, and the guns had far to come. All day they labored,

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and all day the west wind blew and the driven rain beat down.

Raoul was not the man to pull and haul save under sore constraint. He gave his orders and watched Borgia's Walloons work. As amusement this palled, and in the afternoon he wandered off to the apple orchards that lay close to the town. Darkness came early under that iron sky, and Raoul swaggered on through the twilight. The gale had brought down a host of mellow fruit, and Raoul ate some, and between bites sang:

“Ma petite Colombelle,
Ma petite toute belle—
Mon petit œil, baisez moi
D'une bouche toute pleine——

“Like my own, *pardieu*,” says Raoul, with a laugh and another bite, and then, “Oh, *Madonna!*”

For there under the trees was the wan child of the big blue eyes and long braid of black hair, with a boy of her own age or less, very like her.

Raoul came up to them quickly. (“I count this,” says he, “among my mistakes.”) “And what do you here, my queen?” he asked.

The girl—her bosom was swollen with apples—looked defiance. “What do you?” she snapped.

“I, my queen, take my ease. But you are like to take death.”

"You are a coward," said the girl, and the boy, her brother, thrust himself between her and Raoul.

"Go away, go away. You are bad," he cried, and threatened Raoul with small clenched fists.

"Your majesties," says Raoul, "would be better in bed," and he pointed through the gathering dark.

The children, little wan faces reddening, glared defiance.

"You—Frenchman—Raoul!" Borgia came riding up. "Heh! What are these?"

Raoul drew in his breath. Then he saw a chance for them. He began a lie, and spoke it in Dutch so that the children should know their part and play it.

"Two small friends from——"

But the honest little souls would have none of it. "We are not your friends!" the girl cried.

"——from Leyden, who have been telling me all——"

"We have not told you anything! You are a coward."

"Humph! Who are you?" Borgia leant forward to look at her.

"I am the burgomaster's daughter, and——"

"Good fortune!" cried Borgia, and snatched at her and caught her up. "Bring the other babe, you ——Raoul." And he reined round.

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Raoul, as he says, had done his possible. He never attempted more. He picked up the boy and marched off with him, kicking, struggling. And then (Raoul always took thought for himself) he began to boast of the capture. "I saw the little whelps come after the apples, colonel, and I thought I would catch them. One never knows what may be useful. But two pups of the burgomaster's litter! This——"

The girl leant down from Borgia's saddle and struck him across the eyes.

Borgia laughed. "D' you know, little man, I would like to see the babes thrash you," says he.

Raoul said nothing. He dropped behind Borgia and bit his lips and crushed the boy in his arms till the child gasped for breath. Raoul was not admiring himself. The sensation was new and unpleasant.

So the burgomaster's children came into the Spanish camp.

You are to see a little grim room in Lammen with candles flaring and sputtering, Borgia's bull neck and head, Valdez dark and pretty, and two children little and thin and wan. Raoul stood behind them by the door, his hand clenched on his sword hilt, his face in shadow.

"So you are the burgomaster's progeny, my innocents," says Valdez. "Oh, blessed burgomaster!"

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He leant back and his eyes narrowed as he watched them. And the children bore the cruel stare bravely. Only the boy glanced an instant at his sister, and took her hand in his—then he faced the Spaniard man to man.

Valdez's lips moved. "I have it!" he cried. "My desired pentameter!"

"Oh, bah!" growled Borgia.

"*At volucres captos leniter igne coquit!* Neat, by St. Laurence, neat! Do you take me, colonel? 'The captive birds on a slow fire he grills.' Bird-catcher am I? Well, I have caught my birds, and—eh, my pretties, will you grill prettily?" He leant forward over the table and chucked the girl's chin. "Do you hear me, sweeting? I will cook you over a slow fire for your longer enjoyment."

And still the little folk (one hopes they did not understand) stood hand in hand, quiet, braving him.

Borgia moved in his chair. "And how does that help us to Leyden?" he growled.

"Colonel, you have no taste," sighed Valdez. "Nor any wit either. I will send to master burgomaster my pentameter. I will tell him that unless he gives me Leyden he shall see his children grill. Little liar here shall take my message and——"

"*Cœur de Dame!* no!" Raoul thundered.

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“Eh, what, what?” Valdez leant forward, smiling.

Raoul recovered himself. “Your Excellency will see,” he spoke blankly, “that I value my poor life at a little. And for me to go to the burgomaster is to make myself sure of a hanging.”

“Sooner or later, does it matter?” Valdez laughed.

“I prefer it,” says Raoul, “later.”

Valdez turned to the Italian; but before he spoke, “I will see you burnt first,” growled Borgia, and heaved himself up and strode out. And Raoul followed him.

Raoul tells how the Italian turned upon him on the stair and cursed him in many oaths. He remarks that Borgia was an unreasonable man. Raoul saw the children borne up and locked in the storeroom, where for bed and chair was nothing but the empty oaken chests. Valdez came out in a while smiling, humming the Dutch taunt and his devilish answer:

“Fistula dulce canit volucrem cum decipit auceps—

At volucres captos leniter igne coquit.”

Raoul had the night to consider himself. . . . After all, you ask, what were the children to him? He had sold all the babes in Leyden to torture. Why should he boggle at two?

But Raoul did not reason like that. In fact, he did not reason at all. “*Dieu merci*,” says he, “I always

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knew logic was folly, and I am all out of logic." Blue eyes sunk in a wan, worn little face and a child's bosom bulging with apples abode with him all night long. At least, he complains so.

And the west wind howled all night, and all night the driven rain rattled upon the walls, and nearer and nearer came the beat of the waters.

When dawn broke late and pale it showed them little land left. Only the causeways to Zoeterwoude and The Hague kept back the foaming waves, and Boisot's fleet lay within gunshot of Lammen. Borgia, anxious, cursing, turned falconets upon them and drove them out of range, then hurried to counsel with Valdez. But Valdez laughed at him and repeated his pentameter.

For the message had gone to the burgomaster:

MOST ILLUSTRIOUS, —

I have your pretty children. Either you give me the keys of Leyden or you see them grill under your walls.

Nam volucres captos leniter igne coquam.

VALDEZ (*auceps*)

About noontide the wind lulled. About noontide came the burgomaster's answer:

TO DON GUZMAN DE VALDEZ, —

How you deal with my children you shall account to God. Leyden will never surrender.

ADRIAN VAN DER WERF.

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Valdez laughed and went off to tell the children that their father had written to bid him have them cooked. That pleasant jest made, he required a party to plant him stakes and build a fire under the walls of the town. The burghers howled curses and shot at them and killed a few, so Valdez bade bring the children. The two little folk were dragged there in the rain to be a target for their friends' muskets. There they stood, under guard, looking with wild, frightened eyes to the kindly walls and the stakes and the faggots. God knows what they thought, what they felt.

The stakes were planted, the chains were fixed. But the wind had fallen and was almost dead, and as it died came a great rain. The dull heavens opened and a flood came. A flood that soaked the faggots and set them floating away; a flood of rain that swept timber and earth and stone before it like a river in spate. The stakes stood in a pond. And so the poor little folks, fear-numbed in body, in mind, were borne back to Lammen. The heavens would suffer no fire that day. On Leyden walls the burghers sang a psalm, but Valdez stood out, the rain streaming from his helmet, and shouted, "To-morrow, to-morrow!"

That night in the deluge Borgia finished his battery,

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and he, too, as the wet darkness covered all, went back to camp with a growl—"To-morrow."

And Raoul? Raoul had heard the burgomaster's answer, and cursed him heartily. Why in the name of heaven or hell could the man not yield and save his babes' skin? You would not expect Raoul to understand. But the man had not yielded. And Raoul hovered like a restless dog about Valdez's heels, and watched while the stakes and chains were fixed, and watched the little, wan, fear-wrought faces, and gnawed his nails. Then came the deluge, and Raoul stood very still and rubbed his eyes like a man just waked. "Hola, Raoul!" says he to himself, "God is doing something. Help Him then."

Back he hurried to Lammen. He was first into Lammen House.

With nightfall the wind rose again, but still the rain beat pitilessly down. The soldiers huddled together in hut and cottage and barn, chilled and steaming, heard the rising waves crash on the causeways, and cursed Leyden and Valdez and their fate and themselves.

In an upper room in Lammen House, all in the dark, two children knelt together hand in hand, and prayed. Behind them silently rose the lid of the largest chest. Silently Raoul stepped out and stood on tiptoe, listen-

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ing. There was no sound save the little thin voices murmuring, and the roar of the storm. Raoul drew his cloak about him and touched the boy's shoulder.

"Hush!" says he in a whisper, as the children started up.

They could but see him dimly in the dark. "Who are you?" the girl whispered.

"I come from God—your God. I come to save you. Hush!"

Silent, swift, he moved to the window, opened it and peered out. Below, all was dark. He was back beside the children again, he pressed them together. "Trust God, trust me," he muttered, and he bound the two together and lifted them out of the window, and let the rope burn his hands as he lowered them to the sodden ground. He let fall the rope, he stood in the open casement crouching for a spring, flung himself through the dark to an apple-tree and caught a bough and swung an instant, then dropped to the ground. He sprang to them, he sliced the rope with his dagger and caught it up, he flung the girl over his shoulder and snatched the boy's hand, and ran through the storm.

In that black night in that driving rain no man could see another. Raoul had no fear for sentries, if any sentries were braving the storm. He was only mightily

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anxious not to run into the Rhine. But his dog's sense of place served him well. Soon the lights at the Eastgate shone clear, and he stopped.

"Good-bye, my queen," says he, setting her down. "There is your home. Pick no more apples to-night."

"You—" the child gasped—"why, you——"

"Are the pig," said Raoul, and went off into the dark. But he checked to listen and laugh as a glad cry rose from the gate. He desired infinitely to hear also the erudite Valdez gladly cry.

As he hurried back to Lammen with that benevolent purpose a lantern surprised him. It was far in front, it was moving from the town towards Lammen. It came to the camp before Raoul, and some drenched sentry saw it and challenged. While the sentry parleyed with it, Raoul came peaceably within the lines and was mildly grateful. Then he hid his drenched cloak and hat and wiped the mud off his boots and sauntered into Lammen House.

The quarter guard was gathered on the stair, and from above came Valdez's voice: "A woman, you say? Aha, *funesta venustas*—my fatal beauty, Borgia. Bring me the victim."

Raoul went up with the guard. They had in their midst a woman, wet and bedraggled, a tall woman, white-faced, of a very noble bearing.

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“You are General Valdez?” she said.

“My infatuate, I am.”

“I am the wife of Adrian van der Werf.”

Borgia twisted in his chair and growled an oath of amazement. Raoul frowned at her and bit his nails again. God was muddling the affair.

But Valdez leant forward, chin in hand, and the smile grew on his lean lips. “And you would like to try me in his stead, good wife?”

She flung out her arm to him. “Sir, sir, I have brought you myself, and I pray you spare my children—I pray, sir, I pray you.”

Valdez’s smile broke into a laugh, his nostrils swelled, his eyes dilated. “But not at all, my infatuate. I shall spare neither you nor them,” he said, and he rose and signed to the guard. “Away; away!”

Borgia heaved himself up with a laugh. This he appreciated. Before him the men went grinning out, and Valdez came to the woman. She flung herself down before him, and he was raising her. Raoul lingered, gnawing his lip. What was to do? God had blundered.

Then louder far than the rain-beat, louder than the howl of the wind, came a long echoing roar. Valdez stopped still, with his hands on the woman, and Bor-

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gia turned to listen. But Raoul ran out. The camp was roused. From cottage and hut heads looked out into the dark, men rushed forth and peered this way and that and babbled. But Raoul ran straight and swift. The long roar grew fainter, and faded amid the storm-blast and the crash of the waters. Raoul was far past the sentries, out on the causeway to Zoeterwoude, with the breakers beating below him, the spray stinging his face. He stopped an instant, dropped over and drenched himself, then, streaming with water, back he ran to the sentry. "Alarm! Alarm!" he gasped. "The causeway is down, the sea is upon us!"

That sentry did his duty nobly. The night was alive with yells. Out from their shelters the men came pouring. Zoeterwoude causeway was down—the news ran through them as the tide over a sand-bank. They surged disorderly like frightened sheep. Then some hero headed out of the lines, and like sheep they followed him away through the night along the one road left, the causeway to The Hague.

Valdez and Borgia ran out upon them cursing, and learnt the news. They heard it in scraps from breathless men, men who would not be stayed. The tramp of their flying army strove with the din of wind and wave. "They are fools, they are right," said Borgia,

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and struck into the throng howling for officers and labored to put some order into flight. But it was a flight of black panic. Borgia was swept away. Trampling their comrades down, thrusting them off the causeway into the waves, they fled from their fear through that black night of storm.

“*Sicut aves timidi*”—Valdez sneering began a verse, then thought better of it and went back to Lammen House for his guard and his woman. There was neither guard nor woman. Valdez shouted, and only the storm and tramp of the fleeing answered. He shrugged his shoulders and sat down, and in this immortal Latin he wrote his farewell to the leaguer of Leyden: *Vale civitas, vale castelli parvi qui relictis estis propter vim aquarum et non propter vim inimicorum.** Leaving that behind him for a testimony to his learning, the classical general sought his horse and fled, too.

When the tramp of the fugitives was faint and the din of the storm held lonely sway, Raoul arose out of a ditch and hauled out the burgomaster's wife. “Wait here,” says he to her upon the edge, and stole off. But there was little need for caution. Lammen and Leyderdorp were swept bare of men. Soon he had brought her all trembling and shivering back to Lam-

* His grammar, some say, was not quite so bad.

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men House, and he heaped fresh logs on Valdez's dying fire and struck an attitude before her ('twas inveterate in him), and, "Lady, I have achieved. You are safe," says he; and drank off Valdez's cup of wine. "For I am Raoul de Tout le Monde, Little Raoul of All the World"; and he offered her wine.

And the woman, taking it in her trembling hand, gasped, "But my children, sir—my children?"

Raoul tapped his breast. "Again, I. I conveyed them to Leyden two hours ago."

"Ah, is it true, is it true?" Down fell the wine-cup and she caught at Raoul's hands.

"As God is in heaven—which begins to seem likely," said Raoul.

"'Tis true, 'tis true indeed?" Her voice, her eyes, were piteous.

"Lady, yes."

She caught Raoul's hands to her lips and kissed them again and again. He liked that.

After a while she looked up and let him go and fell back in her chair. "But it is strange. So strange. The Spaniards have gone. And I—why—how is it?"

Raoul made her drink wine. He struck another dramatic attitude. "Lady! Conceive Zoeterwoude causeway broken: the sea upon them: horrific!"

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“That—that was the noise? Then we—we, too, shall be drowned!” and she started up.

Raoul sat down. “I saw that it was not broken. I said that it was. They ran. I betook me to you and a ditch.”

“I—I do not understand.”

“You need not understand; but you need much to eat and drink.”

“But—but the noise? What was it?”

“God probably knows,” said Raoul, and went out to forage.

So before a blazing fire Mistress Van der Werf ate, for the first time in four months, a plenteous meal.

Dawn broke grey, and Raoul on the battlements looked to Leyden and laughed. The noise was no more mysterious. Clear from Burgundy Tower to the Cowgate the weak wall had fallen and lay flat. From Burgundy Tower to the Cowgate! His wisdom was proven. Leyden was open to the foe. An army might have marched through the breach.

But the army lay wearied out with no heart in it at The Hague. Valdez’s “To-morrow” had dawned.

Raoul slapped Valdez’s florins in his breeches, and laughed and looked and laughed. He conceived himself justified to God and man. Then he turned westward. Driven by the great wind, swollen by the

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rain, the waters lay close below him. Boisot's boats were moving hither and thither sounding. Raoul waved his hat to them and shouted.

It is in all the histories. They will tell you how Raoul came wading breast deep through the grey water on that dull autumn morn, and told Boisot his way was clear: how they found a passage to the Rhine: how through the watergates the fleet swept into Leyden, and flung loaves to the starving folk on the river banks: how they all went to the great church, and gave thanks and wept.

But there is something of note the histories omit. Loaded with thanks and kindly promises, Raoul was borne to a grand chamber in the burgomaster's house. He flung himself down, weary but well content—and there came a faint knock at the door, and timidly a little girl stole in.

“Well, my queen?”

“Sir—sir—please, I am so sorry. I was very rude to you. I called names, and—you”—the brave little lips trembled—“you are very—very brave—and you are good——”

Raoul waved his hand and laughed. “Never care for all that, my queen.”

She waited, fronting him, and the big blue eyes filled with tears. “Then—then—you won't forgive me?”

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“Why, with all my heart.”

She came nearer and waited again; then came quite close to him and laid her hand on his shoulder and put up her cheek to be kissed. Raoul clumsily lifted her and kissed her, and then she put her arms round his neck and kissed him in turn. “I’ll always love you—always,” she said.

She ran happy away.

Raoul, left alone, drew out the bag of Valdez’s money, and let the bright gold run through his fingers. Then he made a grimace.

If you would like to know more of the siege of Leyden, there is a bright little Dutch lyric in six hundred and eleven stanzas of eight lines each.

CHAPTER III

RAOUL'S SUITS

RAOUL condemned the wine of the "Ewe Lamb." The "Ewe Lamb" would give him only Rhenish when he wanted "the good blood of Burgundy." (Raoul talks so much of wine that I think he must have been a very temperate little man.) Observe him, then, resplendent in crimson velvet and blue stocking, taking his ease in the wainscoted guest-room of the "Ewe Lamb" and condemning his liquor. He had probably a leg on the table.

The landlord ushered in with respect two lean men dressed in a dull grey frieze. Their faces also were grey, their hair lank, their eyes projected. They were absurdly alike and joyless. Raoul cocked his head on one side. "Judas Iscariot and son," said he.

One of them signed the landlord out, and the two stalked stiffly to Raoul. "Your name is Raoul?" one asked.

Raoul, head on one side, looked them up and

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down. "God help your wives," said he: and began to sing to them

"Mon petit œil, baisez-moi
D'une bouche toute pleine
D'amours, chassez-moi la peine——"

"Fellow—fellow—I would have you to know I am Alderman Peter van Hessels, fellow. And this is my son the Councillor Peter van Hessels."

"Peter Minor—kill Peter Major for bringing you into the world: Peter Major—kill Peter Minor for coming into the world. Thus joy regains her sway."

"You are drunk, fellow."

Raoul shuddered dramatically. "God forbid! If I were, I might see four of you. I could not, *pardieu*, survive it."

The two looked at each other. "I desire to know, fellow, if you are one Raoul, who took letters from the Prince of Orange into Leyden."

"Peter Major, you behold in me," Raoul tapped his crimson velvet breast, "the Seigneur Raoul de Tout le Monde. Seigneur of All the World, because I take all the best that is in it."

"You are that Raoul who broke through to Leyden and——"

"I am that Raoul—and many other Raouls."

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The two Peters nodded at each other and sat down. They leaned over the table mysteriously. "I have a matter to propound," said the alderman, and Raoul yawned. "My son the councillor has an affianced bride——"

"Oh, earth and heaven! She can never have seen him."

"She has not yet seen me in fact," said the councillor. "That is our trouble."

"Your good fortune. Peter Minor, marry her in a mask."

"This maiden," the alderman continued, "this maiden is the daughter of my cousin Oswald Fruytiers, who is dead, and the ward of my brother——"

"*Corbleu*, are there more of your family?"

"——my brother Jan van Hessels, the goldsmith in Bergen op Zoom. Bergen, you know, is within the Spanish bounds, and my brother writes that there is no way to send Catarina safely." The alderman paused. Raoul drank up his wine and put the pewter cup down with a bang. The alderman became more mysterious. "Look you now, I believe that my brother does not wish to send Catarina. He has all her father's money, and he would not want to give it up."

"He is, faith, your own brother, Peter Major."

RAOUL'S SUITS

Raoul turned: "Peter Minor, do you love your Catarina?"

The councillor was puzzled. "But she is my affianced bride," he cried.

"And you lust for your affianced florins. Peter Minor, I think she would give you them to be free of you."

"The maiden and the dowry were promised. I have the bond," cried the alderman.

"Do you know what hell is for? It is to burn bonds. And bondholders."

The alderman grew angry. "Sir—look you, sir, this is not a thing to jest with. We are gentlemen of importance, look you."

"Oh! I acquire information."

"Look you, sir, look you," the alderman's voice rose high, "this is not a jest—it is an affair of business."

"Oh, fiery love!" sighed Raoul.

"And I come to you and I ask what do you advise, for you——"

"Advise? I advise, *corbleu*, that Peter Minor content himself with the life of virginity. So shall it be best for some woman and the world."

The alderman feigned, not very skilfully, tolerant good temper. "Pish, pish!" said he. "Now you,

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sir, as they say, are a man of skill and of daring. You have undertaken dangerous deeds and——”

“And achieved them, *mordieu*. But I never undertook to find a wife for Peter Minor.”

“My son the councillor dare not go to Bergen himself. There are the Spaniards. But you, you do not fear the Spaniards——”

“I fear nothing but God and bad wine.”

“Well, sir, very well. Now look you, I give you commission to go to Bergen and seek out this maiden privily and learn of her if my brother be ready to pay her dowry. If he will (which I do not think), it is very well, and you shall bring her openly. But if he will not, look you, you shall take her away unknown to him and she must bring with her some of his jewels to be her dowry. He is the goldsmith of Bergen, and there must be rich goods easy for her to take. I have the written bond for her dowry, look you. And you shall get her out of the town and bring her to me here in Rotterdam.”

Raoul looked him between the eyes. “You——alderman!” said Raoul. . . . “And how if the maiden will bring herself for love of——of that,” he jerked a nod at the councillor, “but will not steal her dowry?”

“You shall tell her that the dowry is in the bond, and she is shamed to be a wife without it.”

RAOUL'S SUITS

“Faith, Peter Minor’s wife is shamed at the wedding. But God for us all! Fifty gold florins now—a hundred more if I do your work.” Raoul’s prices had risen.

The two Peters recoiled, and began to higggle.

“Peter Major, go to your brother and the devil,” said Raoul, and waggled his foot at them.

At last they consented, and Raoul howled for the landlord and ink and paper, and informed him that the alderman was giving a bond for one hundred gold florins. The landlord was much amazed.

Raoul, left alone, looked at his bond and laughed. “If I kept the dowry and left Peter Minor the bride!” he suggested to himself. “That would be amusing.”

So in the springtime the “Eel and Cradle” at Bergen op Zoom welcomed a little guest. He announced for all men to hear that he was a poor Spanish gentleman on his way to join Don Julian Romero. Whereat other guests, two lusty French merchants and a square-faced Englishman looked upon him askance. He treated them with full Spanish arrogance.

“Lie first” (it is a maxim of Raoul’s)—“Lie first. There will always be room for the truth. Truth first—then no room for the lie when you need it.”

Raoul fed full and drank, and went out from the

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“Eel and Cradle” in the twilight. He learnt (in scraps from many insignificant persons) that Master Jan van Hessels, goldsmith, was an alderman, that he lived at the sign of the “Brazen Serpent,” in the Street of St. Anthony, in the new town. Raoul arrived in the Street of St. Anthony and reconnoitered in the gathering gloom. The street was something rural and houses few in it. Jan van Hessels’ “Brazen Serpent” was big, and back from it ran a walled garden where the scent of the limes hung fragrant.

Raoul, hat on one side, nonchalant, swaggered along to the garden gate. Five rascals with cudgels sprang out upon him. But Raoul, for all his airs, was wholly alert. Sideways he sprang, six feet at a bound. Out leapt sword and dagger. “What! What! How, knaves? Is there man-killing toward?” he thundered in Spanish. “Then, by good Sant’ Iago——” He lunged on the invocation.

The cudgellers did not await him. “A Spaniard,” they muttered, “a Spaniard!” and turning, fled together—fled into the “Brazen Serpent” and slammed its door behind them.

Then behold Raoul, most truculent, stalking up to that door and battering upon it with the hilt of his bare sword. At last (he had battered long and loud) a little wicket opened and some one asked his business.

RAOUL'S SUITS

“Business? That word to a gentleman? Rascal!” Then in Dutch, “Open your door, rogue, and produce me the man of the house.”

The wicket was shut again, and after a while the door was opened and a serving-man quavered out a question as to Raoul's name. Raoul took him by the ear and jerked him. “Bring forth your knave master, knave.”

The servant shuffled on and brought him to an inner room, and hurriedly withdrew. Raoul had no need to ask whom he beheld. Master Alderman Jan van Hessels, grey-faced, goggle-eyed, was true brother of Peter. Raoul, hat cocked over one ear, sword twirling in finger and thumb, looked him up and down.

“Well, sir, well?” cried the alderman nervously, “what is your errand?”

“Errand?” Raoul thundered an oath. “Do I look a man to run errands?”

“Then, sir, your wish, sir, your purpose,” the alderman stammered hastily—“your——”

“Mark me now, burgess. I am Juan Perez, a poor gentleman of Spain. I take my evening walk, and I am set upon by five curst rogues. May the devil and——” he checked the imprecation and bowed low. Framed in the doorway a girl stood,

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flushed, bright-eyed: the hair beneath her coif gleamed golden. Raoul swung away from her. "By five curst rogues, burgess. And they are fled into your house. Now, sirrah, how come you to set your curs upon a gentleman? Expound me quickly."

The alderman signed the girl out of the room. But she came further in, and dropped a curtesy to Raoul.

"Hark ye, sirrah," Raoul made his sword quiver, a ripple of light, under the alderman's eyes, "this poor carcass shall not be vilely entreated while my soul is in it. Why are your varlets turned upon me?"

And while the alderman bit his finger, "Indeed, sir, the gentleman is in the right to ask," said the girl, and tossed her head.

The alderman started up. "Catarina! Go away."

But Catarina dabbed another curtesy and stayed.

"By Sant' Iago!" Raoul thundered: "do you palter with me, burgess? I come peaceably by your house, and your footboys take cudgels to me, and you have no word of excuse?" He rapped out a large oath. "Mark me, sirrah! I am no man to jest with. I can thrust through a needle's eye. I can snuff a candle with my point. So—sa ha! sa ha!" he lunged, stamping his foot, at the two candles.

Over they went, and out. The room was dark,

RAOUL'S SUITS

and out of the darkness Raoul roared on: "What is your business with me, burgess? Had I come here by midnight" (his left hand was groping toward Catarina), "had I sought to rob you, to force your strong-box, had I" (he found Catarina's hand and pressed it) "had I stolen into your garden and lurked there—then, faith, your rogues had had some reason."

The alderman had found his tinder-box and struck light again. Raoul had dropped Catarina's hand, and she was looking at him curiously.

"Did you take me, burgess, for a rogue like yourself—I, Juan Perez, a gentleman of Spain?"

"I profess, sir, it was a blunder. It was all a blunder. My lads are fools. I protest I humbly ask your pardon. I had word of a thief, and——"

"Thief? That word to me! Now by all good saints this surpasses! Thief!" Raoul walked upon the alderman sword out, and the alderman ran away from him round the table. "Thief! I will show you a thrust for that, sirrah." His sword shot out like a striking snake, and one of the alderman's buttons went rattling to the floor. The alderman with a yell sprang out of the door; Raoul lunged after him again, and he tumbled over himself and fell on the stairs.

"The garden—midnight—love's envoy comes:"

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it was whispered swift and low in the girl's ear while the alderman picked himself up. Then, aloud, "That will teach you, burgess, to respect a gentleman who does you the honor to pass your house," said Raoul, and put up his sword. "Lady, I commit you to heaven," he bowed, and as she curtsied before him caught the faint sign of her head. Her eyes were shining. "Burgess, I commit you—elsewhere." Off he swaggered, and slammed the door.

The thin, white, May moon was over the town, sharp gable and feathery tree silvered in her light, and the shadows gloomed blue-black. Raoul lounged against the wall of the garden. In the house of the "Brazen Serpent" no window showed light. The midnight chimes died away. Raoul waited a while, went up and over the wall like a cat. A form came to him swiftly, rustling. Raoul took her hands and kissed them both. "Lady, well met. Keep close," said he, and drew her against him into the gloom beneath the limes. "May a man speak to you of love?"

"Indeed, sir, many men have."

"Nay, who can wonder?" Raoul sighed.

"Not I," said Catarina.

"And I, lady, am come to plead for one fool more."

"'Tis a compliment to me."

RAOUL'S SUITS

Raoul took her hand. "Ah, what is life without you?"

"I have not tried, indeed."

"Lady, you are a woman——"

"Sir, my mother determined it so."

"——and what is a woman without love?"

"Even as a man without wit, sir."

"I come from one who loves you as never man loved yet—from one who would go through fire and water——"

"But not, it seems, over a wall?"

"Lady, he would not peril you by his presence. The good Peter van Hessels——"

Catarina started back. "Peter van Hessels? You come from him?"

"Behold me Dan Cupid in breeches—hot envoy of Peter's love."

"He—he loves me?"

"With a love wholly amazing."

"And what does he ask of me?"

Raoul snatched her hand and pressed it. "Lady, he asks of you—you! That body of grace, those sea-dark, sea-bright eyes, that——"

"Oh, I thank you. I have my own mirror. Sir, does Master van Hessels want no more than myself?"

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Raoul coughed. "You—ah—you reduce me to say, lady, that he spoke also of a dowry."

"I knew!" she cried. "And you, I doubt, were to share in it."

"In fact," said Raoul slowly, "I am hired at a price."

"Love's envoy!" she said, and again, "Love's envoy!" and laughed. Then swiftly, "Oh, indeed it grieves me to spoil your bargain! God be with you!" And she whirled away.

But Raoul held her, gripping her wrists. "If you had made my bargain you had broken my heart. The light in your eyes must glow for a man—and it shall. And yet I thank God I have come. I have had your hands in mine, I have tasted the breath of your hair. I——" he snatched her to his breast and kissed her.

She tore herself away, she stood in the moonlight white, fierce-eyed, her bosom storm-tossed. "You—you——" she gasped.

"I" said Raoul, "am a man." And went over the wall.

Slowly he walked to his inn. His head was thrown back, his eyes studied the dark blue void and its spangled stars. "Always," he tells you, "the heavens helped my thought." You will agree that he had need of them.

RAOUL'S SUITS

When he came to the "Eel and Cradle" he demanded wine of a sleepy servant, and dropped himself down in a leathern elbow-chair, and flung his hat and his feet on the table. Then he observed that the square-faced Englishman was fronting him. Raoul put up his nose and sniffed aloud. But the Englishman only stared (Raoul records) like an Englishman or a cow. The wine was brought, the sleepy drawer was bidden to bed. Raoul and his Englishman were left alone.

The Englishman leant over the table and, in bad Spanish, "A word in your ear," says he. Raoul disdainfully inclined his head. "You are no Spaniard."

"*Madre Dios, rascal*——"

"You do not swear enough," said the Englishman calmly. Raoul at once produced him several oaths more, but he continued, unheeding: "I am glad you are not a Spaniard. I do not like Spaniards. And I have to ask you to serve me."

Raoul gasped. He protests that it is indecent to say what you mean. So he gasped, and the Englishman went placidly on with his broken Spanish.

"I owe you something already. Those fellows who set upon you were looking for me. I would have helped you if they had not run so soon. You faced them; you are not a coward. I like that. Then

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you went into the house. I want to know if you will go there again. I want you to take a letter from me to——”

Raoul brought his feet down to the floor with a bang. “Oh, the devil! Peter the third!” says he. “I do not understand.”

“You were not meant to. Go on.”

“I want you to take a letter from me to Mistress Catarina Fruytiers secretly. No one else must know of it.” He hesitated and flushed. “I—you—there may be expense——”

“I promise you there will be,” said Raoul, “Also, my Englishman, I carry no letter without knowing what is inside of it.”

The Englishman looked him between the eyes. “I ask for your honor.”

“I sell that, faith, every day.”

“I ask you for your honor,” said the Englishman again.

“At your service.” Raoul shrugged his shoulders lightly. But the Englishman, still gazing full upon him, held out his hand. Raoul waited a while before he took it.

“I shall tell her that I love her with all my heart—that I shall love her always.” Raoul yawned. “I shall pray her be ready to fly with me——”

RAOUL'S SUITS

“Bringing, it is understood, her dowry.”

“God’s wounds!” The English oath roared out. “You—you—do you think that I know or care if she have a penny?”

“It seems,” said Raoul, “I shall have to ask your pardon.” The Englishman bowed stiffly. “Nevertheless, my Englishman, if I were you I should bear my own love-letters.”

“If I do I am caught. I am perhaps hanged.”

Raoul flopped back in his chair. “Oh, Peter,” says he with a sneer, “Peter after all. . . . In fact, my Englishman, you are not very brave.”

“It serves neither my lady nor me,” said the Englishman simply, “that I should be hanged.”

“You are vain. . . . Now—you spoke of her flying with you. How, my friend, do you fly?”

“I do not know.”

“I was sure of it!”

“I must tell you—I met my lady two years ago when I came here a venturer in a bark of Gresham’s. Now I am come in my own ship, the *Bonny Kate*. I went to her guardian, that rascal Jan van Hessels, to ask her for my wife. He turned me out of his house. He told the Spanish commandant here that I was a rogue, a spy for the Prince of Orange and Boisot. So I am ordered to sail with my ship by sundown

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to-morrow if I would not be hanged. And I have not even seen her. I was stealing there in the twilight when those rogues tried to beat you. He has a guard of them, I suppose. Well! My ship will drop down the river on the afternoon tide. But I shall stay. I do not know more than that."

"But I do. And you will not look well on a gallows. I am sure you would wriggle clumsily. My Englishman, be wise and sail away."

The square face hardened. "I do not go without my lady."

Raoul looked at him a while curiously. Then, "I suppose," he said, "I suppose you know that you are infinitely unworthy?"

The Englishman laughed. "I am not a fool." Then the laugh died. "I shall merit her never."

Raoul lay back, a queer little smile on his lips. "Yes. You would hang badly," he murmured. He sat up with a jerk. "Go aboard your ship in the morning. Sail away in the afternoon."

"But then—but I—but——"

"All the buts are my affair."

The Englishman stared with uplifted eyebrows. "What do you mean? What will you do?"

"I will tell you when I have done it."

The Englishman asked much more and learnt

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little—is it strange? At last a letter was written, and went into Raoul's breast. A ring with three sapphires passed to Raoul's finger. Then the Englishman stuttered, and, "As touching the matter of expense——" he began.

Raoul flushed. "Go to the devil," said he, and went out.

With one stocking off and one stocking on and no more, Raoul sat upon the edge of his bed. "Yes. That," says he, "is a man of a kind. Now what kind am I?"

On that he went to sleep. It seems that he arose betimes, and did certain small matters of tailoring and correspondence. Then he went down to the sailors' taverns on the quay. He wanted some worthy soul to occupy the alderman's attention. "For an honest knave take a sailor" ('tis a maxim of his). "For your dishonest knave the soldier is nonpareil." He was, you remember, a soldier himself. From the sailors' taverns he came back to breakfast, and in due season to the street of St. Anthony and Master Alderman Jan van Hessels.

Fellows lounging under the eaves regarded him nervously and slunk away. The alderman's guard were not minded to mistake him twice. Raoul swaggered up to the house door, and rapped with

power. When it was opened he stalked in, and in the loudest of voices, "Announce the Señor Don Juan Perez," he cried. "You understand? The Señor—Don—Juan—Perez." It was, in fact, clear enough for all the household and half the street to understand. The serving lad gaped upon him. "The Señor Don Juan Perez!" Raoul thundered, and the lad backed, bowing, and hurried off.

Raoul sauntered through the hall. There was a swift rustle of skirts on the stair, and Catarina came down upon him, her cheeks aflame. "You? You dare?" she said.

Raoul said nothing. He held out his left hand with the fingers wide apart. On one of them gleamed the ring of three sapphires. She paled, she started back, her hand to her breast. Raoul put his hands behind him. "Trust. Follow." Raoul's lips framed the words, but made scarce a sound. The serving lad was coming towards them.

Again Raoul came to the presence of Master Alderman Jan van Hessels. Now he took off his hat, and saluted elaborately. Catarina watched in amaze.

"Pray, sir, what obtains me this honor?" says the alderman nervously.

"Burgess, I shall expound. First, I discover that I was something harsh with you last night. I learn

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that you have good cause to suspect danger (though, by Sant' Iago, to take me for a hired bravo was diabolic insolence. But pass—pass). I say you may well suspect danger. How do I know it? Mark me now! I betake me to the 'Duke of Alva' tavern. I drink a measure of Xeres wine. (Xeres quotha! Bah! But pass.) There be two seafaring rogues chattering. I catch your name. I incline my ear. Have a care, burgess! There is villainy toward. They speak of you—of your ward—of your wealth, too, burgess. They say that both rightly pertain to one Peter van Hessels. Now who a plague is Peter van Hessels, burgess?"

"I know, sir, I know," cried the alderman. "Go on, sir."

"But you——" cried Catarina. Raoul waved his hand carelessly, and the sapphires flashed. Catarina gulped and was silent.

"Go on? Faith, I have done. They said that there is one in the town minded to seize ward and wealth for this Peter. So have a care, burgess!"

"I will, sir, I will indeed. I thank you. I am most grateful. I—— Pray you, what like were these two fellows?"

Raoul began an elaborate and pictorial description, in the midst of which came a journeyman to say there

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was a sailor in the shop with a letter which he would give to none but the alderman. The alderman, rising, begged Raoul to await him.

“If you are long I must needs depart; but,” said Raoul politely, “I will surely come again.”

The alderman was hardly gone before Raoul sprang to Catarina and caught her hands. “Your own chamber! Quick!”

“Sir!” the girl gasped—“you—I——”

“If you love your love!” The sapphires blazed in her sapphire eyes.

“Yes—yes.”

Raoul let her go and signed to the door. She looked long in his eyes, and turned and led the way. Out in the hall, “Lady, I give you good day,” said Raoul aloud, and stalked noisily to the door of the street. He opened it, he slammed it again and stayed inside. Then swift, noiseless, he stole back to her, and “Quick!” he whispered, and they fled upstairs together. A moment, and they were together in her little low room, she pale and panting. Raoul swept one glance round, and got into the wardrobe. “Lock me in,” he whispered, grinning from among her fragrant dresses. “Go down then and tell the good man I am gone.”

“But—but——”

RAOUL'S SUITS

“There is never a but in love.”

The door was locked upon him. . . . Raoul protests that it was long hours ere there came a rustle without and the click of a key—it was opened.

Raoul came out with a gasp: “Phew! I shall never love lavender again;” and he sat down on her bed and fanned himself, and smiled at Catarina.

Catarina was pale still, and her bosom quick, but her blue eyes shone. “I pray you——” she began in a whisper. Raoul sprang to her. Her hand was in his, his arm about her before she knew it. He drew the lithe gracious form against him, he bent to the blood in her cheek—she turned and the blue eyes met his. She did not struggle nor cry. “By your honor, by your faith,” she said quickly, softly, “have you nothing from him who gave you the ring?”

“He!” Raoul laughed. “Another without the wit to win you himself—another proxy lover who——”

“Who trusted me to you,” said Catarina.

Raoul let her go. His swarthy face paled, and he said something behind his teeth. He plucked the letter out of his bosom and gave it her. Catarina had not moved at all, and stood still close to his heart. In a moment: “Yes. He says I am to trust you altogether,” she said, and looked up to him smiling.

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Raoul flung away, and the word on his lips was an oath.

“Tell me—tell me everything.”

Raoul, his back to her, drew a long breath. It was a moment before he came to take her hand. Then his face was placid. “Lady, last night I told you that I came from Peter van Hessels. It is remarkable; but I said the truth. I found, lady, you were worthy a man. And after, by a chance, I found the man of whom you are worthy.”

Smile and blush came with darkening eyes. “Indeed I am not,” she said.

Raoul laughed. “You and he will agree marvelously.” She looked in his eyes a moment. “On my honor, lady, I mean you faithfully.” She bowed. “Last night I gave you a woman’s due. I did not know that I took another man’s right. And now—well, one is man after all. But what you cannot give I do not care to take. You love him. You trust me. That is to be enough.” Her eyes thanked him. “Ay, *pardieu*. He has all of your heart. But is the poor man never to have the rest?”

Her bosom rose, her eyes glowed gloriously . . . then she flung her arms wide. “But I am in prison—I am chained here!” she cried. “Ah, if I were free——!”

RAOUL'S SUITS

Raoul smiled. "Behold the way to freedom," said he, and began to take off his breeches.

In a moment they lay on the floor, and he stood up still in breeches. He dragged his cloak from the wardrobe, and behold it was two cloaks and a doublet to boot. He brought a hat out of his breast. "And I pray heaven they fit," said he.

"You mean——" Catarina gasped.

"I think they explain themselves."

Catarina looked down at the clothes and blushed at them, and then smiled. "But even if I did——"

"Then behold the Señor Don Jaun Perez provided with a charming page."

"But how—how is the Señor Don Juan Perez to come out of my chamber?"

"Doubtless, my fair page, your servants eat dinner. While they eat, we flee."

"Oh—oh, dare we?"

"Dare we anything else?"

She turned away from his eyes. "The alderman and I—we dine before the servants."

"Admirable! You will have a dinner inside you to give you heart for this heroical enterprise."

Catarina took up the hat and tried it on, and put it away. Catarina held up the doublet and put it down again. "I am sure they will be much

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too big," she murmured. Raoul stared upon the wall. . . .

The clocks began striking noon. "Oh! this is our dinner-hour," Catarina cried.

Raoul flung his clothes to the wardrobe and went in after them. Again the door was locked upon him. "And I dine upon lavender," he groaned. It was, he avers, again hours before he was let out.

"They are all at dinner" (Catarina was breathless); "the alderman is gone out."

"Oh, amiable old man!" said Raoul, and laid out the clothes on the bed in the manner of a valet.

Catarina drew back. "But he told me again I was not to go outside the house. And I am sure—I am sure the men in the street are ordered to stop me."

"In skirts only," said Raoul, and went back to the wardrobe. "Quick! quick! Love waits." And he pulled the door to upon him.

Sooner than he had thought there was a timid "You may come out," and he came out to see a very little person in the corner trying to shroud herself in the cloak. "Oh, please do not look. But is it—is it——?" gasped Catarina.

Raoul slouched the hat down over her golden hair, took the cloak away, and flung it about her in new

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fashion. He stepped back two paces to examine her. She was all trembling, with scarlet cheeks.

Raoul swung away, opened the door, listened, stole out, listened again, and beckoned. Swift, light-footed, they crept downstairs and out. She crowded upon him as he opened the door, but Raoul swept her aside. He stood still in the sunlight, and bowed to some invisible person within. Then he cocked his hat. "Swagger! swagger!" he muttered, and let her shut the door.

Down the street they went, and the men under the eaves looked at them curiously. Raoul began to talk loud in Spanish. He abused his page with fluency, and the page, as was natural, flushed and stared at the ground.

Then out of a house came Alderman Jan van Hessels.

"Look, look!" the page gasped, and started back. Raoul's hand closed like a vice on her arm.

Then he slid before her, and "Ha, burgess, well met!" says he, and he struck an attitude, hand on left hip, right leg forward. "Shall we finish our talk?"

The alderman bustled up. "At your very good pleasure, sir. I was hoping to see you speedily, sir. Now I am anxious—much anxious——"

"Walk your anxieties my way." Raoul whirled

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round upon his page, and struck her across the cheek with his glove. "What, rogue! Must you be eaves-dropping? Walk ten good paces behind, or your sides shall taste my whip." So they went on. "Never heed him," says Raoul carelessly. "'Tis but a fool. But I ride my lads on the curb.— And what was in the letter, burgess?"

"Sir, it was brazen. It was an infamy. It demanded my ward in marriage for my nephew Peter van Hessels. And it bade me post my answer on the market cross. And it said that if I would not give her she would be taken," the alderman spluttered. "Consider it, sir."

"I do, I do. And from whom came this letter, burgess?"

"It was signed Raoul de Tout le Monde. Raoul de Tout le Monde! Bah!"

"Bah! Bah!" said Raoul with enthusiasm. "And what will you do, burgess?"

"Do, sir? I go, sir, to my friend the burgomaster and my very good friend the commandant, to pray them have search made through the town for this fellow, this Raoul de Tout le Monde!"

"By Sant' Iago!" cried Raoul, "I hope you may find him!"

"I thank you, sir. I thank you. I am your

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debtor." They walked on a little more, the alderman expending himself in wrath. "My way lies here, sir," says he at last, at a cross street.

"And mine there," said Raoul. "But one word, burgess. What ails your nephew, that he must not wed the girl? A nephew of yours, faith, must needs be an honest gentleman!"

The alderman coughed. "You are to know, sir, that my ward inherits certain small moneys, and——"

"And till she is wed you keep them. Oh, you are a warm man, a wily soul. No Raoul of any world will ever come over you, eh, burgess?" Raoul nudged his ribs.

The alderman looked austere a moment. Then he grinned. With two knowing nods they parted.

Raoul turned down a lane to the quay, and beckoned to his page. She came, and he took her arm, but she would not look at him. Raoul peeped under the slouched hat.

"Tears? *Mordieu*, remember you are a man!"

"I—I—oh, forgive me! I thought—I thought you were going to give me up—and indeed I never felt so much a woman."

"There is one who will not complain," said Raoul. To which she had nothing at all to say.

At the first stairs they took boat and rowed out to

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the *Bonny Kate*. Curious faces looked over the bulwarks: a ropeladder was thrown to them. "Oh, but I never can," cried Catarina, and nearly fell into the sea.

Raoul flung her over his shoulder and climbed up. Over the bulwarks he came full upon his Englishman, who recoiled, staring at the page, and cried: "Why, who is this, sir?"

"A man of no account. Go to your own shoulders," says Raoul, and put Catarina into his arms.

The man gave a wordless cry, and she. Then she was crushed to his breast, and his kiss bore back her head. Down fell the hat, and her golden hair, her maiden coif, showed clear to the sunshine.

A moment only he held her on his heart. Then he sprang to the mizzen rigging. "Hands to the capstan! With a will now, lads, with a will!" The ship throbbed with life.

"Heave oh! Heave oh! Round and around! . . . Heave short! Break her out!" The sailors' cries roared about them. "Anchor's apeak! Inboard haul! Ready jib!" They were slipping out to sea on full ebb.

Bergen shore was dull on the horizon when they passed the word for the parson. Raoul admired then the foresight of his Englishman.

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So they hove-to, and were married. Raoul, as was wholly fitting, gave her away. And when she was Mistress Arthur Stukely (of Yealm in Devonshire) she turned to Raoul, and smiling and blushing said, "Sir—the woman's due is your right." And Raoul bowed and kissed her a last time. . . .

From the quay of Rotterdam he watched a white sail, and sighed. "A *pis aller*, poor lass," said he.

CHAPTER IV

THE BLOOD MONEY

IT was the spring of the year, and the limes were budding pale in Delft. The little windows of "The Red Heart's" guest-chamber were flung wide, and within a peat fire glowed fragrant. That was for Raoul. "I never could breathe your stale air," says he, "but I never would freeze without cause." There he sat with his chine of beef and his "good, lustful Burgundy," well content with fate. Raoul had prospered. Van Meteren, the goldsmith of Amsterdam, had a thousand golden florins of his in trust; there were a thousand more with the Fuggers, and more yet in other hands. It was no ill estate for a man to have made himself in a decade.

But Raoul had been constructed to prosper in this world. He came to manhood with many abilities and no illusions. As a man he grudged himself nothing, but he wasted nothing. Always he thought of his profit first—sometimes last as well.

While he sat with his wine and his beef "The Red Heart's" landlord, Blue-nosed Peter, was reading to

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him. Peter thought well of his reading, and adorned it with quavers and thrills and hoarse notes of horror. He was, says Raoul, fiddle and big drum both, and a keen relish to meat. Peter boomed on:

“We declare him traitor and recreant, enemy of ourselves and of our country. . . . We expose the said WILLIAM OF NASSAU as an enemy of the human race—giving his property to all who may seize it. And if any one of our subjects, or any stranger, should be found sufficiently generous of heart to rid us of this pest, delivering him to us alive or dead, or taking his life, we will cause to be furnished to him immediately after the deed shall have been done the sum of TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND FLORINS IN GOLD. If he have committed any crime, however heinous, we promise to pardon him: and if he be not already noble we will ennoble him for his valor.

Given under our hand,

PHILIP R.,

Count of Holland and Hainault.’

Peter ceased, glared dramatically at Raoul, and crushed the paper together in his hands. Then, “Damnable, sir!” says he. “Thrice and four times damnable! A man’s blood boils——” here his wife called him, and he ran.

Raoul lay back in his chair and savored his wine. “Damnable,” he repeated—“but very interesting.”

So King Philip of Spain bid for a murder—you will find him almost adequately abused in the histories—and Raoul considered of it. And next morning, in

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the twilight before the dawn, Raoul rode out of Delft, and eastward.

The Spanish army lay in the villages about Tilburg, and with it was its general, the Prince of Parma, a gentleman of high skill in negotiating murders and other matters. As the sun was falling behind bars of gold, Raoul rode up to the low red roof of Lillo village. There was not much of Lillo—a church, a tavern, and a dozen of houses; but a pennon floating above the largest of them proclaimed the lodging of the Prince of Parma. As Raoul came to the tavern two men went into the church.

Raoul fed his horse and himself, and lounged at the tavern door in the twilight. Two men came out of the church. They took little demure steps; their eyes were downcast. “Here be two who should have been women,” Raoul muttered. One was short, yellow-faced, with hair like hay on his chin and lip. The other might have been tall had he stood straight, but his back bent and his shoulders were rounded; his feeble chin appeared through a thin, long, brown beard. Both of them were peculiarly lean. They passed by Raoul’s curious eyes and entered the tavern.

Raoul was interested. It was his business to be interested in things out of the common, and men who spent two hours in church were most uncommon.

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He turned into the tavern after them. They were making a frugal meal of eggs and vegetables and small beer.

“Mary Mother, St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalen be with you,” said Raoul devoutly.

The two bowed and crossed themselves at the Virgin’s name. “And with you, sir—with you,” they said with unction.

Raoul composed his face to display solemn sorrow, and sat down. He sighed deeply. “Pray, sir, could you tell me who is the saint of yon little church?” he asked.

“St. Denis, sir.”

“Ah, good St. Denis! He has been much my friend.” Raoul muttered what was presumed to be a prayer.

The two—they were singularly insignificant men—looked at him with favor. A glance passed between them, and Raoul was asked to share their meal.

Raoul had supped, but he had always room for more. In a moment he was devouring barley bread and coleworts, and stating that he loved to lodge by a church. The sound of the angelus, you must know, brought peace to his soul.

The smaller man agreed that it was ill, and very ill, to be far off from holy rites.

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“Alack, sir, ’tis too true!” sighed Raoul.

The larger, the bearded man, looked at Raoul and at his beer, and fidgeted. He was plainly yearning to make a speech. Raoul assumed an air of anxious expectation. The man blushed behind his thin beard, and began in a shrill voice nervously: “I think, sir—when you speak of the joy of being near the church—I think of those who have cast down the church, who have cut themselves off from her gentle rites. Sir, in all Holland and Zeeland no angelus rings to-night. Sir, I yearn——”

“Infidels! Heretics!” cried Raoul. “Let them die and be damned.”

“Nay, sir, nay,” they both called out together. “Rather let us seek——”

“——to compel them back to the Church——”

“——if by any means we may save some.”

Raoul shook his head. His was a secular little soul. He never understood why men should kill in the name of a religion or die for it. But he shook his head, and he looked fanatically gloomy, and, “Stamp them out. They are heretics and accursed,” said he.

“But they may be brought back to the faith.”

“Not while”—Raoul stopped and spat—“the devil William of Nassau lives.”

There was silence. Raoul had flung himself back

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in his chair, his chin on his chest, his eyes almost shut. But he saw the two look at each other. "William of Nassau will die some day," said the bearded man.

Raoul shook his head. "The devil his master has given him a charm against wounds."

The bearded man changed color and started; then looked at his fellow. But he gave a short laugh. "Oh, God can kill him," said he.

Raoul allowed his eyes to open. Raoul stared full. "Ay: but when?"

Again there was silence. Again the two passed a glance between themselves. Then they rose together in a hurry, and with a bare good-night left him.

Raoul sat alone, swarthy brow furrowed, hands clenched. He made very sure that they were in bed before he let himself go.

In the morning he was careful to take his breakfast at the same moment as they. They were taciturn; they ate little, and went out in a hurry. Watching from behind the shutter, Raoul saw them go into Parma's lodging. Then he completed a large breakfast. And then he also went to call upon the Prince of Parma. He announced himself as Jacopo Perrotti, a poor gentleman of Siena.

What was his business? With the utmost respect

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he must decline to tell any man save the Prince. First a lacquey, then a secretary, then an aide, bore away that answer. At last he confided (with an air of great mystery) in the Marquis of Richebourg that he had something of great moment to impart concerning the holy enterprise of slaying William of Nassau, called Prince of Orange. That was enough. He was brought to Parma's presence.

"I have never," Raoul writes, "seen a man so like myself,"—and saving that the Prince of Parma was taller than he by head and shoulders (which Raoul has omitted to notice) and showed no trace of humor, the likeness was curiously close. Both faces were bold, aquiline, and high-browed. Their hair was black and cropped close, their skin swarthy by nature and tanned by the weather; their dark eyes were bright, restless, and large.

Raoul looked and approved (he mentions modestly that Parma was his ideal of a man), and wasted no time. "Your Highness! learning that King Philip desires aid in a holy enterprise, I present myself," says he in Italian.

Parma looked through him. "Kings require service, not aid, sirrah."

Raoul shrugged his shoulders. "I am not a man of words, your Highness. The King desires to find

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one who will rid him of William of Nassau. Here am I."

Parma had his head at an angle, like one who listens for faint sounds. "And you are——?" he asked without moving.

"Jacopo Perrotti of Siena, gentleman of fortune."

"And you offer?"

"I go to Holland. With some small matter of a petition I present myself to William of Nassau. I leave my dagger in his bowels."

"Why will you do this?"

Raoul struck an attitude. "Conceiving William of Nassau to be the enemy of God and man, our Holy Father the Pope and the King of Spain, I desire to slay him and win my salvation."

"You expect no reward but salvation."

"*Madonna*, yes," said Raoul bluntly. "I desire to save my soul, Highness, but also I desire to provide for my body. Twenty-five thousand florins the King promises for the deed. I shall claim that. Also I claim something in hand—a trifle of two thousand florins or more of earnest."

"Nothing is offered till the deed is done."

"If nothing is paid the deed will never be done."

All this while Parma's head had been turned a

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little for keen listening. He moved it now. "I will consider, Messer Jacopo," said he.

Raoul flamed up. "Consider? The devil! Consider? Oh, if your Highness has commissioned another, I give you joy of him and I take my leave."

"If I have commissioned a hundred, what is it to you, sirrah?"

"It is this, by the Pope: that I will not be caught by other men's blunders."

"By other men's blunders you shall not be caught, Messer Jacopo. . . . You shall be my guest for a while. You interest me." He turned to his secretary. "See that the gentleman is—entertained . . . I think you said you were from Siena, Messer Jacopo?"

"From Siena, Highness."

"Ah . . . a good-morning, Messer Jacopo."

With perfect Spanish politeness Raoul was conducted to a room and shut in it. Agreeable chairs were brought for him, and food and wine. But he was locked in.

It occurred to Raoul that he had underrated the Prince of Parma. He had not supposed the gentleman so like himself. And he was discomposed. If Parma were to make inquiries concerning Messer Jacopo Perrotti—if Romero or Valdez or Borgia saw his

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face—he might well be known for the man he was. And then—“a hundred burnings and a thousand hangings,” Raoul writes, “would scarce clear my account with Spain.” And Parma suspected already. That curious keen listening—that question about Siena: Raoul understood them too well for his comfort. His Italian, learnt of his old master Taddeo of Brescia, must have the wrong savor. In fact, he had walked full into a trap. It annoyed him to be there: it annoyed him more that he was there by his own foolish fault. And yet—was it his fault? He had made himself Italian that Parma, Italian, too, might be more ready to trust him. And how was he to know that Siena had another dialect than Brescia? Raoul—it is extremely like him—seems to have spent some hours in proving that he had made no mistakes.

And then he thought of escape. The door was fast. If he were to break it with dagger and shoulder, the noise would rouse the guard. The window was thirty feet off the ground, and if he dropped he would come on the pikes of the sentries. They brought him a good dinner. He received it most affably and ate it. The secretary, peeping in later, found him spinning pence with both hands, and was gayly asked to join the game.

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Night came, and he made his supper and went to bed. A little after his lights were out the secretary peeped in again. Raoul snored with enthusiasm. But a moment after he was out of bed and disposing the bolster to look like a body. A moment more, and he was crouching in the big hearth. Then he went up the chimney.

It seemed to him, he records, that he made noise enough in that chimney to wake all Brabant. Before he banged his head on the coping stone he was quite sure that he was choked. But Brabant still slept, and Raoul was still alive when his black face came out to the cold night air, and he rubbed the soot out of his eyes and gasped, and saw the stars. He crawled down the tiles to the back of the house and slid by a water-spout to the ground. Swiftly, keeping to the shadow, he made for the tavern. They were all safe asleep there. Scrambling up to the loft, and dropping down to the manger, he won into the locked stable. His own horse was there alone. In a few minutes Raoul was clear away from Lillo and the Prince of Parma.

All night he rode with the North Star for his guide. There was no safe halting south of the Maas. Not till he and his horse came reeling into Ruydorp at high noon did he grant himself bath and bed. He slept

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till dawn. Then he bartered his horse for a better, and bought a hat, and was off again to the north.

He was in a desolate country beyond the Lek, a country of poplars and rank grass, when he found company. Before him rode two travelers. He gained upon them swiftly at first but as soon as they saw him they quickened their pace, and for a while there was something of a race under the poplars. Raoul drew his hat over his eyes and stared through the sunlight, and gritted his teeth, and sat down in the saddle. Then, while one of them still spurred on, the other wheeled and halted all across the track. "Pray, sir, do you——" he began, and Raoul reined up under his nose. "*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis!* What have you to do here in Holland?" he gasped. He was the bearded man of Lillo tavern.

"The same as you," said Raoul. "Come, sir, let us forward." He walked his horse against the other, shoulder to quarter.

Jammed together, they lurched on. "The same?—what do you mean? Who sent you?" cried the bearded man, jabbing at his bridle. "Halt, I tell you—halt!"

Raoul pressed on. "I come from his Highness the Prince, and——"

"That is a lie!" cried the bearded man. "It is a

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lie! You are a rogue, a spy." He reined off, and plucked a pistol from his holsters.

It was quickly done, but not quickly enough. Raoul's horse bounded under the spur, his sword darted out, and was home in the bearded man's breast. And he reeled and fell forward, and shot his pistol into his own horse's neck. The poor brute neighed sharp, then quivered, and fell over. Raoul was down almost as soon, and his ready fingers at the man's doublet. There was no strength to stay him, and soon he rose with a fat leathern bag of money, a bundle of papers, a rosary, and a Book of Hours in his hands.

"That—that"—the dying man gasped: "for the love of Christ give me that"—he pointed with trembling fingers to the rosary. Raoul shrugged his shoulders; but he propped the man against his dead horse and put the beads in his hands. "*Salve, Regina, Mater—misericordiæ—vita, dulcedo—spes nostra—salve—*" Raoul heard the prayer and the sobs as he sprang again to the saddle.

"Here is a pretty fool to come a-killing!" he muttered between his teeth.

His nostrils were wide, his eyes dilated, his cheeks were pale beneath the tan. He sent his horse along at the best of its speed. Through the rank grass meadows the track ran level and straight, and his prey

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was full in sight. He was flogging and spurring, and shifting in the saddle to look round at Raoul. Swiftly Raoul gained. He was a horseman, and the other plainly none. Raoul had a pistol out and fired. The other tumbled forward in his saddle, but he rose again as the rent sleeve flapped back from his bridle arm. His horse lost its stride a moment; Raoul drew up on his quarter, dagger ready. The other turned: the lean, yellow face, the hay mustache, were scarce an arm's length away. He fired his pistol point-blank into the chest of Raoul's horse. It stumbled and fell, and Raoul went over its head.

Raoul arose with torn hand and arm. His quarry was a hundred yards away, galloping still, and he turned to see his own horse struggling in its death agony. Shaken and smarting, he stood there and swore, and gnawed his fingers and swore again. He was beaten.

There was no man nor beast to help him on. No town lay on his track for many a mile. He must needs tramp on and on and on in his riding boots, and every moment Parma's assassin drew farther and farther away. Raoul clenched his fists and began to march. Before him fleeing horse and man diminished, turned to a dark speck in the grey-green horizon, and faded out. The sun beat down upon him from a cloudless sky,

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and soon every inch of him was soaked in sweat. He had begun to walk at a mad pace in his passion, but now he forced himself to slacken, for he knew his strength would never last him out if he went at speed. Mile after mile of brown track passed behind him, the shadows lengthened and the air grew cooler. Behind him the sun was setting in a glorious crimson sky, but he knew it only by the blood-red pools that gave him drink. As twilight fell he began to count the countless poplars till the figures maddened him. The stars were clear before he came on a little steadying. There he offered great sums for a horse, but there was none to buy. He got a draught of milk, and with a chunk of rye bread and a strip of goat's flesh to munch went tramping on again.

Poplars rustled silvery white beneath the moon. Blue dancing shadows mocked at his weary feet. No thought at all worked in him. His mind was empty, as if he slept. He was a machine—a machine to get on—on—on. The steady, endless thud of his own feet deafened him, dazed him. On, and on, and on, till the moon was gone and only the stars were white in the void. It seemed to him that he never moved at all. His legs rose and fell, but the ground stood still, still as the North Star on his right hand. Once a whinnying horse startled him, and he tried to catch it;

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but the beast fled away, and Raoul turned to toil at the track again—numb with weariness, on—on—on.

The dark sky paled before him and the stars died. Big massed clouds loomed grey in a light blue heaven. The sun came. Still on he went, his lips cracked, his mouth dry and dusty. A brown, straight ribbon stretching into the golden eye of the sun, the track lay before him, and he plodded into the light, stooping over short feeble steps. At last a thin column of smoke smirched the sun's face. The white and red of a farmhouse gleamed. Raoul broke into a shambling run.

Milk and wine! Ten florins for milk and wine! A hundred florins for a horse! Square stolid Dutch folk gazed at him open-mouthed. Fumbling with trembling fingers in his clothes, he brought out gold and tossed it on the table. Wine they had none, but milk was his in plenty and a flask of rye spirit to temper it. Gasping still with the raw fire of it, he hauled himself across a fat Flanders mare and lumbered off. The blood drove faster through him; his mind woke again. He looked up at the sun. Fourteen, fifteen hours he must have walked. Rotterdam could not be far away. With a fresh horse from there he might be in Delft by noon. Still there was time . . . still there was time. . . . Over the river levels the

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great beast thundered on. There was a scent of the sea in the cool morning air, and Raoul laughed and shouted and sang.

Now the land fled from beneath him, the broad water rushed by his side. Gulls skimmed its bosom, flashes of white and a thicket of masts stood clear against the sky. Rotterdam rose white. Houses shut him in on either hand, the causeway narrowed and crooked this way and that. Raoul drew rein in the courtyard of "The Boar." The mare was steaming sweat; Raoul slid off clumsily, and his stiff legs failed, and he clutched the mare for help. A bowl of soup and a cup of wine while they saddled him a fresh beast, and he was mounted and off again.

And now his eyes were smarting and his brain throbbed, and every nerve in him ached. But he kept his grip of the saddle, and he drove his horse on pitilessly. He was to win, he, little Raoul de Tout le Monde, in spite of all the devils in hell. Let Parma's butchers take heed to themselves. Little Raoul was back in Delft. His Highness of Parma should know his master in craft. Raoul dashed on through the sun-glare red-spurred. He was to win! He was to win! And he laughed to his pains.

Delft rose out of the ground before him. Its canals flashed back the light. The fragrance of its limes

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came down the wind. Past the first houses and on to stones with a clatter he came, and the slender tower of the old kirk leant across the street before him. Raoul was checking his speed and drawing in to the side, when there broke upon him the sound of a shot and a great shout, and a man ran madly out of the old kirk door. Raoul drove in his spurs and was after him. Twenty yards away stood a horse in waiting. The man had come to it, he was clutching the bridle, when Raoul snatched his collar from behind and checked his horse with a jerk. They slid grating over the stones. The face that looked up at Raoul was the yellow, lean face of Parma's assassin.

Halberdiers had run out of the old kirk shouting, brandishing weapons, and they took the fellow from Raoul and were near tearing him in pieces as they bore him off. Raoul walked his horse back to the old kirk, and came down from the saddle and reeled in.

The place was a house, and the lodging of the Prince, William of Nassau. The hall was thronged, and Raoul gasped out hoarsely to any who might answer, "I caught him. I caught him. But what had he done?"

"Shot at the Prince," a dozen whispered.

Raoul pushed his way unsteadily through them.

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But the stair was kept by a couple of soldiers. All was silent above. . . .

A little man, cuirassed and grim, with curious green eyes, came down.

“Colonel—colonel—in the name of God tell me ——” Raoul gasped, and lurching forward caught at his arm.

Colonel Newstead held him up, looked in a moment’s amaze at the face streaked with dust and sweat, the sunken, red-rimmed eyes, the quivering limbs. “The Prince is dead, sir,” said he.

Raoul’s mouth opened wide, and he gasped. Then he staggered back and fell on a bench, and bowed himself and sobbed like a woman.

There was many a muttered curse, they say, and prayers and tears. Slowly the throng passed out, and the great bell began to toll. But Raoul still sat there huddled together, writhing, moaning.

Newstead took him by the arm. “Enough, *cordieu*, enough! Are you a man?”

Raoul tottered to his feet, and his face was hideous. He looked in Newstead’s eyes, and made a queer noise in his throat and fell swooning.

* * * * *

When Raoul woke again it was the next day. He rolled out of bed in the sunshine sore-footed, but

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hale, with a great emptiness in him. They told him he was in Newstead's quarters, and plenteous good food was brought him. He ate and drank, and the blood in him beat quick and warm, and his grief came back to him.

Parma had conquered. The murder was done. Parma had conquered, after all. He had spent body and wit in vain. He had failed—failed damnably. He sat there, his head in his hands, and devised oaths at himself.

Ay, he had failed, curst blundering fool, and William of Nassau lay dead. The one man of his world who was something more than a man, who had flung away wealth and ease, who had never failed trust, who had believed the impossible and achieved it—Raoul had let him die, and himself still lived. Shame tortured him. Folly on folly, blunder on blunder, or the Prince would still be alive. Was there a dull coward in all the two Hollands that could have done more amiss?

He sat huddled together, biting his fingers.

“You are yourself again?” A brusque soldierly voice, and Colonel Newstead stood before him.

“I thank you, I thank you,” and Raoul turned away.

“It was you, I think, sir, that caught this vile mur-

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derer?" There was no answer. "You caught him as he came to his horse?" Newstead repeated.

"Ay, ay," said Raoul wearily.

"I am charged to acquaint you that the Estates of Holland vote you five hundred florins of reward."

"A reward?" cried Raoul. "My God, not that!" He pushed back his chair and limped to the window.

"Why should you not take reward?"

Raoul felt the keen eyes upon him from behind. After a moment he turned and came forward a pace. "It is my fault the murder was done."

Newstead did not move. It was a moment before he spoke. "Since you have said so much, you must say more."

"I am ready," Raoul said simply, and told his doings as they are told here. Newstead stood still, his green eyes gazing steadily, his face unmoved. "And so I was beaten. I failed. I was late," Raoul ended. . . .

"And still you must say more. You offered Parma to do the murder for money. You meant to take his money?"

"I meant to take his money," Raoul echoed.

"You meant to do the murder?"

Raoul shrugged his shoulders and laughed. "Does it matter what I answer?"

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"I think it matters," said the Englishman.

"Then I answer no, *mordieu!*" Raoul cried, with darkening cheeks. "I meant to make money out of him—yes. But I meant to spy out his plans, I meant to find his butchers. I meant to save the Prince from him. *Cœur de Dame*, that is why I went. . . ." He laughed. "Meant! Oh, ay, I meant brave things. And this is what I have done. . . ." He stared into Newstead's keen eyes. "No; you will not believe me, and I do not care if you believe me or no. . . . No man hates me more than I hate myself." He turned away.

Newstead put a hand on his shoulder. "Come with me," he said; and Raoul went, his eyes on the ground like a criminal with his warder.

They turned into a room fragrant with flowers, a room where children were playing. A little woman, maidenly, motherly, whose hair was gleaming gold, whose cheeks like sea foam in the rosy light of dawn, turned to meet them. Newstead smiled at her: "Gabrielle, I bring you a very brave gentleman, who has done all that man might to save the Prince."

The woman held out her hand. But Raoul was staring wildly at Newstead, and there were tears in his eyes, and his throat was choked.

That is all Raoul tells. But if you care to go bur-

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rowing into the archives you will find that the reward to the man who caught the assassin was never paid, and that the Estates of Holland received of one whom they call Raoul de Monde 2,795 gold florins, "being a gift for waging the war." That must have been the money Raoul took from the man he slew on the road—Parma's blood money. So it served to fight Parma.

And what is the truth of it all? Did Raoul mean to hire himself for the murder? If Parma had paid him would he have done it? Or was it all a dare-devil scheme to trick Parma and spy out his plans and save the Prince? It is doubtless possible to believe either. Raoul himself writes: "Who thinks me ready for a butcher's work may——think so." You judge of him as you will; and your judgment judges yourself.

CHAPTER V

RAOUL'S MOUSTACHIOS

THE salt meadows of Maasluis were hazy in July heat. Raoul sprawled on a haycock and his horse nibbled it. Raoul rejoiced in being again a masterless man. Through an irritating month he had held a commission as scout master general to His Excellency Philip de Marnix, Seigneur of Sainte Aldegonde, Governor of Helvoetsluis. Remembering that Sainte Aldegonde was a gentleman who composed hymn books you need not wonder that he disagreed with Raoul. They parted as I infer without affection (Raoul's opinion of Sainte Aldegonde makes vivacious reading) and Raoul rode away back to Delft at leisure.

So he took his ease (which he complains Sainte Aldegonde never did) on a haycock and admired his own excellencies. The agreeable and familiar occupation was interrupted by a vision of two horsemen. They appeared suddenly from the shadow of a rank of poplars, they surveyed the Schiedam road and retired again into shadow. Raoul without ostenta-

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tion rolled off his haycock. If they were looking for someone it seemed superfluous to be visible.

Behind the haycock Raoul and his horse remained, both immobile, the horse munching, Raoul observant. Through the haze came yet another rider who spurred toward Schiedam. He passed the poplars, he passed the haycock. Raoul marked that his horse was jaded and dusty and damp. He was a hundred yards away. Then out from the shadow of the poplars rode the two and followed him.

Raoul yawned. "Eh, Pollux," says he to his horse, "so they are not looking for us. It is impolite." Pollux regarded him with large eyes of tranquil pity—and munched.

Raoul with his chin on the haycock stared down the Schiedam road after the one and the two. Something was afoot that he did not understand and he was annoyed. He clipped the bit into the disappointed mouth of Pollux and mounted. Since the two were hunting the one he hunted the three. . . . And he hunted them all into the "Eel and Spectacles" inn.

"For what followed," he advises you, "accuse fate and not me. I protest I was never so passive in my life. I responded merely to fate and my moustachios."

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and they whispered together a moment, and "At him, my bully, at him!" they shouted.

With oaths continuous if indistinct the drunken man rolled, lunging, at Raoul, and overreached himself, and staggered forward, to meet the straight drive of Raoul's fist and drop like a dog.

The two gaped at Raoul a moment, then one looked down to the fallen man, and "Sped, by my bones!" said he with a chuckle, and started up and ran to Raoul, crying, "Come, my lad, you were best safe away," and whirled him to the door.

Raoul let himself be whirled. "I will go—oh, yes, I will go," he stammered with much agitation, and went. The door was slammed behind him. Then, wholly calm, he walked to the window and, unseen, looked in. He saw the two down on their knees by the stunned man. They had his cuirass off, they loosed his doublet, they fumbled in his bosom. The hand of one came away with a paper in it.

Raoul leapt through the window. He darted upon them, he snatched the paper away, he sprang back flicking out his sword. They rushed upon him, but the first thrusts were his. He was impartial. Down went one with his right thigh pierced, down went the other. Raoul leapt out through the window as the alarmed landlord burst in the door.

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Dutch ejaculation and execration shattered the summer evening's calm.

Raoul spurred away from them toward Schiedam, and smiled. He approved of himself. After night-fall he sat in an inn at Vlaardingen and took his well-earned ease. With a flask of old Burgundy for counsellor he examined the captured paper. It was sealed carefully with black wax. Raoul took from his bosom a clasp knife, and opened a blade thin as a wafer and warmed that over the candle and slipped it daintily under the seals. He was not a novice.

There was revealed this epistle in Spanish:

TO DON GUZMAN de FRANQUEZA, Commandant of Schiedam—
these.

The Prince is informed that Newstead threatens you, and His Highness this day orders that two companies of shotmen with pikemen and pistoliers each a half-company and sakers four, march for Schiedam.

RICHEBOURG.

From Breda on this S. Peter's day. The bearer is Pedro Valdez, a trusty soul, whom pay fifty crowns.

R.

"But certainly!" said Raoul, with a chuckle. "Behold me Pedro Valdez." He warmed the seals over the candle and daintily pressed them down again and surveyed his handiwork. "I protest it is cheap at fifty crowns," said he, and went happy to bed.

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Next morning he rode in through the main gate of Schiedam. As he came up the market street there was some commotion. Three or four citizens gayly dressed were marching along, when out of a byway came a sergeant's guard of pikemen and bade them halt, and straightway arrested the gayest of them all, a sturdy young fellow in cloth-of-silver. He protested, his friends protested vehemently, but the pikemen listened to no argument, and thrust them aside and bore him away, cuffing, kicking, fighting like a madman.

"*Diantre!*" quoth Raoul, "there is a popinjay of energy!" and asked bystanders who the gentleman was.

"It is Gerard Reyd," came the answer, "Gerard Reyd, who was to be married this morning."

"From what folly do they save him!" said Raoul, and, riding on, observed his struggles continue. "And how human is his gratitude!" Then, with a shrug for those futile convulsions, Raoul, who himself never wasted strength, rode on to the castle and his fifty crowns.

Pedro Valdez with a letter from the Marquis of Richebourg was brought at once to the presence of Don Guzman de Franqueza. The commandant was a Spaniard of the fair breed, with golden hair and a

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handsome, humorous face. He broke the letter open carelessly, and was reading it when a captain came in to announce that the burgesses Joost Reyd and Adrian Kloet demanded to speak with his excellency. His excellency laughed. "My burgesses amuse me," quoth he. "Well! perhaps I shall amuse my burgesses."

He was still laughing when they came in—two plump Dutchmen, richly arrayed, puffing and red. "And what is my burgesses' prayer?" his excellency asked politely.

The elder of the two, a greybeard of some dignity, strode forward. "Sir," he cried, "your pikemen have arrested my son on his wedding morning——"

"Oh, give me leave! This is not his wedding morning. Faith, I doubt his wedding morning will never dawn."

The two looked at each other. "What do you mean, sir?" said one in a low voice.

"Many things. Mynheer Reyd, your good son Gerard was on his way to wed the fair Mary Kloet? And his mind is to wed her or never wed woman?"

"Ay, sir."

"Then, poor fool, he is like to die a bachelor."

"And why, sir?" cried the greybeard.

"Because he will never die her husband. Why

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again? Because that pleasure I reserve for myself. Therefore I arrested the good Gerard betimes. You behold in me, burgesses, one who purposes to die and live the fair Mary's husband. Unless in the providence of God I live her widower. Mark me, Mynheer Kloet"—he turned to the younger, the smaller man—"do you recall that I proposed myself for your daughter?"

"Ay, sir," quoth the small man sturdily. "And you were answered that the maid wished it as little as I."

"Good burgess, what she wishes is of no account. I wish for her. That determines her work in life."

"God forbid!" her father muttered.

The commandant laughed gently. "Father-in-law, you misapprehend the case. Mary's dear love Gerard lies in my castle wedded to fetter and shackle-bolt. You will give me Mary to wife with the dowry you promised Gerard, and make me, like him, the heir to all you have, or—or, father-in-law—I hang Mary's dear love Gerard from the battlements for the wind to play with."

Gasping, shuddering and chill, the two fathers shrank back. Then, hoarsely, "It is vile—it is an infamy!" cried Gerard's father. "We are free burghers all. We have rights. We——"

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The commandant laughed. "Do you indeed think that a thing like you has rights against Don Guzman de Franqueza? A Dutchman, a base burgess trader, talk of rights! You amuse me. If I deign to wed a wench of your kind——"

"For the money she brings you!" cried Joost Reyd.

The commandant waved his hand. "The base-born flesh needs gilding," quoth he.

"Sir, I beseech you consider!" cried Adrian Kloet. "Mary cannot love you. She must hate you."

The commandant laughed. "That will amuse me."

"Oh, how can it please you to wed a woman who loathes you?"

"I profess it pleases me mightily."

"Nay, sir, you jest. I pray you spare her—spare her love: let the two be free to wed and the money shall be yours—the dowry, all the rest. I will give it freely."

The commandant looked at him curiously; but in a moment,—“No, by the living God, no!” Joost Reyd thundered. “If my son be done to death, God will give him courage and us. Neither his death nor his life shall put a denier in that man’s hand.”

(Away in the background, “I am glad you are not my father,” Raoul murmured. “Or . . . or perhaps I am sorry.”)

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The commandant laughed. "My burgesses, you weep and you thunder idly. I shall spare you nothing. I will have both maid and dowry, dowry and maid."

Then Adrian Kloet drew a long breath and fell back, and, little and helpless, he looked defiance. "For the maid and her lover I answer, as God is their father, we will yield you nothing!" he cried.

"Does the maid say so indeed?" said the commandant, laughing. "Then tell her that her lover shall hang. Away, away, burgess: bear the glad tidings."

The two glared at him, impotent hands trembling with wrath. Then with a groan Joost Reyd turned and drew his friend away and out.

The commandant rose leisurely, chuckling. Raoul came from the background and stood before him. "Well, sirrah?" quoth the commandant, surprised. "Oh, ay! You are the man from Breda."

"The man," Raoul agreed, "from Breda."

"And you see we can amuse ourselves in Schiedam."

"Your excellency," Raoul agreed, "amuses me infinitely."

His excellency chuckled, and took up the letter again and again read it. "I see that I owe you something, my friend."

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Raoul bowed. "Your excellency is pleased to acknowledge it."

"Well, come to me in an hour. I go to tell this happy bridegroom his destiny and hers. And then I must dine. Faith, this business wakes the appetite."

Raoul bowed again, and went to look for a dinner himself. He too had an appetite.

The woes of the prisoned bridegroom and the bride bereft lay, he assures you, light upon his too experienced soul. "Cabbages and Dutch bridegrooms," he writes, "are two of God's creatures I could never love." He admired a little the stubborn fathers. He admired also a little the humorous ingenuity of the commandant. For the lady he was not concerned, since, as he writes, "she was like to have more salt in her life as Don Guzman's spouse than with any Dutchman inside the dykes." So, he protests, he went out of the commandant's presence eminently uninterested and impartial. I do not know whether I believe him.

Close by the castle gate he found an inn of opulent aspect, and he entered and vociferously demanded dinner. A mess of boiled beef was brought, and he sat down to it. In a moment he rapped out an oath that brought the tapster back into the room with a jump. Raoul beckoned to him: "Hither, varlet,

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hither! Boiled beef with no salt—what is it but nausea to a Christian mouth? Resolve me that, rogue.”

“Salt?” the tapster giggled. “Your honor asks for salt?”

Raoul took him by the ear. “I asked no fool to laugh,” quoth he.

“Oh!” squeaked the tapster heartily. “Alack! Oh, alack, your honor, there is no salt in all Schiedam.”

“Unsavory town. But why, rogue?”

The tapster was released, and rubbing his ear he expounded. “Your honor must know that we of Schiedam get all our salt from the sea-water pans at Saaldwyk. For a month past the Englishman Newstead has been in camp with his troops at Saaldwyk, so that he has cut us off from our salt entirely.”

“Bah!” quoth Raoul. “He does not guess how much better some of you would look pickled. Bah! Away! Bring me herbs, many herbs, to make this mess less vile.” From that and the unsalted bread he made a bad meal, and mourned: “Alas, my body. The only body I have. I wonder if you will ever forgive me. . . . You feel as if you would not. . . . Why was I such a fool as to come to this unseasoned town? For fifty crowns! Bah! five thousand would not pay me for my swallowings.”

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In a very bad temper he went back to the commandant. The commandant had a bandage about his head. Raoul was pleased to find someone else injured. "Your excellency has met a misfortune," said he, and twirled his moustachios with satisfaction. "Oh, I trust the bridegroom was not unruly."

His excellency cursed the bridegroom.

"I fear he did not appreciate your excellency's humor. I fear he——"

"He broke my head," growled his excellency. "And you may hold your tongue. Or go into double fetters like him."

Raoul bowed to his excellency. But mentally he bowed to the bridegroom—who was plainly something more than a cabbage. Raoul curled his moustachios more rotundly in the bridegroom's honor.

"Keep your cursed hands still," growled the irritable commandant.

Raoul's hands stayed still with the moustachios in them—not from obedience but amazement. "No man before," he assures you, "had ever the impudence to meddle with my moustachios' curve."

"You want fifty crowns," said the commandant. "There they are." Raoul bowed stiffly—he was upon his dignity now—and pouched them. "Now—

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you come from Breda. The Prince was there when you left: what forces had he?"

Since Raoul knew no more or perhaps less than the commandant, the answer required, you will agree, some thought. Raoul began to lie carefully and slowly, twirling his small moustachios as his way was when thinking.

"Speak out, man! speak out!" cried the impatient commandant. "You fidget with your mouth like a Barbary ape."

Raoul stopped short. "My moustachios displease your excellency?" he inquired coldly.

His excellency started up in a rage. "Away with your moustachios!" he cried. "Away with you! Shave yourself and get some sense."

Raoul went out with dignity.

But not to a barber's. He sauntered through the market-place, feeling the wronged moustachios, and reflected. "That person is wholly disgusting. Shave, quotha! The only moustachios I ever loved! I dislike him infinitely. . . . Oh, I dislike everything infinitely. . . . I—I think I will go get some salt."

He was responding, you observe, to his moustachios and fate.

The meadows are billowy toward the salt pans at Saaldwyk. Raoul was challenged by an unseen

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sentry. A corporal's guard rose up from a hollow to take him to the invisible camp.

Hidden in an angle of the shore-dyke were near a thousand men. On the dyke sat Newstead, their leader, the little man with the curious green eyes that look down the centuries, and Gaspar Wiederman, his huge, tawny-haired camp-marshal, and old Zouch, the quartermaster. Below them the men stood at their ease, disorderly, half-armed. It was the full council of the Free Companions.

Old Zouch was speaking. "The charge is: these two, Robin Curtnose and Peter the Poet, they were set to watch the road from Maasluis to Schiedam for a messenger of Parma's carrying dispatches. They have brought the messenger into camp, but they say that a young fellow robbed them of the dispatches: one man, as they say, robbing and wounding them both. The charge is that they failed of their duty, whereby this Free Company is injured."

Raoul, tiptoeing, beheld his friends of the "Eel and Compasses" under guard, and smiled upon the universe. They were so symmetrically bandaged.

Newstead spoke. "Robin Curtnose: Peter the Poet: how do you answer the charge?"

"It is true," said Robin Curtnose; and Peter the Poet said in a low voice, "It is true."

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“Free Companions!” Newstead cried, “you have heard the charge. The prisoners confess it is true. Give sentence.”

A low murmur ran among the throng; then a man stood out from the rest and pointed with naked sword to the ground; and the murmur swelled to a word—“Death! Death!” and was still again.

“Who gainsays that?” cried Newstead. But all was still.

“It is just,” said Peter the Poet; and Robin Curtnose echoed, “It is just.”

Newstead stood up. “One death is enough,” he said. “One life I give. Let them cast the dice which shall die.”

A drummer came thrusting through the throng and set his drum down at Newstead’s feet and a dice box upon it. Newstead beckoned to the two. They came slowly.

“I am ten years the elder,” said Robin Curtnose half to himself. “I give him the throw. Let Peter live.”

“No, by God!” cried Peter the Poet. “I cannot live if Robin dies for it; and Robin is the better man—and the better man should live.”

“One life is given,” said Newstead. “Throw the dice.”

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“And one life I claim!” It was Raoul as he strode forward, eyes agleam. “Colonel Newstead! I am he who robbed your men, and, *pardieu*, the man who is beat by me need feel no shame. I will tell you all, and much more than you had learnt from that dispatch, matter of high import to this Free Company; and the price of the story is—one life.” Raoul struck an attitude on the dyke, and the Free Companions stared at him. He enjoyed himself.

“What are their lives to you?” Newstead asked.

“I like men,” said Raoul.

There was a mutter of “Who is he?” in the throng.

Raoul laughed. “Little Raoul de Tout le Monde, gentlemen, who has done some little things sinful and other in this sinful world.”

A look of some humor crossed Newstead’s lean, sunburnt face. “I know this cavalier,” said he, “Free Companions! If it prove that the Free Company has taken no hurt, shall the life be spared?”

Again there was a murmur, again one man stepped out from the rest. He drew his sword half from the scabbard, then clashed it home; and from behind him a thousand scabbarded swords clashed again. The Free Company voted life.

Gaspar Wiederman heaved himself up and gave gruff orders. The throng broke up. The prisoners

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were borne away in guard. Newstead took Raoul by the arm.

“Come, my friend,” said he, and drew him to a little turf hut in the shadow of the dyke. Gaspar Wiederman followed, and Zouch. Within was a table, one chair, and a saddle.

“I preface,” said Raoul, sitting down on the saddle, “that when I came into the affair I did not know that Colonel Newstead was there already,” and then told his story—how he quarreled at the inn, how he stole the letter, and what was in the letter, and how he took it to Don Guzman. Gaspar Wiederman coughed and coughed again. “Precisely,” said Raoul. “As the camp-marshal suggests. For fifty crowns. So then Don Guzman expects those forces. His own are yet slender, being. . . .” Raoul precisely detailed them.

“Faith!” growled Gaspar, “you have the head of a soldier, if you had not chosen to be—something else. Why, having gone to the Spaniard, do you come to us?”

“For the honor of my moustachios—by Don Guzman aspersed. And on behalf of my stomach.”

Newstead smiled. “And what does Monsieur Raoul now suggest to Colonel Newstead?” he inquired.

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“A surprise, an onfall, a storm. Here is my strategy. That town is starving for salt. Send some of your fellows habited like peasants with salt to sell. Let them cut down the guard at the gate. Your company storms in. Don Guzman is overwhelmed. Behold my plan. I give it freely. Make it your own.”

“Monsieur Raoul,” said Newstead quietly, “what plan do you think mine was when I seized the salt pans?”

“*Diantre!*” Raoul cried,—“you meant this from the first? Colonel, I salute you with my heart.” And he started up to do so with his sword. “Then I go back to Schiedam.” Gaspar Wiederman coughed. “Tell me when you will come into the town, and I will engage, I, little Raoul de Tout le Monde, that they shall not be able to shut the castle gates that day. One’s moustachios must do something, *mordieu!* But for my stomach’s sake I would beg you come quickly.”

“I shall be into Schiedam——” said Newstead, and Gaspar was seized by a fit of coughing: Newstead continued unheeding: “——on the morning of the day after to-morrow.”

“So be it,” said Raoul, bowing, and turned to the table. “I take the salt-cellar and my leave.”

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Newstead gave him a hand-grip and let him go. He was hardly gone when Gaspar broke out: "By the devil of Dresden, the little puppet may betray us all!"

Newstead laughed and shook his head. "I know him. When he talks like a liar you may believe him. He loves to act the hero, and sometimes, *cordieu*, is more a hero than he thinks."

"That is not possible," Gaspar grunted.

So Raoul went back to Schiedam and had salt with his supper.

The next day he spent lounging about the castle gates. He had the gratification of observing from time to time certain peasants—in accent, in bearing they were almost excessively peasants—who had a trifle of salt to sell. They announced that Newstead was moving camp from the salt pans, and promised Schiedam more salt on the morrow. The afternoon was waning, the shadow of the castle lay full across the market-place, when Raoul, spread on a bench by the inn door, saw one of the commandant's captains come out. Raoul hailed him, waggled a flask at him and bade him drink. "Only a sup, then," quoth the captain with regret: "I am in haste."

"Poor devil," Raoul yawned.

The captain laughed and drank. "Don Guzman

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has lost patience. I go to Kloet's house to tell the fair Mary that if she come not to Don Guzman to-night her lover shall hang to-morrow morn."

Raoul yawned again. "God bless to-morrow," said he.

Then, the captain gone, he dropped his eyelids and considered this new case. He condemned Don Guzman's impatience. It was purely inconvenient. Now, or ever Newstead came, the maid might yield, and Don Guzman get his desire. "Which my moustachios," Raoul muttered, "would profoundly deplore." He contorted himself in thought. . . .

But rose and lounged down the street to meet the returning captain. "What fortune?" he asked.

The captain chuckled. "The maid wept, and Kloet committed me to hell. I said the lover would be there to-morrow." He poked Raoul's ribs and passed on chuckling.

"I suppose," Raoul meditated, "the maid will let her lover die so she may be safe from Don Guzman. Her lover might give her little thanks for that. But my moustachios are grateful. For Don Guzman is spited. And if Newstead is too late to save the lover a hanging—why, the maid may still find one Dutch bridegroom as good as another." Raoul lounged along complacent.

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But as the twilight deepened he saw a girl steal out of Mynheer Kloet's house and hurry towards the castle. The girl had changed her mind. Selfishly, *mordieu*, neglecting the moustachios! Raoul bit his teeth on an oath, and swung across her path and gripped her wrist. "Mistress Kloet!" he hissed, "do you dare? Will you be false to your love?"

"False?" the girl gasped, trembling. "False? Oh, God help me! I—I—" she sobbed—"I go to save him the only way I can."

"To save him? Bah! Would he not rather die a thousand times than you should yield yourself to this Spaniard?"

"I know, I know," the girl sobbed piteously.

"Then you are traitor to him and traitor to love."

Raoul felt the girl's body quiver. He saw the agony on her wan face. "I—I cannot have him die," she moaned.

"What life is the life you save for him so? You leave him no happiness, no honor."

"I—I cannot—" she was sobbing against Raoul's heart—"I cannot bear him to die."

But Raoul's face was set and grim. "Do you think only of yourself? Do you love only yourself? You—you cannot bear the pain of his death. You must have the joy of sacrificing yourself, though by

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the sacrifice you shame him. I' God's name, love him better! Bear your pain. Give him the honor. Let him die to keep you pure."

The girl's sobs were hushed. Wistfully through tears she looked at Raoul. "Yes: he would wish that," she murmured. "He would wish that. I thank you. I—I will bear my pain. Oh, I thank you."

Raoul bowed low, and watched her turn and pass home in the gloom, helpless with her sorrow. Raoul drew a long breath. "And I wonder if I believe it all?" said he. ". . . Or if the Dutchman does? . . . Eh, but this complicates the affair." He passed on deep in thought. He had indeed harmed Don Guzman pleasantly—but only by meddling with other people's lives: if the Dutchman were hanged now it would be his work. Raoul (it is one of his virtues that I like much) never declined his responsibilities.

He turned short and made for the castle. There he was amiable and witty to the sergeant of the guard. Ere the wicket gate was closed for the night he had the happiness to behold Don Guzman come to it and stare out, looking vainly for his prey. With an oath for the maid, and a vile jest at her and her doomed lover, Don Guzman turned at last, and strode away to his quarters. Raoul, following dis-

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creetly, sat down on his stairway, and went to sleep at once like a dog. Like a dog he woke at the first sound ere dawn, and went back to the gateway again, and was zealous in helping the guard to open the great gates. But as he helped, he rolled along the ground under the ball of his foot four pistol bullets; and he pushed them into the slots where the bolts should go, and ground them down with his heel hard. Then he lounged by the gate-post, chatting easily, though every nerve in him was at strain. Any moment might bring the sound of Newstead's onfall. Any moment Don Guzman might come forth to order the Dutchman's hanging.

Don Guzman was first. He strode into the gateway and peered down the street, and turned again with a curse. "Reeve me a rope over the gate," he growled. "Go one of you to Kloet's house, and bid his daughter come to see her bridegroom kick a last time. By my faith, he shall hang this hour."

"That is crude," said Raoul aloud. The commandant turned upon him with an oath. "Oh, perhaps your excellency desires to be kind to him." His excellency with another oath denied such intention. "If I were your excellency, I would go tell the man his bride is yours, and give him a worse pang than hanging."

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Don Guzman laughed. "By my faith, a noble thought. Go, get me the key of his cell."

Raoul ran off with enthusiasm. He took the keys from the master of arms, and, elaborately polite, ushered Don Guzman into the main tower and down the winding stair, and past the powder magazine to the dungeons.

They entered a dark noisome cell, and Raoul carefully locked the door behind them. One beam of light from a grating high in the wall broke the darkness, and showed the hapless bridegroom lying in his double fetters.

Don Guzman stirred him with his foot. "Ha, dog! I bring you good news. Since yesterday, that bride of yours is mine." Raoul heard the irons clank as the man shuddered—heard a choked sob. Don Guzman laughed, and peered forward in the dim light to see the tortured face. "Ay, you may groan. She has well forgot you, dog. She has such joy in me that she cares not, she says, whether you live or die, and so——"

"Thank God!" cried the man. "Ah, thank God! Now I know that you lie!"

The commandant, blaspheming, flashed out his sword. "Dog, swine, filth——" He made a pass at the helpless man.

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His sword scraped along Raoul's.

He jumped round upon Raoul with louder oaths. "Your excellency," said Raoul politely, "pray consider my moustachios." The commandant cursed his moustachios and made a wild thrust at him. Raoul's sword flashed a riposte. The commandant's sword fell. Quite gently he swayed back against the wall. Raoul's point was through his eye and his brain.

Raoul laid him down and stood over him. "I congratulate the world," said he, and he twirled his moustachios. "You also, my dears." Then he dropped on his knees beside the amazed Dutchman and began to try his keys on the fetterlocks.

"Is she safe? Tell me! Is she safe?" the Dutchman cried.

Raoul laughed and nodded, wrenching a stiff lock round. "Did she send you to me?"

Raoul laughing dealt with another lock: "Faith, I think she did."

"Is she not wonderful?" said the Dutchman.

"Humph. I think I am a little wonderful, too," Raoul grunted, as he swung the last of the fetters clattering away. He had the door open. He bore the Dutchman (cramped limbs would scarce move) out into the passage-way. He locked Don Guzman dead into his own dungeon.

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Then he dragged the Dutchman to the black darkness at the passage end. For there was the roar of a fight above. Newstead was in. And Raoul had no mind to trust himself with a helpless man to the fury of a storm.

Under cover of night (to tell a tale the chroniclers have told better) Newstead brought all his company close to the walls of Schiedam and hid himself cunningly. An hour after dawn there rolled up to the main gate a huge wagon heaped with powdered salt. The guard gave it a glad welcome. It was scarce across the threshold when a score armed men leapt out of the mound of salt and tossed away the veils that had saved their eyes and fell upon the guard and hewed them down, and jammed the great gates with wedges. Two hundred horsemen broke from ambush and galloped headlong to the gate. Six hundred footmen followed them at a run. The horsemen thundered on through Schiedam streets to the castle. The footmen swarmed upon the walls and hurled their garrison down. At the castle, when they heard the din and saw this regiment of horse whirling down upon them, there was tumult and the guard ran to shut the gates. But they could not force the bolts into their slots, and at the first rush the gates were clashed back and wide. Newstead was in.

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A fierce fight raged in the castle yard. The Spaniards, half armed, some but half clothed, hurled themselves recklessly into the fray. But they were driven back and back, and the captains, bleeding, distraught, held an instant's council, and one ran to seek Don Guzman. Raoul and his Dutchman saw him batter upon the door of the cell, heard him shout and shout again to the dead. . . . Then came oaths of amazement . . . and then he ran back to his comrades. But he found the fight lost and won. What of the Spaniards were left alive had been driven from the courtyard into the towers, and Newstead's men beset the stairways, slaying still. The Spanish captain—give the nameless dead the honor of his deed—turned and ran down again hot-foot for the magazine, to fire the powder, and vanquished, win victory through death.

Raoul heard him come—caught through the din the patter of powder—and dashed down the passage-way. The Spaniard was stooping with flint and steel and tinder over a powder train. Raoul ran him through, and stamped wildly hither and thither on the sparks that he scattered as he fell. There was a flash of yellow light and thunder; Raoul was hurled out into the passage-way and beyond him the wall and the stair fell roaring down. . . .

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Raoul came to himself again in the dark, with the Dutchman holding up his head. Raoul staggered to his feet and felt his way to the mass of ruin. Raoul began to drag the stones aside, and he toiled madly till he was drenched with sweat and his limbs would move no more. Still no gleam of light, no breath of air, came through the mass. . . . Raoul sat down on the ground and shrieked curses at himself and his world and his God.

“Sir, sir,” said the Dutchman hastily, “this is not right; this is not like a man——”

“A man?” Raoul cried: “I am not a man. . . . Ah, but I have been a man, and done a man’s deeds, *mordieu* . . . and this is the end of it all, to die like a rat in a hole!” He stamped and gnawed his hands in impotent rage.

The Dutchman turned from him and began to pull at the ruin. Feebly but steadily still, hour by hour, he toiled. Ever and again Raoul would come and work madly by his side—then turn away and fling himself down and writhe and groan and curse. . . . So the hours went by in the dark—long hours—till they both lay worn out and tortured with thirst. . . .

A gleam of light clove the dark. Raoul saw it, and dragged himself to his feet shrieking hoarsely.

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A cheery shout answered. The light broadened. Through it came the scrape and crash of men toiling. Raoul flung himself on the stones and strained up to the light. "Water!" he gasped—"water!"

After a while a leather bottle came bumping down. Raoul grasped it, and reeled to the Dutchman, who lay moaning, and let the water drop on his hot, wrinkled lips. The man gasped, and broke into wild delirious laughter; and Raoul gave him more and gently more, till the laughter hushed, and he began to cry. Then Raoul permitted himself to drink. . . . He gulped, he coughed, he rubbed a hand across his eyes. Then he brushed his clothes and folded his arms, and made ready to receive his saviors with a pose soldierly, heroic.

The din of the laborers was loud. Each moment saw the hole in the ruin broader. There clambered through it a man naked to the waist. "Ha!" says Raoul, "good-day to you, Monsieur Robin Curtnose."

Robin Curtnose grinned and saluted. "Will you up, master?"

"My bridegroom first," said Raoul; and together they hoisted the Dutchman out to light, to freedom at last.

Robin Curtnose helped Raoul through; and Raoul, blinking at his saviors, all dappled with sweat and

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stone dust, found Colonel Newstead. "Ah, Colonel! The gates did not shut, I think?" said he airily. "The commandant also had the kindness to expire appropriately."

Newstead wrung his hand. "And that I never thought to do again," said Newstead. "We tore it out of these knaves that you were in the dungeons when the powder fired, and I doubted even Raoul de Tout le Monde would scarce find a way to live. But there were three who swore they would have you out, alive or dead—three who have toiled all day and all night—three who said they owed you something: the camp-marshal here, because he had believed you a rogue; Robin Curtnose and Peter the Poet because—— *Cordieu*, catch him!"

Afterwards Raoul remembered grasping at Gaspar Wiederman's huge hand; remembered also the huge grins of Robin Curtnose and Peter the Poet—but no more. For his heroic pose collapsed, and he fell down and went to sleep where he fell.

He woke, however, before Gerard Reyd, his rescued Dutchman. For it was he, five-and-twenty hours after, who haled Gerard Reyd out of bed, and induced him, somnolent, into his clothes, and hurried him to that house where Mary Kloet was waiting in glad impatience. The sight of her, he records,

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did at last wake Master Gerard, who ran to her. "Her blush," Raoul writes, "made me rejoice that I wore moustachios."

"You were certainly meant to be wed," he remarked, and made his bow, and was going.

"Ah, sir, but we have to thank you for so much!" the girl cried.

Raoul turned again. "Believe me, you have better things to do," he said; and smiled upon them, and went out with a swagger, twirling his moustachios.

CHAPTER VI

RAOUL'S QUEEN

IT was no romance but pure business that brought Raoul to Namur. War reigned and Walloon and Hollander were not delicate in slaughter or hate, but still the goldsmith of Amsterdam must needs have his account with the money changer of Namur. Raoul was come south to settle it. You may laugh at old Ven Meteren for trusting his florins to such a one. It is likely he thought no better of Raoul's moralities than you, but he conceived himself to know when Raoul would think it worth while to be a knave. He was right, and Raoul did not rob him of the worth of a herring and all this is no more matter than to explain you why Raoul was strutting on Meuse bank in the savor of a summer afternoon.

Raoul was more than common fine. His cassock coat and his hose were of crimson silk, but his sleeves were slashed with silver velvet and, from cuffs in cloth of silver, ruffles of Mechlin lace dyed crimson fell over his lean brown hands. He had an opal or so in the gold buckle of his hat and a chain of gold linked with

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silver thrice about his neck. Only his eyes and the plain steel cross handle of his rapier looked ready for work.

The good folks of Namur, or their women at least, were mustering along the quay. Raoul winked at one fair, fat maid and dandled another's chin and found two who were thin enough to please him. ("From feminine circumferences," says he somewhere, "chaste saints preserve me!" He was of the same taste as Napoleon.) "Fair ladies," says he, as he parted their shoulders and thrust in between them, "let me make the ham of your sandwich."

"'Tis the task of a pig, sir," says one.

"But you're mere bread and butter without me," quoth Raoul and clapped an arm about each slim waist: "Has not life more relish so?"

One giggled and endured. The other freed herself. "You put too much sauce in it, sir," said she. It was to her Raoul looked. She was quick and wholesome, he assures you, with an uncommon end to her nose. His examination of it was interrupted.

The people of Namur made a joyful noise. Along the quay came a litter and a cavalier that glittered at each other. The litter was drawn by six black horses spangled with silver and itself was all of glass, bound by golden columns. On its cushions of gold, clad

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with blue velvet, a woman lay in grace. Her cavalier, a blaze of color and metals, caracoled beside her magnificent. So they passed the waving kerchiefs. Don John of Austria and Queen Margot of Navarre. He bent his fair curls to her window with some gallantry. The divine mockery of her laugh gratified Raoul.

He turned to the girl with the unusual nose: "That is the way to laugh at a man, my dear," said he—"as if he could never understand you. He can of course. You're clear as water, but he likes to think you are dark as wine."

"You are knowing, sir. And that is what I hate in a man," said the girl.

"But I like your nose," said Raoul. "A nose of wicked originality."

"It turns up at you, sir."

"Well, I would not have it blush," Raoul admitted. "Come let me sing the nose a love song," and he was more urgent about her waist and let her giggling comrade go.

"Good lack, sir, in broad daylight!" the girl cried, holding his lips off.

"That is a promise for the twilight," quoth Raoul and kissed her. "I seal it so."

She won away from him, she stood a moment counterfeiting wrath, her eyes were roguish as his as she

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fled. It will not surprise you that after sundown Raoul came swaggering back to the quay.

But the girl with the unusual nose he was never to see again. What came to his bosom instead was a man common enough in nose and other matters, a bloated fellow in stained, frayed finery, with many weapons. This gentleman was in a mighty hurry and he dashed himself upon Raoul. Raoul gave him a tough shoulder and he rebounded with oaths and flung a vicious kick up at Raoul's stomach. But Raoul knew that tactic. The swinging kick was brought up short upon Raoul's shin and as the fellow reeled over groaning on his broken leg, Raoul fell upon him and introduced his head to the pavement. He liked to pay debts in full.

Raoul rose smiling and as he rose saw a glitter of metal in the senseless hand. There was no delicacy about him. He took it and found it a circle of tin. There was a cypher scratched on it that might have been many things and was probably meant for a boar's head.

Raoul lounged away from the prostrate gentleman who had begun to groan—and meditated upon his duty to providence. "When the event incalculable called me, ever I sought to respond," he writes. That is to say, he was as fond of mystery as a jackdaw. He

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put his nose fairly into this one. "Why does the gentleman carry a pig's head?" says he. "And why does it make him in such a hurry?" Then he scratched his nose. The boar's head was the crest of William de la Marck, the pirate-privateer, the chief of the Beggars of the Sea. But it was not like De la Marck to be striking game so far inland as Namur. "I wonder—" says Raoul—"if I were to hurry with the pig's head, I wonder what it would bring me?" He turned about and hurried with enthusiasm, going down stream like the prostrate gentleman towards the loneliest, lime-shadowed end of the quay.

Out of the gloom he heard a mutter of voices. He saw darkly a galley with full crew lying off the water steps, two men above. Raoul walked up to the nose of one of them, who looked with contempt over his modest extent and said: "Who in heaven are you, whelp?" Raoul held out the circle of tin. The man crushed it in his hand.

"So much for that. It belongs to fat Silas, not you." He gripped Raoul's collar and the other man drew close, loosening his dagger.

"Precisely," said Raoul coolly. "Fat Silas has tumbled over himself and broken his leg, so he sent me to take his share."

The two men muttered together a moment. "Get

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in with you," one growled. "And if you fail me I'll have my dagger in your weasand."

Raoul was well content. The adventure promised abundantly. He found himself one of six at the oars as the galley shot away down stream. The truculent man of the steps held the rudder, his comrade was at stroke. It was a crew of sturdy rogues and the narrow light galley leapt from their oars. Raoul sweated. The heavy air was hot still and even the spray of the oars struck warm, though now the golden circle of the moon climbed the sky. Raoul did not love rowing—there is no room for enterprise in it—and he saluted with a grateful oath the muttered order that bade them ease. They were steered into the shadow of the steep right bank and there lay waiting, lost in darkness, while beyond them the broad river shimmered silver and gold, and the breath of some late flowering lime came to them out of the light.

An island lay framed in midstream. Above the shadow of the banks the long, waving grass, the willows and elms that murmured to the low night wind were gemmed with faint rare splendor, all silvery green now, now with a tracery of lavender as the willow leaves turned, now with a pale cloud of gold.

"Such nights," says Raoul, "ever woke the deviltry in me."

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Waiting there in the dark he heard anxious impatient breath of the sturdy rogues about him. He protests he was wholly calm. He had most often the temper that can wait for providence.

The clear melody of the lute came over the water and a woman's mellow voice mingled with it joyfully. Raoul felt emotion stir in the galley. . . . The song came nearer and was broken with the beat and splash of oars. Through the gentle light moved a barge of gold. The golden canopy that it bore shadowed a woman clad in a robe like the moonlight. It was Queen Margot singing of hills and the sky.

Raoul saw enough to approve the heroic pose of Don John beside her before the barge slid on to the island strand and moored. There was rustle and abundant chivalry to help the queen on land. She passed amid the blue tree shadows with Don John at her hand. Men and women in the barge were busy with baskets and napery. The romance of the island was to include a collation.

The coxswain of the galley muttered something, the oars dipped, the galley slid out into the stream. It made for the lower end of the island, and as it closed to the land Raoul saw the queen and her knight drawn near, their faces upturned to the majesty of the sky. The oars were shortened, the keel of the galley grated

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gently. The coxswain and his friend of the stroke oar sprang to land. Swift, so swift that a man might hardly see it all Don John was beaten, stunned, to the ground, the queen gagged and bound and borne away. She was tossed aboard. The galley was off down stream at speed.

Raoul saw her by the coxswain's side, helpless, the cords drawn hard into her body. Her white face was half hidden behind the gag, but he saw her eyes—dark eyes that gleamed with laughter, that took Raoul. There was also a rope of pearls.

The coxswain was standing up and peering through the moonlight. From land, from the left bank came a low, clear whistle. Horses moved black against the light.

It was time. Raoul made his endeavors and caught a noble crab. It took all the way off the galley, it swung her half across the stream, it brought the bow side rowlocks to the water's edge. Wrestling mightily with his oar while the crew swore at him lavishly, Raoul leant upon the gunwale. The water came pouring in. He yelled, started up kicked the gunwale from him as he dived. That was the end of the galley. It filled and sank beneath its crew and they were left struggling, spluttering, to swim for their fortunes.

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Queen Margot, bound and helpless, was drawn down in the swirl of the boat. Her captor lost her altogether. Nor he, perhaps, nor any of the rest in that moment of surprise had thought of her. Raoul, who had had the advantage of knowing what he was going to do, Raoul had gripped her before she sunk far and under water he struck out for the right bank and safety. While the crew were still splashing and shouting to each other in midstream, he reached the shadow of the trees, he let his feet down and his head up and drew a great breath. The kindly gloom made him safe enough. He tilted the helpless Queen to her feet. It must have been now—though he does not say so—that he made prize of her black pearls. Then he was gallant.

By reason of the gag, you'll note, she could not have swallowed much water, and though she was near stifling when her nostrils came to the air again she made no dangerous noise. "You are safe, my queen," says he in her ear. "You are safe from all now: for I am Raoul," there was mirth in his voice and while he was speaking he was slicing her cords with his dagger. Then with a whispered: "Silence is life!" he had out the gag. She stirred against his shoulder, he saw her eyes gleam gay, she moved her limbs lightly trying their freedom. Raoul put his arm

about her. "Trust me for all," said he and held her close. Queen Margot made no trouble of that, and they stood so breast on breast, the warm water swirling about them. A low delectable laugh came to Raoul's ear.

He took her white face in his hand and turned it to his. There was the gayest light of mockery in her eyes: "Oh, 'tis a joy men are mad," said she and let her head rest on Raoul's shoulder.

The crew of the galley were by no means so happy. First, as was natural, they had thought of land and the land of their friends, so they struck for the left bank. They were not welcome. Horse-men spurring to the water opened vials of abuse.

"Quast! Oh! rot you all for lubbers, where is Quast?" That roar drowned all the rest. It came from a heavy man, whose hair, whose beard swayed tawny in the moonlight.

"It is De la Marck," said Raoul.

"I always thought he would be amusing," said Queen Margot.

"Will you go and amuse him?" Raoul asked and loosed her as De la Marck perfumed the night with oaths.

"You also amuse me," she said and did not stir. He saw in her eyes the pure happiness of a child.

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The unhappy Quast—he was the coxswain—emerged from the water. He tried foolishly to explain the idiocy of Raoul. He was buffeted back into the water. “Where is the woman?” roared De la Marck and added an unpleasant threat “Find her for me, quick or dead. Else I fling you in with bluestone at neck and heels. You knaves, line the banks. Is any rascal can dive?” One boasted. De la Marck dashed him to the water, too, and bade him get down to the galley. The rest, horsemen and damp footmen, moved to and fro along the bank searching.

“Shall we get out of our bath?” said Queen Margot.

Raoul scanned the searchers anxiously. He was not in a hurry. Where he stood in the dense shadow they were safe enough from eyes in the light. To climb the bank was to reach the light themselves, and, however wary, a moment they must needs stand against it black and clear. But the searchers were gone some way up and down . . . and Queen Margot shivered.

Raoul wormed himself up without a sound and lay flat on the bank holding his hands out to his queen. She took them, she was drawn up swiftly, safely, but she sent a loose stone splashing down. They were seen.

Yells tore the moonlight. One man and another

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dashed his horse at the stream. The hounds were upon them.

“ 'Tis in such moments,” says Raoul, “that your fool betrays himself.” He was placidly wringing the water from Queen Margot's clothes and praising God, I understand, for few petticoats. When they were light enough to let her move: “Run now!” he muttered, “run!” and pointed her the way. But he turned back to the river.

Already the first of De la Marck's men was urging his horse up the steep bank. The beast scrambled and failed and failed again. His rider sprang from the saddle and won firm ground himself and was tugging at the bridle, when Raoul was upon him from the shadow. Down he went, stricken before his own sword was out, and Raoul caught the bridle from him in time to steady the plunging horse and win it to land. Now more of De la Marck's men were ashore and the tawny haired Sea Boar himself, but Raoul vaulted to the saddle and was off over the lucerne to his queen.

She waited, holding up her arms to him while her wet dress clung close, a form of strange loveliness in the mellow moonlight. She was ready. He had hardly checked before her foot was on his, before she had sprung up behind him and was safe with her

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arm locked about his body. Then they were off at speed. . . .

Raoul turned to see De la Marck's ordering of the chase and found the eyes of his queen. They laughed to him and he lifted up his voice: "Raoul! A queen for Raoul to wear—Raoul!"

De la Marck made him an answer in no way fit for a queen to hear and the chase quickened. Raoul was no great matter in weight, nor she, I think, and the broad Flanders mare was not troubled. Through the wattle fences she broke and held her heavy gallop over meadow and barley undriven. De la Marck's men with horses of her own blood gained nothing upon her. But the Sea Boar himself, more royally mounted, was closing fast. . . . Looking back Raoul saw the foam flecks on him and the red whirl of his beard, saw him reach for his sword. . . . Queen Margot's breath broke gasping and Raoul felt all her body thrill. The passion of the hunt was upon her, the quarry's yearning and fear. Raoul bent back his head and brushed her cheek, her lips with his. She clung the closer. . . .

But no emotion dazzled Raoul's wary brain. It was not in him to earn bliss by forgetting all else. His own skin interested him as much as his queen. So you see him edging craftily away to the river bank.

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When the gleam of the water was close, he checked, he made Queen Margot loose him, he slid to the ground, leaving the reins across her arms. The mare's back was wide and the sister of Charles IX had cavalier's skill enough to stay there. But the mare went on as she chose.

"Now mark my work," says Raoul. It was mighty near his end: for De la Marck was upon him like the wind and he hardly flung himself out of the swing of that terrible sword. But as he bounded away he struck a sweeping back hand stroke and all his blade jarred upon De la Marck's leg and his horse's side. It was a stroke of no art, but it wrought abundantly. The searing pain maddened the horse: De la Marck's sinews were shorn through and he reeled out of the saddle.

"In all the which," says Raoul, "there is nothing. What follows marks the man of mind." He caught De la Marck by the leg and whirled him into the river before he caught the horse and upon it pursued his queen. So that De la Marck's men when they had him almost in their teeth must needs halt and turn aside to fish for their leader.

But the fact is Raoul was, in this last matter, something superfluous. He had only drawn level with Queen Margot when he made out horsemen in front,

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a network of them flung wide over the meadows. "It seems, sir, that many men want me to-night," quoth Queen Margot.

"'Tis for you to say who deserves you," said Raoul modestly: but he was puckering his eyes to peer ahead.

"There are many, I thank the Virgin," said she.

"But it is I—" Raoul turned to her—"it is I who have the honor to tell my queen she is safe."

"Sir, I have never in my life doubted it."

Raoul was something disconcerted. "It is not everyone who has a taste for the Sea Boar," he growled.

Queen Margot laughed. "I do not think you understand me very much, sir. Oh, but it is amusing to be a woman. Tell me, who are these gentlemen in such a hurry." For now the net of horsemen was closing swift upon them.

"They are Aerschot's Walloons. And Don John must have a harder head than I thought."

It was Don John who came at them headlong, crying from afar to the Queen in a score of questions. "Oh, believe me safe," said she calmly as he reined up with a miracle of horsemanship at her side, "believe me safe and almost dry. For all which I thank this cavalier."

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Raoul saluted Don John magnificently. "He shall be my brother in arms," cried Don John. "I will reward him with the half of my possessions."

"Nay, sir, 'tis only I can pay the price of myself."

Raoul thanked her little for that; but he tried to look chivalric. Don John bowed. "My queen is royal in every thought," said he. "Now I pray you have you a guess at these villains?"

"Never one," said the queen quickly and frowned at Raoul's open mouth and pressed his foot with hers. "Nor can I tell their purpose."

"Nay, my queen, 'tis your heavenly self that makes men mad. Yet, God assoil us all, madmen must be slain."

"I profess," says Raoul, "I do not know them from the dead."

"Ah! And you, sir, how had you the great good fortune to serve her majesty?"

Raoul was ready: "You must know, sir, that I have the felicity to be a poet. I find the moon and a river cheering to my inventions. I was consorting with them both when I beheld the first tragic act of this adventure which I have had the honor to turn to a romance."

"By Sant' Iago, I envy you as much as I am your

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debtor," cried Don John. "Now must I scourge these knaves." And he spurred on with his company.

But De la Marck's men did not wait him. So much they had bungled that night that they had no lust to try more. Even those who had gone down to the water to haul their master out leapt to their horses and fled. De la Marck was left struggling and splashing helpless against the steep bank.

"Have they saved him?" said Queen Margot to Raoul as they two peered through the failing moonlight at the chase.

"They are kinder," said Raoul. "They let him drown. Don John would let him hang."

"Oh, but it is altogether joyous," cried the Queen. Raoul shrugged. "Now go you and save him," said she. An exclamation (no matter) was startled out of Raoul, but she had turned her clumsy horse already and was making for the river. . . . But in the gloom—for now the moon was all but set—she needed Raoul's trained eye to point her out the place where De la Marck clung painfully to the bank. "Since you like him there he is," Raoul growled.

"Bring him me," said the queen.

And Raoul went, wondering at her and himself and all the earth. . . . Over the river he bent and

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gripped De la Marck's wrists. From the tangle of wet tawny hair grey eyes glared at him.

"I am bidden haul you out," said Raoul. "Whether to hang or live God knows and a woman who is not at all like Him. Will you stand the chance?"

"Haul," quoth De la Marck, bidding him also go some whither.

"It may well be damnation to save you," said Raoul and hauled. It was sturdy labor, but in a while he had De la Marck on dry ground, kneeling. The man could not stand alone. With Raoul for a crutch painfully he made his way to the queen. She smiled down at him, he glowered at her with more of wonder than hate. "Sink me, but you are a witch," said he.

"What else did you want?" she laughed.

Now a party of Don John's horsemen were spurring back to her. "By your royal leave," cried the captain, "Don John bids me give your majesty escort to Namur." Raoul shadowed De la Marck behind him.

"It is well, sir," said the queen. "I am your master's debtor. Now I pray you, lend me your cloak."

He did it off with alacrity and was making to put it about her but she held it off and gave it to Raoul.

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He had De la Marck muffled in it swiftly. "What," cried the captain, "your majesty had two men?"

"Both have served me well to-night," said Queen Margot, smiling; "and one——"

"Without this honest gentleman," Raoul explained, "I could not have had the honor to save her majesty." De la Marck, who could not stand without him, far less move or strike, grated his teeth in impotent wrath.

"And now he is sore hurt by reason of his devotion," Raoul sighed.

"A man would be lucky to die for such a cause," cried the captain.

"And perhaps he may do so yet," said Raoul blandly. "Who knows?"

"Can he ride or must he be carried?"

"Why, he might go pillion behind me if my queen could go alone."

His queen, who sat in the man's saddle in graceful ease, laughed gay. "I will follow you where you can ride, Sir Poet of the Moon."

So through the last of the night, a strange company, they came back to Namur. Behind and before went Don John's horsemen and Raoul watched his queen, slim and lithe, as she swayed to the cumbrous trot of the Flanders mare. Sometimes she laughed to herself. She gave Raoul no chance of a word with her.

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When he began to draw close she sent her mare on beside Don John's captain. And Raoul with De la Marck's arm gripped about his body, with De la Marck's oaths hot in his ears, began to feel that he did not dominate the situation and was uncomfortable.

"Split and sink you," De la Marck growled, "what is your wench after?"

"If I knew—well, I might be more uncomfortable than I am," quoth Raoul.

"Then," and De la Marck expressed an uncomely desire, "why must you be meddling? As fine a ploy as ever I laid. Heaven, if once I had the wench afloat!"

"Do you know," says Raoul, "I would back her against you, as like a boar as you are."

De la Marck swore extravagantly.

Into the deeper gloom of the town they came and on to the queen's lodging. Her people ran out with lights. Swiftly she slipped to the ground and in, then with one foot already on the stairs turned to look for Raoul, who hesitated. "Nay, come," she cried, "I do not part with you so lightly. Francois," she beckoned her chamberlain to her and spoke a moment with him unheard, then aloud, "look to them well, Francois."

It seems to have been now that Raoul remembered he had her pearls in his pocket.

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The situation was full of difficulty. If he were to plunge at her and present the pearls in a chivalric manner, he would, in the first place, lose the pearls and in the second might lose his head, if she suspected how he had come by them. If he made a dash for the door to remove pearls and himself he was like to be prevented and, if it came to a fight, stuck on the halberds of her gentlemen at arms or on the swords of Don John's horsemen without. But if he gave himself calmly to the hands of her chamberlain for care and lodging the pearls might be found upon him—nay, faith, why was the queen so zealous about him, if she suspected nothing? There were in fact a thousand reasons against whatever he might do. He chose to wait upon fate. He smiled blandly to the chamberlain and kept the pearls in his pocket and followed where he was led. He never gave up in a hurry.

Two serving men conveyed De la Marck after him. They were given twin rooms off one corridor and Raoul found his the most sumptuous he had ever seen. He had only a moment to finger the silver ewers and the peach-hued velvet of the walls, to sniff at the sandal wood, before there broke on him "a damnable visitation of lackeys." First it was two with a collation—then three with a bath. Raoul suffered. He was shy

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of their zeal to assist in his bathing, but he dared not deny them lest they take him for a churl unused to the ways of nobility. So, most unhappy, he endured the person who wrought over his adequate little body with Neapolitan soap, and that other who poured over him water now hot now icy cold, and he let them roll him in much linen and pummel him politely. But when one was for anointing him with perfumed oil he smote without mercy. Then they prayed his pardon and offered him a choice of a dozen perfumes till he obsecrated them all earnestly. At last he got them out and himself to bed with the pearls under his pillow. What he said to the man who came thereafter with a sleeping posset is best left in its original language.

He slept till long after noon and waking in the heat with all the bed clothes flung from him gripped nervously after his pearls. They were safe still. . . . He tried to consider his case. . . . But for some while all he could think of was De la Marck suffering from processions of lackeys. That cheered him. . . . He got out of bed with his pearls, admitted the sunlight, and in it debated more solemnly. "She is plainly a devil," said he, "and full of quips. . . ." Suddenly, he bethought him of doing what De la Marck had tried. Raoul with a queen to wear. . . . The vision allured him . . . since she

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was a woman who warmed his blood. . . . A queen to wife. . . . It was true she had a husband or so already. . . . He had no doubt he could make her forget them. . . . He had already found himself unique. . . . And the lackeys came with the bath.

He was fed, he was dressed again in his river-stained clothes, he had the pearls still safe in his pocket when the chamberlain came to say that the queen desired his aid. He followed with alacrity. But in the light room to which he was brought there was only De la Marck at rest on a couch. Raoul wished him good day and two legs again.

De la Marck swore: "And will you tell me what this fooling means?"

"Doubtless," said Raoul, regarding him blandly, "her majesty wishes to convert you to the domestic virtues and marry you with her maid."

In the midst of another explosion Queen Margot came in. She, too, wore the river-stained clothes of the night, her black hair was in the night's disarray, with tresses falling from their bonds about her neck. She made them a curtsey, smiling. "I am your debtor for as happy a night as I have known," said she. "And now I am come for you to tell me what you hoped of me." Wonder grew in De la Marck's

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fierce eyes. "O M. de la Marck," she cried, "it was a glad plan of yours for me. But what did you want by it?"

"What does a man want of a woman," he growled and his eyes glittered, "such a woman as you?"

She sat down, rested her elbow on her knee and her round chin on one finger, and gazed at him intently. "There are men who want money—or a move in politics—and my body is worth a ransom."

"No ransom would have saved it if I had won you," cried De la Marck with an oath. "Sink me, you would not have tired me soon."

Her grave eyes did not flinch from him. No shade of blood stirred in her white cheek. "So," she said quietly, and again, "So. . . . Well, it is best as it is, M. de la Marck, for indeed I should soon have tired of you."

"Enough of your jests," cried De la Marck, with an oath. "What do you mean to do with me?"

She lay back in her chair. She shrugged, and her eyes wandered away from him: "The fact is, M. de la Marck, you are much more interested in yourself than I am."

"Well," De la Marck stammered, something abashed, "well—I mean—if I am to be hanged, hang me, and have done with this curst kitten's playing."

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“Hang you? No, indeed. You have been much too amusing. I will let you go when you please.”

“Ay, and what of my men? How many did your dandy, Don John, ride down?”

“There are three, I heard,—or two, I took no heed.”

“No, sink me, but I do. Shall I go loose and leave my men to be flayed? That is not the Sea Boar’s way. A bargain with you, Queen Margot! Do what you will with me and send them scatheless. It was my ploy and my blunder and I pay.”

She rose from her chair, she came up to his couch and looked down at him with something of tenderness:

“Is there a little in you that rings clear?” she said.

“Curse your phrases,” growled De la Marck.

“Take the men with you,” she said.

“You’ll save them?” he cried. She held out her hand. He gripped it and looking up at her with eyes aglow snatched her down to him and grasping her upon his breast kissed her breathless. Raoul was at him, gripping at his throat, and he let her go. She rose, calm still, though her outraged cheeks were red.

“So I’ve had an earnest of you,” cried De la Marck, his eyes ugly and eager still.

“Let him go,” she said to Raoul quietly. “There is nothing in him that matters.” She clapped her hands for the lackeys. “I wonder if you will always

think that was worth while, M. de la Marck?" But De la Marck chuckled. "And I might have had some honor for you," she said almost sadly as she turned away. Then the servants came and De la Marck was borne out.

"Brrrr!" with a shiver and a sound as if she had met a cold wind she turned upon Raoul: "I hope you will be more amusing, Raoul," and she laughed at him. His attitude was perhaps terrifically heroic.

"What amuses your majesty in a man?"

"His manhood," said she.

"I believe you are as much a woman as I am a man. My homage. It is an achievement."

"And what achievement does M. Raoul desire on this earth?"

"To be altogether Raoul—all that Raoul can be."

"He will want a woman to help him."

"My queen, I have never doubted it," said Raoul, bold-eyed upon her.

She smiled. "You will tell me the whole true story," said she, and nestled cosily down upon a couch. "Who are you? How came you in De la Marck's boat?"

"I begin at the beginning—which is frankly the gutter—" said Raoul, nothing loth, and he gave in high color the story of his crowded years and she

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watched him with shining eyes of laughter. He was some time in reaching Namur and his amusements of the night. "Then, my queen, with you damnably bound in the boat I devised a hundred deeds——"

"Why?" For the first time she broke in. "What did you hope of me? Why did you strike for me?"

"For the light of your eyes, my queen! For the throb of a perilous venture."

"How fair that sounds!" she said softly and stretched out her arms with the famed white hands clasped. "Praise God for a man! How fair that sounds!" The light in her eyes changed and glowed for him. . . .

Raoul was ill at ease. He took a new, grand pose. "And the rest of the story you know," he ended baldly.

She leant towards him. "What can a woman give you, Raoul?" she said softly. "Ah, men serve us always and we—surely in men is the true romance!"

Raoul muttered something and drew away from her. Then he thrust his hand in his bosom and drew out the pearls and forced them into her hands. "There were these, too," he growled.

She started up, her eyes all glistening, all of her throbbing with life. "You have conquered," she cried and her voice was glad. "You have conquered."

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But Raoul fidgeted and his face was flushed, and he talked curses at himself: "You knew it!" he broke out. "You were playing with me!"

"Is it ill, is it ill, then, to have the truth? I cared enough for you to hate your lie. I knew there was more manhood in you than you have let live. Good morrow, Raoul," she swept him a curtsy, "this is your birthday." Raoul bit his lips. He was strangely moved. He fancied that her eyes glistened, too.

"And for these," she let the great black pearls shimmer through her fingers, "I will keep them for the woman you win to love you." She waited then, finger on lip, her eyes grave, watching him. "And my part—" she murmured—"my part—" then she was gone.

Raoul was the prey of new emotions. . . . For the first time in his life there was some pleasure in shame. For the first time all his deeds looked small and his strength surged in him greedy of a venture of despair. He yearned to fight and win by his fall. His soul was waked to a new, a swifter life. . . .

Some one bade him to the queen again and he followed, dreaming still.

Her chamber was glittering with light. On a couch of black velvet she lay robed in white. Her hair was braided with pearls and over the broad, white brow a

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diamond glistened amid the close black waves. Her bare arms moved across a golden lute, the red lips parted and she sang.

It was a ballad of old France and her chivalry, of the love that conquers in death. But Raoul hardly knew of the words. The mellow voice rang to him of the truth of life, of faith and hope unguessed and the sway and surge of the forces that have no names. . . . The last notes faded. She rose and he saw her, with a filmy white cloud swaying about her, and the famed loveliness of her close clad in white. She began to dance. Through the light, in strength and grace her body swayed, lavishing all its charm for him. He saw the splendor of her dark eyes, the little, full, red lips in a strange smile that challenged soul and brain, the white wave of her bosom throbbed for him. . . . Womanhood called. . . .

She was still. The cloud fell about her again. She held out her bare arms. Raoul came forward and grasped her hands and looked at her long. Then, holding her hands still he bowed over them and so stood awhile.

Then he went out to the night. The summer sky was cloaked in cloud but everywhere shone a pale, soft light.

CHAPTER VII

RAOUL'S DINNER

IN the year of the great flood, when dykes failed beneath a northern storm and Holland was near lost, it was Dirck Santvoort who found Raoul swimming between a cradle and a coffin and saved him, Dirck Santvoort of Flushing. Raoul and he, not the likeliest pair, struck friends in his cock-boat and stayed so. They met seldom and liked each other the better. Half a dozen years after, when Raoul came into Flushing from a dolorous passage of the North Sea and distressed with two days and a night on a hoy whereof the food was sodden cockroaches, he sought out Santvoort for a dinner.

Dirck Santvoort was a herring merchant and, as happens often yet in a fishing town, money lender, too. Also he made ropes and by one trade or another flourished. His house on the quay was opulent and when Raoul, after a deal of hammering, won inside, he found the hall very splendid with polished pewter

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and blue china platters against the dark oak. The servants did not much approve Raoul. A man who let him in hovered about him doubtfully instead of going swiftly as he was bidden to Mynheer Santvoort: retreating at last under stress of oaths, he brought no mynheer but a sour woman of the house-keeper kind: and she told Raoul mynheer had no leisure for guests.

“Beldame!” cried Raoul, whose stomach was angry, “beldame of hell, tell him Raoul has come to him, little Raoul of the flood.”

Dirck Santvoort came at last, a broad man of deliberate eyes. “It is a good day for my house when you come,” said he with his hand out. “Welcome, my friend.”

Raoul slapped his shoulder amicably. I think that he really liked the man. He spent some minutes in politeness and was answered absently. Then, “You do not know how empty I am,” said he with some pathos.

Santvoort was a minute or two in understanding him. “It is a shame to my house that you should say so,” he said at length and called for the sour woman and gave orders whereat Raoul smacked his lips. He turned to Raoul again: “And how is all with you?”

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"Infinitely well—save for the stomach. And you—how go the herrings?"

"It is a good season," said Santvoort. "There is a matter that presses—may I leave you? Use my house as it were your own."

"You are the best fellow in the world," said Raoul with enthusiasm sniffing at a dish of pickled neat's tongue. "And I were the worst if I hindered you. Away!"

Santvoort bowed gravely and went. If Raoul's stomach had been less importunate he might have seen that the man was ill at ease. . . . Yet more plainly troubled he was when he came again. But Raoul, hard at work with a stew of eels, nodded at him and drank to him and saw nothing. "You will pardon me that I am so bad a host, but there is an affair—a—a matter instant with me. I—if you will pardon me——"

"I would pardon the devil for such eels," quoth Raoul.

"And here is my honorable friend Mynheer Gabriello Hawkins to serve you in my stead."

It was the Gabriello Hawkins who waked Raoul's thoughts from his eels. The mere name was savory—and the man himself was immensely like an eel—an eel with moustachios. Of great length and little

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breadth, with hair and a small face like ruddy brick, Gabriello Hawkins most allured the eye by those moustachios. In two long peninsulas waving triumphant at their extremities they stretched beyond his cheeks, bright and amazing.

Gabriello Hawkins manipulated his length in a flamboyant bow. "Salutations, *amigo*. A friend's friends are Gabriello's brothers, by Pollux."

Raoul stared. The Roman oath was new to him. But he liked the twinkle of those moustachios.

"Brother in wine is brother in arms," said he and he drained his glass to Gabriello.

Gabriello filled in turn—it was "the good, lustful Burgundy" Raoul loved—and drank and smacked his lips. "'Tis the Falernian of Christians," he said and filled again. "Verily *corlætificat hominum*. Aha!" Then suddenly his back bent, his moustachios turned downward, he was an image of grief. He looked round for Dirck Santvoort, who had gone out. Then he cheered up.

Raoul, to whom his conversation and his manners were alike Hebrew, devoted himself wholly to the eels till there were no more.

"My affections yearn for you when I see you eat," Gabriello Hawkins informed him. "Something now of this mutton pasty. They have a way of it with

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thyme and a dream of garlic. Basta! But I envy you the void there must have been in you—an emptiness of Jove—an Olympian hunger.”

Raoul who had a doubt that Gabriello was laughing at him grunted uncomfortably. “Make a bite yourself,” said he. “It’s dull talk between feeding and fasting.”

“*Mehercle!* No! This is no hour for my poor carcass to make merry. But charge you the victuals home, my adelphidion. By Silenus’s ass it titillates my heart beat to see a man let his body go.”

“I think I live faster than other men,” said Raoul, filling Gabriello’s cup and his own, “so——”

“So your immortal body—for mark you if you be a Christian that body of yours will dance with you in heaven—your immortal body craves a double wage of mortal goods. By Olympus, it is rightly and duly done. Your well fed body uplifts the soul to utter righteousness,” and pensively Gabriello made an end of his wine. Then he sighed deeply and shook his head.

Raoul, who had come as far as pickled cherries by this, was now full enough to pay him more attention. Raoul blinked at him with humor and filled his own cup and bowed to him dramatically: “Sir, do me honor,” and he lifted the wine.

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Gabriello bowed, but shook his head and sighed again.

“Faith, you are a melancholy host,” said Raoul.

“Who, I? Must sacred hospitality cry shame on Gabriello? *Fratercule mi*, I am rebuked. Give me the bottle.” He drained a bumper scientifically. “Ho! More wine here. Why, mother Lotta, do you stint the guest of my heart?”

Shamefastly, as one who liked grudging but little, and yet grumbling to herself, the sour faced woman brought them a basket’s load of flasks and then rustled out, disapproval visible in her back, audible in her walk.

Gabriello looked after her with some timidity, then back at Raoul, then drank another cup and, gripping them in both hands, whirled his moustachios magnificently.

“To the host and the house and the cellar,” quoth Raoul filling again.

“Hold, my adolescent, hold. I challenge your friendship. That calls for three bumpers at least.”

“Have with you,” cried Raoul. “*Diantre*, but it is a noble liquor.” He held it to the light. “There the dark glow of very lust in it, *mordieu!*”

“’Tis the very blood of joy. Again, my neophyte. Now with a long breath—sa ha, sa ha! *Nunc vino*

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pellite curas,” they clashed their glasses and drank again, “now sink your woes in wine. To-morrow’s time enough to face life’s storm again. Again, my juvenile, and again! I do profess and protest you take me marvelously.”

“I admire you to a degree,” cried Raoul. “Therefore, my well-beloved, give me that other bottle.”

“Unto the last in my cellar, my fair brother. Oh, it is not my cellar. No matter. It is Dirck Santvoort’s and the same is a right good fellow who knows thirst himself.”

“He is the best fellow in the world,” Raoul called out. “Signor Gabriello he saved my very life, my whole life, mark you.”

“Noble soul!” cried Gabriello quivering with emotion. “To Dirck—not less than a bottle to Dirck—” and from Dutch he relapsed to English “with a down derry, derry derry down.”

“Down derry, down derry down,” Raoul chorused waving his cup. “But look you, mark you, you have not heard all. I had a coffin and a cradle withal and he saved the whole sinking trinity.”

Gabriello wiped away a tear. “I protest I do not understand you the least, but you affect me extremely. *Fratercule!* a bumper again for Dirck and many cradles for him. Nor ever a coffin withal.”

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Raoul drank and smacked his lips and drank again. Then he gave a stentorian sigh. "Death," says he, "is the common lot."

"Hard lot," Gabriello echoed. They looked at each other and shook their heads and sighed again. "Nay, then, a song to gladden life," cried Gabriello and struck up:

"I love no roast, but a nut brown toast and a crab laid in the
fire,
A little bread shall do me stead! (Much bread I do not desire!)
Nor frost, nor snow, no wind, I trow, can hurt me if it would,
I am so wrapped and thoroughly lapped of jolly good wine and
old.

"O back and side, go bare! go bare!
Both hand and foot go cold,
But belly, God send thee good wine enow
Whether it be new or old!"

Raoul came into the chorus with his broken English mightily. Then they made their breath good with another bottle. . . .

"Aha, my dearest adelphidion, *nunc est bibendum*—which is as if you should say, liquor up, uncle Gabriello. *Nunc pede libero pulsanda tellus*—I would bid you shake a leg, dear child—so!" He arose, straightened his lean length in sections, and holding a brimming cup, began to contort his yards of legs

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in weird elaborations. Then cheerily out of tune he sang:

“I mun be married a Sunday
I mun be married a Sunday
Whosoever shall come that way
I mun be married a Sunday.

“Roister Doister is my name
Roister Doister is my name
A lusty brute I am the same
I mun be married a Sunday.”

Raoul heaved out of his seat and linked arms and, together, waving cups that splashed, they curvetted down the hall, long man and short flinging wild legs and roaring:

“I mun be married a Sunday
I mun be married a Sunday
I mun——”

The woman who presented herself was she of the sour face. A face so grim, so bitterly sour that the song broke in their wet gullets, that their limbs stiffened ludicrously. “Mynheer Hawkins!” (Raoul records that her voice was like a blunt razor.) “What is this beastliness? Can you not remember that this house is mourning?”

Gabriello straightened himself, parted from Raoul and so stood a moment. Then he struck his brow

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and clutched it, then he crashed his wine cup to the ground and stamped upon it, then he beat a tattoo on his breast. "'Tis a most just censure, Lotta," he groaned. "I am a beast. I am a fatted calf."

Raoul gazed in a vinous stupor at so alarming a comparison. Lotta sniffed disdain. "I will have no more of this here," said she and her pattens clattered out. Raoul gaped after her.

But Gabriello sank limp to a chair and there sat, an image of repentant sin, wobbling his head a little. Raoul came to him and slapped him on the shoulder and looked at him (as I guess) with intense solemnity. "My—dear—old—friend," says he with painful clearness, "what's the matter with the old woman?"

Gabriello shook his head, smote his breast again, then clapped his hand on Raoul's and looked up as sentimental as a dog that has been kicked. "Alack, my juvenile, I am a boor and a boar and a roaring ram and a fatted calf and I have made you one, too. Be the infamy mine. *O ingenui vultus puer*——"

"Oh, the devil," said Raoul and dropped down in a chair beside him. "What the devil! I know you are drunk. And why should not a cavalier be drunk? I would get drunk myself if I did not get too sleepy. But rat me if I am a ram for it."

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“Nay, my adelphidion, I do not blame you. You are innocent as Herod’s babes. But look you, we have made revelry upon a coffin. We have guzzled in an open grave. Even as in the fable—bah, I babble.”

“It is water you want, *mordieu*,” cried Raoul.

“Very right, my juvenile,” Gabriello swayed to his feet, made one stride at the table, took the full ewer and poured the whole of its water over his head. He shook himself like a dog, he drew a long breath, he slapped his chest. “Hear ten plain words *fratercule*: the goodly son of this house, the dear brother of our most laudable friend Dirck Santvoort is in Spanish durance. The meridional vampires will do him to death save and except there be a ransom of five thousand gold florins——”

“Five thousand gold devils,” cried Raoul, for it was the ransom of a king.

“And our most goodly Santvoort hath no means withal and already he mourns as for the dead. The house is lapped and wrapped in gloom. And we must needs bring our boorish mirth upon his sorrow!”

Raoul with much deliberation put down his wine cup and stared at it sternly. “I dislike myself excessively,” he said. The thing hit home at him. If you do not see that he was intensely respectable

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you do not understand Raoul. To be merry in the house of a friend's mourning was a sin that he ranked with the blackest. The thought of it sobered him like a bath of ice. He turned from severe contemplation of the wine cup, his companion in iniquity, and arose.

Gabriello Hawkins woke as from a reverie with one hand clenched about one moustachio: "Whither, O my brother?"

"To Santvoort. To proffer my remorseful regret, my help," and he made for the inner door.

Gabriello stared. Slowly his hand unclasped from his moustachios. He smote his head violently and so exhorted himself: "Up, Gabriello, up! Shall a babe outdo thee, thou old man of war?" He went out with a curious, swift, purposeful swagger. A moment after there came to the empty hall from the street a whistle of complex harmonies. Then an answer.

In the narrow corridor behind the hall Raoul came upon the sour faced Lotta. She eyed him as you might a prowling thief: "What now?" she snapped.

"Your master, good dame."

"He has no leisure for sots."

"Nor I, *mordieu*. Which way, good dame?"

"What is your business?" says she, inflexible

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and something curious withal. But Dirck Santvoort himself came by.

“Santvoort—the time for two words with you!” cried Raoul, and the Dutchman, his wide face something troubled, his eyes seeing, but grave upon other matters, pointed on to an open door. It brought them to his office, a tiny room smelling of the hemp he spun. Santvoort sat down heavily at his desk, punctiliously set a chair for Raoul, fidgetted with his papers and looked up again wearily. “Santvoort, I cry you pardon,” quoth Raoul. “I am humbled before you as a boor,” and he made an attitude far from humble.

“I do not know what you mean,” said Santvoort and seemed to care little, either.

“It is this, my friend. I have come upon you in your sorrow—but *mordieu*, it was too kindly a friendship that kept it hidden from me—and have made in it a boor's debauch. Your pardon—a friend's pardon. Now tell me your case and I—well, I say nothing of myself, but it is not vainly I am called, ‘Raoul de Tout de Monde.’” And his new attitude was better than the first.

Santvoort, who was not the man to trust him more for that, only looked dull.

Raoul was beginning anew, when in with a whirl

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came a woman of silvery hair and a maiden that clung to her. "Dirck! They say now he is to die in the morning."

"I know, mother," Santvoort groaned. He thrust his fingers through his short, yellow hair and looked from one woman to the other. Raoul's eyes—Raoul, who was very like a jackdaw, had no notion of going—Raoul's eyes followed his. There was no doubt of Vrouw Santvoort's motherhood. The width of body and heavy face, the solemn eyes came to her son from her. But the girl with her was plainly of another blood. For all the full round curves of her she was slight: the hair close drawn beneath her coif was crisp and black: her eyes glistened dark. It was she who took the word: "Dirck, the Spaniards sent to me——"

"To you, Marie?" Santvoort's grey face flushed. "And why to you?"

The girl flushed, too. "Because we—because I—because they have heard of him and me," she said in a low voice. Santvoort leant his head on his hand. "Ah, yes," she went on eagerly, "and Don Pedro says that for seven thousand florins he may be ransomed yet." Dirck Santvoort made a gesture of despair. "Oh, Dirck, but my father promises to lend you the two thousand, I begged of him and he

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promises—and the rest—ah, you must find it, you must!”

“I cannot, Marie,” Santvoort muttered and sat still with his head bowed.

“Dirck—but he is your brother, and I——”

“You!” Santvoort echoed. “Oh, yes, I know it over well!” His shoulders bent together and the whole man seemed to shrink.

A sob broke from the girl's storm wrought bosom. Raoul saw her face pitiful and terrible. And yet—and yet—why, he had seen more grief for a less woe. But the mother was staring at Dirck Santvoort with horror and no pity. “Dirck,” she cried hoarsely, “are you mad or a villain? You have the money, I know, all the town knows, you have the money. Do you mean to be rich at the cost of your brother's life?”

Santvoort looked up quickly. “I have not this money, nor the half of it. I have offered all I have—and the Spaniard would not take it.”

His mother laughed scorn at him. “Not five thousand florins? What of the fishermen's moneys? What of the adventurers'?”

“They are not mine,” said Santvoort.

“Whosever they are, they are in your hand. Will you not take them for your brother's life?”

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“It is a trust. I cannot break it,” said Santvoort.

“Oh, you are very righteous! What is that beside your brother’s life?”

“I cannot break trust,” said Santvoort again.

“No, it is not that! It is that you cannot part with your money. Oh, God, that I should bear such a son as you! Are you human at all? Will you break my heart? Will you let your brother die for the sake of your accursed money?”

“Ah, Dirck,” the girl’s hands were laced together, all her being prayed to him, “you must save him,” and in a weak, childish voice, “you must, you know.”

“Again and again I have offered them all I have,” cried Santvoort, “the very house and all that is in it. I have begged here and there till no one would lend more. It is not enough. The villain will not take less than his five thousand florins.”

“Ah, yes and you are well enough pleased,” the mother broke out shrill. “It suits you well that Christian should die. Oh, I can believe you planned it all!” Her eyes were horrible with motherly hate. “I know your heart. You covet the maiden who loved him, Marie here——”

“Mevrouw Santvoort!” the girl cried all crimson from bosom to brow.

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"It is too much, mother!" Dirck Santvoort cried starting up.

"Too much? Yes, it is too much for all but a villain," his mother cried in a frenzy. "Oh, you have always grudged Christian all that he had. You stinted the money for his smallest debts. You envied him all I could give. Now you mingle him in a plot and betray him to the Spaniards. Now you would kill him to have his love to wife. But that shall never be at least. Marie, child, that shall never be;" she clutched the girl to her fiercely: "swear it! Tell the beast so!"

But the girl only sobbed.

"Marie!" Dirck Santvoort gasped from white lips.

She lifted her head, her face all strained in a storm of cruel doubts—"Oh, give—give all!" she moaned feebly, with little passion and little will.

Santvoort flung out his hands in a gesture of helplessness.

"Ah, come away, Marie," his mother cried. "We will beg from house to house, we will raise the town upon him for the villain that he is. Come, child, come," and with one last look of hate at her son she turned and dragged the girl away.

Santvoort dropped to his chair again and bent

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forward over the table stared at nothing, helpless, hopeless. Then Raoul came out of his corner. The affair seemed to him villainously obscure. None of the actors in it pleased much his peculiar taste. But what it seemed good to him to do was to lay his hand on Santvoort's and grip. After the man's surprise faded—he had plainly forgotten Raoul altogether—his pleasure was something pathetic. "I am not afraid for you in the end of things," said Raoul. "Tell me now in two clear words on what charge have the Spaniards taken your brother?"

"They say he was plotting against them."

"He only in all the city?" said Raoul quickly. Santvoort nodded. "Faith, strangely enterprising in him—and a strangely mighty ransom, too." He cocked an enquiring eye at Santvoort. "Has the Spaniard a grudge peculiar against him or you?"

"I know not," Santvoort groaned wearily. "I pray you leave me now. Forgive me, I—I have many affairs."

"I give you good night. May I give you a better morning!" quoth Raoul and swung out.

Then Dirck Santvoort came heavily to his knees. He had reason, you will agree.

Raoul was pensive as he dallied along the quay. The affair plainly called him, and yet he had no

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enthusiasm for it. He was not so stupid as to grudge Dirck Santvoort respect, but such a one could not charm his swift soul. The mother he liked still less. A mother rampant ever gave him a chill. For the girl—why the blood was not hot enough in her to warm Raoul. As he conceived her duty, she should have been in a frenzy of love or hate or both. He saw her plainly sane and condemned her for that prime vice in woman—coldness. None of them moved him an iota. And yet he itched to be in the affair. Its tangle excited him. For a Spaniard to sell the lives of citizens—why, that indeed was common in Flanders as any other bargain. But why choose one man only, and he not of the richest folk in the town? Why so vast a ransom for one? Then what was the truth of it between brother and brother? Between the brothers and this chilly girl? What end to it all if Christian were yet saved? What like was this unknown Christian? Every question of them all stirred Raoul. And beside all that, stronger (as I believe) than all, was a quaint feeling of duty. He had to redeem his character. He was intensely annoyed with his vulgar manners. That he, who knew how to bear himself with the highest, should appear a boor! He must needs do something splendid for the sake of his self respect. A strain of the

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Herakles, of the hero of the *bourgeois*, was dominant in him.

So you find him on that summer night revolving a hundred schemes as he wanders above the beach toward the citadel. Indeed he had so much in his head that Gabriello Hawkins escaped him altogether. Gabriello, who in truth mattered much, was moving among the loafers on the quay, with swift words here and here, and while he spoke men turned and made away from him to the narrow dark alleys behind. There, too, loafers were gathering. When he saw Raoul on the beach walk just below him, Gabriello retired with a strange discretion, and from behind other men's backs watched him progress nearer and nearer the citadel. "*Diavolo,*" quoth Gabriello, tapping his nose. "Would you fox me, little brother? Marry, then, I will out-fox you. He hath a modicum of the vulpine, too, thine uncle old Gabriello." And again he was very busy, and in a while there came rolling to him a hairy man of the sea. But that is another matter.

Raoul with his hundred schemes reduced to fifty or so came pensive still to the outworks of the citadel. It was built close to the shore, small and grey, its landward walls stained with lichen. A moat fed by sluices from the sea ran all about it. Then, as the

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sun sank low to landward, the waters of the moat ran blood red and the grim light flickered back about the base of the towers. The drawbridge was down and, around the little fortalice at the bridge head, a score or more of the Spanish garrison lounged at their ease, unarmed. Some were casting the dice upon a drum head and to them came Raoul. "Three guilders to two on the black man's throw," says he in good enough Spanish as a dark fellow took the dice. One and another swore at him Spanish fashion lustily. "Faith," says he with relish, "it's good to hear gentlemen of the sword again. Three to two on the black man." The irate black man turned and let drive a blow at him that would have broken his rib. Neither the rib nor any other part of Raoul received it and the black man over-balanced himself uncomfortably. There was more profanity to ask who the evasive Raoul was. Raoul explained that he was one Pierre Briand, come back from a campaign with Le Balafré to join Richebourg's regiment. "*Basta,*" says he, "but it is good to hear a swordsman's oath again after a week on shipboard with (unspeakable) civilians. But you break the game for me, comrades. *Via.* Three to two on the throw!" It was a vilely rash bet and they took it and he lost and was welcome. Before the twilight was heavy

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he was one of the circle, losing a little more than he won and heartily welcome. Then the sunset gun boomed from the ramparts.

Raoul was too profitable a player to be let go easily. So with exuberant good fellowship they swore him of their company and dragged him into the citadel for a merry night with the bones. Before the draw-bridge was up Raoul called for a gallon of Xeres from the vintner's at the town end. In fine he was welcome to those Spaniards as a bone to a dog. And yet I doubt if it cost him very dear. No man ever made braver show with less money than Raoul.

You see them, a stalwart, keen little company of thieves plying the dice beneath a flickering lantern in the courtyard. "Five and the main—Juan, you are down! May Asmodeus rack all bones and yours withal—there's for you, twins of the highest. Who takes the major? Pass me a swill for my gullet."

"Faith," says Raoul, "life's gay in the citadel of Flushing," and he looked as stupidly innocent as you please. He got not information so much as strife.

"Gay!" says one with the wine in his throat: "Well, and so it is!"

"Gay!" says another. "Tell that to a Catalan

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ass. We be as gay as bears in a pit, stuck here in the mud guarding this mud pie of a town."

"Why, but little to do and plenty to drink and some good red lips to kiss in the town," quoth Raoul smacking his own lips and winking marvelous like a wicked fool.

But plainly he had gone awry. There was silence and then, "Oh, women," says one with a shrug. "Well, I have known enough to want none."

And another broke out: "Kiss quotha! You'll be scratched from hair to hip if you waggle your eye at one."

You imagine Raoul's mind mighty pleased with itself. He was upon the track. But he looked sore puzzled. "Why, what ails the wenches?" said he. "You have had no blood letting to scare them in Flushing."

"They are all for our accursed prisoner," one grumbled, and swore at that prisoner with a zeal which did in truth surprise Raoul.

But of that he showed nothing at all. "What ails them at a prisoner or so?" said he with a careless shrug and took the dice box again.

"The rascal is a martyr, if you please," one grumbled and again came oaths of strange vehemence.

Raoul, palpitating with curiosity, took no heed

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but sent the wine round and called a new game. You need not doubt that he would have had the whole story out of those shallow swashbucklers with time enough. But a cannon ball past his ear cut short the game.

It was a clean shot through the gateway, and with the rending and roar of it came a fiendish din in Dutch. Raoul's Spaniards started up and ran all ways, but Raoul stood still gripping at the cause of it. Between two men it lay for certain—Dirck Santvoort or that "old man of war" Gabriello Hawkins. And they——

Before Raoul's amazed eyes came Dirck Santvoort's own image. Was it night or the wine or the devil that tricked him? No, by heaven, it was the brother, the martyred imprisoned brother. Hark!

"What is it, Don Pedro?" he was crying. "What is it?"

"San Felipe speed me! It must be an escalade of the fat burghers to rescue you, Santvoort. What blood to waste for a knave! I could laugh if——" another shot crashed through the gate and the commandant ran up to the ramparts. Christian Santvoort was close behind him and very close behind Santvoort Raoul, like a hound on the trail. The Spaniard saw a dangerous sight.

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The truth is that no man in Flanders then knew the worth of Gabriello Hawkins. When first he drifted into Flushing with some sort of a left hand commission from Elizabeth of England and a stronger warrant from Diedrich Sonoy, the patriots of the town, Dirck Santvoort with the rest, grumbled that a mountebank had been sent to help them against Spain. Nor for a while could they find he consisted of more than a love of drinking and a great love of talking. It was only on this night when he hurled his thunderbolt that they learnt he had won to him all the mass of the people and held their will and strength at his order. Gabriello was, indeed, not quite ready to strike. His artillery tarried. He had smuggled but one demi-saker into the harbor and he wanted two. But the affair with Raoul "accelerated his dispositions most thaumastically" (so afterwards he declared). He had always hoped, as I take it, to fall upon the citadel in time to save Master Christian, but with all his flamboyancy he had not the temper that spoils a fair enterprise for the sake of one man's life. An hour or two of wine and Raoul "wrought him to rashness." Rash he was in truth, for though there were pikes enough he had but a two score of muskets and the one demi-saker with its gunner, whom you saw a moment. He was a Jeremy

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Pengelly who had been in the great business at San Juan d'Ulloa and I know no better of him than this—that he brought up his gun on a cart of herrings and had two shots through the main gate before a Spaniard saw him.

“Then was there” (so Gabriello records) “Bata-vian pandemonium. For with yells thoracic and guttural the neophytes of war fell to: and indifferent to steel and musketoons they swarmed upon the fortalice at the bridge head: and by sheer thrust of brawn, yea verily, with tooth and claw they flung the Spaniards out upon the moat: yea, and would have followed after them, howling most dismally with a din of Avernus, and would have snapped at them in the dark water as hounds upon the fishy otter but that they heard my whistle of command at length sounding a rally. Yet twice and thrice I had to sound withal. For the which presently after I did make them a high rebuke of style plusquam-Alexandrine.” So eloquently Gabriello.

That outer fortalice won, and the gate of the citadel itself well battered by Jeremy Pengelly, the Dutchmen had to the front a pair of rafts (fish-trays buoyed on fish boxes they were) and were launching them across the moat. From the ramparts the alarmed Spaniards made at them a desultory fire. So perilous

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was the citadel's case when Don Pedro came upon the ramparts. He kept his head. Howling to the courtyard for powder, fresh store of powder and ball, he ran to the falconets over the drawbridge and turned them upon the rafts. Christian Santvoort followed after him and after Christian Santvoort followed Raoul. And it happened that as Don Pedro was busy with his guns, even while he bent over the priming, it happened that Raoul stumbled upon Christian Santvoort and he again upon Don Pedro and they two knowing nothing who was in fault fell over together, and all the priming was spilt. And that gun was never fired. So or ever a shot came the rafts were across the moat, close beneath the castle walls, safe from any gun at all, and a score of sturdy Dutch pikemen were scrambling through the broken gate.

Yelling to his men, Don Pedro staggered to his feet and with quick orders and oaths he made for the stair to the courtyard. Now it had come to stroke of steel. And again Christian Santvoort went after him and after Christian Santvoort, Raoul, Raoul, breathing short, his nostrils wide. He was happy now. He had events under his hand. Even as Christian turned to the stair Raoul came up with him, Raoul took him by the collar and kicked his

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legs from under him and hurled him out to the moat. He had not vanished before Raoul dived after him.

There was no one to heed them. The Dutchmen were all in a frenzy to win the citadel—some dragging up new rafts, some swimming, and those first desperate men hacking and hewing in the very gateway. The Spaniards were utterly distraught. Raoul had his quarry to himself.

Christian Santvoort, gasping, gurgling his way ashore, found Raoul waiting for him, felt an arm engage with his own like a vice, heard a voice rasp "March!" and was dragged away toward the sand dunes. The man's wits, as I take it, were stunned. He had for the moment no thought nor will. One can excuse him for that.

Raoul relates that they had gone a wet furlong before Christian came to himself. Then he checked and dragged back upon Raoul's arm: "What is it? Who are you?" he cried hoarsely.

"The man sent to deal with you, Master Christian," quoth Raoul.

"What do you mean?"

"That I am going to find out."

Christian started back and tried to wrench himself away. Raoul's hard arm locked his. For a moment

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the two swung wrestling together; Christian was the heavier man far, the stronger, I suppose, in muscle, but Raoul encompassed him like a living cable of steel. In a moment Christian was on the ground, breathless, crushed, looking up through the dark at fiery eyes. "Fool, fool, do you think to trick me like your brother?" the voice rasped at him. "Have a care, Master Christian! I am not very patient. It will take but little more of you to make me rob you of a limb, ay, or life, *mordieu*. Have a care!" Raoul sprang off his chest. "Up, now! Swiftly, *mordieu*. Is a gentleman to wait for you?"

Christian staggered to his feet. "This is an outrage!" he gasped. "This is intolerable! I——"

Raoul drove a blow at his chest. "Forward, rascal, forward!"

Christian turned clumsily and began to run away.

Raoul whipped out his sword and with the flat of it dealt a cruel blow across the man's loins. Christian shrieked and fell again. Raoul had a foot on his neck. "Another such trick, fool, and you taste the steel itself," he made the point quiver close to Christian's eye and the man shrieked again. But there was none to heed him. All Flushing hearkened to the din of the fight. Raoul laughed: "Cur, cur, what right have you to shun pain?" He stepped

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back and sheathed his sword. "To your feet! Do not tempt me again." But for a moment Christian seemed to have no power to rise. . . . Slowly, with some queer muttering to himself, he found his feet and looked sideways at Raoul. "On!" cried Raoul. "On!" So a strange procession, Christian shambling, stumbling over the sand heaps, Raoul following lightly a sword's length behind, they went on through the night. . . . At first Christian turned often to look back: but always Raoul's grim laugh met him. . . . In a while he dared not turn at all: and still he had to hear Raoul chuckling a little. . . .

They had gone a mile or more, they were lost among the grey blown sand, when Raoul cried: "Halt!" He sat himself down on the crest of the sand dunes and Christian turned and peered in nervous terror. Raoul pointed him to the hollow below. There you have them in the grey gloom, Raoul sitting easily, but his body straight as a bolt, Christian Santvoort slouching, shuffling below. Raoul considered him awhile, beckoned him closer and considered him again. Their eyes were upon a level. "Tell me the truth," Raoul snapped.

"I—you—it is an outrage," Christian stammered. "I will not bear it. It is——"

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"Cur," said Raoul very quietly.

Christian began to whine. "I am sure I do not know what you mean. You have entreated me shamefully. And I have never done you any wrong. I——"

"Tell the truth," Raoul thundered.

"Well, but I do not know what you mean. I am all dizzy. And you have bruised me very sore. I am cold, too. I——"

"*Mordieu*, do you think I care what you suffer?" cried Raoul.

"It is most brutal in you," Christian wailed. Then with a ludicrous defiance. "What do I care for you? What——"

"Ah:" the sound was not much, but as he made it Raoul leant forward a little and in the gloom Christian saw his eyes.

"For the love of God tell me what you want!" at last a cry rang true.

"The truth of what you were doing in the citadel."

"Oh!" Raoul heard the sound of sucking lips and indrawn breath. "Oh, it was a most foul outrage. The Spaniards took me captive because they said I was plotting treason against them. They told me that I should be hanged unless my brother

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paid a great ransom. And my brother—ah, well, he was ever a hard man—and there was no ransom. To-morrow, they said, I was to die. Dear sir, but for you——”

“Fool,” said Raoul quietly. Christian Santvoort’s smooth, swift sentence broke sharp off. Raoul rose and there was a streak of steel in the gloom.

“No, for God’s sake, no!” Christian screamed and flung himself down in the sand.

“You have had your chance. You have lied,” said Raoul coldly, and came a step nearer.

“I will tell the truth, I swear it. I will!”

“You have little time,” said Raoul coldly.

“Oh, I will tell you all. Only wait, wait!” His voice broke in a queer, hysterical sob. “It was a trick. You are right. It was a trick. Dirck has always grudged me money. He is miserly, close indeed. If he were not so grudging there would have been no need for it. And I was in debt. There was a thousand guilders to Don Pedro at play. He thought of this. I made a covenant with him. He was to pretend to arrest me and pretend he would hang me unless Dirck paid a good ransom. And he was to have three quarters of it. You see if Dirck were not so miserly—ah, what are you doing? You will not kill me now—not now!”

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his voice rose in a shriek as Raoul came towards him.

“Cur! If there were a soul in you, it would die of shame. What use are you to any man? What use is life to you?” and the sword point quivered greedy. . . . Then it fell, then it clashed home in the scabbard. “No, *cordieu*, I sentence you to life. That is the worst doom for you, life with your shame. Go!”

Raoul turned away and made for the other side of the dune and lay cosily on his back. He shut his eyes with a sigh of relief and heard the voice of the sea. . . .

Christian was making some queer noises by himself. After a while he scrambled over to Raoul. “What am I to do?” he moaned. “Where am I to go?” Raoul said nothing at all. Christian cowered down on the sand . . . after a while Raoul heard him sobbing, heard the tearing, rending sobs of a man utterly beaten.

Raoul sprang up and stamped in angry impatience. “*Dame*, did ever you think or feel or care for anyone outside your skin? Oh, it is nothing that your curst treacherous greed has brought your brother hatred and the worst pain—nothing that he staked his last guilder, did all but steal to make that ransom

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—nothing that your mother hates him because he would not steal, too—nothing that the girl he loves now doubts him miserly and cruel!”

“I—I love her, too,” Christian sobbed. “And I only wanted some little money.”

Raoul’s laugh echoed along the shore. Then he clutched Christian by the shoulder. “Love? You? In the name of God, if you would make yourself a man, now, now! Each instant is nearer too late.”

“How is it?” sobbed Christian. “How can I?”

“Deal truly by him.”

Christian buried his face in his hands. . . . Raoul heard him moaning to God. . . . Painfully he rose and faltering trudged away through the night. . . . Raoul watched awhile, then followed. And again Christian turned back often to look at him. . . . When they had gone some way, Raoul with a muttered oath came up to his side and gripped his arm. . . . Christian looked at him timidly. There was no cruelty now in the gleaming eyes . . . Raoul was surprising himself again. . . .

To that tiny room with its odor of hemp Dirck Santvoort came back from the storm of the citadel. His strange leather armor—just such his father and his grandfather had worn in their day—was dappled in blood and dust. He loosed it and sat down wearily,

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leaning forward against the table, his arms spread out across it. So he sat, muttering to himself, when his mother broke in with the girl. "What now, Dirck," she cried, "what now?"

"He is not there, mother."

"How do you mean? What is it? The Spaniards are beaten?"

"We have taken the citadel. I have searched everywhere. He is not there."

The mother screamed. "They have killed him already!" she cried and pressed her hands to her head. Then flinging out her hand to point at Dirck: "His blood is on your hands. But for your accursed schemes he would not have died and you did not lift a hand to save him. Ah, you—you—" her voice failed and she fell sobbing on the girl's shoulder. Over her quivering head the girl's eyes met Dirck's, merciless enough. . . .

There was tramping and a clatter in the corridor. Gabriello Hawkins strode in twirling his moustachios with tremendous speed. "*Carissime,*" he cried. "Ha, noble ladies, your slave. Dirck, my brave heart, I have that commandant. A strange tale, *mehercle,* he tells. *Turpiter mendax,* basely he lies, I doubt. Yet all things may be true while the devil lives. How say you? Will you hear?"

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“Of Christian?” cried Vrouw Santvoort.

“Ay, lady. God give us all grace at the last.”

“Oh, let him come, let him come!” she cried and Dirck bowed his head.

“So be it! Be strong now.” He flung open the door and stamped his foot. “On your front! March!”

Between two sturdy Dutchmen Don Pedro was marched in. He limped painfully, his face was pitted with powder and there was a dirty, red scrap of linen about his brow. But blood shot eyes glared at them and “What! Rogue’s brother and mother and light o’ love! Well met!” he said with a hoarse laugh.

Vrouw Santvoort turned to face him fierce as a wounded beast. “Villain, where is my son?”

“Saints help him to hell where his place is! What matter for so base a son as yours, old woman?”

“Pedro, Pedro,” said Gabriello Hawkins gently, “you prepare for yourself an uneasy death.”

“Bah, what death does a beaten man fear? Am I brought here to say fair words of that rogue Christian? Dutch swine, should I spare you one word of the truth if it smarts? You think the beast a dear martyr. Bah, he was nothing but a thief. He wanted money. He knew you would pay to buy him off death. So we made our little plan. I took

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him and frightened you by threatening death. He was to have his share of the price. Martyr! He only wanted to plunder you."

"It is a lie!" Dirck leapt up with a shout, his broad face crimson: "it is an accursed lie!"

But his mother, her throat, her bosom working as she tried to speak, pointed silent at the door. There grey faced, dishevelled, stood Christian.

Dirck saw him and, with a great roar that made no words, leapt at him and wrung his hands. "My brother, my brother, in good time," he cried and the mother broke by him and flung herself upon Christian's breast.

Raoul, swaggered in, his swarthy face drawn a little, his eyes curiously keen. Even while the mother clung to her son he gripped Christian's shoulder and Christian shuddered and turned to him.

"What kind of beast is the mother that fondles a thief of a son?" the Spaniard laughed.

Dirck turned upon him and dealt him a blow that crashed him back past his guards against the wall.

"No," Christian cried out, "he has spoken the truth."

The Spaniard's laugh rang again.

"Christian!" his mother clutched at him fiercely.
"Christian!"

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"I am . . . what he said," Christian gasped and looked like a frightened child at Raoul.

His mother tore herself from him and gazed with wild, swollen eyes. There was no need to ask more. His face told all. . . . She flung herself down by the table in a frenzy of sorrow. . . .

The Spaniard was laughing loud. On him Gabriello turned in a passion. "So laugh they in hell, *sceleratissime*. Out! Out!" and he drove the man and his guards before him.

"Marie!" Christian breathed. "Marie!"

The girl stood aloof with the eyes of one held in a great fear. At the call she gave a strange, gasping sob. "Do not—do not speak to me," she muttered.

But Dirck, grave and deliberate, strode to his brother. "Christian—it is in my mind I have been hard to you," he said and felt for his brother's hand. Christian clutching it, turned away. . . . Raoul saw his shoulders heave. . . . Together the two brothers went out. . . .

Raoul drew himself stiffly to the salute as he looked after them. Then, turning, saw the girl's cheeks all glistening wet while she smiled. . . . Softly she came to Vrouw Santvoort, laid a hand on her shoulder and caressed it. "Come, mother," she said. . . .

Raoul, left alone, sat down in the largest chair,

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pulled off his boots and regarded them benignly. "I have made a man to-night," said he. "It is exhausting." He stretched himself out on the rug, laid his sword by his side, pulled up a coil of rope for his pillow, and was asleep.

CHAPTER VIII

RAOUL'S PROFESSOR

IT was at the siege of Leyden that Raoul jumped out of a window after Barbara van der Werf, who loved him from that hour. She was then nine. Close on a decade after, when the horrors of that siege were faded, and the new University, a memorial of the triumph, was grown to be a thing of some account, upon a morning in May, Raoul came to Leyden again. Adrian van der Werf and his wife gave a most hearty welcome (as indeed they had good reason of gratitude) then begged pardon of him for going to a prayer meeting. Raoul, whose large curiosity halted before prayer meetings, went a walking in the orchards beyond the wall.

Perhaps he did not choose amiss. Springtime was wild in the air. The white fragrant glory of the apple-blossom quickened his heart like passionate music. The hurrying note of the bees' labor mingled with the wind, and through the wind and the sunlight the strife of missel-thrush and blackbird rang with joy. Raoul drank all in greedily. He began to see

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all the glad medley of color, grey and green and lavender as the leaves swayed behind the pure flood of blossom, the bright gold of daffodils and tall daisies broken with the hyacinth's deepest blue, and afar about the grey walls' base a wave of valerian, crimson red.

It was good to live. You see the lilt of his walk, the proud strength of him . . . and he met what well became the hour and exalted his temper. Lithe as a maid should be in her first springtime, one went light and eager with a gallant that held himself manly enough. Raoul sat down and banked himself against a swell of the ground and, bright-eyed, breathing deep, let himself watch.

In a while, they, too, sat down and he saw them a comely pair. Her brow was delectably white beneath the heavy ripple of dark hair and even from far he could see the fine wrought form of her and the deep redness of her lips. The lover was a sturdy fellow, something dark and heavy of face but alive enough as he turned to her and pled most eloquent with hands and lips. Raoul saw her smile, that strange, wise, mocking smile he loved in womanhood. Then she spoke slowly, with a roguish tilt of her head and swift glances from under her lashes. It seemed she was kind. For the lover caught her hands and

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kissed them with passion, she smiling gay the while—and Raoul could have sworn that she clung to his hands a little. Then my lord rose up and after no mean bow marched off to the city.

“So. Singly. Lest the good gossips of Leyden should blacken us,” quoth Raoul watching him. “With a kiss o’ the hand in memory, and a promise of better to-morrow. *Benedicite.*”

The girl watched my lord smiling till he was lost among the trees. Then she rose up and followed. Raoul sprang out of the daffodils to her side. “My felicitations,” says he with a dazzling bow.

“And on what, pray?” she held aloof.

“Why, on yourself,” quoth Raoul.

She looked at him gravely (he remarked that her eyes were blue). There was doubtless something in him that appealed to her. For she did not disdain to answer: “I do you the kindness of supposing that unsaid,” said she.

Raoul—he had much experience—understood her at once. That is, as much as any man but one could ever understand. He bowed. “But it would have been mere deceit not to worship you. And all conversations must have a beginning.”

“I do not see the need, sir.”

“I grieve to declare you selfish. So indeed am I.

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But for my selfishness I have the divine right of manhood. You, none at all; that is the one loss in being a woman. But you are selfish, mademoiselle, because to talk to me costs you nothing and gives me infinite felicity. Yet you grudge me. It is unwomanly."

"Indeed, sir, it seems I need only listen."

"That would be most unwomanly of all."

He had persuaded her to smile. The victory was won. But still she was not encouraging: "The truth is, sir," said she, "gentlemen of your kind are not to my taste."

"If you think me less than unique, I warn you of your error."

"Your manners, alack, are no wise unique."

"Nay, mademoiselle, consider me and them more deeply. On the first flash you took me for a gallant of the gutter. But you find I understand your temper as well as yourself. Or better."

"I protest I am restraining my temper marvelously."

"Not in the least," Raoul blandly informed her. "For your temper needs no restraint. I offer no more than good fellowship. I ask of you no more. What should inflame you? What hinders our virtuous union?"

"Since it appears by these presents that you are a man——"

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“Thereof shall some woman be mightily glad.”

Raoul saluted the not impossible her.

“——Whom I have not before seen——”

“You have all my sympathy,” Raoul assured her.

“——it is not becoming that I should seem to like to see you.”

“Heaven!” Raoul addressed it with a gesture of frenzy. “Is it becoming that a maid should be a living lie? Am I a dragon, a Minotaurus? Quite otherwise, mademoiselle. I am an honest gentleman of fortune with something about him that takes the eye. I have the felicity to amuse you. You have, I assure you, the ability to amuse me. Why should we both go sorrowing for a beldame’s notion of what befits?”

“So light may all my sorrows be,” quoth she.

“I protest the first prude was born of cold folly,” Raoul grumbled as she made away from him. Then he quickened his pace to her side. “Let me tell you a story. I had it from a wise clerk of Louvain. In old years there was a seigneur of the Greeks called Odysseus and it befell him to be shipwrecked so that of all his goods and company he saved none but himself. And he was cast up on the shore with no rag to cover him. Beyond the beach were some maidens playing bilboquet and the seigneur Odysseus, needing

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things to put both inside and outside himself, went to them. Now they, being prudes, did all run away saving one who was the King's daughter. She, having heart and mind large enough to condemn little things, stayed for him and gave him all his need and spoke him kindly. Her name—well, her name is out of my mind for it is hard as high German. But I am sure by the clerk's tale she was much like yourself. Moreover, your task is the easier for I"—Raoul regarded his neat legs with approval—"have as good breeches as you need wish to see."

"But if you remember your story, sir," said she quickly, "when they came near the town Nausicaa went forward alone lest the townfolk should talk. So good e'en, my lord Odysseus." She sped away.

Raoul let her go. He did not hold himself defeated, for he had kept her long enough to rejoice in the deep water light of the blue eyes beneath black lashes, the milk white turn of her face and the roguish mirth of her dark lips. He followed after, and not too far away, watching the life of her walk.

Away through the town she led him and past the old fortalice and down the Nieuw Straat into the shadow of the Hooglandsche Kerk and the scent of its limes. And behold she halted at the burgomaster's door. Raoul—almost he exclaimed—closed

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upon her swiftly. With her hand on the latch she turned red and angry: "You go too far, sir!"

"Nay, I am going farther, Barbara," said he and opened the door for her. Mightily indignant she faced him, he waved her in with bland politeness. She gave a little wrathful cry and sped in crying: "Father! Father!"

Raoul followed at his leisure. "Once with a kiss you promised me eternal love," said he sadly. "It is true you did not know the worth of kisses then."

She was stamping with impatience when Adrian van der Werf came grave in his fur gown. "Father, this person—" she began, breathless.

"Ah, M. Raoul has found you," said her father smiling. With a little cry she shrank away into the shadow, her hands pressed to her hot cheeks. "Why, you were not so shy of him when you were nine."

"In fact I have often wanted some one to blush for me, Barbara," said Raoul, and held out his hand. "You do it as delectably as I could wish."

"It would be kinder to help me stop," Barbara protested, coming out of the shadow in pleasant, smiling confusion. "But it was hateful of me not to know you. Oh, tell me, did you know me at once?"

"At first," said Raoul calmly, "appearances deceived me."

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Her eyes fell an instant. Then she looked up with a quick, roguish gleam. "I am sure you do not care for appearances." A clock struck. "Ah! You always liked dinner, I remember. It is full time."

"Ay, go in, child, go in," said her father.

She was gay and most kind to Raoul at dinner and he sparkled upon the surface, but more than once she caught his humorous eyes dark in gravity.

For Raoul, who had always a mission to put the world right, was concerned for her. He knew her father and mother well. He was sure that no decent, honorable lover of her need fear them. And he disliked this gentleman who met her in secret beyond the wall. Raoul had forced through enough of ill life himself to be mightily zealous in keeping his friends out of it. There was never anyone more respectable than he in the end.

When the graceful, lavish courtesies of Mynheer and Mevrouw Van der Werf were done, when Raoul had fought half a dozen battles over again for them and shown Adrian the younger three new tricks for the swordsman afoot against mounted men, he captured Barbara in the garden alone. She was on a broad, white seat by the sundial at the end of the great yew ledge. He could not doubt her pleasure as she made room for him with a dainty flick of grey

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skirts. Then turning to him with the gayest smile on lip and eye (while punctiliously she hid her ankle): "Now tell me truly, did you know me at first?"

Raoul shook his head. "It was not in such condition that I thought to meet Barbara van der Werf," said he with portentous gravity.

She did not conceal surprise. It was plain that righteousness so alarming was not what she thought Raoul's character. "Where have I marred your ideal?" said she.

Raoul turned to her with so paternally solemn an air that she gurgled invincible laughter. "You will not suspect me," says he, "of meaning you anything but good."

"Indeed, no," she murmured demurely, thinking him much too amusing.

"Then let me ask you," says he, very virtuous, "does your mother or your father know of your meeting this brave gentleman without the wall?"

"No, indeed, sir;" she cast down her eyes. "They—they believed me on a visit to the sick."

"Barbara," says Raoul mighty earnest, "is it well done?"

"Indeed I thought he did very well," she murmured.

"If he means you honorably let him come honorably to your father's house!"

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"But I think I do not want him," said Barbara. "And I am sure he does not want to."

"Child, is it honorable, is it maidenly in you?" cried Raoul.

Barbara looked in his eyes: "Why, sir, from what you said to the girl you did not know I had hardly thought you so precise."

Raoul coughed. "My dear, I meant nothing and therefore did you no harm. This gentleman purports to mean much and will do you as much damage."

"But I 'have the felicity to amuse him' and indeed he has a great deal of 'ability to amuse me,'" she quoted with plaintive malice from the orations of Raoul. Then with her head on one side; "I suspect," says she, "the first prude was a man."

Raoul gave up solemnity in despair. "And we know," he added, "it was a woman first listened to the serpent."

"That," Barbara explained, "was after the man had spoken to her. The voices were marvelous like."

"They are so. And it was in an orchard Eve made her mistake, too."

She laughed. "Oh, you persist like a spider. I do promise you there is no shame at all in what I do—and I can tell you no more, for the secret is his. Oh, believe me." She was again the child he had loved.

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"I believe," said Raoul and kissed her hand. And resolved to deal with the gentleman.

Then they were both happy, Raoul, when he let himself go, could be the gayest company, and with tales of wild deeds and the thrill of his own surprising soul he kept her heart swift. She was mightily proud that when she was nine she had taken her chance and kissed him.

In the days that followed, Raoul used well the gruesome skill he had in knowing what another was doing without watching. So that he came to the orchards again one twilight hour close behind Barbara, but unseen. The same sturdy dark fellow was waiting her, they had the same joyous meeting, the same tender converse and farewell. And Raoul's face in the shadow wore a saturnine smile. It was a matter of some skill to follow the gentleman without being seen of the lady. Raoul did it with success.

Well away from her and still far enough from the town, he caught up his gentleman. You see his face change swiftly from the wary spy to the stern moralist. He tapped the gentleman on the shoulder.

"I have an errand to you, sir. I am Raoul de Tout le Monde. Who are you?"

"An errand without an address?" says the man, speaking Dutch with a French accent.

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“’Tis your actions and not your name that brings me here. Dare you not put a name to your actions?”

“Sir, you are presumptuous. I am Gil Vallorbes, Professor *Juris Civilis et Juris Gentium* in the University of Leyden.”

“Babes and sucklings prophesy there, then,” said Raoul with a shrug: and indeed the professor did not seem five years older than himself. Raoul looked twenty-five till he was fifty.

“Nay, babes swagger with swords too big for them,” quoth the professor angrily. If he had kept his temper, if Raoul had not felt so moral, they might have seen how absurd they looked, red faced, nose to nose in the gloaming.

“Well, sir, for all you are a child and a professor you are old enough and man enough to know what’s honorable. I complain of your conduct, sir.”

The professor of law stiffened and flushed. “I contest your right, sir!” he cried.

“I have no wish to put you to shame,” said Raoul grandly. “I will believe you not worse than thoughtless.”

“A pest on your impudent insolence,” cried the outraged professor.

“Be gentle, with your words, sir,” Raoul thundered. “Look you, if I fix a quarrel on you, there will be one

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professor the less in this world. Now. You have an affair with a lady whose name does not pass my lips. I will believe till you prove other, that you have meant no ill. But, sir, henceforth you shall seek her in her father's house, not stealthily and shamefully beyond the wall. This counsel for your own honor which, I tell you frankly, you have smirched."

"You may go to perdition," the professor exploded. "You are an impertinent. I will hear no more of you," and he thought to thrust by.

Raoul gripped his arm. "Be advised, sir," Raoul's voice rasped in his ear. "If you are a man of honor go fairly to her father's house. If you are not—you dig your grave—I am Raoul de Tout le Monde." He struck an attitude before the professor, chest out, tapping his sword hilt.

The professor, with some words that were not professorial, thrust by him and on into the town.

Raoul followed gloomy. He did not see his way clear. It seemed to him that it would be his duty to despoil the faculty of law of its professor: and that was not likely to please Barbara. The professor annoyed him immensely. That a gentleman should prefer to conduct his wooing against Raoul's advice was to Raoul plain evidence of ill intent or bitter folly. Raoul was always quite certain he could play

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providence admirably if people would not interfere with his arrangements.

In the character of providence he sought out Barbara. She was cosily upon a couch in the innermost room, and she sang softly to herself and made a lute echo faintly her voice. It sounded of love. But when she saw the prodigious solemnity of Raoul, the note changed with a clang.

‘Slaet op den tromele, van dirre dom deyne’
(Beat the drum merrily! Rub a dub dow!)

she pealed in heroic strain. Raoul brushed the martial ballad aside with a lordly wave of his hand. She gurgled. Raoul drew up a chair to her and sat down. “Indeed,” says she, her voice quavering and her lips, “you have the very manner of the apothecary.”

“I pray heaven I have not to be the apothecary of your soul,” said Raoul with the deepest gravity.

“Oh, pray that vigorously!” she said.

“Barbara, I have spoken with this professor of yours.”

A red spot burnt in her cheek: “That is, you have spied on me.”

“I was never afraid,” says Raoul grandly, “to dirty my fingers in the cause of heaven.”

“And after I asked you to trust me!”

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“My dear, I would trust you like God or myself if you were not trusting him.”

“And what ails him, pray—poor Vallorbes!”

Raoul coughed. “I am not yet at the bottom of him. But I never suspected a man more. If ever a man knew the world and the worst of it, it is I,” his chest swelled with pride. But Barbara was laughing. “Child, bring him here, let him face your father——”

“They would disagree marvelously,” Barbara murmured in tranquil joy.

“——deal honorably with us all——”

“That would be far less interesting for you,” Barbara reminded him.

“—Prove him before you yield to him.”

Barbara gurgled. “Oh, I trust him like myself.”

Raoul made a gesture of dramatic despair. “’Tis such women as you are the glory of the world and the ruin of yourself.”

“I give you my word I will be neither,” Barbara assured him.

“You will not be advised?” said Raoul in his deepest voice.

Barbara looked sentimental. “Only by my own heart,” she sighed with her hand on it—and laughed at him.

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"No trusty counsellor!"

"But decently amusing," said Barbara meekly. "That is why you like me," she informed him.

"Ay, child, I like you enough to save you," said Raoul rising. "I would it were with your own will."

Humorous affection sparkled in Barbara's blue eyes as she looked after him. "I suppose," she reflected, "one likes men because they can be so quite, quite wrong. . . ."

On the next night, as I believe, she went out for nothing better than to annoy Raoul. She made ostentation of going. In Raoul's hearing she told her mother she was away to visit a sick cousin. You conceive Raoul's ears pricking at the phrase. He followed her, earnestly, warily. But with a wicked skill she lost him in the alleys off the Lange Brug and then—why, then, I will swear she went demurely to sit by the sick.

Raoul suspected her of nothing less. The moment he found he had lost her he made for the old haunt beyond the town. And there—conceive the flame of his righteous indignation!—there he beheld the professor with another maid in his arms.

The professor had vastly more zeal with this one. It multiplied his offence, *mordieu!* He held her close upon his heart. It was not her hands that he kissed.

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And he was rewarded. She clung to him passionately. She answered him well.

You are not to suppose that Raoul felt any shame at watching them. Avenging Providence does not disdain to play the eavesdropper.

The professor and his new love were in no haste to part. Raoul sat down behind the trees and his lean face was grim and still more grim. He found their joy infinitely tedious. Besides, he condemned the professor's taste. This scrap of a girl, all pink and white with her pale hair, was a common flower of the wayside to the rare charm of Barbara. Altogether and every way he execrated the professor.

At last the lovers parted. With a covey of kisses flung after her, the girl sped back to the town. The professor stayed a while. Raoul condemned him again for his discretion. When at length he came sauntering, whistling an amorous lay, Raoul spoke out of the shadow, peevishly: "You kiss like a pig."

The professor started back in amazement. Raoul rose up before him. "Who made you a spy on me?" cried the professor with an oath.

"I dislike the word. I dislike your kisses. Oh, I dislike them infinitely. In fact I cannot permit you to kiss without my leave."

The professor cursed his leave.

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"Your very swearing is piggish," said Raoul critically. "Oh, your whole being inflames me with contempt."

"By heaven you pass all bounds!" cried the professor and tried to thrust him from the path.

"Is it so professors fight?" Raoul sneered, "with open hands like girls at school."

"I will show you, sir," the professor roared, purple with rage, and lugged out his sword.

The more another man lost his temper the better Raoul ever kept his. "After all, there is a lurking beauty about you," he admitted as he saluted punctiliously and swung round to make the light fair for them both. The professor engaged with more fury than precision: he was but too plainly no professor of the sword: and the utter facility of the fight disgusted Raoul.

"You perceive?" says he coldly. "Your life is mine." The professor's neck was bare to his point. "Ah!" As the professor made a wild lunge. "It is dangerous to be so much in earnest. I have but to straighten my arm and—so!" He pricked the professor's chest. "In fine, sir, you are in my power. I've no wish to let your silly life out. Swear to me you'll have no more in private with Juffrouw Van der Werf and I let you go."

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The professor, whose dark brow was dripping sweat, stammered a breathless curse at his insolence and beset him again. Raoul broke ground swiftly and again very swiftly. The professor followed wild in rage and lunged beyond his reach and staggered and fell. Raoul was upon him, rolled him upon his back with a crafty trick of the knee, had a foot on his heaving chest and the sword point at his throat. "Have you learnt your lesson now, professor?" says he blandly. "There is but one way to earn your life. Deal honorably by the Juffrouw Van der Werf and never see her again. Swear it!"

"I will not," the professor gasped. "No man shall order my life, if I die for it."

"Bethink you," cried Raoul, and the sword point urged. "I demand no more than honor demands. But less, by heaven, means death."

"I am judge of my own honor," the professor gasped.

"Speak to her no more!" Raoul thundered. "Swear it!"

"I will not," the professor growled.

Raoul with an oath shortened his arm to thrust. The professor did not flinch. . . . Raoul waited a moment, his sword in the sunlight looking down at him. . . . Then he put up his sword with a flourish, he stepped off the professor's chest. "You

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are an impracticable man," said he smiling. "You are too good to kill: and yet for what I have seen of you, you are too bad to let live."

The professor laboriously arose. Disheveled, with many grass blades upon him, he stared at Raoul. Then he drew a long breath. "Heaven!" says he, "if I mystify you you mystify me. What do you want at all?"

Raoul sat down upon the grass. "Explain to me," says he, "your polygamous intentions."

"It is nothing of the kind," said the professor. "Of that most noble and high born lady the Juffrouw Van der Werf I want nothing at all."

"I could slay you for it," cried Raoul.

"Name of God!" cried the poor professor, clutching his brow, "what would you have? I thought you were concerned for her?"

"For your taste in not loving her," Raoul grumbled, "I could fight you again."

The professor gasped heavily. It is probable that he thought Raoul not quite sane. "But she has been very kind to me," he explained. "She came only to help me with Matilda——"

"Matilda!" Raoul muttered disgustfully. "She would have a name like that! Well, and why do you want help to Matilda?"

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The professor became melancholy. He shook his head. "I am not permitted to be betrothed to her." He sighed tremendously.

"What more does Matilda want?" Raoul asked. "You are a straight, lusty man and——"

"It is not Matilda," said the professor. "She knows. She understands.—It is her father." And he gave another alarming sigh. "She is the daughter of Hendrik van Uden——"

"The old soldier of Burgandy. Old Woodenh——ahem! You contemplate him as a father-in-law."

"He swears," said the professor in deep depression, "his daughter shall never belong to a man of the gown. He will give her only to a soldier."

"Which indeed you do not resemble," Raoul murmured.

"And he has most straitly forbidden her to meet me," the professor lamented.

"So Barbara has to bid her come and be kissed," said Raoul. "Well, professor, what remedy?"

The professor shook his head. "I must wait. We must wait."

"It is the most accursed trade I know," said Raoul and lay flat on his back and watched the sky mellowing in the sunset light. . . . It was some time before he sat up. Then his eyes were

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at their wickedest. "And when does she come for her kisses again?" he asked.

The professor brightened a little. "She promised me to-morrow."

"*A merveille.* He lives close above the Stadhuis, old Woodenhea—that is to say, your esteemed father-in-law. To-morrow be in the Maarsman Steeg. Fail not, if you value Matilda."

"But at what hour? What do you propose?"

"At what hour? A little before the hour she should start for your kisses. And that is—seven? A quarter after seven? Better and better! Be there a little before seven and wait. What do I propose? I do not propose. I prophesy. I prophesy bliss for you and Matilda."

The professor, as was not unreasonable, began to ask many questions.

"Do not be the catechism. I never could endure it. Come away back to the town. The dew is falling and spoiling my beautiful hose. Pray admire my hose. Do you suppose that Matilda—bah, what am I saying?"

"Slaet op den tromele, van dirre dom deyne:

Slaet op den tromele, van dirre dom does:

Slaet op den tromele, van dirre dom deyne:

Vive le gens! is nu de loes."

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Humming that sounding ballad of Barbara's, Raoul marched the protesting professor back to the city. But before they were in sight of the gates he halted and sent the professor on before him. "My reputation is delicately maidenly to-night," says he, and to the professor imploring information would give no more than this: "If you knew anything you would know too much. It is innocence that gives man the right to paradise. Farewell. Remember. In the Maarsman Steeg!" Reluctantly, the professor was driven on ahead. Raoul spent a decent interval in placid contemplation of the rising moon, then at some speed made for his lodging and Barbara.

Barbara indeed was more than ready for him. She met him upon the threshold holding aloft a candle whose light fell upon a demure, delicious wickedness. "Pray, did you happen to be looking for me?" said she.

Raoul regarded her gravely: "Barbara," said he, "some day you will have to be a wife. Abolish your sense of humor."

"I shall present it to my husband," says she.

"Poor wretch," said Raoul with feeling, "he will not have time to be anything but patient."

"I do not think you are being very moral to-night," said Barbara.

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"Alack, Barbara, your friends are not allowed to be moral."

"You must learn to be moral with a certain ease," Barbara informed him. "Like my friend of the orchards," and her eyes were essentially roguish.

Gently but firmly Raoul possessed himself of her arm. He led her out to the garden.

"I do hope your walk to-night was pleasing," says she with an air of concern. Raoul took hold of her arm more firmly. She looked up at him most wickedly innocent. "You found what you sought?"

"I followed wickedness, Barbara, and I found romance."

"And what did you say to it?" she cried eagerly. Raoul coughed. "Oh, I will wager my onyx girdle you were moral!"

"I was the very church militant," Raoul admitted.

"Oh, joy!" Barbara gurgled: and then mimicking Raoul in his moral moments: "'Sir,' (said you) 'is this maidenly in you?' Oh, I will make him tell me just how funny you looked."

"I doubt if he saw," said Raoul grimly.

"And now, sir," she swung a little on his arm for the last sunlight to fall across her face, "pray what do you think of his taste?"

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Raoul slipped one arm all round her and took her pleasing chin with his other hand: "Now what do you think you deserve?" said he. Her eyes laughed gay defiance as his lips closed upon hers . . . but in the same instant a shadow of fear crossed her face and Raoul checked stiffly. She did not try to free herself nor he let go. They stood so silent and close, and half-unconsciously each felt the other draw a long breath. "In fact I am rather stupid," said Raoul slowly.

"It would have spoilt everything," said Barbara as much to herself as him. Their eyes met gravely. "Yes. You know rather much," she said. Raoul let go her chin, but his other arm held her still. So with her close in his arm he walked into the sunset. . . . "It is rather good to know you," said Barbara.

"I find it vastly interesting myself," Raoul admitted.

Barbara considered him critically. She was wondering, I suppose, why she liked him so much and yet only liked him. She concluded with a little sigh. Then after a moment: "Well and did the professor find you interesting?" she asked.

"My fascinations prostrated him," said Raoul. "He regards me as a swashbuckler—a busybody—a redeemer."

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"And which are you?"

"All three, my dear," said Raoul. "That is the true mystery of my power."

"Oh, what do you mean?" she cried earnestly.

"I hope to find out before I die."

"Well, what are you going to do now?"

"Whatever seems to myself most surprising."

"Oh, but about the professor. Do tell me everything."

Raoul shrugged his shoulders. "I condemned his taste. He condemned my manners. And so we parted."

Barbara looked disappointed. "You know about Matilda?"

"It is impossible to say," Raoul explained blandly, "how little Matilda interests me."

Barbara looked at him twice. "If you were the professor," (Raoul shuddered dramatically) "what would you do?"

"I should break old Woodenhead's wooden head. We should fight. His daughter would weep for him and hate me. And we should all live happily ever after."

"You are being rather a pig," said Barbara, watching him.

"It is very soothing," said Raoul. "Now you are

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not soothing, Barbara. Did you ever see a lovely hedgehog?"

"You are talking nonsense," said Barbara severely.

"Go look in a mirror," said Raoul: and at that Barbara fairly wrenched herself away, and with a flash of her eyes and a stamp of her foot in anger half real, half feigned, turned her back on him. Which was precisely what Raoul wished.

Till it was full dark he stayed in the garden pacing slowly a short path. His mind was concerned with two matters: he made himself see in the tiniest detail the streets and alleyways about the Stadhuis and he recalled every outer garment in his considerable wardrobe.

The next afternoon he went (it is his habit of doing such things as this which, intellectually I most admire in Raoul) he went to visit Matilda's father, the Burgundian veteran, Hendrik van Uden, old Woodenhead. That hairy, rosy, obstinate warrior he knew from old days in Leyden's siege and they had a noisy hour or two exulting, fighting, fighting old fights. Raoul left the veteran in the highest spirits, convinced that he was the finest fellow in the world and Raoul the wisest for thinking him so.

Then Raoul sauntered with meticulous eyes down the Maarsman Steeg and up an alley beside. And

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afterwards he went back to the Nieuw Straat and took two hours of sleep. For that he had always a great capacity.

In the later darker twilight the professor came tip-toeing to the end of the Maarsman Steeg. He looked hardly more ashamed of himself than he was. He had been telling himself continually that he was a fool to come and be made a fool of. He was mighty thankful that it was close upon supper time and the streets near empty. Too occupied in reflecting on his own folly, he failed to mark a ragged swashbuckler lounging in a beershop doorway close at hand.

This was a scoundrel of dissolute air. He swaggered and rolled about in the doorway as if he were far less than sober. His battered hat was cocked full over his eyes. His ragged, dust colored cloak drawn up to his chin as if he had no more than a shirt beneath.

The shadows deepened fast. Even the wider street was dim now and the alleys gloomed black. Out of her father's house tripped Matilda duly: but (to some one's dismay) Barbara was with her. That was in no way upon the programme, which had plainly forgotten the very feminine nature of Barbara. It was too late to change. The girls were crossing the head of the Maarsman Steeg (you conceive the professor's pulses throbbing two paces away) when

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out from the beershop leapt the swashbuckler. He thrust Barbara away, he caught Matilda up roughly, he whirled her off into the shadows, he had a rude hand at her neck. . . . But even as she screamed and Barbara, the professor rushed upon him madly like a bull and like a bull roaring. The swashbuckler flung Matilda down, leapt back a sword's length into darker gloom, flicked out his own sword, shot a pass through the thick of the professor's sword arm and darted off down the alley to the river.

Precisely twenty-five seconds after, Raoul, splendid as Raoul was wont to be, with cloak of black velvet and close velvet cap, arrived breathless at the head of the Maarsman Steeg crying: "*Sangdieu*, brave sword! Villain of hell! where has he marked you?" and he caught the professor's wounded arm from the tremulous hands of Matilda. Then as men and women poured from the houses and crowded around: "Away, name of God! Away!" Raoul cried with a sweep of his arm. "Pursue the villain! Thither he fled! Some broken Italian rogue of Vitelli's, by his air. Nay, fie, lass, bear up. 'Tis nothing of a wound, and that hell hound that wronged you bears a deeper mark I'll swear." Raoul cut the sleeve away from the blood.

Old Hendrik van Uden came waddling, buffeting

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his way through the press. "Here, now, here, herring bellies, what is all this? Where is my maid?"

"Van Uden! The very man! You know more of a sword thrust than I do myself. Take a look at this." Raoul thrust the professor's bloody arm under the old man's nose. "And as for your maid, why here she is safe. What she might have been but for this good fellow's trick of swordsmanship, God knows."

"Ah, God knows!" That thrilling echo came from Barbara. Raoul stiffened.

"Thunder of heaven!" said old Van Uden. Then critically over the wound. "It is a good thrust." Then looking up to the professor's face. "And it is you. So!" (His brain worked with difficulty.) "Come in to my house. I will bind that up. And where is my maid? Come!"

So the professor and Matilda and Barbara and Raoul went back with him, and half the crowd hunted for the swashbuckler and the other half cursed him. The villainies of broken soldiers of fortune, debauched Southern bullies were bitterly common.

Once inside in the candle light Van Uden pounced on his daughter and peered at her minutely. She trembled a little. "So. You are not hurt," he said at length and turned to the professor. "But you—

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heaven!—you are bleeding all over my floor. Come here!”

“A most damnable, foul thrust,” said Raoul, dropping into a comfortable chair and spreading himself, but keeping the corner of an eye toward Barbara.

“Oh, a true villain,” Barbara echoed.

“But, by my faith, as fine a fight as ever I saw!” cried Raoul. Van Uden looked up from his business with linen and water. “Look you, the hell hound had the girl in the dark of the alley. Our friend here runs at him, but the beast flung the girl between himself and the steel and our friend was baulked of his first passato. But he came on like Le Balafre or yourself and with another instant the villain had been dead meat: the accursed hell hound! he sank himself under the point and made to stab the girl. By heaven, it was a miracle of a *stoccata* put that by; but to save her, our friend over-reached himself and the hound was through his arm. Then up I came and he fled for his life.”

The professor's jaw dropped to hear what miracles the professor had done. His eyes were wondrous round. But old Van Uden stopped in his bandaging to slap his thigh mightily and chuckle. Then he grabbed the hand of the professor's unwounded arm and wrung it with vigor.

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"Indeed it is a marvelous story," said Barbara in a still, small voice. And it is to be feared that she looked at Raoul with admiration.

"Why, faith, if ever a man won a maid with the sword, there he sits," said Raoul carelessly.

Now it was Van Uden's jaw that dropped. He gasped slightly. Then vigorously again he shook the professor's hand.

Raoul rose. "Well, I could not leave a wounded swordsman in wiser hands. Give you good night, sir, and swift healing. A good night to all. Come, Barbara, since there are knaves abroad to-night you had best walk in my company."

Barbara rose meekly. "I feel just as if I should see the villain," said she.

Raoul shook his head. "I could hardly hope for such pleasure."

"Oh, I know the sight of him would delight you," said Barbara passing behind him to kiss Matilda—who clung to her, who was in tears.

Raoul saluted her: "It is my infinite grief that I could not be your champion. But one cannot be everything. And probably you would rather I was not. A good night."

Once out and away: "You are really very wicked," said Barbara, with a joyful gurgle, "and——"

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“And you,” said Raoul severely, “are obtrusive. It is the worst fault in a woman.”

“What is a woman without faults?” said Barbara. “I knew you had a secret. So I had to be everywhere it might be.”

“Which is to say, everywhere you were not wanted.”

“You will forget I am a woman,” said Barbara sadly. “Well, it is fair, for you are not a man but a brother. Oh, and you were cruel to the professor.”

“In providing him with Matilda and matrimony? You play the cynic. He thinks he has come to bliss. Perhaps he has. It takes so little to fill some men.”

“You know I did not mean that,” said Barbara. “And I believe you did not mean what you did. I believe you fumbled the thrust.”

“That,” said Raoul, “was a slight tribute to veracity. The professor pays it, as a man must who marries.”

“You are certainly not moral to-night,” said Barbara.

“I despise the man who is afraid to sin,” quoth Raoul. “That is essential in my nature.”

CHAPTER IX

RAOUL'S FIRST LOVE

THIS chapter is all the story of a woman whom down the ages honest men have scorned and good women loathed. I do not defend her. I tell the truth of her.

* * * * *

It would be more tedious to begin at the beginning. I begin, therefore, with His Highness the Prince of Parma. "Men say," Raoul writes, "that the Prince of Parma never made a mistake. I profess he made two, which were worse than many. He never understood Providence or me." It appears (to leave Providence out of the story) that Parma never understood precisely the principles of Raoul's morality. You may have some sympathy with that failure. More than once, to more folks than one, Raoul had offered himself for sale. Parma made the mistake of inferring that he could be bought.

Raoul, no doubt, was worth buying. He had been going to and fro Delft and Nijmegen, helping John Newstead the Englishman and Martin Schenk the

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German to perfect their joint and several plans for the summer campaign. Raoul was in all their secrets. And the Prince of Parma desired to be like him.

So you should conceive of Raoul in the terribly clean upper chamber of a Nijmegen inn regarding with benignity a Walloon of square, dumb face. The Walloon has just presented a letter from the Prince of Parma which offers Raoul a hundred crowns for an account of the plans of Schenk and Newstead, and a thousand crowns more when time shall have proved his account true: one hundred crowns, as Raoul behind his benign smile was reflecting, for being a traitor, one thousand for being an honest traitor. "So, my friend," says he to his Walloon, "you are a spy come a-bribing. And what if I say two words to Martin Schenk and have you thrown from the nearest steeple?"

"You would not get any crowns," said the Walloon.

"I see," said Raoul, "that you estimate me justly." His smile became more benign. "And Parma was confident I would earn his money?" The Walloon grinned and chuckled. Raoul also chuckled. "*Par-dieu*, I will," said he; and he turned away, and wrote with flourishes and pauses of ecstasy to contemplate

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his composition. . . . The letter was sealed. With one hand Raoul offered it to the Walloon, the other he held out for the hundred crowns.

The Walloon dandled the money and tapped the letter: "There is in this," he inquired, "what His Highness wishes?"

"It will gratify him," said Raoul, taking the money, "marvelously."

A while after, when the good Walloon had won back to Tilburg, and gave Parma the letter and stood before His Highness smirking, he was mightily amazed. For Parma started up yelling an oath, and he caught the Walloon by the throat and shook him as a terrier shakes a rat while he felt for his dagger. Then doubtless our Walloon had ended his life but for the Marquis of Richebourg, who, alarmed by the noise, broke in and stayed Parma's hand. "Your Highness would do the rogue much honor by killing him," said he.

Parma flung the man from him and turned away muttering. His face was purple about the cheekbones, his eyes dilated. The Walloon felt at his neck and coughed and sputtered. "Silence, rogue!" cried Richebourg: and then to Parma: "What is his offence, sir?" The Walloon looked, and no doubt was, injured. Parma, swearing, tapped Raoul's letter.

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Richebourg took it up. These were the words that had in truth gratified Parma marvellously:

To H. H. the Prince of Parma—these.

I have the honor obediently to inform Your Highness of the plans of the commanders John Newstead and Martin Schenk. On receiving Your Highness's promise to turn your coat, to bring over your troops to their victorious standards, and to join with them in assailing your ass's tyranny, the power of Spain, their Excellencies will pay Your Highness ONE HUNDRED CROWNS: adding ONE THOUSAND CROWNS when Your Highness's promise is performed. I am assured that Your Highness's nature is such as to grasp at this generous proffer, which I take leave to assure Your Highness's modesty is not less than a fair price for Your Highness.

And I have the honor to be, etc., etc.,

RAOUL DE TOUT LE MONDE.

One hundred crowns to be a traitor, one thousand crowns to be an honest traitor. Raoul, you see, treated Parma as a man and a brother. Richebourg, savoring the humor of it, smiled behind the letter, and over the top of it looked at Parma. Parma was stamping about the room with his wrath. Richebourg turned to the Walloon: "Away with you, sirrah. To the guard-room!"

"Sir! Guard-room, sir?" the Walloon stammered in a hurry of fear. "Why, sir, I did my orders. This Raoul, sir, he told me he had writ what His Highness wished." Parma turned and fumed upon

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him. "Well, sir—why, sir?" the Walloon protested; "he took the hundred crowns."

That, after all the rest, was too much for Parma. He sprang at the Walloon, yelling oaths again, and the poor Walloon stumbled back and fled.

In these so different ways did Raoul and the Prince of Parma receive the flattering proposals of each to buy the other. Raoul's way, you observe, was the more profitable.

Richebourg, who had with effort quenched a chuckle, reflected pensively that the Prince of Parma was blind to humor, and waited for him to cool.

"The hell's insolence of it!" Parma was coherent at last. "To propose treachery to me! To offer me a price!" more oaths intervened. "Ah, I would I had him here!" He stalked to and fro, twisting his long fingers and muttering of torture.

Richebourg reflected. "It might be done," he said, half to himself. "They say the little poppet loves to peacock it about a woman. We might trap him so. There is Gertrude Mol."

This is that Gertrude Mol whom the chronicles have given to shame. She was as fair a woman, they say, as the world has seen—a child-woman, fragile and dainty. She stood to the height of a man's lips, and a woman's form could scarce be more slender

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than hers. She was crowned—she could be veiled when she wished—with rippling, flaxen hair. Her skin was like milk, her lips a red rose, and her eyes dark as the shadowed sea. She had the pure, fearless face of a child. And the chroniclers call her Circe and Tarpeia and Cleopatra, and many another worse name.

She was the daughter of the syndic of Breda, and just come to womanhood when Parma cast covetous eyes upon the town. Parma sent a young Italian captain, Lodovico Mondaleschi, to spy out its weakness, and Lodovico, who was certainly a gentleman of ingenuity, turned to Gertrude Mol. Lodovico was a pretty person, too—I have that on Raoul's word—he had an air and some power, I suppose, with his tongue. He made the girl love him unto surrender. Lodovico did not want her—he was a cold-blooded Italian of Machiavelli's school—he wanted Breda. When the girl's passion flamed he held aloof till he had her distraught to win him. He never took more than a kiss of her, but he robbed her of more than honor. For he persuaded her to let the Spaniards into Breda, to betray her own people, her own father.

It was all done for the hope that Messer Lodovico might deign to take her. On a dark autumn night she filched from her father, the syndic, the keys of the

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postern gate, and stole out and opened it to Lodovico. Parma's men stormed in. There was a massacre (Spanish and Italian soldiery in a Dutch town never failed of that). Her father was killed, fighting desperately a hopeless fight, and hundreds more, her kin, her friends, men and women of her town. Gertrude Mol sat alone in a lonely house all that night, with the wild shrieks torturing her, trembling for what she had done, and praying that Lodovico might be safe. . . . When dawn broke upon the ghastly streets the town was still. The women had been taught not to wail. Gertrude Mol sat by her window looking out over the dead—looking for Lodovico, hoping, longing. He did not come.

She was worn with fear. He might be dead, he might be lying in torment. At last she dared the streets, and went out to seek him. The streets were still enough. Parma's soldiery were sleeping off their debauch of slaughter. She met only wild-eyed women, who trembled and cowered at a sound and were dumb. She went by a pathway of blood amid the dead.

At the Spanish bivouac in the market-place she asked for Lodovico, and they mocked at her with foul jests. Lodovico came laughing. She ran to him aflame with love, but he held her off. "Softly, orphan," he cried. "I have no more kisses to waste."

“Lodovico!” she gasped, shivering. “But I did it—I did it—and ’twas for you.”

“Ay, orphan. And done it is, and my kisses are done, too. You are no more use to me. Oh, but you shall have the honor of it.” He whirled her round into the midst of the ring of officers. “Look you, gentlemen! Here is the maid who gave us her father to kill and her town to take for the sake of my beautiful eyes and my sweet lips. Who wants the orphan?” He thrust her into one man’s arms, and he again to another’s. Dazed with shame and grief, the girl was bandied about the ring, while they laughed and jeered at her. At last, with a shriek like a wounded hare, she broke away, and ran wildly to the desolate home.

Then came days of anguish. The Spanish soldiery patrolling the town would stop before her window and shout up taunts and bestial jibes. Her servants cursed her and left her. When she stole out in the twilight to crave food, the women, widows and childless mothers, reviled her and spat upon her.

She had to flee the town or die. I do not like what she did, but what she should have done I cannot tell. She stole away to Parma, and pled for a pittance to keep her alive. He thought, I suppose, that it would serve him but ill to let one who had played the traitor

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for him starve. He may even have pitied her. He gave her a pension.

She began to live at Tilburg. The Spanish officers showed her an easy scorn: who could respect Gertrude Mol? Then they saw she was beautiful. Then she made a lure of that wonderful pure beauty of hers and her grace, and kept them all dangling about her. When the turn of her white neck, the glint of her hair made a man grow tender, she laughed at him, then tempted him again and laughed again. She had the men who scorned her quarreling with each other for a touch of her hand. She amused herself in making men stupid and base. Whether she was as gay as she seemed those may judge who know women.

Such was her life when Richebourg came to her and proposed that she should be the bait of a trap to catch Raoul. There was a high price offered, and that may have tempted her, for she loved silk and soft living. Or it may be that she was glad to ruin a man by the same cheat of love that had ruined her. She went joyfully to Nijmegen, to Raoul.

On a fair spring morning Raoul was lounging through the market-place. "I beheld," says he, "the most delectable of all women, save one. She had the lithe womanhood of a man's dreams. It was cloth-of-silver she wore, and she had in it the

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grace of the queen of heaven.” He made an occasion to look in her face. The innocent loveliness of it took him captive. Gertrude Mol passed on with her innocence, and he followed.

There was a man with a panier of live larks to sell. Gertrude stopped and spoke to the birds, and at once the man put a price on them and began to praise them. They were young birds, fine birds, fat birds—they would come luscious from the spit. Raoul saw the delicate face shudder. The next moment she had given the man all he asked, and he was gaping at the money and her folly. Then she had the panier in her hand and was walking swiftly away. Raoul followed still, and heard her talk to the fluttering birds as a mother talks to her children.

Raoul strode in front of her. “A thousand pardons. May I bear your burden?”

Of course she started in shy surprise. “Oh—oh! I thank you. But I like to bear my own burdens.”

“A selfish pleasure,” said Raoul: “I demand a share,” and he put his hand on hers on the panier. She clung to it still.

“But you take all I have,” she protested.

“Such is my intent,” said Raoul, with his bold eyes on hers. She looked away. Raoul took a firmer grip of the panier. “And whither now?”

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“By your leave, sir, I go my own way.”

“I would not yet suggest that you should go mine,” said Raoul, and kept hold of her and her panier.

She bit her lip, a dimple trembled in her chin—then laughter conquered her. “Oh, but you are—you are so unlikely. Come, then. I was going outside the walls and the gates, out where there is only earth and sky—with these.” She smiled down on the larks.

Raoul bowed, and walked close at her side, and his eyes devoured every line and tint of her loveliness. It roused his heart and brain like wine. His swarthy cheeks flushed. He began to talk of the magnificent deeds of his magnificent self.

Gertrude knew the symptoms well, and assisted the disease. Her lips parted, her breath came quick, her bosom trembled. Shy glances gave him the praise that modesty forbade her speak. The heart of that fair body, he could see, throbbed to his. He was enraptured.

They had gone out by the main gate. They were climbing the green slopes above the river. Raoul at the end of a magniloquent tale had paused for effect. “You are splendid,” she murmured—to herself of course—and gazed at him with wide wondering eyes. Raoul smiled at her.

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Then with a start, "Oh, but you have made me forget them altogether," she cried. "My poor larks!" She took the panier from Raoul's hand and swept a glance across wide land and sky: "Here—there are no walls and gates here. It is all open and free. Come, my dears." She bent to open the panier, and the birds fluttered in wild fright. Then they found their way out. From tuft to swaying tuft of grass they went, little brown bodies calling to each other. One tried its wings and soared away to the white dazzling eye of the sun. Its song poured down clear and sweet.

Raoul was looking at the woman. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes shining. I think that some of her delight was not feigned. She turned to Raoul quickly and pointed up to the tiny singer. "Is he not dear?" she cried. "Does he not make you glad you are free? Oh, that is the best joy in the world—to be out of bonds, to have your will of yourself, to use yourself as you choose, to . . ." Her voice quavered suddenly, and her color changed.

"Beyond doubt it is good," said Raoul, watching her curiously. "But you, lady, what can you know of any other fate?"

Gertrude Mol, who was bound forever by shame, who could never again use herself as she chose, turned

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on him, white, wild-eyed, and gave a bitter laugh. Then she mastered herself and went on with her cheat.

“Ah, sir” (a sigh), “I know what it is to be in a cage like my birds. I am Judith Hals from Liège——” With that she began a most pretty story. She was an orphan richly left, you must know, and the commandant of Liège had claimed her as his ward. He had kept her close for months, he had forbidden her speech of woman or man without his leave, so that he might keep her safe to wed her and her dower to the man who would pay him most for her. Oh, indeed, she knew what it was to be in chains! And it was vile, vile! At last she thought she might save herself from the commandant’s wardship by claiming to be the ward of another. She wrote to the Prince of Parma.

“*Diantre!*” cried Raoul: “from the grid to the coals!”

She gave a little joyous laugh. “Oh, I am terribly cunning,” said she.

Parma had replied, she went on, with an order to send her and her dowry to him at Tilburg. The commandant blasphemed, but obeyed. He put her on board one of a flotilla of boats dropping down the Maas.

“Then I,” said she, with a wicked smile, “was

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very pleasant to the captain of my boat." This man, her credible story ran, was charmed and persuaded to cut his boat loose when the flotilla was moored for the night at Venloo, to steal off down stream. With the morning they landed, bought horses, and laden with the dower, struck north for Martin Schenk's country. Safe, mistress of herself and her dower, she had come to Nijmegen.

Such was the story she told Raoul. And I know nothing cleverer of Gertrude Mol than that. It was most aptly designed to beguile the man. Your weak, pathetic women, always in distress, always sucking a man's strength, had no charm for him. But here was a woman with red blood in her veins, a woman of wit and resource to outdo a man. His heart was hers to take.

And he was urgent for hers. That day, as they walked back past the great hospital, where women whom the war had bereft of husbands and kinsfolk tended the wounded in war, Raoul was mightily ardent. Day by day after he was at her side, dining with her at her lodging in the Spoor Straat, sailing with her on the Waal, walking with her on the hills without the town, alone with her and earth and sky. She held him daintily aloof, yet never let him think her cold.

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Sometimes I fancy that she drew out those days longer than need was—that something in Raoul had waked her heart. I know she must have been sneering at his folly from first to last. And yet I doubt there was more in her mind than a sneer.

On a wayward spring afternoon they were walking by a backwater of the Waal. The tiny waves glistened and flung back the kingcups' gold, the willows were white in the breeze.

“And have you thought better of love?” says Raoul.

“Love? Ah, love is a gaoler. I can only be happy free.”

“Why, unless you love you cannot be free. The best of freedom is to use every power you have. Till you love you are in bonds, you are chained down. Dear heart, unless you love, your sweet self is of no effect. God forbid that! Love me, dear, and live.” His arm went about her, he drew her fragrant against his side.

“Faith, one is harder than the other,” she says with her wicked smile. “Dear sir, I fear my cruel self could live without you—and perhaps more piously—more quietly for certain.”

“Live without me? You would never have the heart.”

“And how do you know there is any heart in me?”

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“*Mordieu*, I will try!” He caught her to him fiercely and kissed her mouth. “Does the heart answer, rogue?”

She blushed: her eyes wavered, tried to shun his and could not. “God help me!” she muttered, and gasped for breath, trying to loose herself. Raoul kissed her again before he let her go. Once free, she was quickly cool.

“Oh, but I am honored,” she said and laughing made him a curtsy. “I shall always be proud that I made so great a man deign two kisses for poor Judith Hals.”

“She can multiply them at will,” said Raoul, taking her in his arms again.

She leant away from him, laughing. “Alack, sir, the poor lass knows naught of mathematics.”

“Mine the joy of teaching her. And does she know that debts must be paid?”

“Debts?” she asked. Raoul held up two fingers. “Oh!” She was in a pretty confusion. Then she laughed at him. “You shall ask me for them to-morrow.”

“And why not this hour?”

“Because—because—” again she was delectably shy—“because, sir, I am afraid to be alone with you too long.”

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Raoul held her close against him a moment. "Love," he said softly, and let her go.

Gertrude Mol laughed.

So they went back to the town and away to her lodging in the Spoor Straat, beyond the great hospital. There at the gates stood some of the nursing women, those sad-eyed women who gave their lives to the care of the men that suffered for the country's sake. Raoul saluted them gravely. But Gertrude Mol hurried by with averted eyes. Her work, her life, showed ill against theirs. She hated them for that. She hated Raoul for honoring them.

In a moment she was at her own door. "Till to-morrow, sweet," said Raoul in a low voice, and kissed her hand.

Gertrude Mol laughed again. "Good-bye," she said. For so Lodovico Mondaleschi had kissed her hand the night before she betrayed her honor for him. I fancy her calling Raoul fool, and sneering at him and herself and all the world. In cynical misery she turned to finish her work.

It was past noon on the next day; Raoul was striding out of Martin Schenk's quarters, when an orderly ran at him with a letter. "By the hand of a dusty peasant, sir," he explained. "From Neerbosch."

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The seal was a shapeless blot of wax. Raoul broke it, and found written in a quavering hand this:

DEAR ——

I am hurt sore. I was riding out hitherward and my horse fell upon me. I am much in pain. Come.

JUDITH.

At Neerbosch, in the inn.

I think it was well written. I do not wonder she counted on it to bring Raoul to her hotfoot. But she made the mistake of forgetting that Raoul for all his ardor was a practical man. If, while his heart throbbed wildly for her pain, his first thought was to gallop to Neerbosch, his second was to take her her maid.

So off he ran to the Spoor Straat and up the stairs to her lodging. He broke in—then started back amazed. For the room was bare of all its trinkets and dainty finery. Three packhorse paniers stood corded and ready for the road, and the maid was thrusting things into a fourth. "*Cordieu*," Raoul cried, "what thievery is this?"

Flushed, surprised, the maid looked up. "Thievery, forsooth!" says she, with a toss of her head. "Thief yourself! 'Tis my mistress's own order." Then "Oh!" she gasped, and clapped her hand to her mouth. Nervously she began to tell a wild, impossible, halting tale. Raoul leapt at her, he caught her wrists

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and harshly demanded the truth. At first she babbled incoherent nothings, twisting herself in his grip. Slowly he brought his eyes close to hers . . . she grew still . . . she breathed heavily. "The truth now!" said Raoul through his teeth. And the truth came.

Her mistress had bidden her gather all their chattels and bring them on packhorses to Ravestein by way of Neerbosch

"And why Ravestein?" Raoul growled. The woman shuddered. "Why Ravestein?" he insisted. "Why? . . . Why? . . . Why?"

" 'Tis the way to Tilburg," she gasped.

"Tilburg?" Raoul roared; for all men knew that Parma was there. "Tilbuig? What have you to do with Tilburg?"

"We—we—we came from there."

Raoul's face was white. He gripped her so hard that she screamed with pain. "Who are you, then, i' God's name?" he said hoarsely.

"She is Gertrude Mol," the woman moaned. "Oh, let me go, let me go!"

Raoul flung her away from him, and she fell against the wall sobbing. Raoul glared down at her, and he clenched his hands till the nails pierced his flesh. "Stay here," he said at last; "speak no word of this,

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or you hang. Mark me! Silent, or you hang;" and he swung on his heel and out.

Gertrude Mol—his love Gertrude Mol? The traitress, the scorn of all Holland! He smarted with shame and wounded pride. Her tenderness had been all a cheat, then? She had tricked him into passion, she had taken his love to sneer at it. She—she had made a mock of him—of Raoul de Tout le Monde! For a moment he hated her enough to put her to torture. . . . Then hate was quenched in grief. His heart was torn asunder. Oh, that she, his love, his queen, should be false and base—she whom he worshiped! "Would to God it were I in her stead!" he muttered. "Oh, my God, I would it had been I!"

The letter from Neerbosch; what did it mean? *Cordieu*, it must mean that she was drawing him within Parma's reach. She was Parma's hired lure—his love. . . . He groaned, and his eyes were wet. . . . Well, he would seek her still. He would fight it out to the end.

Off he went to Martin Schenk. He had tidings of the enemy at Neerbosch, he said. He asked for a troop of horse. Martin Schenk gave him a squadron.

While a troop of Richebourg's Walloons rode into Neerbosch Gertrude Mol lay at her ease in the inn. She thought her work well done, and laughed over it.

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Oh, she had fooled him finely, for all his wits! She herself had not been more a mock than he would be, the little swaggerer. Yes! She had paid some of her debt to men. The trick that had ruined her was not more comical than this. And she made herself laugh again. But her face was pale and her laughter rang strangely. . . . She hid her face in her hands a moment . . . then forced a smile and a sneer. She must laugh—she must laugh—or she would be in agony. Wild thoughts were torturing her. What if she had broken loose from Parma—what, then he would have wedded her eagerly, and she would have been at peace, with a man who honored her, whom she might easily—yes, so easily—learn to love. . . . At peace? No, never in life. Some day he must have heard the truth of her, some day turned on her and cast her out with scorn. There was no hope of happiness with him.

She laughed again. Poor little man! She was best rid of him before she loved him much.

Suddenly she started and paled, and caught at her throat. There came from the stair a gay laugh that she knew too well.

It was Lodovico Mondaleschi. He strode in debonair, laughing. He made her a low salute of mockery.

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“What have you to do here?” she gasped.

“I came to give you joy on the way you have bettered my instruction. What! There is nothing like a kiss to fool woman or man, is there, sweeting?” He tapped her cheek, and she shrank from him, red and shuddering. “But I confess ’tis comelier when the woman cheats—when the woman’s kisses are the liars. Eh, yours were true enough once, were they not, sweet? Have you any left for me now?”

“No! No! No!” she cried, all trembling.

“*Madonna*, here is coyness! And once you would give me more than I cared to take.” He laughed at her shame. “Tell me, does this Raoul love you as well as you loved me? How much will he hate you when Parma burns him?”

Gertrude started up and faced him, one hand at her throat. Her lips were tight pressed and white. Lodovico laughed heartily. She struck at him. And while he warded off the blow there came suddenly a yell—“The guard! The guard!”: the thunder of hurrying horses: then the clash and grate of steel and the roar of the Dutch war-cry, “*Vive le gens!*”

Lodovico turned with an oath and ran out.

There is no story to tell of the fight—the fight of that troop that came to catch one man and caught a

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squadron. Martin Schenk's horsemen found the Walloons dismounted out of order, took them in front and rear, and slew.

From that whirl of slaughter Lodovico Mondaleschi fled. I do not deny him courage. No man could have been so good a spy without courage. But his was not the courage that fights. Livid, foaming, blaspheming, he came again to Gertrude Mol: he screamed a volume of foul words at her, stammering in mad wrath. She laughed. He plucked out his sword and run at her.

Then she flung wide her arms and gave a great glad cry. "Kill me! Kill me!"

He checked. He faltered.

Raoul burst in, his sword and dagger dripping blood.

Lodovico Mondaleschi screamed and flung his sword away, and cast himself down and clung about Gertrude Mol's knees. "Save me! Save me!" he moaned.

Gertrude, white and still, was looking into Raoul's flaming eyes. "I am Gertrude Mol," she said. "I tried to betray you to death."

A moment more Raoul gazed at her: then he flung back his head like a beast in pain, and strode forward and gripped Lodovico. Lodovico clung

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the closer to Gertrude, and "Save me!" he shrieked, "save me!"

Gertrude Mol laughed a little. "Oh, yes. Save him!" she said.

"Who is he?" Raoul growled.

"Lodovico Mondaleschi."

"Lodovico Mondaleschi! Who—who——"

"Who loved me." She laughed. "Who loves me now."

"Yes! I love you. Indeed I love you," Lodovico shrieked. "Gertrude, dear——"

Some wild cry broke from Raoul. He wrenched the man away from Gertrude, and dragged him out. Still he shrieked for mercy. Raoul's face was working: his red sword-blade shivered under his hand. He had Lodovico out to the street among the dead, and glared at him a moment with the blood lust in his eyes. Then he muttered an oath and flung the man staggering away. He shouted to two troopers and bade them set Lodovico safe on the Tilburg road.

Lodovico, fairly away from the fight, curled his moustachios again. He was well pleased with himself. He laughed and laughed most heartily at the stupidity of women and the invincible affection of Gertrude Mol. So he went happily on to Tilburg. And there, as I like to remember, Parma, wildly wroth

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that the trap had failed, that a fine troop of horse had been utterly destroyed, was yet more wroth with Lodovico for being saved, was convinced that the Dutchmen, who spared no one else, would never have spared Lodovico unless he were privately their friend—in fine, the excellent Prince of Parma hanged Messer Lodovico for a traitor.

Among the dead in Neerbosch Raoul sheathed his sword, and slowly, heavily, climbed the stair again. Gertrude stood awaiting him. They looked at each other long. "You know everything now," she said defiantly. "Everything!" Raoul did not answer or move. He gazed at her still, with sad, dull eyes. She swayed and fell into the chair, and hid her face. "Speak!" she sobbed. "Oh, I cannot bear it! Speak! Curse me!"

"Dear!" Raoul whispered. He was at her side, his arm was around her. "Dear love——"

She shuddered, she started away from him. "Not that!" she cried wildly. "Never again!"

"Ay, again and again and again," Raoul held her still. "Dear love, you have come to a new life now. This past is past and dead, and you must forget——"

She laughed bitterly: "Who can forget?"

"I have forgot," Raoul said. . . . "Now you

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must live again, live to love me." He drew her closer, he bent to kiss her.

With both arms straining against his breast she held herself away. "I dare not!" she cried. "God help me, I dare not!"

"Nay, dare, for my sake. Forget, for my sake. How can I be happy else? Oh, dear heart, could you not be happy loving me?"

But still she held herself away. "I dare not," she sobbed. "I dare not."

"Why, then?" Raoul cried, staring at her.

"Ah!" she gave a cry of pain. "You make me say it. I—I am too vile."

"Never say that again! Dear, how can you dare? I love you. I love you."

Her throat, her lips were quivering; she could not speak. But still she strained away from his arms. "What now?" Raoul cried. . . . Suddenly his face hardened. "*Mordieu!* This—this fellow—this Lodovico, you do not love him still?"

She started, and was still again. She waited a moment ere she spoke. Looking furtively at Raoul, she made ready her lie. It was the noblest moment in her life. "Yes, I love him still," she said in a low voice. But no blush came, and steadily, covertly she watched Raoul.

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Raoul had let her go at the word, and flung away from her. "Would you follow him, then?" he said through his teeth.

"No!" she cried. "No, I swear it! I had rather die than wed him. . . . And yet . . . and yet I love him, you see." She peered at Raoul's face, and saw the pain on it: then gave a passionate cry: "Oh, why do you not kill me? I would love you for that. Death! death! Is it not my due?"

Raoul strode up and down gnawing his lip. She ran to him, caught his arm. "Raoul, what is my life but misery? What is there for me but death?"

"Death?" Raoul turned on her, and his face, his voice were stern. "Death is easy. Would you die with nothing done? Would you die with your life no fairer than 'tis now?"

She trembled, and drew away from him crying. Raoul stood still, and gazed at her steadily, grave and sad. . . .

After a while, "You are right," she said. "I—I would like to do something not vile before I die . . . if . . . if God will let me."

On a morning of the early summer Gertrude Mol under the name of Judith Hals went into the great hospital at Nijmegen to give herself to the care of those

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who suffered in the war. Raoul kissed her hand at the gate, and she passed from the sunshine into the gloom, and saw him no more in life.

That is the true story of Gertrude Mol. Some strange folks who have read it say that she never loved Raoul.

CHAPTER X

RAOUL'S HOSTS

I PICK this chapter out of two manuscripts. One lies at Dresden in the Saxon archives (and how it came there no one professes even to guess); the other is my old ally, Raoul's "History of Myself." They agree altogether—an achievement most unusual in manuscripts.

The manuscript at Dresden is a poem written with great vigor and humor in a patois of German and Dutch. Its author was that Gaspar Wiederman, whom you have met already. I regret that the manners of a more prudish age restrain me from quoting all his verses. I should much like to have known him.

Raoul begins the story. It was the autumn of 1584, and William the Silent was dead, and the Prince of Parma was gathering his strength to besiege Antwerp, and Raoul was in a bad temper. I think that must be why he dared what he did. For the deed was the most reckless of his life, save one; and in that there was a woman. Unfortunately this present little matter makes nothing in the telling. It was a lonely

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raid, like most of his. He went down to Kalloo, where Parma had his magazines and a dockyard with great store of timber. There must have been half a hundred in Parma's force who knew him; and if one of them saw him, burning was the kindest death he could hope for. Nevertheless the little man went. And one moonlight night he threw a pannikin of burning charcoal into the powder magazine. The powder went to the heavens in splendor, and the flame of it caught the dockyard timber. In three hours three months' work and the worth of fifty thousand florins were red ash. But before that, some one—to the end Raoul never knew who it was—some one saw his face in the glare, and gave the alarm, and tried to seize him. Raoul broke away, and dodged about the huts to his horse. All the rest of the night he rode northward, away from that yellow sky. Pursuit was left out of sight and hearing. Just before dawn he skirted round old Mondragon's camp at Zwol. Most impudently he stole a fresh horse from the Spanish lines and left his tired beast in its stead.

Then the sun rose orange in a dull grey sky. All the morning he rode on, and as the morning waned the sun faded. Wet fog came rolling from the sea. About noontide he could see a bare hundred yards through the greyness.

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And now the story begins to be a story. A farm steadying loomed out of the fog, and Raoul, all weary, drew rein and rapped at the door with his dagger hilt. A square Dutchman came from the byre, a woman from the henhouse. The man gaped at him, and the woman's eyes grew round and big. Raoul was mud from feather to spur—grey Scheldt mud underneath half overlaid with red gravel of Zwol: drooping feather, moustachios and little beard were gemmed with the fog dew.

“Good folk, may I buy a meal and hire a bed?” he cried.

“Surely, sir, surely,” said the woman readily enough. (Raoul here thinks fit to point out that, dirty or clean, his shape ever took a woman's eye.)

“Who may you be?” the man growled.

“One who will pay,” said Raoul.

The man eyed him with distrust. “You are not Dutch.”

“But my money is.”

“I do not care for your money.”

“Then you are not Dutch, either.”

“And no one comes into my house unless I know who he is.”

“I suppose the devil makes the same rule in hell,” said Raoul, and swung stiffly to the ground. “Well,

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my friend, if I am not Dutch I am not anything else. I have no country and no name, and no victuals inside me. I want two pounds of meat and four hours of bed, and I pay two florins for all."

The Dutchman shook his square head. "I take no nameless man into my house. For what I know, you are a Spaniard——"

"*Diantre*, for what you know, I am an archangel!" Raoul stamped his foot. "You may call me Raoul if you want a name. I serve the Estates of Holland, and I come from troubling Parma's rest. And now for God's sake give me meat."

"You serve the Estates? Why did you not say it at first? You are welcome; ach, but you are very welcome indeed. Come in!"

Very welcome they made him. All foul from the highway, he was brought to their speckless best room and put into the master's chair. Off went the man to tend his horse, and the little buxom woman set all her farmhouse dainties before him and plied him till he could eat no more. Then she brought him to an upper room and a soft white bed with sheets all fragrant of thyme. He was asleep, he says, before he lay down.

When he woke it was to hear the clatter of steel, to see men standing over him. They laughed at him

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as he gaped and rubbed his heavy eyes. Then he saw that they wore the yellow and red of Mondragon's horse.

"So, little devil, we have you in your earth," says one genially in Spanish.

Raoul had his wits about him again. "I do not understand," says he in Dutch. "What do you want with me?"

"We only want you."

"I am a trader of Bergen op Zoom, and——"

A volley of oaths, and "You are a foul little liar. We have been hunting you all day."

Raoul shook his head. "You make a mistake, noble gentlemen. I am——"

He was jerked on to the floor. "Up with you! We know who you are. You are that curst Dutch spy. They told us so downstairs."

"Oh, they told you?"

"Yes, curse them. When we had offered to burn her husband the woman told us. *Madre Dios*, and I think we will burn him yet. I would like to see her face."

"You are benevolent." Raoul sat down in his shirt on the bed. "And since you know who I am, most illustrious, who am I?"

"You are the little rogue Parma sent us word to

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catch. That is enough for me. Back you come to Parma. You can tell him who you are."

"Let me honor him by wearing my breeches," said Raoul.

"Well. You will never put them on again." The Spaniard chuckled.

Raoul began his toilet. His stockings came on slowly, and were artistically gartered. Slowly he buttoned his breeches. The fog was thick without, and he did not try to see out of the window; but his head was cocked a little on one side, and he strained his ears to listen. Horses were champing and shifting their feet.

"Now, where the devil are my boots?" said Raoul, and moved about looking for them.

The Spaniards, too, peered round the room.

Raoul snatched his sword from the bedside and hurled himself through the window. With a shiver of glass and a crash of timber he vanished into the fog.

Some of them rushed at the window and struggled out, and began to climb down; some stumbled headlong down the stairs. But all were too late. Raoul had fallen on hands and knees in the mire. He sprang up again and darted at their waiting horses. His rapier shot through a man's heart: he vaulted to a

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saddle, and shouted to the frightened beasts and beat them with his sword. In a moment they were all gone, flying wildly hither and thither through the fog. And Raoul was gone with them.

“I think I never did better in my life,” Raoul writes. He was fairly away from them, a good horse between his thighs. They had their own horses to hunt before they could hunt him. At worst he had a quarter-hour's law, and to give him that was to lose him forever.

But he checked his pace. He was not content yet. He had also a little affair with his hosts—that dainty buxom little woman and her square suspicious spouse. They had betrayed him, of course. But if you think that troubled him you do not understand Raoul. He was altogether a man. He expected no one to be a martyr for his sake. It was they, not he, who seemed to him injured. He had brought the Spaniards down upon them, and left them to bear a Spanish revenge—death and torture and worse. He liked his doings to end in neat success. This was ugly, unseemly. It did not accord with his honor to leave it so.

“My vanity,” he writes, “my vanity, so please you, turned my horse.”

Over the turf warily he came back to the house.

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From all sides sound came to him out of the fog. The horse hunt, he guessed, was not going well. But he could see little. Something dark in the greyness close ahead was doubtless the steading. A horse came up to him and whinnied. He snatched its bridle and rode on. A shriek came from the house, and another. He heard the thud of feet, the crash of faggots against the ground, the creak of a rope on timber. But he dared not gallop. He saw the orchard fence only just in time to lift his horses for the jump. Then, stooping low for fear of low boughs, he broke through the trees. Tawny flame leapt up through the fog about the writhing body of a man who was hung by his feet from a tree. Around the fire a little knot of Spaniards were laughing and shouting.

Raoul came. Two Spaniards were ridden down and his horses plunged upon them. Two more he caught on his sword as a cook spits pieces of meat. Raoul sprang down. His sword was fixed to the hilt in their gasping bodies. He plucked it out, and plunged into the fire, kicking the burning faggots this way and that, and slashed at the ropes from which the Dutchman hung. In a moment he had the man out of the smoke and flame, singed and gasping, but safe. Raoul tore a sword from one dying Spaniard and thrust it into the Dutchman's hand.

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"Guard the horses!" he muttered.

"My wife!" the man gasped, coughing: "my wife!"

"One at a time," said Raoul, and pattered off in his stockings.

No one, it seemed, but the dead had seen or heard him. No one was there to see or hear. The clean, neat rooms were a filthy wreck now, but he found no one in them. Then he heard quick footsteps above, and darted up the stairs.

In her own bedroom the woman was struggling with the Spanish captain. Her brown hair hung in wild disorder about a white distorted face, her dress was rent, she writhed in the brave man's arms. Raoul sprang across the room, seeking his chance for a thrust that would not kill her. The Spaniard saw him and howled an oath, then hurled the woman full upon him. Raoul staggered back, and the Spaniard sprang upon him like a dog. They all crashed down together, and the Spaniard's dagger was driven deep into Raoul between shoulder-point and neck. The Spaniard was quickly on his feet again, but the woman was stunned, and Raoul lay in his blood. A moment the Spaniard looked at the two and laughed, then he kicked Raoul out of the room and down the stair, and watched him fall a

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huddled lifeless mass on the threshold. Then he turned back to the woman.

* * * * *

Thus far Raoul. The muse of Gaspar Wiederman, camp-marshal, now becomes our guide. I shall have to expurgate her speech. Gaspar Wiederman begins something like this:

We were toasting our pork and our toes at the fire,
When we heard someone spitting a curse at the mire
Blaspheming—

more than that I need not translate. In fact, Gaspar Wiederman, with his Roan Troop (you will find them in the histories), was halted a quarter-mile away, a little off the Bergen road. They could not see to do anything else, so they were eating. In the middle of their meal Spanish oaths came to them out of the fog, and some one blundered into the horse lines, and tripping over a heel rope fell upon Zouch the quartermaster, who jerked him into the fire.

“Curse my sentries!” growled Gaspar. “Pull him off, you. He is putting the fire out.”

The gentleman was hauled out by the legs, swearing voluminously. “Who are you? The fiend go with you! Who are you?” he cried in Spanish, dabbing at the sparks that clung all about him.

“Ask the fiend, Don Leanshanks,” said Zouch.

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"The gentleman was asking you, quartermaster," said Gaspar; and then, most politely, "We are Richebourg's Walloons, from Kalloo."

"What? what?" The Spaniard looked about him. There were two score or more most efficient ruffians lolling about him in their cloaks. The firelight flickered through the fog on scarred, weather-beaten, bearded faces. "Richebourg's Walloons! Then you are after him, too?"

There was for a moment a most solemn silence. "Of course we are after him," Gaspar agreed. "Have you caught him?"

The Spaniard began to swear again. "We had him, curse him! we had him. But he jumped out of the window." Somebody laughed; and somebody else kicked him; and there was silence again. "Then the little devil drove off all our horses. So we are all out on foot hunting them. That is how I fell into your camp. I suppose you have not caught any of our horses?"

"No, my dear, we have not caught your horses," said Gaspar. "You have lost them and you have lost him? So. You are having successes to-day. Is that all?"

The Spaniard swore a little more. Then he laughed. "There is the woman, at least."

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Gaspar sat up. "Ach, there is the woman, is there?" he growled.

"Yes. We took him in a farm, and Strada is burning the farmer, and she is the farmer's wife. *Madre Dios!* but she is pretty and plump—as yet!" he laughed.

Gaspar also laughed. As no one else did, he kicked Zouch. Zouch laughed with enthusiasm. In the midst of it Gaspar whistled four notes. The lolling troop started up in an instant. The fire was being stamped out, the horses untethered, before Zouch had finished laughing. Gaspar heaved himself up, a mass of a man.

"Where are you going?" the Spaniard cried.

"I have to talk with your Captain Strada."

The Spaniard nodded. "Why, by the saints! but you are a godsend to us. You are mounted. You can help us home."

"Ay," growled Gaspar. "We will help you home, my dear."

By that they were all mounted. A horse was found for the Spaniard—the Roan Troop, known to history as the finest thieves in the Provinces, had always spare horses—and off they went through the fog. The Spaniard rode with Gaspar and showed the way. The troop was in column with four abreast, but each man

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rode so far from his neighbor that they covered a great space. More than one of the scattered horses blundered in upon them, were caught neatly, swiftly, and led on. More than once scared voices cried out of the unseen: "Who is it? what are you?" And the Roan Troop answered in Spanish, "Friend! friend!" and swept on, shrouded in the darkening fog.

The farm steading loomed a vague shape before them, and they checked, and by twos crowded together came through the gate. Gaspar held up his hand, a word went down the column, they halted. There was a noise in the orchard, shifting feet and the scrape of steel, then a Dutch cry: "Devils! devils!"

Gaspar turned in his saddle, signed to a sergeant, and nodded to the sound. Then he swept out his arm in a wide gesture, and whistled five notes. The Roan Troop was blotted out in the fog.

"And I will talk with your captain a little," said Gaspar.

The Spaniard and he dismounted, a trooper took their horses, and they went in. There at the stair-foot lay Raoul, bleeding and lifeless. The Spaniard gaped. "*Sant' Iago!* Why, they caught the little devil after all!" he cried.

Gaspar took him by the arm. "Ay, you have

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caught your little devil," he growled. "Come up." For a man's laugh came from above.

Gaspar opened the door and stalked in. The woman was in Strada's arms and moaning. Gaspar tapped him on the shoulder. Strada turned ("the face of him," says Gaspar's ballad, "was the face of a ferret"). "Curse you! who are you?"

"I am a man," growled Gaspar. "What are you?"

"What?" Strada's eyes reddened. He let the woman go, and she fell on her knees by her bed. "What?"

"That," said Gaspar, and knocked him down.

The other Spaniard, his cheated guide, sprang upon Gaspar with oath and dagger. Gaspar hurled him crashing through the window. Strada started up and felt for his dagger. But his dagger was in Raoul's shoulder. He darted across the room to his sword, but before he came there he was in Gaspar's arms. Gaspar waddled out of the room with him, and he writhed and bit "like the ferret God meant him for." Gaspar had him safely pinioned. The long legs struck madly at the air, his back was across Gaspar's knee, Gaspar dropped his weight down.

I caught the ferret or he was 'ware,
And I broke his back at the turn o' the stair,
For he was——

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what it would give you no pleasure to read. So Gaspar writes.

Strada dropped, a limp distorted form on the stairs. Gaspar had helped him home.

Gaspar came back to the woman. He laid his great hand gently on her quivering shoulder. "You are safe now, lass," said he in her own tongue. She shrank away from his hand, and her eyes were terrible. "You are safe now, lass," he said again.

"Safe?" She muttered the word, and gave a long sobbing cry, and fell forward on the bed weeping at last. But it was only a moment before she started up and faced him. "You did not save him!" she cried. "Ah! bring me to him; let me see him. . . . O Karl! Karl! . . . and I am alive!" She turned from Gaspar's eyes, trembling, and moaning.

"God help you!" Gaspar muttered, and went out. He kicked Strada out of his way and went downstairs. As he came to the bottom he heard Raoul groan. "God in heaven! Our little man is alive yet," he muttered, and bent over him and moved him very gently. Then "Morgan!" he roared—"Morgan!" and a shout answered from the fog. He strode out into the doorway, and there were a couple of his troopers with a man on foot between them. "Humph! what have you caught, Bouvier?"

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“A gentleman that did not wish to be burnt, sir. Also we have killed five gentlemen that wished to burn him.”

“What? what?” Gaspar roared. “Is your name Karl?”

“I am Karl Vloten, and——”

“So! So! God is in heaven!” cried Gaspar, and caught his hand and wrung it. Which must certainly have been very painful for Karl Vloten.

At that moment Morgan galloped up, a little grizzled Welshman. “Ach, Morgan! Our little man is there wounded. Care for him as if he were all your daughters, or I will make your face look backwards,” cried Gaspar. “And you,” he dragged Karl Vloten in, “come back to your own.”

They ran up the stairs together, and Gaspar flung wide the door. Then he came across the room at a bound, for the woman had Strada’s sword in her hands, and was trying to put the point of it to her breast. Gaspar snatched the blade in his bare hands. Her husband came, crying “Lisbeth! Lisbeth!” and flung his arms about her.

“Karl! . . . my Karl! . . . my Karl!” Her voice was as low as a sob.

Gaspar shut the door softly. With Strada’s sword under his arm he looked down at the dead Strada.

"Sometimes I believe very much in God, my friend," said he. He flung the body out in the farmyard, and snapped the sword and dropped the fragments upon the breast.

That evening the Roan Troop were busy. They had drawn a cordon about the farm, and as Strada's men came straggling back by twos and threes, mounted or on foot, the men of the Roan Troop drew aside into the fog and let them in. But they were not let out again. While the fog blackened in the twilight there was hunting inside the cordon, and the end of the hunt was death.

But there could be no safe tarrying there. Before dawn Raoul was sent off in a horse litter, and Karl and Lisbeth, too, and the Roan Troop fell back on their main body, Colonel Newstead's company at Loevorden. They enjoyed that march much. For old Mondragon had sent two more squadrons from Zwol to look for Strada, and they came in touch with the rearguard of the Roan Troop. The Roan Troop lured them delicately on, till they were five miles off Loevorden. Then Newstead swept down upon them and hurled them into the sea.

Altogether it was a neat little foray, and well deserved a ballad.

Thus Gaspar Wiederman. Raoul, naturally, is

shorter: "But God would not suffer me so to die. Gaspar Wiederman, the famous camp-marshal of Colonel Newstead, had been by him despatched to watch for me. The Herr Gaspar most cunningly found me in time. I salute him. With skill of the best he dealt with the Spaniards. But I knew little of that till I woke in a bed at Loevorden. I was but a wreck of the trim soldier who had done the deed at Kalloo. I was——" But we must abridge Raoul.

He was, in fact, in bed, and rather weak, and Newstead and Gaspar were sitting beside him. He told how he had fired the magazines at Kalloo, and given Parma three months' work to do again, and ended breathless.

"So Antwerp can save itself," said Newstead.

"If Antwerp has sense," grunted Gaspar.

Raoul turned to him. "The woman and he—at the farm—did you save them?" Gaspar nodded. "She—she was——"

"I came in time," said Gaspar gravely. "They are safe here in Loevorden."

Raoul drew a long breath and raised himself on his arm. "Colonel Newstead—I claim the bounty of the Estates of Holland—for the farmer and his wife. I was upon the service of the Estates. I was

fleeing for my life. They offered me refuge. The Spaniards came. It was death and torture not to give me up. They chose that—death, a Spanish death—rather than betray me. It was the noblest deed—I have ever known.”

Gaspar and Newstead looked at each other. “Ach, my friend, but they have told us all,” said Gaspar.

“I tell you on my oath——”

“It is not worth while,” said Newstead, smiling. “They have said they brought the Spaniards to your bedroom. *Cordieu*, I do not blame them—but they did it, Raoul.”

Raoul lay on his pillow, breathing heavily. “Did they tell you—did they tell you I—came back—into the Spaniards’ hands—to try to save them?”

“They told us,” said Newstead.

“And do you think if—if they had given me up, I—should have risked myself for them?”

Newstead smiled. “I think you would,” said he.

“And I wonder if I should?” grunted Gaspar. Raoul lay still, tired out and angry. They left him soon, and as they were going, “Take heart, little man,” said Gaspar, chuckling. “We can lie, too.”

So some days after, Gaspar stalked into the room again. Raoul was sitting in a chair by the fire. “Well, little man, you are a good liar, and I am a

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good liar, and, by the Kings of Cologne, I think Newstead is the best of the three. So the Estates have granted your farmer and his wife lands in the salt meadows of Alkmaar. Also the good folks are voted the thanks of Holland for their fidelity to the cause." He chuckled. "Their peculiar fidelity!"

Raoul's sunken eyes flamed. "Would you have been more faithful?" he cried.

"Devil a bit!" said Gaspar. "Well, they are clean little people. Here," he turned to the door and shouted,—“come in with you!”

Lisbeth and Karl came in—the man to blush and look sheepish, the woman to fall on her knees and kiss Raoul's hand. Raoul tried to raise her. Gaspar did it for him. Then Raoul must needs reel to his feet and bow (in his bedgown) before her.

"That was most poetic," says Gaspar, regarding the bedgown. So Raoul closed the account with his hosts.

The sad part of this story is that those magazines in Kalloo were burnt to no purpose. Antwerp had its respite of months. But Antwerp had no sense. The foolish town did nothing to make itself safe. So Parma drew his lines about it, and the siege began. And then Raoul was inside. What he did there you shall hear.

CHAPTER XI

RAOUL'S NAME

THERE was trouble in Antwerp. Each man called his brother a fool.

On the night before, Gianibelli the Mantuan had promised that his fireships should blast a hole in Parma's bridge across the Scheldt. Then Admiral Jacobzoon was to drive Parma into the river, all the bridge would be smashed, and the fleets of Zeeland would bring relief to the leaguered town.

Gianibelli's fireships had done their work nobly. Never were such fireships. They had duly rent a great gap in the bridge, they had sent a thousand of Parma's soldiers to heaven or hell. But that was all. And now in the daylight Antwerp saw Parma's men working like beavers to repair the wreck, and knew that in a few hours the Scheldt would be barred once more and relief as far away as ever.

So all Antwerp was out on the quays talking about it and settling twenty times a minute whose fault it was. The Admiral "Runaway Jacob," Sainte Aldegonde, the hymnbook-making burgomaster, Hohenlo, gen-

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eral and wine-barrel—all these and a dozen more were blamed for it. Antwerp had found intense satisfaction in picking out new men to blame for the siege ever since the siege began. To be just, there were many that deserved blame—no fewer than every man in Antwerp save one.

That one was Raoul. He had risked his life and near lost it to cripple Parma and give Antwerp time. And Antwerp had failed to break the dykes that would have made a siege impossible, failed to ammunition itself, failed even to victual itself. Antwerp was a fool. Raoul sneered at it and cursed it—and fought for it still.

Raoul was in the crowd on the quays, wandering hither and thither, listening. The babble was instructive, if not edifying. There was no word of the common cause, of the future: all spoke of the past and their private losses and other folks' roguery. No man had a good word to say of any man. Raoul, his nose high, sniffing disdainfully, remarked to himself that Antwerp town was a den of apes. Some fool climbed upon a bollard and began to accuse burgomaster, general and the rest of taking bribes to betray the town. Toward him surged the crowd. Raoul jerked himself out of the rush and came to the quay edge. A few yards away, close by the speech-making fool,

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stood a slip of a girl in black. But she, too, cared nothing for the speaker. Her back was turned to him, she looked down into the swift-running tide. Still the crowd was pressing to the fool's speech: the mass was jammed tight about him; the girl was thrust to the verge of the quay. But she made no effort to move. She looked over her shoulder once, and Raoul saw a calm, white face, then she gazed down again at the tide. The crowd swayed. Without a cry, without an effort to save herself, she fell.

But Raoul had seen. When her face rose out of the water he was swimming towards her. His hand gripped at her hair as she sank a second time. In a moment she felt stone beneath her feet; all breathless she was borne up the quay steps. At the top he set her down: "Stand back, fools, stand back," and he was buffeting his way through the crowd. He came back with a hat on his dripping head. She was wrapped in his dry coat and lifted to her feet. "Where is your home?"

"In the street of St. Michael."

Raoul broke a way through the crowd and hurried her on. He did not speak again, and she had no breath. It was a little house to which they came, and she opened the door with a key. Then she looked at Raoul, but he signed her in and followed. Into a

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bare room they came, and she began to struggle out of his coat.

She stood before him, and the black dress clinging close betrayed the lithe grace of her maidenhood. Black hair all disordered hung in glossy curls about her neck. Her bosom was quick, her face lightly flushed. Raoul regarded her gravely.

Her dark eyes fell. "I—I—I ought to thank you," she stammered.

"You would thank me, lady, by receiving me tomorrow," said Raoul. She bowed. "I must ask your promise," he said.

Her black eyes, wide and frightened, looked for an instant into his. Then her face flamed. "I—oh, indeed I promise!" she gasped.

Raoul took her hand, held it a moment, and went out. He ran gayly home. Antwerp was to be interesting after all.

In all his best (he pathetically records that it was no better than crimson woolsey) he came again to the street of St. Michael. The girl herself opened the door. Raoul came in, making fantastical courtly bows. "You save me asking for one whose name I do not know."

"I have no servant. I am called Margaret van der Wyn."

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“And I Raoul—de Tout le Monde, if you ask a surname, for my father’s I never knew. In the service of the Estates of Holland, and wholly at yours.” He made another magnificent bow.

But the splendor of it escaped Mistress Van der Wyn, who coldly bade him sit.

Raoul sat and put off some of his airs.

“Mistress Van der Wyn, I asked you to promise to receive me because I wished to be sure that you would be alive to-day.”

Her cheeks were crimson. “You—you have no right,” she stammered. “I—I——”

“When one wishes to live one does not fall into the Scheldt at flood without a struggle, without a cry.”

After a moment, while he heard her breath, glowing defiant eyes met his. “And if I did!” she cried. “If I did!”

“If you did seek death, it was because you are in trouble. So since you are in trouble, mademoiselle, I am here.”

“I have not asked your help,” said the girl proudly.

Raoul looked at her long. “I think you would never ask help of any man.”

“At least, sir, I ask none of you.”

“It is I who ask you to accept it.”

“You have no right!”

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Raoul leant towards her. "Will you stand by that, mademoiselle? Have I not earned the right to help you?" The girl's lips trembled, and her eyes were dull above pallid cheeks. Raoul laid his hand on her knee. "Mademoiselle, I have periled my life half a hundred times. Believe me, it is always worth while to live."

"I—I am afraid," said the girl, and began to cry. "Oh, indeed, indeed I did not try to do it—but it was so easy. I am cowardly. I am all alone." Pride was gone now. She sat sobbing, and Raoul's steady warm hand held hers. After a while she told her story.

Her father had been a goldsmith in Brussels. There a Dominican monk of the Inquisition, one Father Diego, had spied upon them, and for fear of the torture and the stake (they were Protestants), she and her father had fled the town. They came to Antwerp purposing to cross to England. But in Antwerp her father had fallen ill of a phthisis, and for his comfort they had bought that tiny house in the street of St. Michael. When Parma threatened the siege, their servants had fled, and all alone the girl had nursed him till his death. It was months since he had died, and ever since the girl had had nothing to live for, no hope of happiness but to join him. But indeed, in-

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deed she had never sought death. Only when it came——

Raoul heard her to the end and said nothing. You would not expect Raoul to understand how life could have no savor, still less the wish to die because some one else was dead. But he did not make a fool of himself. "He has gone where he is happy," said Raoul at last. "And you have your life to live. *Mordieu*, would he not wish you to live it bravely?"

"Yes . . . you are right . . . I will try. You see I am not very brave. I am all alone. And there is nothing to do."

"And I am all alone, too. So we will neither be alone any more. I am your brother Raoul and you are my little sister Margot. Will you adopt me, sister?"

Her pale face darkened. She looked long in his eyes. "I should like."

"And by the good God I will be true brother as long as you will," said Raoul slowly. "Faith, my shirts and my stockings cry out for a sister. Will you be good to them, Margot?"

For the first time he saw her smile. "Oh, yes. But you are so quick."

Margot made him a perfect sister. Day by day Raoul came to her and abused the townfolk and

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jeered at his leaders. Day by day Margot was sure that the townfolk were horrible and his leaders ridiculous. Raoul recounted what he would do if he were burgomaster, and Margot listened as she listened in church. But once he jeered at that church of hers and then the cream of her cheeks glowed red and her black eyes flashed, and Raoul heard some truths of himself that no one had told him before.

Raoul was no bad brother. He did as much of the harder work in her house as she would let him. He brought her such dainties as the leaguered town would furnish. He talked his best for her. He even read in the worn Bible that she gave him. He met her anger without a sneer, and was not too lordly when afterwards she prayed his pardon.

And he never sought to be more than a brother. But with each passing day he strained harder at the curb. For in his thoughts Margot had grown to be no sister of his. Raoul had come by a way women go more often than men. He began with no more than a friend's kindness and the wish to help her: then love came, and last of all the hot passion of desire. Present or absent he saw her always. Little red lips in a face of cream, black eyes that glowed, a boy's lithe form graced with womanhood—his Margot. Body and soul yearned for her. But he hid it well.

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That leaguered town was no place for marriage or love. He must have her in safety before he asked for that. The Spaniards threatened every hour, and there was only he to care for her honor, her life. If he showed his passion while she was still in peril he asked a price for guarding her. He had no mind to bargain for love. Not till she was safe, not till he had nothing to give her but himself, would he ask her to give herself to him.

Nine years had made Raoul a very different man from the little cut-throat who served Taddeo of Brescia.

So the siege dragged on, and Raoul and Margot were brother and sister. One showery May afternoon Raoul bade her good-bye.

“But you will come again?” she cried.

“I mean to come again. You’ll not doubt that, Margot?”

“No, no indeed.”

“But I go to sup with Parma.” And he told her how that night he was going to spy out Parma’s forts on the Kowenstyn, and what force was in them. “So it may be—good-bye.”

She caught his hands. “You must not. You must not, Raoul. Why should it be you?”

“I would have no one else go but me,” said Raoul. So he went, and came back unscathed. Then in a

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day or two he hurried in, cuirassed and armed, to tell her that that night they were to sally out and attack the Kowenstyn, "and break the siege, *mordieu*, and save the town and little Margot."

Of that night battle on the Kowenstyn the histories will tell you: how they drove the Spaniards off the dyke, and Hehenlo and Sainte Aldegonde came gloriously back to tell the town that Parma was defeated and the siege done; how the Spaniards rallied and won the dyke again, and, just as Antwerp was ringing joy-bells for its deliverance, wounded and dying men came reeling back to tell that all was lost.

Margot sat at her window watching bonfires blaze in the daylight, hearing the roar of triumphant cannon, the clang of joyous bells, and watching anxiously. Raoul came up the street all foul with mud. She gave a little glad cry and ran to the door. Raoul lurched up to her. His helmet was beaten down over his eyes, his cheek was dark with stiffening blood.

"Beaten! beaten!" he said hoarsely. Then his head lolled to one side and he fell forward on her breast.

After that the first thing he remembers is that he was lying in a bed, quite painless, and wanting much to sleep. But for days he had been in no case to know anything. . . . One thinks of the girl all

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alone by his bedside while he raved, while he lay in stupor, the girl who tended him day and night, racked with fear lest he too should die and leave her again with none to love. . . . She saved him. . . . After sleep came a great hunger, and he quarreled with Margot because she would not give him all he asked. One morning he woke, and saw at last that she was very pale and thin and red-eyed. Why did she look like that? Had he been long in bed? How many days?

Indeed Margot did not know. But it was many days.

Raoul raised himself on his elbow. "Many days? Then Parma—*mordieu*, does the town still hold out?"

"Oh, yes," said Margot. "Please lie down," and she laid him gently back on his pillow.

"Then can you get food easily?" Oh, yes, there was food. "Do you lack money, Margot? Sainte Aldegonde owes me——" No, Margot had money enough. And would Raoul take his dinner?

For some days he ate and slept marvelously. He began to walk again, and very quickly he gathered strength. More than once he proposed to go out, but Margot begged him not, and he yielded. He was very careful of Margot, and now it was her turn to

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sleep long hours, and life came back to her face and her eyes. At last, one warm summer day he protested that out he must, to see Sainte Aldegonde.

Margot sat looking at him a moment, and flushed before she spoke. "Raoul, Sainte Aldegonde is gone. I lied. The town surrendered while you were sick. There was no fight. They gave up the town to Parma. I—I could not tell you while you were ill. Please forgive me."

Raoul frowned and bit his fingers. "The devil!" he muttered, and walked away to the window. Even of Antwerp—that den of apes—he had hardly thought that it would let Parma walk in peaceably. "There was no fight!" And twice he had near died to save this cursed, cowardly town! He devised oaths for Antwerp. Yet if Parma had stormed his way in—if the town had been sacked while he lay ill—then, Margot . . .

Margot's hands were on his arm. "Oh, Raoul, of course you are angry with me. But I could not tell you while you were so weak. I know you wanted to save the town more than anything in the world and——"

Raoul started round, his eyes gleaming, and caught her in his arms. "Margot!" he cried; then suddenly let her go. "Little sister, you are worth a thousand

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Antwerps, and you are safe. But now if the Spaniards are in I must get you out."

"Ah, Raoul, but not yet. You are weak. You must not risk yourself."

Raoul laughed. "Not I, Margot. I want to live while you are alive."

So Raoul went out and took the air on the quays and in the taverns. He had the gift of tongues, and he was Spaniard to a Spaniard, Italian to an Italian, Walloon to a Walloon. He acquired much information.

When he came back that night, "Margot, have you changed your religion?" he asked. Margot drew herself up, and the curl of her lip answered. "I thought not. But Parma gave all heretics a week to quit the town. And that week is long past. You might have gone but for me, Margot." He looked at her, but she would not meet his eyes nor speak.

That night Raoul tried sword play. His wrist was slower far than of old, and his arm tired soon, but there was pith in it. Still he could drive his dagger half blade deep into oak. Ay, it might serve against one man of no skill at arms. But the old, conquering speed of thrust was gone—gone, too, the stubborn, untiring strength. All his body was weary after a dozen thrusts and a lounging walk through the town.

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He was in no case to guard Margot through a country swarming with Spaniards and Walloons. They must wait. And yet for a Protestant maid to wait in a Spanish town was the devil's own hazard.

The long summer days passed. There were more monks in the town than Raoul wished, but none molested Margot. Raoul's vigor was coming back. He was the best of friends with the Spanish garrison. He had learnt that Richebourg was dead and his regiment in Brussels, so he became one of Richebourg's Walloons left behind to heal his wounds, the scars whereof he produced for a testimony.

Fortune favored him at last. An English ship came into Antwerp, and Raoul met the captain. Raoul's English was sadly to seek, and the captain's Flemish horrible, but they struck a bargain for a passage to Poole. Raoul had no money to pay, but he did not confide that to the captain.

He told Margot the good news, and Margot laughed and cried, and thanked him and God. "But, Margot, have you ever ten florins in the world?"

Margot's eyes grew round. "Yes, indeed, and much more. I do not know how much. Come!" She took him down to the cellar, and there by the candle-light Raoul saw an oaken coffer clamped with iron. Within were piles of dull gold coin.

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“*Diantre*, Margot! But this is the wealth of the Indies.”

“I suppose it is much,” said Margot simply. “Father was thought rich in Brussels.”

Raoul tried the weight. It was as much as he could carry easily. He had no mind to be seen walking the streets with a coffer that was small yet needed all his strength. In the still hours before dawn he stalked out of the house with it, and came through the lonely streets to the quay. It took some time to get a gangway run ashore from the *Peggy o' Poole*. It took more time for the captain to be roused. Then the coffer was sealed in his cabin and put under his bunk. Then (to the mortification of Raoul's flesh) there were mugs of English beer to be drunk and English jokes to be heard. And at last the gold was left to the captain. Something had to be risked. Raoul did not think he risked much in trusting this wide person with a round face and twinkling eyes.

The sun was bright and the town busy as he came back. But the street of St. Michael was more than busy. Every window had gaping faces, every door. Raoul, his pulses quivering, hurried on. The door of Margot's house was open; there were soldiers in the hall.

A harsh voice spoke from Margot's room: “You

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are Margaret van der Wyn, who fled from Brussels with her father?"

"I am Margaret van der Wyn."

There stood Margot amid four black-garbed, black-veiled men, while a Dominican monk glowered down at her. Raoul in one swift glance saw their case—*famuli* of the Inquisition four, halberdiers half a score. There was no hope—no merest chance.

The Dominican spoke again: "Where is your father?"

"I thank God he is dead."

"Then you thank God he is damned." The Dominican took the Bible from her bedside. "This is yours?"

"It is mine."

"Enough. Bring her away." He turned and Margot saw Raoul. She trembled and gasped, and caught at her heart. Raoul moved no whit. The Dominican came up to him: "What have you to do here, sirrah?"

"By the leave of your reverence, I lodge here."

"You know this woman?"

Raoul looked full in Margot's face and shrugged his shoulders. "No more than I know an inn-keeper."

"Who are you?"

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“Hans Zeraerts of Richebourg’s Walloons, on furlough for my wounds.”

The Dominican glared through him. “Then, sirrah, it ill becomes you to lodge with heretics.”

Raoul started and crossed himself. “Heretics! St. Denis preserve me! Is she that? Accursed!” He made the sign of the evil eye and shrank away.

The Dominican turned from him and signed to the familiars. The procession formed. The halberdiers tramped out to the stones. Between the black robes Margot came. She looked at Raoul, and he saw the shame and agony in her wide eyes. He fell on his knees before the monk: “Your blessing, my father,” he murmured.

I think that is the greatest thing in Raoul’s life. Every fibre in the man must have yearned to be by Margot’s side. He had but an instant for thought. One word, one look unguarded, would have betrayed him. He felt her anguish at his vile answers. But he played his part swiftly, unflinching.

Mighty noble it would have been to fling himself on the monk and slay and slay and die fighting for her. Mighty noble, too, to declare himself of her faith and go forth with her to the prison. So, when she shrieked on the rack and in the flames, she would know for her comfort that Raoul was true. Now

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she thought him a vile coward—might well think him so to the end. But he was free with his wits and his strength, and at worst a shot out of the crowd, a clean-thrown dagger (Raoul had seen the thing done) might save her the last agony at the stake. He was ready to let her loathe him if he could serve her. That seems to be one kind of love.

You sneer? These, you think, are farsought excuses for a cowardly villainy. He had the girl's money, of course: he wanted no more of her: the little rogue thought only of saving his skin. Why then, if you call him a coward, read on to the end.

Raoul was left alone with his thoughts and the memory of Margot's eyes. He knew well enough what awaited her—all men knew in those days—the dark dungeon, with a monk to weary her out with questions; then, on some day after the sun had set, the torture by rack and strappado to make her deny her God. And what could he do? He sat huddled together, biting his fingers. Despair he did not. No man ever lived who believed in himself more than Raoul.

At last he went out in the air. Head thrown back, eyes to the heavens, hand in his belt, he wandered along the quays. There lay the *Peggy o' Poole*, that should have carried them to safety. Half a day more

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and they would have been aboard and sailing away to happiness. He cursed the grim mockery of fate. But there was no use in that. His present need was to get that gold back ashore. In a moment he saw the wide captain rolling along ahead, and hurried to him. But the captain spoke first. The *Peggy o' Poole* was shipping more cargo; she would not sail that day. Raoul's hands clenched. He stared at the captain stupidly a moment, then nodded and passed on. The gold could wait a while.

For here was another trick of fate. Trick? Why should his ship be stayed? Was God showing the way?

Raoul went to a tavern by the prison of the Inquisition, and there ate his breakfast. He sat long by the window watching monks come and go. After a while he went out and bought a razor.

It was just after sunset when the Dominican monk came out of the prison. As he crossed the street he felt a hand on his arm. "Father, a word in your ear," said Raoul.

The monk turned and looked down at him in the twilight. "You? What do you want with me?"

"A word in your ear," said Raoul mysteriously, and drew him on by the sleeve. "Father, I have found something in the heretic's house."

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“Ah! what is it?”

“Father,”—Raoul appeared anxious and excited—
“it was well hidden. In the cellar: a great box: books
in it.”

“What are they?”

“Why, father, I am no great scholar, you must know.
I think—I do not know—I think they are books of the
arch-fiend Luther.” Raoul spat at the name.

“Touch them not, my son. I will send my famil-
iars.”

He was turning away, but Raoul held him. “Ah,
father, but that is not all. There are certain moneys
and jewels in the box. I take you to witness, father, I
have come hastily to tell you of them, knowing well
that they do wholly belong to the Holy Inquisition.”

“You have done well, my son. I will come see this
—your books. There is matter in this. We hold in-
quiry of the heretic to-night.”

“Accursed,” said Raoul, and spat.

They came to the house, and Raoul unlocked the
door. A light was struck, a candle lit, and they
passed down the steep stairs and into the cellar. Raoul
held the candle aloft in his left hand. “There in the
corner, my father.” The monk turned his head, and,
as his neck showed white, Raoul stabbed at it once and
stabbed true

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The monk was dead with scarce one groan, and in a moment Raoul had off his gown and his sandals and was gone upstairs. He shaved his face—for the tonsure there was no time—slipped off stockings and shoes, bound on the sandals, wrapped himself in the gown and drew the cowl well over his head. Then—this is extremely like him—he stopped to put his stockings and shoes in the wide monk's pocket.

So the loungers in the street of St. Michael saw the Dominican come out again, and knelt for his blessing. He gave it. Raoul went at his leisure. He was practising the Dominican's gait. His lips moved, and wayfarers thought the holy man was muttering prayers. The holy man was making phrases in the Dominican's style, and training his mouth to the Dominican's harsh, nasal voice.

It was dark when he came to the prison again. He knocked as he had seen the monks knock, and the door was opened. Raoul passed in without a word. His gait conveyed that he was deep in meditation. He passed by the *famulus*, and then stopped suddenly as if a new thought had struck him. "I will see her," he muttered as if to himself; and then, more loudly: "the new-comer, Margaret van der Wyn."

"Again, Father Diego?"

"Ay, again. Let us spare no zeal," said Raoul.

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Down a narrow winding stair and along a narrow passage all dark he was led by lantern light to Margot's cell.

Margot was kneeling by the stone bench. She heard the grinding bolts and turned, raising her head. "You!" she cried in a pitiful voice. "Again you! Ah, if you have any heart at all——"

Raoul turned, took the lantern, and signed to the *jamulus* to shut them in alone. The heavy door clanged again. Then Raoul came to her. "Margot," he said, and put his hand over her mouth. "Little sister Margot." He crushed her cry back; he held her as she started up. "Silent! silent! Take the lantern: look at me." He threw back his cowl.

The lantern trembled as she held it close to his shaven face. "Raoul, Ra——" Her voice was stopped by his hand again.

"Did you think I had played you false, Margot? Not I, *mordieu*. Listen now. I take off this gown. You put it on. I tap at the door. That villain without opens it. I kill him and bring him in and put on his gown. Together we go out of this hell. When we come to the door above you say——"

But the bolts grated, the door opened again. Raoul flung his cowl over his head and started round. There were three or four of the black-robed *jamuli* without.

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Raoul's hand was within his gown on the dagger-hilt. But there was no use in that. One, two he might kill—but the others would give the alarm. He had the wit to do nothing.

“Father Diego, the Holy Court requires your presence.”

“Lead on,” said Raoul.

Two of them brought him to the end of the passage into a vaulted room, and left him. Lighted candles stood on the table, a brazier of charcoal glowed red. Vile things in iron hung on the wall, and there was a bed of black, greasy oak with wheels and levers—the rack. Raoul began to know fear. What was it that dead monk had said? “We hold inquiry of the heretic to-night.” In a moment they would be torturing her—Margot—Margot. He bit his fingers till they bled. His breath came noisily. What to do? God! what to do? Then he muttered blasphemies. God would let him do nothing. All that he ventured went awry in the very moment of success. Twice he had near had her safe; he needed no kindness of fate, no more than justice, an even chance; twice she had been snatched from him to doom; fate mocked at him with crafty spite. God wished to see the maid tortured. Why, then curse God.

A black figure came in by another door; beady

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eyes looked through slots in the black hood of it. It dropped fresh charcoal on the brazier and greased the rollers of the rack. "All is ready, father," it said.

"Away!" Raoul gasped, and bit his teeth on an oath. "We shall not need you for an hour."

It was hardly spoken before another door opened behind him, a narrow door that gave upon a staircase. One Dominican monk came in, and another, and the second shut the door. They spoke a Latin greeting to Raoul, and Raoul murmured what was presumed to be a Latin answer. But his heart had leapt when the door was shut, and his brain was crying, "Only two!" They knelt down and one began a Latin prayer. And Raoul knelt with them and prayed, but the words of his prayer were different: "Two! Only two. Oh, my God, be good to me now!"

The Dominicans rose from their knees and sat at the table. Lean, yellow faces were outlined in the candlelight. Raoul stood a little behind them. "And of this new soul, my brother," said one in Spanish, turning to him.

"You have wrought with her. Has it availed?"

What was he to answer? "Yes" might leave her in her cell: "No" would bring her to the torture. But they were two. They were only two! Raoul staked

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his all on a last throw. "Alas, no!" he groaned in his cowl.

"To the question, then," said one with gusto, and struck once on a bell.

It was the door by which Raoul had entered that opened. Without, Raoul saw two *famuli*. One came forward. "Your will?"

"Bring Margaret van der Wyn."

In a moment or two the girl was brought in. The two *famuli* stood her over against the table and went out. She stood alone, all trembling. The two Dominicans leant forward together, peering keen-eyed. But Margot looked beyond them to the dark figure in the shadow. Her lips were parted a little, her black eyes wide but not afraid. Raoul laid his finger on his lip.

"You are Margaret van der Wyn?" a shrill voice rent the silence.

But Margot, looking at Raoul's finger, said nothing.

A tone higher it came: "You are Margaret van der Wyn?"

Still Margot said nothing. Raoul took one pace to the right.

The Dominicans looked at each other, and on each cruel face came a smile. One put out his hand to the bell.

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Now for the last chance!—now! That hand was gripped in Raoul's left. Swifter than stooping hawk he struck, and struck again. Clean and straight through the spine, where the neck begins, the monks were stabbed. One started up, and Raoul had a hand on his mouth. The other fell gently forward on the table as if he slept. Both were dead without a sound.

But Margot gave a cry and hid her face in her hands. Raoul was at her side in a bound. "Silent! If you love me, silent!" he hissed. Silent himself, and swift, he took two levers from the rack and lightly pushed their wedge-ends under two of the doors. A moment more and one dead monk was stripped of his gown. Raoul wrapped Margot in its ample folds. She shuddered, and withstood him: "I can't—I can't!"

"For my life you must." He drew the cowl over her head, took her arm, and led her on. She shrank from the monks, but Raoul leant across her and wrenched the keys from a dead hand. Out to the narrow stairway they came, and Raoul locked the door behind them silently. Up and up and up they stumbled, till the stair ended at another door. Raoul listened, and could hear nothing. He tried key after key, and had the door opened at last. All was dark still, but a heavy scent clung about them. They were in the chapel, beside the altar. Through the

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stale incense reek they stumbled, seeking another door. These were several, and Raoul listened a while at each. Through one came the noise of the street.

One instant more, and that hell was left behind. The clear cool, night air gave them greeting.

"Swift, now, swift! But walk. Do not speak," Raoul muttered; and they hurried on to the quay. The streets were not empty yet, and more than one looked curiously at the two hurrying monks. But none stayed them. Soon they came to the dark, murmuring river, the shadowy forest of mast and rigging, the black hull of the *Peggy o' Poole*.

"Cap'n, cap'n, here be two black monks boarding o' we!"

The wide captain rolled forward, muttering unkind things of monkery. "Into your cabin," said Raoul in a hurry. "One word with you alone."

"Foul words be all you'll get," said the captain in English. But he led the way.

Once in the cabin, "I am no monk," said Raoul, and flung off his gown. There he stood in his doublet and trunk hose, bare-legged from the knee.

The captain took up the lantern and held it aloft. "God bless Billy Adams!" he growled: then, in his jargon of English-Flemish, "why, if you ben't my passenger with your face shorn!"

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“I am; and,” Raoul flung back the cowl from Margot’s disordered curls and took off the gown, “this is your other passenger.”

Captain Billy Adams sat down on his bunk with a bang. “And what be you both a-doing in they traps?” he asked. Then had to translate it.

“We were caught by the Inquisition. They would have tortured us. I killed the devils, and we escaped in their clothes. If they catch us again—and they may catch us—we die under the torture. It is death to us if you do not sail to-night. I will pay——”

“Catch you aboard my ship?” roared the captain. “Catch you be damned! Be they after you?”

“They may be on the quay now, and they can bring all the garrison down on you, and——”

Captain Billy Adams pushed him out of the way and went out on deck roaring. Raoul followed, and Margot. Men came tumbling up out of the forecastle, bulky, bare-armed, bare-footed men, who ran hither and thither. Captain Billy Adams was up on the poop. Blocks creaked and boats splashed down into the water. “All clear for’ard.” “Give way in the long-boat.” The sloop’s bow fell off from the quay. “Cast off aft. Give way all.” Slowly they drew out to mid-stream. The moon was rising, and the oars churned up glistening, silvery foam.

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Raoul drew Margot very close and looked into the depths of her dark eyes. "After all, dear heart, after all," he murmured.

Margot caught both his hands and pressed them. She did not speak.

But from the quay came shouts and the sound of running men. They were hailing the *Peggy o' Poole* in Flemish and Spanish. Captain Billy Adams looked at them curiously, but he answered not at all. Still shouting, they ran down the quay steps and manned a boat.

"Go to the cabin, dear—go in." Raoul hurried her out of the reach of shot. As he shut the door he heard the captain shout: "Way enough! Way enough! Come alongside starboard all. Man the foresail halyards." Then something in a low growl that set two men scurrying below.

The shore-boat was coming near, and its crew yelled many things. "What do 'e say?" cried the captain in English. "I be main deaf, I be." Then to the starboard quarter, "Lively with that tackle!" The shore-boat came alongside to port, and hailed in Flemish, "Englishman, you have heretics on board!"

"God bless Billy Adams!" He rolled to the bulwarks. "Have I, now? Come you under my quarter, Papishers," he cried in his jargon.

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“What does he say?” was asked in the boat, and some one explained, and they scraped aft.

“Come you under my quarter, and I’ll throw you something to help you aboard.”

Raoul ran to him in a frenzy. “Man, this is death and worse than death——”

Captain Billy Adams buffeted him out of the way. Four men were tottering aft with masses of stone ballast. The captain leant over the side. “Be you ready, Papishers?” he howled. And they answered Ay. “Heave over, boys!”

Together the great stone blocks came crashing down into the crowded boat, and in a moment its crew were whelmed in the tide. There was a roar of hoarse laughter from the English sailors: but Captain Billy Adams ran forward again, shouting, “Be you all aboard, Peret Martain?”

“All aboard, cap’n.”

“Foresail haul! Ready jib! Starboard a bit.
. . . Steady!”

The *Peggy o’ Poole* slipped fast through the water. Then Raoul came to the captain and began to be voluble in thanks. “Now, bless your eyes,” said Captain Billy Adams, “did you think as I would leave a lass to they spawn? Tell her she is to bide in my cabin.”

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Margot sprang to Raoul as he opened the door, and he held her: "All's safe, all's safe. We have left them all behind. We are sailing to England." She clung to him a moment, then turning, knelt. Raoul looked at her a moment—knelt by her side. Neither spoke at all.

* * * * *

The sun was high in heaven, and the white cliffs of England lay on the starboard quarter. Raoul sat with Margot on the poop, but she had hardly a word for him, and when she met his eyes she blushed. The *Peggy o' Poole* ran on before a brisk easterly breeze, and Captain Billy Adams rolled up to grin and tell Raoul that sweethearts had hold of the tow-rope. Even after nightfall the good wind held, and the brown sails were stiff in the starlight.

Margot sat on a coil of rope in the shelter of the poop and Raoul stood beside. Again he had tried to make her talk, and failed. "Margot,"—his hand lay on her shoulder,—“what troubles you?”

Margot looked up swiftly, and as swiftly turned away. Raoul sat down on the rope with her. "Margot," he said gently, and took her hand.

She drew it away. "I must tell," she murmured, half to herself. "Yes. I must tell you. . . ."

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Raoul, I did not believe in you . . . when—when—oh, you know. . . . I thought you meant to leave me and just keep yourself all safe. . . . I—I thought that. . . . I did not trust you, Raoul. Do you understand? I did not trust you.”

“But you trust me now, Margot?”

“Now? Yes, now! Now you have done everything. But then I did not. I—I——can you see how base it was? I thought you were a coward, and—and—oh, vile things. You, Raoul!”

“Oh, Margot, does it matter? Do I care? What else could you think? I had to play the knave well to cheat that devil. And if I cheated you, too, who could help it? Not you, nor I. Margot, why will you cry?” He put his arm about her and drew her to him, and tried to soothe her. “Nay, Margot, Margot, little sister——”

Margot forced herself out of his arm. “No,” she shook her head fiercely. “No . . . Raoul . . . don’t you understand?” She held him away from her with one little hand. The other clasped at her own heart.

Raoul looked wondering. Under her maiden coif moved the night wind, and her hair’s black waves were alive. The moonlight fell about her, and her face, her little round throat were purely white; tears

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glistened about her eyes, her lips trembled and her bosom.

She snatched Raoul's hand. Her pulse throbbed to his. "Raoul—Raoul!—is it just—sister?"

And then Raoul crushed her lithe body against him. "No, thank God, no!" he cried. "Not like a brother, Margot!" and hot lips claimed hers.

* * * * *

"Dear heart o' mine, I've not a name to give you. Raoul de Tout le Monde I call myself—Raoul of All the World, because I want all the best that is in it; and faith," Margot was kissed, "that I have. But——"

"But indeed you are not All the World's Raoul any more."

"Nay, subject of one—who is the only Margot in All the World—and mine. Mine! . . . Ay, mine, and so—I have it—and so I will now be called Raoul de Bonne Fortune."

"Then I shall be Margot of Good Fortune. Indeed I am . . . "

A shout from forward, an answer from the poop, and in a moment the sails flapped as the helm went over. The *Peggy o' Poole* ran on into a still wide lake of gleaming silver girt by black land. Gruff orders came from the poop, and forward and aft the

A GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE

watch were bustling. Halyards creaked and the tall sails vanished. Swiftly the sloop lost way. "Let go!" and forward the anchor splashed down.

"All clear, cap'n."

"Give her five-and-twenty fathom."

Captain Billy Adams rolled down from the poop. "We be come to Poole Haven, little mistress." Then he saw Raoul's arms about her. "Eh, eh, and you be come to haven, too, seemly," and he went off chuckling.

Margot looked up into Raoul's eyes. "Yes, indeed," she said very quietly.

That night the last thing Raoul heard was the drone of the anchor watch: "A clear sky and a calm sea and all's well."

Here, you think, one might end. But Raoul would like you to read a great deal more. His "History of Myself" tells elaborately how Captain Billy Adams was given a great reward, how Margot and Raoul went ashore and found all Poole on the quay to gape at "Cap'n Billy's furriners," how Raoul amazed the good parson of Poole by demanding marriage in much-broken English, how Margot and Raoul spelt out the English service before-hand, to be quite sure what marriage in England meant, how they were married before a great throng in Poole

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Church, how Captain Billy Adams caused the bells to ring and sent three fiddles and a drum to their window on the morrow morning. Raoul is, in fact, not reticent.

Later he gives the full tally of their wealth—Margot's heritage, and the hard-won, blood-won moneys Raoul had out at usance with the Fuggers and the traders of Amsterdam; he describes the noble manor they bought at Yealm, in Devonshire, and what great folk they were, and how in a while there came from Queen Margot of Navarre a string of black pearls, and lastly and at length he tells of the sons and daughters that were born to them. Of which last I think Raoul was prouder than of any other achievement.

But he was a notable little man.

(1)

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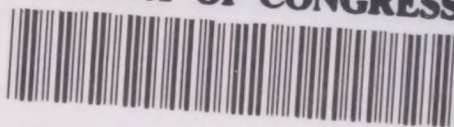
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