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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BLACK GALLEY ***

Produced by Michael Wooff

The Black Galley

A story by Wilhelm Raabe (1831-1910)

I.

Along the walls of Fort Liefkenhoek.

It was a dark and stormy night in the first days of November of the year 1599 when the Spanish sentry in Fort Liefkenhoek on the Flemish side of the Scheldt sounded the alarm, urgent drumming woke the sleeping garrison and each man there, commander-in-chief and ordinary soldier alike, took up their posts on the fortress's walls.

The waves of the Scheldt were running high and often disgorging flecks of foam in the face of the shivering Southerners over the ramparts. A northeasterly wind whistled sharply down from the "Provinces", and the Spaniards had already known for a long time that it was seldom that anything good came to them from that quarter.

In Fort Lillo as well, on the Brabant side of the river, the sticks of the drums were whirling and the horn was being sounded. One could hear quite clearly over the noise of the storm and the waters tossed by a tempest the sound of far-off cannon fire, which could only be emanating from a battle at sea at the mouth of the Scheldt.

The sea beggars were up to their old tricks again.

What did this race of amphibians care about darkness and storms? Were not nightfall and stormy weather their best allies? When had a sea beggar ever been afraid of a stormy sea and darkness when it came to annihilating the enemy, to outmanoeuvring his deadliest enemies, those who had laid waste to and oppressed his homeland won back from the waves.

The war, however, had taken a terrible turn for the worse.

This coming and going of the belligerents had lasted now for two and thirty years and there was still no foreseeable end to it. The sowing of the dragon's teeth had yielded a generous harvest—men of iron had indeed sprung from the blood-drenched earth and even women had had to forget what kindness and clemency were. There was now a younger generation who, for this very reason, did not long for peace because they had never known what peace was.

And if the violence of the war had worsened on dry land, it was even more horrendous at sea. At least

on land prisoners could be exchanged or ransomed—towns, villages and hamlets could spare themselves burning and sacking by buying off would-be attackers. At sea, however, there were no pardons and no ransoms. It was held to be merciful to put enemy prisoners to the sword without further ado or to hang them from a yardarm and not to slowly torture them to death in the cruellest way possible or to nail them to the deck and sink them along with their captured ship.

Commanding officers and ordinary soldiers on the walls of Fort Liefkenhoek listened with rapt attention to the cannon fire and shared their opinions on it. One person would have one view on the parties to the skirmish, someone else another, but, finally, whispered at first, then louder and more surely, the word went from mouth to mouth among the soldiers:

"The black galley, the black galley again!"

Each of them spat out the same message with a tone between anger and uncanny dread:

"The black galley!"

Towards one o'clock in the morning the wind died down and the cannons too fell silent. Twenty minutes later there was a sudden burst of flame in the far, far distance that left the dark water looking blood-red from an equally bloody flash of lightning. The garish illumination flickered over hundreds of bearded and wild faces on the walls of Forts Liefkenhoek and Lillo and, half a second later, the dull thud of a huge explosion succeeded to the lightshow, with which the skirmish appeared to be at an end, in the same way that a tragedy ends with a catastrophe. No more signs of life could be seen or heard to hint at the continuation of the struggle. Although the garrisons of the Spanish fortresses waited patiently, listening out for a long time, they heard no more signs of gunfire.

"Well, and what do you think about all this, Senyor Jeronimo?" the commandant of Fort Liefkenhoek asked one of his captains, a gaunt elderly man with grey hair and a grey beard, covered with scars from head to toe.

The soldier thus addressed, who until then had been leaning on the parapet a little away from his comrades in arms, shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't ask me about it, sir. By God and the Virgin Mary, I gave up racking my brains a long time ago over what this war has in store for us. My armour has become attached to my skin and I'll hold my ground till Judgement Day, but that's as much as I will do."

"You are very brusque, Senyor," said the commander, who was a much younger man than the old warhorse and had only recently arrived in the Netherlands from Castile to take up the post of governor in this fort on the Scheldt.

"Coronel," said Captain Jeronimo, "for many a long year now I have clung to my position on this lump of earth and watched the waves wash over it. You are young, coronel, but your predecessor was also young and a nobleman. He too stood here next to me, in the same place that you yourself are standing now, full of youthful dreams and hopes of victory. Now he lies down there below the waves and the one who was here before him was killed by a bullet near Turnhout—he too dreamed of returning crowned by victory to his castle on the Jarama, back to his young wife—bah! And now I can cast my mind back to the end of the year 1585 when I got back from Madrid—then I too believed in victory and honour in this war. I have ceased to believe in those things and you will as well, mi coronel, if God lets you live."

"You have a morbid imagination, captain! But tell me, you were in Madrid in that ever memorable year?"

"Aye, that I was."

"In that glorious year that the great prince won back Antwerp for us?"

"Yes."

"So you entered the town with Alexander Farnese as a victor? Oh happy man!"

"No," said the old soldier darkly. "I did not figure in the victory procession; I had been entrusted with a different task, a task that made other people in the camp extremely jealous of me. I was the messenger that the brave prince sent to Don Felipe—may God have mercy on his soul—to announce the town's surrender."

"You? You, Captain Jeronimo, were permitted to take such a message to the king? Oh thrice happy man! Please tell us about it as we cannot yet withdraw from manning the walls."

The other officers of the garrison had gradually drawn closer to the captain and the commandant so that now, as attentive listeners, they formed a circle round them. It was only on rare occasions that Jeronimo could be persuaded to hold forth.

"What is there to say?" the captain began. "In the night of 4 to 5 September 1585 I reined in my breathless nag in front of the castle of the king in Madrid—I am a native of that town and I can tell you, gentlemen, that my heart beat faster when I heard once again the rushing waters of the Manzanares. I had often enough dreamt not long beforehand in the field hospital where I lay in a fever of the roaring of this river. And, having reached my final destination, both the good tidings I had brought with me and the expectation of a fabulous reward that appeared to me in dreams drove my blood more strongly through my veins. Darkness and a deathlike silence lay over the castle and the town itself. I subsequently learned that there had been a great auto da fe the day before and that the inhabitants of Madrid were sleeping it off: everyone was asleep, including King Philip himself. The watch held their pikes to my chest just as my exhausted steed collapsed under me in the courtyard. I was as out of breath from that last wild ride as my horse, but I still had sufficient strength left to pant: "Letters from Flanders! Letters to the King! Letters from Prince Alexander of Parma! Victory!"

The weapons of the sentries were lowered and courtiers came up to ask me questions and then I was led through the halls of the castle to the bedchamber of my Lord and Master. My heart trembled like my weary limbs. My head was in a whirl when I came to kneel beside the king's bed and handed him the great prince's letter. Propped up on his elbows, King Philip left to one side his writing and skimmed through the letter with his sharp ascetic eyes—his chamberlain held the golden lamp so he could see properly. I will never forget the king's face, nor the trembling that overcame his sallow livid features. He sat up in bed, gaunt and feeble, and uttered a shout that was almost a cry:

"Antwerp has surrendered! Antwerp has surrendered!"

And the lamp in the courtier's hand began to tremble too. The king got out of bed; against all the rules of court etiquette he leaned on my shoulder, the shoulder of a simple soldier, covered with the dust and sweat accumulated along the way. His noble retinue threw a cloak over his shoulders. The fact was that such glad tidings had not reached the ears of the king since the news of the victory at Lepanto. He hotfooted it down the castle corridors to the door of his favourite daughter, Donya Clara Isabella Eugenia, knocked at the door (for what did His Catholic Majesty care about etiquette at that moment in time?), at the door of a princess, opened it slightly, shoved his head into the room and whispered to his still sleepy daughter, alarmed at the intrusion:

"Antwerp has surrendered! Antwerp has surrendered, Donya Clara!"

The castle became a hive of activity as the great news spread...

"And what about you, Jeronimo?" asked the commander of Fort Liefkenhoek.
"What was your reward for such joyful and glorious tidings?"

"Yes, what was your reward, Jeronimo? Were you dubbed a knight of the order of Calatrava?" asked the other officers.

"No, I'm not a knight of the order of Calatrava," answered the old war horse. "And as far as material rewards go, His Catholic Majesty hung a golden chain around my neck and gave me a commission in his army as a colonel."

"Ah!" the commander said, and the other officers pushed nearer.

"I know," said the old warrior, "I know full well what that look means, mi coronel; it means: So why are you here now as my subordinate, as a poor half invalid mercenary? Isn't that what you're thinking?" As he asked this question he looked round the circle of men around him. "Well, I'll tell you, being as I'm getting to that part of my story. Prick up your ears youngsters. There might be a lesson in this for you. On 13 July 1591 Prince Alexander Farnese set up camp before Fort Knodsenburg, opposite Nijmegen, in order to lay siege to it, but Gerhard de Jonge, the Dutch commander, was a brave man and we had our bloody work cut out with him. To give Alexander a scare Maurice of Orange moved up from Arnhem to the Betau and proceeded to set up an ambush after reconnoitring the area around our camp. Seven of our ensigns, Spanish and Italian lancers, rode out against the enemy. Doughty knights were among them, I can tell you: Francesco Nicelli, Alfonso Davalos, Padilla, Jeronimo Caraffa and Decio Manfredi to name but a few. I was bearer of the prince's standard that day—a plague on it! Up and at the enemy we were and the enemy withdrew in haste until such time as we fell into the ambush and were wiped out to a man. God in heaven, I had already sustained thirty war wounds which scars all over my body bore witness to and I had bled at every close encounter, but this time, this time, as all my companions lay dead and bleeding on the field of battle, I alone escaped uninjured. The Duke of Parma's victorious

standard, however, which I had been carrying, was captured by the enemy! It bore an embroidered figure of Christ with the motto: *Hic fortium dividet spolia* or He will apportion the spoils to the bravest. My honour as a soldier was lost. The following day the golden chain Don Felipe had given me in token of my sterling service was torn from off my neck, another more fortunate inherited my post and I was allowed to lose myself in the ranks as an ordinary mercenary. I changed my name and re-enlisted in a German regiment. Overnight I became grey and bent and assumed the rank of captain again under my new name and so I am your subordinate, commander, and your comrade, gentlemen. Don't turn away from me!"

The commander of Fort Liefkenhoek reached out his hand to the storyteller and shook it warmly in silence; the other soldiers present pressed forward to reach out their hands to him too.

"Enough!" said the veteran. "What difference does it make, for it all comes down to the same in the end. I have witnessed the eclipse of many reputations and much honour and fame. King Philip the Second sleeps in the Escorial, the great prince Alexander Farnese lies in Parma. Where is Fernando Alvarez de Toledo now? Where is our redoubtable enemy, William the Silent?"

"Quo pius Aeneas, quo divus Tullus et Ancus? Where is god-fearing Aeneas? Where are the divine Tullus and Ancus?" laughed a young ensign, who was fresh out of upper school in Salamanca; but no-one paid attention to him, and Captain Jeronimo continued. "Enough, comrades. Let each man do his duty and think himself an honest man. Let the company stand easy, *mi coronel*, or we'll all be down with red dysentery tomorrow. That nasty business down there on the estuary has been put an end to now—and His Catholic Majesty Philip the Third and his Genoese Excellency, Signor Federigo Spinola, have one good ship less. Let us go to bed, colonel, and tomorrow you can find out more details."

"Is that what you think, prophet of doom? Your terrible misfortune has sapped your courage. Pull yourself together, Jeronimo."

The captain just shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, so be it then," said the colonel. "Give the signal to leave the walls. Afterwards I'll expect you all to come to my quarters, gentlemen, for a glass of wine. None of you will be getting any sleep tonight. Have courage, gentlemen, and long live Spain!"

The officers repeated their commander's last words, but somewhat mutedly. Then the drums beat the retreat and the troops withdrew from the walls of Fort Liefkenhoek.

The commander himself held back for a while and, sighing, leant his elbows on the parapet, cupping his chin in his hands. He stared out in this wise over the waters and gazed at the night and murmured:

"He's right. This war has a curse on it. For fourteen years now the Spanish flag has flown yet again on these walls and on the walls and the towers of Antwerp, but are we for all that one step nearer in our conquest of this heroic stiff-necked people? How many men have fought and bled for this tiny flooded lump of clay! How many men have struggled to possess this wilderness! Like dazzling stars shining through the mists of time the names appear of both friends and foes, names like Alexander Farnese, Mansfeld, Mondragone, Johannes Pettin of Utrecht, Aldegonde, Gianibelli, Giovanni Baptista Plato, Barrai, Capisucchi, Olivera, Paz, La Motta, Delmonte and a hundred others. But thousands of nameless fighters lie buried under the sand and under the waves—how many more will sink there without leaving a trace?"

The garrison had long since disappeared from the walls, and all there was to hear from the top of Fort Liefkenhoek were the calls and the tread of the night watch and the roar of the waves and the once again gathering storm.

The colonel circled his walls one more time and encouraged the twice as numerous as usual night watch to keep a good lookout; then he went down to his quarters where his officers, in response to his invitation, had all come together. Only Captain Jeronimo was missing, as was his wont when his comrades-in-arms gathered socially. They left him to his own devices, were sorry that he wasn't there and laughed and joked about his prophecies.

The captain had indeed been right! His Catholic Majesty and Federigo Spinola of Genoa had lost a valiant ship during that stormy night. The next morning charred remnants of the Immaculate Conception were washed up on the dunes of South Beveland at the feet of heretics, and the evening tide carried more than one mutilated body in Spanish uniform down to the walls of Fort Bats. Captain Jeronimo's grim prediction had been proved true—the sea beggars had emerged victorious from the previous night's skirmish.

II.

On Board the Andrea Doria.

Fishermen brought the news of the night's happenings to the town of Antwerp and, depending on where one's political sympathies lay, there was secret rejoicing or gnashing of teeth among the town's inhabitants.

The name of the Black Galley promptly spread among the populace and was linked with varying degrees of certitude to the unfortunate events that had just taken place.

Who, during such a night of storms as the previous night had been, could have carried out such an action if it were not the crew of the black galley?

In town squares, in back streets, in workshops, in churches, in the town hall and in the citadel the rumour was heard. On the warships and the merchant ships that lay at anchor at the quayside, next to the houses and walls of the town, the rumour also circulated. Everywhere, as already mentioned, consternation or masked jubilation were visible on people's faces.

"The black galley! The black galley!"

That was Federigo Spinola, a noble patrician from Genoa, an enterprising son of that rich republic's most famous family, who had entered into a contract with the King of Spain, Philip the Third, to prepare a fleet for the service of His Catholic Majesty to be used against the Dutch rebels and to sail into the North Sea. All booty and all the ships captured from the heretics became the property of Admiral Spinola and so he went with an impressive array of galleys and galleons, manned with sixteen hundred bold sailors, out of Genoa, went through the Straits of Gibraltar, rounded Cape Saint Vincent, was joined by a large number of audacious Viscayan pirates and privateers in the Bay of Biscay and later by a large number of Dunkirk freebooters and appeared on 11 September 1599 in the port of Sluys, where he dropped anchor and from where he commenced his activities in the North Sea.

The waters of the North Sea were for the first time furrowed by those Roman galleys which had only been used hitherto by those who lived on the shores of the Mediterranean. And so it came about that, at first, even the intrepid and fearless fisherfolk of Zeeland felt the fear engendered by the unfamiliar when confronted by these Italian galleys that struck the waves like the hundred-oar feet of giant water-beetles.

Thus, in the beginning, Federigo Spinola did a roaring trade and won many a richly laden merchantman and many a poor fishing boat from the Dutch until the initial shock experienced by the latter had worn off and they dared more boldly to get to grips with their new enemies. The States General sent a sizeable squadron and, in the heat of battle, not only were a large number of enemy privateers annihilated, but they even went as far as to capture one of the terrible galleys.

This remarkable vessel was brought in triumph back to Amsterdam and here something similar was built along the same lines and manned with the bravest hearts and hands. It was of a threateningly black colour and the newly painted black galley was soon scaring the Spaniards and Admiral Federigo Spinola out of their wits. The speculative venture of the Genoan bore from then on no longer such good fruit as it had done at first.

So the black galley was no ghost ship, no spectral apparition, but a thing of wood and iron, and neither was its crew a phantom crew. Beings of flesh and blood clambered aloft in the rigging, set the sails, loaded the blunderbusses and boarded enemy ships with the blood-curdling cry:

"Sultan before Pope!"

People were talking about the black galley on the squares and in the alleyways of Antwerp and everyone wanted to know more about the rumour that the splendid trireme, the Immaculate Conception, had been scuttled and blown up the previous night by men of Zeeland.

Then it gradually grew dark again; a thick fog came up from the Scheldt and came to rest over the town of Antwerp. The lights of the quayside shimmered redly through the mist and the rigging of the galleon, the Andrea Doria, dripped with condensation. The ship lay at anchor next to the harbour walls and the houses on the quayside and on its deck Captain Antonio Valani, a young man approximately thirty years old, wrapped in a thick cloak, walked backwards and forwards while the waves of the river, gently lapping the hull of his ship, washed to and fro and from the quayside and the town came the dull din of excited locals.

The captain paused in his pacing and stared up at the lights of the town shimmering over the wall just as at his side his bosun, Leone della Rota, a boon companion of his youth from la strada Giulia in

Genoa, appeared and put his hand on his shoulder:

"A penny for your thoughts, Antonio."

The man to whom this was directed looked up almost startled.

"Ah, it's you, Leone. Do you bring any news from the outside world?"

"Yes, but it isn't good news by any means. It came to the admiral's notice from Fort Liefkenhoek that the story about last night was true. The Immaculate Conception has been dragged down to hell bag and baggage. Only the cabin boy came ashore alive, landing at Fort Bats clinging on to an empty water barrel. There was great jubilation among the heretics and the fishwives of Zeeland—frighteningly ugly creatures, Antonio—dried the boy off and sent him here to give their regards to His Excellency the Governor. They took the boy into the citadel. Well, we'll soon be hearing from the admiral himself."

"God grant it may be so," cried out the Andrea Doria's captain, stamping the deck with his foot in a temper. "Leone, I can't stand this enforced idleness of lying at anchor any longer!"

"Idleness?" laughed the ship's bosun. "By the fair frame of Venus, I didn't know we were being idle. I thought it might be possible to make use of this time we're lying here at anchor. Corpo di Bacco, I've made a fine conquest of a strapping wench in town in the tavern with the arms of Alcantara hanging up outside. You're invited, Antonio."

"You never take life seriously, Leone!" sighed the captain.

"Listen to me," laughed the bosun. "Trust to your instincts, my friend, and don't give me that. Don't turn away with such a miserable look on your face. Follow my finger—see, over there, that light over the city wall in that corner window. Just follow my finger—can you see it? Antonio, Antonello, captain, little captain of mine, who lives in that room? Tell me who has lit that tiny light. Is she not the sweetest child that this northern clime, or should I say this northern bog, has ever brought forth as long as there has been rain here and that must have been for a very long time, I think. Has not Antonio Valani, captain of this good ship, the Andrea Doria, fallen in love body and soul with the fair hair and the blue eyes of this beautiful Fleming? Another of your sighs? Antonio, Antonio, by our lovely lady of Cythera, you can be a pain sometimes!"

Captain Valani turned away indignantly.

"Oh, leave me alone, Leone—go to your buxom wench. I'm giving you the rest of the night off, up until the first cock crows, just to get you and your loose tongue off my ship. Go now, I beg you, go and stop torturing me with your cheerful face. I forgive you the lightness of your blood and your zest for life, but give me an hour by myself if you are truly my friend. My life seems like a wilderness at the moment."

"Antonio," said the second-in-command more seriously, "Antonio, on my honour, it was not my intention to torture you. My plump hostess at the Alcantara Arms can wait keeping an eye on the door for as long as she has a mind to. I won't go. What the devil ails you, my friend? How do things stand with you? Confide in me what it is that oppresses you. It's not last night's bad news from the Scheldt estuary, that's for sure. Confide in me. Can it really be true what I took as a joke and treated in fun? Have you really fallen for the charms of the fair-haired enchantress?"

Captain Valani sighed deeply without answering and Leone went on:

"And she's playing hard to get, hard to get with you, every woman's pin-up in the strada Balbi and in all the other streets, sidestreets and alleyways of our dear home town of Genoa. By the goddess of Paphos that calls for punishment, the most severe punishment. Oh that beautiful barbarian! I stand ready to serve you, Antonio Valani, my friend and superior, with sword, heart and head. What can we do to win you the heart of that sweet child?"

The rest of the conversation between the captain and his bosun was lost in and interrupted by the shouts of the night watch in the direction of the gangplank. A whirl of drums resounded from the quayside, torches flickered and weapons glinted. Admiral Federigo Spinola had come to see how things were aboard the Andrea Doria and on the other ships of his fleet lying at anchor under the walls of Antwerp. He was in the foulest of moods as Leone and Antonio could not help but notice when they hurried to welcome him on board. The admiral stamped about most grimly surrounded by his captains who had gathered around him on the main deck of the Andrea Doria. The unfortunate skirmish of the previous night lay heavy on his heart. If things were going to continue in this vein, his business interests were not worth the parchment contract they were written on, countersigned with the Yo el Rey of King Philip the Third of Spain.

"To sea with you!" cried Admiral Spinola as he raged at his captains. "Put out to sea and capture that accursed black galley. String up the whole of its crew from its own yardarms and the devil take their souls. Tomorrow at daybreak I want the four galleys that are lying here at anchor to weigh anchor. Do you hear me, gentlemen? The Andrea Doria will stay here and await further orders. But the galleys will make sail tomorrow good and early. The message has already been given to the ships' captains at Sluys to put out to sea with every ship available. The black galley—bring me the black galley or bring me back Satan himself."

At this the admiral stamped off, swallowing the rest of his harangue, and the captains looked at one another wryly and then turned their gaze to the admiral:

"Diavolo, Spanish sound and fury!"

"A task that's easier said than done!"

"Well, what do you think, gentlemen?"

"The black galley, eh?"

"Did you hang your cook yesterday, Francesco?"

"Yes, it's a pity!"

"Spinola sends us to Sluys!"

"To hunt the black galley!"

And so the banter on the Andrea Doria went on till eventually one captain after another went off to complete preparations for the imminent departure of their ships.

It was a long time before Antonio Valani and Leone della Rota were able to find themselves alone on deck.

"So the others are sailing and we have to stay here? Wonderful!" said Leone. "Let us go hunting on our own account, Antonio, but first to the tavern I spoke of. You can tell me everything there is to know there of your relationship with that pretty Flemish woman."

"No, Leone. Leave me alone."

"No, I won't. You should and will tell me. I'm going to cure you, dear boy. I'm a good doctor in matters like these. Many a one had learnt that and you are not going to be the exception, Tonino."

Reluctantly the captain allowed himself to be dragged away from his ship. With an air of annoyance he followed his lieutenant through the streets of Antwerp to the Alcantara Arms where the fat hostess had fallen for the jolly della Rota and the scoundrel had a free slate and free accommodation as often as it seemed agreeable to him. And it was frequently very much so and just the job for him.

III.

Jan and Myga.

The following evening Myga van Bergen was sitting in one of the high gable houses behind the city wall on the quayside in Antwerp in the immediate vicinity of her small night light. As the daughter of the erstwhile rich and respected merchant, Michael van Bergen, of whom it could now be said: *Supremum diem obiit, senex et pauper* (Old age and poverty killed him), she was dressed in mourning.

As when a sack of newly minted gold coins is shaken, fifteen or twenty years before the name of the firm of Norris and Van Bergen reverberated in the ears of everyone, for the firm represented one of the richest merchant banking houses in the whole of affluent Antwerp. Its ships sailed on every ocean, its warehouses were full of the most precious treasures from the Indies and America, its underwriting rooms were full of diligent underwriters. Twenty years before you could have asked at the Stock Exchange or at the Oosterling Bank, the great repository of the Hanseatic League, about the firm of Norris and Van Bergen and you would have heard good reports of them.

Now it was a different story. Johann Geerdes Norris had died long ago in Amsterdam and a fortnight since his former business partner had followed him to the grave in Antwerp as an undischarged bankrupt.

If you had asked now on the Stock Exchange or at the offices of the Hanseatic League about the firm of Norris and Van Bergen, you would probably have been asked to repeat your question more than once

and received for your answer a shake of the head. Who could still remember now the firm of Norris and Van Bergen? Only the oldest merchants and brokers would still know of it.

But how had such a thing come about?

The answer to that question is easy to give. When the firm of Norris and Van Bergen was in its heyday, two hundred thousand inhabitants were gainfully employed in Antwerp. Now they had dwindled to eighty thousand. Is that explanation enough for you?

Let us cast a glance back at days gone by to the twentieth day of August in that annus horribilis of 1585. On this day those of the reformed faith held their last service in the cathedral. After the surrender, which the town had arranged with its mighty conqueror, Prince Alexander of Parma, the Catholics were to have restored to them the following day the sacred property of the Blessed Virgin Mary that they had had to leave so long in the hands of heretics.

It was a solemn and extraordinary moment when, on 20 August, after the last Protestant sermon, the rolling chords of the cathedral organ were heard. A deep silence ensued, people sat with heads bowed praying softly and fervently. Then there was an unexpected commotion—a noise, half a sigh, half a repressed cry of anger rang out in a painful sort of way. A murmuring arose, the congregation got up from their seats and ran in an undisciplined confusion towards the church doors, towards those great portals, to which the Catholic portion of the population were already laying siege.

Triumph and defeat!

Monks of every conceivable order pushed contemptuously or threateningly past the humiliated, still crying or complaining heretics, lifting their wreaths of roses gaily.

How long ago it now was since they had had to succumb to these very same heretics who had then cried out to them: "Papen uyt! Papen uyt!" ("Away with the priests! Away with the priests!").

Such a changeable thing is man's fate and triumph and defeat alternate in spiritual struggles.

On 20 August the merchant banking house of Norris and Van Bergen was still strong and well respected. On 27 August the firm was officially wound up. Alexander Farnese entered the conquered town in triumph; Jan Geerdes Norris left it with his ten-year-old son and several companions who did not want to endure a Spanish yoke. Michael van Bergen stayed behind with his little daughter who was then six years old. Each of the two partners acted true to character: Norris impulsively and angrily; Van Bergen fearfully and with timidity. The former flew in the face of bitter destiny and abandoned his position to resume it elsewhere, the battle having been lost. The latter bowed to his fate and suffered in silence what he could not hope to alter for the better.

But all this was a long time ago and our two protagonists are no longer Geerdes Norris and Michael Van Bergen, but their children Jan and Myga respectively.

Into what a frightful, devastated, horrid world had the two poor mites been thrust. How often had maternal lullabies been silenced by the noise of gunfire both near and distant! How often had their fathers had to take son and daughter off their knees because they had been summoned by the warning bell to the walls or to the town hall!

Poor little mites! They had never been able like other children born in happier times to tumble out of danger in shady woods and on the green grass of meadows. They had never been able to make crowns from the blue cornflowers and the red poppies which grew at the edge of tilled fields.

The woods were full of the roaming bands of His Catholic Majesty, the wild gangs of the forest beggars and lawless and ruthless ragamuffins that had dispersed there from all over Europe.

The armies of Spain, mercenaries from Germany, England, France and Italy, the soldiers of the United Provinces under the leadership of the Prince of Orange fought on the green grass of the meadows and pitched their makeshift huts and tents there.

Fields of corn, even before the corn in them ripened, even before poppies and cornflowers bloomed in them, fell victim to the feet and hooves of invading armies.

Where was there a peaceful hamlet to be found on this downtrodden piece of earth that the King of Spain saw as his own?

In the dark and narrow sidestreets of the town of Antwerp, behind the high walls, redoubts and towers of Pacioti, poor children had their playgrounds and these were often unsafe and perilous. Often the houses of honest burghers were changed into dungeons in which those who lived there shut

themselves up, in which they themselves had to be their own jailers to protect themselves against clear and present danger.

These two children's perception of the world must have been very different to that of other more fortunate children and many a fair blossom was stifled and annihilated in the bud by the dark and cold cloud that hung over these troubled times.

How often Jan and Myga during the Prince of Parma's long siege had seen from their windows where they laid their gaily-coloured dolls and cuddly animals war with its attendant horrors rampaging through the streets!

It had been decided by their fathers and mothers that Jan and Myga would one day be a couple while the great firm of Norris and Van Bergen was still in existence. When the surrender negotiated by Prince Alexander with the town of Antwerp had once been signed, however, Jan Geerdes Norris ripped up the contract of forthcoming marriage between his son and Michael van Bergen's daughter. By this time the wives of both partners were already dead.

On 27 August 1585 the two children were separated from each other and the ten-year-old boy and the six-year-old girl sobbed as if their hearts would break at it, but it was wartime and war splits up people who are close to one another in ways far crueller. It was felt as a matter of course that the two children would have forgotten the earliest memories of their childhood soon enough. We shall see if that was indeed the case.

The years went by and Jan Geerdes Norris passed away as did Michael van Bergen after his fortune had melted like snow in the sun.

Myga sat in her little room behind the city walls along the quayside in Antwerp. She was in her black mourning clothes, a beautiful young woman still pale from her long vigils at the bed of her dying father. She was spinning. Her eyes were full of tears and her heart was full of pent-up grief and care. The poor child had been quite alone in the great town since the death of her father and the times were so unruly that the weak in society were virtually at the mercy of all random oppression and insolence.

But was Myga van Bergen completely alone in the world?

Poor child! One of Myga's principal worries was that she was not entirely alone.

There was still someone to watch over Michael van Bergen's daughter. The orphan knew full well that at least one heart had remained faithful to her, that Jan Norris of Amsterdam would have shed his blood to the last drop for her. Jan Norris, however, was an outcast, under threat of the gallows if he fell into the hands of the Spaniards in the streets of Antwerp. And Jan Norris the sea beggar often appeared in various disguises in the streets of Antwerp.

Jan Norris had not forgotten the memories of his youth as quickly as Jan Geerdes Norris, his father, thought he would have done.

Jan and Myga were still effectively betrothed to each other. No power on earth could have separated them—they had sworn to each other an oath that was mutually binding. What was to become of them, neither of them, as long as Michael lived, could possibly have said.

Michael van Bergen had now been dead and buried for a fortnight, but Jan had disappeared months ago. Was he still alive? Had he drowned at sea? Had the Spaniards boarded his ship, caught him and hanged him?

Who could say?

What would poor abandoned Myga have done with herself, all alone in the world, if Jan really had been dead?

The night gradually drew on, but Myga was afraid to lie down. She was unable to sleep for grief and anxiety, so why should she have gone to bed? It gradually became quite cold in her little room, but she scarcely seemed to feel the cold and did not put more coal on the tiny fire that was burning in the grate. She put away her hand loom and covered her face with her hands, leaning her head on her breast. She sat like this for quite some time till eventually she got up shivering to seek the shelter of her bed.

She was bending down once more to check if the bolts on her door had been correctly adjusted when she heard something and held her breath.

"Myga?" Someone was whispering through the door from outside.

Myga's whole body trembled.

"Oh my God!"

"Myga?" The whispering came again through the keyhole.

With a sudden cry the young woman drew aside the bolts and turned the key in the lock. The door flew open and the very next moment a young man in the officer's uniform of a regiment of mercenaries with Spanish markings on the shoulder was holding Myga in his arms.

"Myga, oh Myga!"

"Oh Jan, Jan, dearest Jan!"

Tender kisses for the next few minutes took the place of words for both of them. Then Jan Norris sank, completely exhausted apparently, onto the nearest chair and Myga now noticed for the first time the disarray of her sweetheart's apparel, noticed that he had lost his hat, that one of his cheeks was bleeding from a slight graze.

"My God, what's happened, Jan? I'm trembling! Oh, you've been reckless again—oh Jan, Jan, bad Jan!"

"This time I came within a hair's breadth of being caught, Myga! But don't worry, sweetheart, they only nearly got me—I'd have been swinging from the hangman's noose by now if things hadn't passed off so well!"

"Oh Jan, and you actually say that you love me! Do you really want to save me from this town? Merciful God, you'll perish and so will I, and my father's dead too. Good God! What's to become of me? Who'll protect me? Who'll help me?"

"You're right, you're right, poor dear. And your father has died and now I'm there to comfort you in your distress. But I had to cruise off the coast of Dunkirk to send those pirates to the bottom—oh, it's hard, Myga, and yet I could do no other and I can do no other tonight either. Each of us has to be prepared to give his life to uphold the sacred honour of the fatherland. Ah, Myga, Myga, love me just a little even though I am a bad provider. Your poor father, Michael..."

"Leave my poor dead father out of this, Jan! He's alright where he is. He's at rest now and need no longer fear anyone. The dead are to be envied in these bloody, fearsome times!"

"Myga, don't talk that way. Your father's death was a great loss, but now you're my problem. Now you can go with me to Amsterdam, now nothing holds you back in this sad town of Antwerp. Myga, follow your heart, for happy days are just around the corner for us, my betrothed. Soon I'll be coming to fetch you—watch out—with an elegant wedding procession fit for a queen. Perhaps they'll ring the bells and beat the drums, perhaps they'll mark the blissful hour with cannon-fire in which I take you away from Antwerp. You will see if it's not true, what I am telling you now in the strictest confidence."

"What fantasies, Jan Norris! Tell me how all this is going to come about. No, don't tell me, as it's all sheer tomfoolery. Tell me about this danger you have just escaped from by the skin of your teeth. I won't be able to get it out of my head tonight and that's your fault, reckless madcap Jan."

"Not as reckless as you think, dearest!" said the young man with a smile. "Otherwise the captain of the black galley would not be using Jan Norris's head, heart, arms and legs as he is doing. There's something big afoot in the town. We are about to perform a deed that the children of Antwerp will still be singing about in a hundred years' time. I'm here to gather secret information, hence the disguise: the wide breeches of a German mercenary rather than the trousers of a Zeeland boatman. Listen, Myga. I carried out my orders on the quayside and learned that four of Spinola's galleys have set out this morning to hunt down the black galley. Apart from that, I also found out that your father Michael has died and had a close look at the last of the Genoese ships still at anchor here, the Andrea Doria, due to the way in which it's been built and, in the meantime, it got dark. During the day I often stole glances up at your window, dearest, but did not find the time to slip in to see you as all sorts of people were hard on my heels. So I thought I would wait till it went properly dark (I still have the key to the house) and then turned nimbly into the alleys until the idea came to me, in front of a brightly-lit tavern door, that I could spend the night in a tavern and take an opportunity to keep an eye on the doings of both locals and visitors (because of my orders, you know!) Well, I went into this tavern, ordered a bottle of wine and sat down at a table, spreading my elbows as if the whole world belonged to me and only seeming to feel no compunction or anxiety over poor Myga, whose father had died without me being there to comfort her. All around me was a din such as there must have been at the building of the Tower of Babel. Germans, Burgundians, Spaniards, Italians and Dutchmen chattered, swore and shouted, each in their own tongue, and all of them were drinking like fish. Every table and corner were

taken up and there remained only two empty places, next to me as it happened. Then two ill-mannered ruffians turned up—I recognized both of them: one was the captain of the Andrea Doria, the other his lieutenant. They climbed over tables and benches and sat down next to me. I gladly made room for them for their presence was worth silver and gold to me and every word they uttered I assayed. I pretended, however, never to have laid eyes on them and drowsily laid my head on both arms as if to shut out the world, but I had my ears pricked up for listening. The two foreigners called out for wine and the younger of the two, the lieutenant, put his arm round the serving wench's waist. The other, however, looked mournful at this, as though it had actually made him feel worse. I could have laughed at him, but, by the brotherhood of the sea beggars, it was no laughing matter! Then their banter started and, to begin with, all the talk was of our intrepid deed, of the dance we had led them the previous night, of the journey to kingdom come of the Immaculate Conception. I rejoiced much to hear this, but I suddenly froze for they mentioned a familiar name. They started to talk about you, Myga!"

"About me?" cried the young woman. "God in heaven, the Italian captain spoke about me! Jan! Jan! Protect me from him! He frightens me!"

"So the dog has set his snares to catch you!" shouted Jan in a hollow voice and Myga hid her face upon her breast and nodded trembling.

The young sea beggar gnashed his teeth and laughed grimly.

"Revenge is a dish best served cold as that foreign rogue will shortly learn. Be of good cheer, Myga. Am I not at your side and are there not many of my boon companions to fall back on if need be? Poor dear, how you're trembling!"

"Merciful heaven, Jan, I can't help myself. Do not these violent and arrogant foreigners rule over us? Who can stop them from having their evil way with us? Take me with you, Jan, out into the night, here and now!"

Jan Norris held the livid and trembling girl in his arms and tried everything he knew to reassure her. Once he had been moderately successful in this, he went on to relate his adventure in the Golden Lion.

"My hair stood up on my head and all the blood rushed to my brain. But I had to control myself so that I wouldn't give myself away, and that was hard work, but Jan Norris managed it and acted as if he didn't understand a word of Italian. By Count Lumey, they were discussing with each other a piece of knavery blacker than night, but I succeeded in understanding everything they were saying. In the early hours of morning, the day after tomorrow, the Andrea Doria sets sail—her orders to do so come straight from the admiral himself—and, because the opportunity is such a favourable one, their clever plan will come into operation the night before. The untamed dove, Myga van Bergen, will be captured by Antonio Valani with the help of Satan and lieutenant Leone della Rota. This house will be pounced on, but so discreetly that no neighbour will be disturbed thereby, that no cock in the whole of Antwerp will crow to reveal the dark deed. On to the galleon with Myga! What larks! Hoist up the anchor, boys, and off we go to hunt down the rebellious heretics, out into the open sea, for who can hear at sea the cries for help and the weeping of little Myga? Hell's teeth, and Jan Norris sits there in the Golden Lion unable to budge, holding in his hand his knife, unable to strike down these two whispering rogues!"

"Oh Jan, Jan, for the sake of our two mothers and our love, rescue me! Don't let me fall into their hands! Death would be a less terrible fate than that!"

"Calm down, Myga, calm down! There's plenty of time from now till midnight. Sitting round the fire in Amsterdam we'll remember this story. Trust me, love of my life, nothing untoward will happen to you as long as Jan Norris can still stand on his own two feet. But keep listening; my story isn't over yet. I still have to tell you how it came about that they sniffed me out as helmsman of the black galley. That's a much better story than the one I've just been telling you."

"Oh Jan, Jan, feel how my heart is beating—merciful God, who will protect poor Myga? Oh Jan, let's go, here and now, immediately. I can't breathe here any more. The air in this room is choking me!"

"Calm down, Myga, calm down. I'd gladly take you with me right away, and there'd be a boat ready to take us on board, but listen down there in the streets—the whole town knows now that men from the black galley are concealed in disguise within its walls. Just listen to the rumpus. Making a run for it would be no good as there's no chance of us getting through unscathed. Sit down and stop trembling like that. We're still safe and time is the best counsellor. Think about those times when we'll be sitting round the fire in wintry Amsterdam. Ha ha, let them look for me down there. Jan Norris has always been too quick and too cunning for them. It would also be a pity for the fellow if they hanged him, wouldn't it, Myga?"

"Oh Jan, Jan!"

"Never mind. Give me a kiss and then another one and then I'll tell my story. So there I sat biting my lips till they bled, but not missing a word of the conversation going on near me and the rogues kept chattering on and complimenting themselves on their stroke of genius. Then they drained their glasses, got up and would have gone out only they were detained at the door by great to-do. A lad was being brought in on the shoulders of two strapping youths and a loud hurrah went up when the toppers in the tavern spotted him. The lad in question was the cabin boy from the Immaculate Conception, who alone had survived out of the whole crew and had made his way to land through mad perambulations via sea and air. Everyone wanted to see this lad. Everyone wanted to talk to him and they all pressed up against him, reaching out to him their tankards and jugs. I thought it best to make use of this diversion to slip away unnoticed. I crept out keeping as close as possible to the walls and had almost got to the door when it was my misfortune to catch the eye of the cabin boy, who was still crouching on the shoulders of his carriers. The lad stared at me as if he had seen a ghost, went white as chalk and shouted at the top of his voice: "Help! Help! Ecco! Ecco! He's one of them! Help! Arrest him!" "Who is? What's all this?" the customers bellow and each of them looks at the lad and their neighbours. "There, there, where the table is. Arrest him. He's one of those sea beggars, the one who struck down Captain Perazzo, one of the crew of the black galley." What came next was pandemonium. All eyes were focused on me. All swords flew out of their sheaths. I too had got my knife out to sell my life if needs be as dearly as possible. Now they threw themselves at me, but I was faster on my feet than they were, grabbed the nearest bench and flung it at the feet of the first wave of attackers so that a pile of them stumbled over it and fell against one another onto the floor. I made use of this brief opportunity to jump into the thick of it, hitting out to right and left with my knife into upturned faces. I reached the door. I was outside in the street. Behind me I could hear the noise of my pursuers. Thanks be to God that I know Antwerp like the back of my hand. I get chased all over the place, but I manage to lose them with adroit twists and turns. I take them down blind alleys and double back on myself. On the quayside all is still. My trusty key opens up a well-known door and I've taken refuge here, Myga, in order to rescue you. But still they didn't give up hope of hanging a sea beggar. The whole of the garrison came after me if truth be known. A great honour, men! Thank you most kindly!"

Jan Norris listened with a laugh on his lips. Myga van Bergen trembled at the noise in the streets below.

"Dearest, dearest Jan, are you quite sure that no-one has seen you come into this house? Listen. They're coming this way. Oh God, look out of the window—torches and spears—heaven above, they're knocking on the door. They're looking for you, Jan. Lord have mercy on us. We're lost. We're lost."

The front door flew open, people appeared to be forcing their way into the house. Jan Norris gritted his teeth and seized his knife by the hilt.

"Calm down, calm down. It's not possible. Calm down, Myga."

"They're coming. They're coming," screamed Myga. "They're coming upstairs. They're going to find you. Jan, Jan, let me die at your side!"

The young man was as pale as death.

"How could I have been so careless as to endanger you, Myga? That was an awful thing to do. By my oath as a sea beggar, they really are coming upstairs. What's to become of you, Myga?"

"Let me die at your side, Jan!" breathed Myga, clinging to the chest of her betrothed.

IV.

The Raid.

Not only was Leone della Rota at home in the Alcantara Arms, but in all the taverns of an Antwerp full of drinking dens. He had dragged his friend and captain, Antonio Valani, on this particular evening to the Golden Lion, and reluctantly, as usual, the captain had followed him there.

Who could resist Leone della Rota when he had a plan to put into action?

More reckless than malicious, the young lieutenant looked upon the world as a great playground and the war as a splendid chance to execute daring schemes unhindered. He saw the abduction of the poor small abandoned orphan, Myga, as a daring, playful scheme, an honourable thing as far as he was concerned, and had taken it into his addled pate to carry it out only after having convinced his friend with difficulty to agree to it. What did this Genoese good-for-nothing care about the affairs of the rebel provinces and His Spanish Catholic Majesty? Heretic women could be very pretty and female members

of the one true church extremely ugly. Leone definitely preferred charming heretics to ugly Catholics and did all that he could not to depart from the old proverb that went the rounds in Italy about his home town, namely that Genoa has a sea without fish, a landscape without trees and men who cannot be trusted.

In the Golden Lion he had, as we know already from the tale told by Jan Norris, made the final arrangements with Antonio Valani as to the planned abduction. If this came off and the Andrea Doria got back safely from its expedition, the black galley would either have been taken as a prize or sunk. Who would dare then to point the finger at the victors? If the galleon did not come back, then its last deed would have been worthy of its end. The possibility of a third state of affairs, in which the Andrea Doria returned home without having seen the enemy ship, was unthinkable and held by Leone della Rota to be beneath his dignity. The captain allowed himself to be led by Leone however and wherever he wished.

The two friends from Genoa had taken not the slightest part in the pursuit of the bold sea beggar. They wandered arm in arm through the streets in which an excited crowd was milling in the direction of the quayside.

"We'd have been fools to have run after that scoundrel!" laughed Leone. "Leave it to others to chase that audacious beggar. By the doves of Aphrodite, since I've been serving the formerly cold Antonio Valani as a pathfinder in the magic kingdom of love, my soul hovers high over this land of mists. Oh Love, tamer of hearts, I follow your battle standard, oh goddess of Cythera, place us under your divine protection!"

"I beg you, Leone, be sensible. Don't be a fool. I'm in a strange mood. In all my life I have never had such a feeling in my breast. Leone, it's as if—Leone, all day and all night I have such strange thoughts. Leone, be prepared, perhaps you will soon take over from me as captain of the Andrea Doria..."

"And you'll be a rear admiral to Federigo Spinola."

"Or a corpse at the bottom of the sea," murmured the captain.

"What? Thoughts of death? Thoughts of death under the window of the girl of your dreams?" laughed the lieutenant. "By all that's holy, that's a splendid thought. Would that I were Petrarch to compose a sonnet on this wonderful mood. Look, you dreamer, here we are directly under the window of your beloved—her light is still shining—what a thought! Antonio Valani, friend of my youth, to scare away your intimations of mortality, let's now, right this minute, pay a visit to the sweet child who lives up there."

"Leone!"

"Let's search her house. All mad ideas would be most welcome! Forward in the name of the king! Forward in the name of love!"

"Leone! Leone!"

"Let me be," snorted the lieutenant. "I ask you, can the beggar that these boorish fellows are looking for not just as easily have crept into the lodging of the little one as into any of the other houses of this town? Forward, Antonio, you worry too much. We'll carry out a house search of your fair beloved's and familiarize ourselves thereby with the position of the house for tomorrow night."

Before the captain could hold his wild friend back, the latter had dashed to Myga's door against which he pounded with his fist, calling out in a loud voice:

"Open up! Open up! Open in the name of His Catholic Majesty of Spain! Open up! Traitors and enemies have sought shelter in this house!"

Immediately there streamed from all sides soldiers, sailors and citizens of Antwerp towards the door that led to Myga's lodging. The crowd of people grew from one moment to the next. Half in desperation Captain Valani tried to put a stop to the noise being made by his crazy friend, but it was already too late. The front door opened and the inhabitants of the building in which Myga lived, a carpenter, a cobbler and a town clerk, along with their families and companions, a widow with several children, cowered fearfully in their corners, horrified by the thought that one of the Dutch rebels must have sought shelter under their roof. Only a bent very old woman strode bravely forth with a lamp in her trembling hand in the direction of the intruders and insisted in a screeching voice that no-one had slipped into the house and certainly not a sea devil from Zeeland. God forbid she should grant protection to any of the sea beggars—had not her husband, her poor departed husband, been thrown from his fishing smack into the water by those raging pirates and come to a wretched end? But what

good were her asseverations? Nobody listened to them and the house was full of Spanish soldiers, Italian sailors and the dregs of the streets. Cries of fear and woe rang out from the various dwellings. There were a few beatings-up and a certain amount of harassment accompanied by some plundering.

"Forward, Antonio! Don't hold back!" cried Leone. "Forward and upward to a realm of heavenly bliss!"

He was holding the old woman by the collar and forcing her to light the way with her lamp making merry threats the while.

"Cheerfully, cheerfully, little mother! The others are looking down below. We are going to look upstairs—forward and don't be so prudish. I'm not looking at your calves. Hey, Antonio, don't get left behind, will you?"

"Leone, for heaven's sake!"

"Che importanza? Keep going, fair maid. What a rabbit you are, Antonio, when it comes to such a sweet adventure! What would become of you if you didn't have me with you? Well, that seems to be the last step. We've made it! Here, here, Antonello—in the name of the king, open up, open up! Traitors and beautiful women have hidden themselves away in here. Open up! Open up in the name of the king! In the name of His Catholic Majesty of Spain, come out of your nest, pretty bird, open up and let us see your sweet rebel heart!"

With his mouth wreathed in smiles the madman caught the captain by the shoulder and pushed him towards the door, which he threw wide open. The two natives of Genoa stood there dumbfounded, scarcely able to believe their eyes!

Jan and Myga had been listening to the noise in the streets with growing apprehension and alarm. When pandemonium finally broke loose in the house, Myga had begged Jan in desperation to hide.

But what could happen for both of them to be saved?

The next minute it was all too late. Leone della Rota had climbed the stairs all too quickly.

In his left arm Jan Norris grasped the unconscious Myga while his right hand reached convulsively for naked steel. He did not know what he had to be about as all presence of mind had deserted him in those last frightful few seconds. And besides what good would any amount of presence of mind have been to him? Jan Norris and Myga van Bergen were lost as far as human reason was concerned.

"In the name of all the devils, what's all this?" cried the Genoese lieutenant. "Well, that's not bad. That's a strange encounter for sure. That's what I call killing two birds with one stone. Antonio Valani, now you can win your fair dove for yourself. Have you not allowed yourself to dream of having such a rival? Down with the beggar! To the gallows with him!"

Genoese swords flew from their scabbards.

"God protect you, Myga!" shouted Jan Norris, swinging his own blade. "Get back, you foreign rogues!"

Uttering the beggars' piercing cry: "Sultan before Pope!" the helmsman of the black galley eluded the guard of Leone della Rota's sword, stabbed out and with a cry Antonio Valani, the captain of the Andrea Doria turned and stumbled, his sword falling clattering from his hand and with it Antonio Valani himself. The sea beggar leapt over the body of the Genoan while a second thrust merely grazed the lieutenant's left shoulder. Sailors from the Andrea Doria invaded the stairs, brandishing their ship's knives. A wild and bloody struggle developed in a confined space and all this time Myga van Bergen lay unconscious on the floor. Spanish and Albanian soldiers added to the turmoil, lamps and torches went out, glimmered on the floor and were re-lit. Few people knew what was really going on and when suddenly the cry: "Fire! Fire!" echoed through the house, the confused throng fled in panic and back down the stairs. Dense choking smoke filled all the rooms in the house and through it the Genoese sailors dragged their mortally wounded captain and the chained sea beggar, Jan Norris! Leone della Rota carried the senseless Myga through the smoke down to the street where a new fight was threatening to break out between the sailors of the Andrea Doria and Spanish soldiers who tried to wrest their prisoner away from the former. But a drumroll proclaimed the arrival of a high-ranking officer to whom Leone reported insofar as the trance-like state he found himself in allowed him to. The Spaniard airily expressed the opinion that the best thing would be to carry the wounded captain, the sea beggar and the woman aboard ship, then early the following morning all would be ready for the trial and anyway the prisoner deserved to be hanged from a yardarm as a pirate so that his immediate removal to the galleon was, from this point of view too, the most fitting solution to the problem.

The crowd was thronging round the quayside down below. Torches cast light on the wild procession and projected their flickering reflections over the wounded Antonio, the unconscious Myga and Jan Norris in chains who allowed himself to be dragged along by his fierce foes apathetically. Still Leone della Rota was holding Myga in his arms, but without understanding how this had come about. Everything was turning around and around in his head. As if in a dream he carried his light burden on to the galleon.

In the cabin a place was prepared for the wounded captain. A surgeon came to examine the injuries of the still unconscious Antonio and to shake his head over them. Myga van Bergen crouched in a corner of the cabin with no-one, for the time being, bothering about her. The helmsman of the black galley was chained to the main mast and his pitiless enemies surrounded him sneering.

Only late on did the tumult die down in the town, after the fire in the burning house behind the sea wall had been extinguished. Earlier it was quiet on board the Andrea Doria. Antonio lay motionless in the place assigned to him and Leone sat equally motionless next to him while Myga crouched in the darkest, most far away corner of the cabin. Over the whole ship scarcely a sound could be heard other than the murmur of the river, the noise of the rigging swaying in the wind and the pacing of the sentry who, with a loaded musket and a slow-burning match walked up and down before the prisoner chained to the mast and did not take his eyes off him for an instant.

At two o'clock in the morning the wind died down completely and even the creaking noise made by the rigging ceased. It was as silent as the grave aboard the Andrea Doria—a deep silence that was suddenly and all the more spinetinglingly broken by a shout and the noise of a shot.

Out of the cabin rushed Leone della Rota onto the deck. From their bunks and hammocks rushed out ordinary sailors.

The place formerly occupied by the prisoner at the main mast was empty. The sentry stood there with a smoking musket, casting around him confused glances, besieged by the questions and the oaths of both officers and crew.

"There he is, there! Man overboard!" went up the hoarse cry from the chest of the dumbfounded man.

"Where? Where? Where?"

Everyone rushed to the side of the ship.

"Down with the boats! Quickly! Quickly!" rapped the lieutenant's commanding voice.

It was lively on the Scheldt where lights were shining through the night, but the nights are dark in November. A corpse heading downstream was fished out of the water, but it was not that of Jan Norris. Going downriver, on both banks, alarm signals were flying, but the efforts of all the ships' boats sent out from Antwerp were in vain.

Had Jan Norris been rescued? Had he been killed by the waves?

Who could say?

But how Myga van Bergen sat up in her corner listening when she heard that her beloved had burst free from his bonds and jumped over the side.

Morning broke, but it brought no news of the sea beggar who had escaped.

On the deck of the Andrea Doria Leone della Rota walked backwards and forwards with arms folded and whispered to himself:

"If only he hadn't said it! He'll die and it'll be all my fault. Oh Antonio! Poor Antonio! He predicted this. Me as captain of the Andrea Doria, himself a corpse at the bottom of the sea."

The lieutenant stopped.

"And yet, Leone, will the same fate not befall you yourself perhaps soon, maybe even tomorrow? Who fears death? Death is annihilation. Long live life! Here comes the sun. I can breathe freely again and clouds of blood disappear from before my eyes! I want to toast the morning in the fiery wine of Syracuse, even should it prove to be the last morning I ever see!"

The cabin boy brought a full tumbler of the exquisite wine. Della Rota lifted it towards the blazing solar sphere, emptied it at a single swallow and flung the glass far away from him into the river, putting his foot firmly down on the planking of the deck.

"Captain on board the Andrea Doria," he said, and almost inaudibly, he added: "Captain of the Andrea Doria and Myga, the crown of all the maids of Flanders, mine, all mine!"

V.

Fevered Dreams.

For the third time since the night in which the garrison of Fort Liefkenhoek perceived the exchange of cannon fire between the black galley and the Immaculate Conception and the explosion of that ship, evening fell, a still and unusually warm evening. People who knew about weather were of the opinion that there would be an ample fall of snow before too long and they may well have been right. After the early morning sun had risen brightly in a cloudless sky, it had around midday crept behind heavy grey clouds. These clouds had become more and more closely packed and in the evening had sunk more and more deeply over the town of Antwerp, over land, river and sea.

Once again we find ourselves on the Genoese ship, the Andrea Doria, in the captain's cabin.

The hanging lamp throws its ruddy light over the room, over the weapons therein, the maps on the wall, the floor on which bloody bedclothes lie strewn about, on the bed where Antonio Valani moans and rambles in a raging fever, on Myga van Bergen kneeling where the pillows are at the end of the bed, on lieutenant Leone della Rota who is standing next to where his friend is dying and wild, strange glances cast by the wounded man towards the forcibly taken maid.

At noon Leone della Rota had heard with equanimity from Admiral Spinola and the governor of Antwerp that the escape of the sea beggar was attributable to him. With somewhat less equanimity he had also received the news that, in the absence of someone more suitable, he was to be entrusted with the overall command of the Genoese galleon for the expedition of the following day.

Neither the governor nor the admiral had inquired after the presence of a young woman on board ship.

As he had had a lot of work to do both on board and on land, the day had flown by for Lieutenant della Rota and he had only been able to devote a small amount of time to his dying friend. But on board and on land, indeed everywhere, the young Genoan was pursued by the image of the beautiful Flemish damsel whom he was currently holding captive on his ship, who would be subject to his every whim, without the slightest vestige of protection, once his friend was dead. At first he sought to banish all such thoughts from his mind, but time and again they forced themselves upon him and there was no way that he could escape them and soon he gave up the struggle completely. The pretty child appeared to him in her desperation all the more charming. Among the sailors and men-at-arms, in the admiral's antechamber, in the streets of the town she appeared in his mind's eye as he saw her kneeling in a cabin of the Andrea Doria, wringing her hands. The wildest of passions broke out inside him in bright flames and he sought to overcome with the most convoluted sophistry the resistance of his conscience.

What earthly use would it be to Antonio if he, Leone, were to send this woman back to where she came from?

And now Leone recalled those moments during which he had held the young woman's delicate body in his arms, during which he had carried the unconscious girl through the gunsmoke and the streets. Then the wind had blown the damsel's fair hair into his face.

"No, no, no, Antonio Valani, your right to this fair booty ceases with your life! All's fair in love and war, Antonio Valani. Strike your colours and pass away. Then your luck will devolve on me and tomorrow, tomorrow I'll be defeated and someone else will have the victory. All's fair in love and war, my poor Antonio!"

With such thoughts in his head the lieutenant had walked into the cabin at twilight and now he stood, as we have shown him, between the dying man and Myga all of a tremble in the glimmer of the flickering ship's lantern.

The idea of carrying the wounded captain ashore had been mooted, but with all the strength of a life about to be extinguished Antonio Valani had expressly forbidden this. He wanted to die on board his ship and not in a hospital. He had not forgotten in his delirium that Leone had brought the Flemish maiden that he loved onto the Andrea Doria. The nearer he is to death, the more he clings to this love, the more violently it manifests itself. In life he might almost have concealed it had his turbulent companion Leone della Rota not meddled in it. As he lies dying, his brain casts off all restraint; Antonio Valani no longer hides anything of what he has formerly felt and kept a secret.

Poor Myga! See how she kneels there at the feet of the mortally wounded captain with her hair

spread out, white as a ghost, wringing her hands! No salvation, none!

The waves of the Scheldt have swallowed up her betrothed, who was impotent to prevent the depraved corruption of his beloved and who had precipitated himself into the river's cold waters so as not to participate in her dishonour.

And where is God in all this? Woe is me, the night is too dark and the mind of the unfortunate maiden too disturbed to be able to remember the great Redeemer from all of life's troubles. No power on heaven or on earth can protect her from scandal and disgrace. Poor Myga van Bergen!

The clock in the tower of the cathedral chimed eleven, the single chimes succeeding one another slowly and echoing in Myga's mind.

The noise of the town gradually diminished again and once again one light after another went out behind the city wall constructed by the Italian civil engineer, Paciotti.

The calm grew ever deeper. From time to time, however, wild cries and rejoicing rang out. From time to time too there came the raucous singing of a stray band of soldiers or the cry of a nightwatchman and the "Halt! Who goes there?" of patrols.

And once again the clock whirred in the tower of the Cathedral of Our Lady—midnight!

Antonio Valani lifted himself up from his pillow and cast about him mad glances from his eyes aglow with fever.

"Where is she? Leone, Leone—wine, lights and love! Leone, where are you? Where are you holding her? Where are you keeping her hidden? She's mine, you traitor, you treacherous Leone—the girl belongs to me! Hahaha, I'm not dead like you thought, Leone. I'm alive and holding on to what is mine."

Myga van Bergen's forehead was touching the floor of the cabin and Lieutenant della Rota gently pushed the delirious man back onto his bed and tried every way he could to calm him down, but it seemed as if all the strength and feeling of the dying man had to burst out afresh in all their fullness before they faded away forever.

Again and again the delirious Antonio tried to escape from the arms of Leone.

"All hands on deck. To the oars! To the oars! Long live the king! They're flying their flag—the sea beggars' flag. Fire at it! Fire at it! Eviva Genova! There goes the admiral, blown to kingdom come! Fire! Fire! It's a living hell! Leone, look after the ship. Look after the ship, Leone. It's all over for us. Woe is me. The beggars' flag. Man the guns. All is lost. All is lost. Look after the ship, look after the ship, Leone!"

The sick man fell back. The lieutenant straightened his pillow for him. Then he approached the kneeling maiden:

"What are you afraid of, signorina? Get up. What is it keeps you down on the floor? I won't harm you, my sweet little dove. You ought to be a queen, the absolute ruler of this good ship of ours. That's war for you. Someone has to strike their colours. Someone else gets to fly them from the flagpole. Poor Antonio! He predicted this—for him the grave, for me the beautiful bounty; I love you. I love you, star of Flanders, white rose of Antwerp. I love you and you're mine—stop ruffling your hair, don't look so wild—you're mine and no-one's going to take you from me!"

"Jan! Jan! Help! Rescue me!" cried the maiden, without knowing what it was she was shouting.

"Forget about your sea beggar," whispered Leone. "Has he not had his revenge on us? Will not poor Antonio be dead within the hour? Why are you so bothered about the body of this sea beggar? Leave him to drift with the tide. Get up. Get up, I say. You shouldn't be injuring your chaste brow by banging it on the floor. What can I say? The sea beggar's dead. Antonio Valani is dying. Take Leone, Leone who is still alive, in the blessed arms of his proud and beautiful queen."

"Mercy! Mercy!" stammered the maiden, but the lieutenant merely laughed:

"Listen, one o'clock! At five o'clock we cast off. Till then you have all the time you want to moan as much as you want, but then away with sighs and complaining. Antonio, poor friend, between now and five you've time enough to die. Don't sit up. Lie down. Your wounds are bleeding again. Lie down. What business of yours is the girl?"

"Leone, Leone, look after the ship! Beware the black galley. Look after the ship!" the dying man

screamed in his delirium.

"Who cares about the black galley?" muttered Leone della Rota. "The chase will only begin at five o'clock. Calm down, Antonio, calm down. Everything is as it should be on board. No worries. Sleep. Go to sleep."

Once again the captain sank back and closed his eyes. The last wild burst of excitement was followed immediately by the final moments of exhaustion. The life of Antonio Valani, captain of the Andrea Doria, was drawing to a close.

The lieutenant was all too well aware of it. He sighed and shook his head: "Poor Antonio! Poor friend! Must you set sail so soon? Ah, what good does it do to moan about it, and yet—I wish that day was dawning. I wish this long night were over! Once we're out at sea, once the corpse is overboard, only then will I feel better. I really do wish that morning were here already!"

He paced up and down in the narrow cabin. More than once he brushed against the unfortunate Myga and each time she jerked her arms together and pushed herself nearer to the wall.

"If only I could die," whispered Myga van Bergen. "If only death would come to save me. Let death embrace me as it embraced Jan."

The oil lamp was threatening to go out. Leone della Rota called for another light, more wine. He needed both in this dark night. His soul seemed a wild and desolate place.

VI.

The Black Galley.

On Fort Liefkenhoek the banner embroidered with the lion of Leon and the towers of Castile flutters proudly. The same banner flies over Fort Lillo and all the other forts staring into the jaws of hell on both banks of the Scheldt right up as far as the mighty walls of the citadel in Antwerp.

Sharp eyes keep watch over all these ramparts and walls, and the calls and the answering calls of the sentries never stop by day or by night.

The enemy is also close by and vigilant. He can appear at any moment. Who knows the hour at which he will come?

All around Zeeland's coastline the North Sea surges. It is here, on Tholen, on Schouwen, on North and South Beveland, on Walcheren, that the fearsome men of iron live who were first to swear an oath that they would rather be Turks than Papists and who wear a silver half-moon on their hats and carry in their hearts an all consuming, unquenchable hatred for Spaniards. What children mothers give birth to on these sea-sprayed sand dunes! Protect this land, you towers of Castile, keep good watch over the bastion of Flanders, you lion of Leon. "Better a country spoilt than a country lost" was the opinion of Zeeland sailors who, from the defeated Spaniards of Veere and Leyden, tore the hearts from their chests, bit into them and threw them to their dogs to eat.

"Eat this, bitter though it is!"

On Fort Liefkenhoek, on Fort Lillo, on the Kruisschanze, on Fort Pearl and San Felipe, on Forts Maria, Ferdinand and Isabella the cry goes out:

"Keep good watch! Keep good watch!"

The cannons on the Brabant side of the Scheldt and the cannons on the Flemish side are ready to spit out death and destruction onto any venturesome vessel that dares to make its way upstream in the direction of Antwerp.

"Keep good watch! Keep good watch!"

But the night is dark and neither moonlight nor starlight make it any brighter. It is hard to keep watch well on such a night.

How still and warm it is! Only the roaring of the great river sounds on and on against the background of the warning cries of the soldiers on the walls:

"Keep good watch! Keep good watch!"

What is coming from South Beveland towards the western arm of the Scheldt where river and sea

meet up with each other and can no longer be told apart? What is gliding over the waves under cover of darkness? It is propelled by a hundred strange arms, flying swift as an arrow just like the ghost ship, the Flying Dutchman. A ship's mighty form cuts through the waves and others come after it, less powerful ones.

What do the men of Zeeland care about darkness? They can find their way over these waters for these waters are their native land. One dark shadow comes after another; they sail on in a straight line—no noise is heard on board, even the rudder runs noiselessly through the waves. Words of command go from mouth to mouth in whispers. Each one on board knows what his duty is, each one is bound by the most solemn of oaths to stick a knife through his neighbour's jaw if his neighbour, by making a noise or by crying out thoughtlessly, jeopardizes the success of the enterprise.

Each one on board will abide by his oath, even were it to mean that he was thus obliged to stab his own brother, father or son.

A light comes up on the left—Fort Lillo!

A light comes up on the right—Fort Liefkenhoek!

The cries of the Spanish sentries fall clearly and audibly on every ear on board the black galley and its accompanying convoy.

Each knife, each grappling hook is kept in readiness. The concealed fuses glimmer near the weapons. The hearts of these daring men are beating strongly.

"Keep good watch! Keep good watch!" can be heard echoing into the distance. A great danger lies behind these bold seamen now. Long live the luck of the sea beggars!

What's that shimmering on the right?

The lights of Dorf and Fort Callao.

What is flickering on the Brabant side of the river?

The lights of the village of Ordam.

How still it is now in this frightful place where the bridge of Alexander Farnese once stood, the engineering wonder of the century! What genius once shone here! What blood once flowed here!

On this spot Giovanni Baptista Plato and Barocci once worked. On this spot Gianibelli's fireship wreaked havoc and filled the air, the water and the surrounding countryside with ruins and mutilated bodies.

Even now, after so many years, many a citizen of Antwerp with republican sympathies, wakes from sleep at night and thinks he has been woken up by the crack of a great explosion that might have been the town's salvation and wasn't.

Soundlessly the black galley glides on over these baleful waters with its shadowy convoy in tow.

"Keep watch! Keep good watch!" goes the cry from the earthworks of San Pedro and Santa Barbara.

Behold the lights of Predigerhof, the lights of Fort Maria, the lights of Fort Ferdinand! A bell, muffled and solemn, chimes in the darkness—the bell in the tower of Our Lady's church in Antwerp.

Two o'clock!

The captain of the black galley is at his post, drawn sword in hand, but another is taking the ship through the darkness of this night.

Were the slightest beam of light to fall on the face of this steersman, you would be startled when you saw his face.

Jan Norris, Myga's betrothed, Myga who is still a prisoner on the Andrea Doria, Jan Norris who has left his love in the power of his deadliest enemy, Jan Norris who did not jump to his death from the deck of that Genoese galleon, Jan Norris is steering the black galley tonight!

The eyes of Jan Norris scan the night, bore through the darkness as if it were broad daylight.

Jan to the rescue! Jan's revenge!

Watch out, Leone della Rota, the night has mischief in store for you. Be careful, Leone della Rota,

now is not the time to succumb to the love of a woman and the strong wine of Sicily! Look out for your ship, Leone della Rota, watch out—watch out for the black galley!

On board the Andrea Doria all commands had been issued and carried out. In another three hours the galleon would make its way to the rendezvous point with the four galleys that had already sailed at Biervliet and then the chase in pursuit of the black galley would begin. The crew were using the short respite that had been afforded them to sleep, even the watch on deck were sleeping and the lantern of the man on the gangplank had gone out like all the other lights on board. Was the ship not safe at anchor under the city walls and the walls of the citadel?

Suspended from the mainmast the ship's lantern throws an unsteady and flickering light over the deck. From the windows of the cabin a dim light falls on the dark waters of the Scheldt, which are streaming past it.

In the cabin Leone della Rota stands up at Antonio Valani's bedside.

"It's over," he says. "He's dead. Can you hear me, bella Fiaminga, dead and Leone della Rota is captain on this ship. Can you hear me, my sweet? I'm coming into my own—you too belong to me. With my friend's last breath you became mine."

Once again Leone filled the tumbler with wine.

"Why do you turn away and tremble, beautiful Myga? He's dead. His heart has beat its last. But my heart beats like a hammer, out of control. He was my friend in life. Now, by loving you, I avenge his death."

He lifted the tumbler and emptied it in one.

"A toast, my poor Antonio—you will have on the high seas the grave of a noble sailor. They won't be burying you on land in a hurry. You'll sleep instead below the joyful waves as befits a child of Genoa. You'll fall asleep in the arms of Neptune's daughter."

"Have pity on me, Lord, let me die. Save me, save me," whimpered the despairing girl, but Leone, now drunk, laughed aloud shrilly.

"Don't look at me like that, my queen—today you belong to me, tomorrow you'll belong to someone else—, that's war, that's life. Do you think I ought to mourn and mumble prayers like a priest over the corpse of my friend? If we were on the shore of the Ligurian Sea, we'd weave roses and myrtle into our hair to celebrate the beauty of the night! In the name of vengeance, in the name of victory, come into my arms, you wanton beggar woman, come and be mine, you pretty heretic."

With a shrill cry Myga van Bergen clung to the post of the bed on which the pale and bloody body of Antonio Valani lay outstretched. She sought the protection of a dead man! But with a raucous cry Leone della Rota gathered up the unfortunate woman into his arms. He covered her mouth and her naked shoulders with burning kisses. Then there was a thud over his head, so that the lamp hanging from the ceiling shook with it. A shout! The sound of a struggle. A second thud. The stamping and tramping of several feet. A wild scream. The loud report of a musket. A fearsome, unsettling cry:

"The beggars! The beggars! The beggars on board! Treachery! Treachery! All'arme! All'arme!"

"What's that? Diavolo!" shouted Leone, letting go of the girl and reaching for his sword. Once more, from his bloody resting place, the body of Antonio Valani raised itself, once more his eyes opened wide to stare at his friend:

"Protect the ship. Traitor! Vile good-for-nothing!"

A stream of dark blood shot out of his mouth and Antonio Valani sank back. Now death truly had him in its grip.

On deck the turmoil after the fall of the first sentry became ever more widespread and loud. The bewildered crew rushed out with the first weapons that had come to hand.

"To arms! Treachery! The beggars!"

The sound of oaths, groans, cries for mercy.

Myga van Bergen fell to her knees once again, while Leone, as he unsheathed his sword, rushed up the cabin stairs. Once on deck his foot bumped against corpses and the wounded. The fight was

heaving wildly to and fro and a roar of triumph from the Dutch and the terrific war cry of the beggars: "Sultan before Pope!" were already beginning to drown out the battle cries of the so rudely awoken men of Genoa.

And still their enemies were climbing like cats up the hull of the Andrea Doria. The merchant ships at anchor next to her and small warships seemed to be in the process of being captured for from them were coming battle cries and shots and numerous torches were visible.

In desperation Leone della Rota hurled himself at his nearest enemy, encouraging his men to resistance with words and actions. In the sentry box on the quayside a drum came to life and beat out the Spanish call to arms.

"The sea beggars! The sea beggars! The sea beggars at the gates of Antwerp! Treachery! Treachery! The sea beggars in the town itself!"

Torches were seen along the banks of the river and lights soon appeared in the houses behind the city walls.

"Sultan before Pope! Victory! Victory! The black galley! The black galley! Victory! Victory!" Such were the shouts of the beggars on the Andrea Doria carrying all before them. There was no quarter given. What was not struck or hewn down was thrown overboard. The very words black galley filled the hearts of the Italians with terror and broke their courage more than anything. Some of them fled to dry land, even more of them were hacked down in the first attack. Around the mainmast, in the circle of light radiating from the ship's lantern, a group of men were desperately continuing to fight. Here Leone della Rota stood side by side with the bravest of his crew and the whole of what was happening was finally concentrated in this area. The deck was already slippery with blood and littered with corpses. Many a wild sea beggar fell to Leone's sword.

"Courage! Courage, brave comrades! To me! Help is coming from dry land! Courage! Courage!" shouted Leone, striking down a man from Zeeland, but, where the latter had fallen, a new adversary appeared, stepping over the fallen one.

"Forward! Forward, you sea beggars! Down with foreign tyrants! Down with their flag of shame! Take it down from the mast! Do you know me, you foreign devil, you cowardly abductor of women?"

"Diavolo!" cried Leone, stiff with fright and astonishment, but he composed himself immediately. "You're not drunk then, you beggar? So much the better. Feed on this cold steel then. There!"

"A hit! Myga! Myga! Salvation! Vengeance! Take that, you dog, to hell with you and greet your comrade-in-arms from me, Jan Norris, the sea beggar!"

Leone della Rota from Genoa sank to the floor, drenched in his own blood, and Jan Norris placed his foot on his fallen foe's chest and shouted in his face:

"Myga has been rescued! The ship has been taken! Tell that to them in hell!"

With that he stabbed his deadly enemy through the neck with a long knife.

In the meantime the other Genoans, who had not saved themselves by running away, had also been killed. The skirmish on the Andrea Doria was now at an end and already the sea beggars were busy loosening the chains which bound the ship to the quayside.

Myga van Bergen lay prostrate in the cabin in the arms of Jan who now carried his betrothed out of that terrible room, away from the proximity of the dead body of Antonio Valani up into the freedom of the upper air.

Fighting was still going on on one of the sea-going vessels that had fallen to the Dutch, but already some of her crew were sliding into the water, pushed there by the hands of sea beggars and fiercely and harmoniously the song of the victors resounded through the night:

William of Nassau,
I am of German blood.
Faithful to my fatherland
I shall remain till death.

The black galley's bugler from the stern of the Andrea Doria was now blowing the same tune townwards and, revelling in the chorus, the galley's victorious crew sang for all they were worth:

That you are by the Spaniards,

Oh Netherlands of mine,
Harmed and injured, just to think,
It makes my poor heart bleed.

Even mortally wounded beggars who could no longer sing sat up on the ground, washed over by these harmonious and solemn sounds, and moved their lips in time with the words of the song. Myga van Bergen too was recalled by them to life and she sang, laughing and crying, held in Jan's arms, the same song of freedom.

"Look, Myga, how I keep my word—I'm taking you home with the sounds of cannon fire and jubilant bells and a flourish of trumpets in my ear! Saved! Saved from a fate worse than death!" Jan Norris was ecstatic.

From the citadel there came the noise of one alarm signal after another. More and more drums sprang into life along the city's walls and enclosures to call as many people as possible to the quayside. And the movements of the great Flanders town became noisier too and many an oppressed and angry heart beat faster at the proud, forbidden sounds that rose in response to the Spanish drumbeats and that grew more insistent as the latter strove to drown them out. Alarm bells rang from every steeple. And now there was a commotion in the town and another commotion emanating out from the citadel towards the quayside. Troops moved along the city walls. Troops pushed down to the river.

But louder than anything there arose above the tumult:

My hope and my protection
Are you, oh God, my Lord.
On you I want to build more.
Never let me go.
That I may nurture piety
And serve you all the while
By driving out all tyrants
Who wound my loving heart.

Thousands of such hearts heard behind the walls that Paciotti had built around the town of Antwerp these strains with delight. Thousands of eyes became moist on hearing their message.

Now there could be no doubt of it. The black galley had performed its finest feat of arms and all that there was left to do now was to bring its prize to a place of safety. Under covering fire from the black galley Jan Norris, now captain on board the *Andrea Doria*, reached the middle of the Scheldt and gradually sailed downstream. Seven smaller vessels taken as prizes sailed along with the beggars' ships—the black galley brought up the rear.

There was much shooting and firing from the walls of Antwerp and a return of fire from the beggars' ships and the *Andrea Doria* was now sailing downstream under the beggars' colours, its sails joyously expanded by the morning wind. Don Federigo Spinola was tearing his hair out at such an unheard of thing!

There was passing fire from all the earthworks and forts along the river.

Fortune smiled on the beggars! What affair was it of theirs if the Spaniards aimed well or badly? The wounded below deck, the dead overboard, the black galley's cannons were in action once again before Fort Felipe. Boom, boom. Kruisschanze on the Brabant side of the river.

Now, you men of Holland, look to your laurels, for the last bolt, but also the strongest, needs to be drawn back.

Down there in the morning mist lies Fort Liefkenhoek.

Down there in the morning mist lies Fort Lillo.

Now, you beggars, take up your weapons, whoever among you still has the use of his hands and his feet.

Beggars' luck! Beggars' luck!

All was in readiness in Fort Liefkenhoek, for the commander of the fort had had time enough to give out his orders well in advance. Captain Jeronimo had woken him at two o'clock in the morning.

"Well, what is it?" the colonel had asked, and the old veteran had shrugged his shoulders and said: "It may be a mutiny at Fort Callao, it may be an uprising in Antwerp, but I'd like you to come to the

battlements anyway, sir." Reluctantly the commander had appeared on the south-eastern bastion of his fort and listened for a long time. A quarter of an hour later the drummer had once again summoned the garrison to the walls, and an hour later the captain had said: "If I were you, sir, I'd have all of tonight's sentries shot."

How long had the cannon fire lasted along the Scheldt? It was no wonder that everything for the reception of the black galley had been best prepared at Fort Liefkenhoek!

Captain Jeronimo paced darkly up and down before his company and, as the firing came nearer, he glowered all the more as was his wont. He had played the game so long that he had grown weary of it—no, not weary!—, it had become as indifferent to him as breathing. So Captain Jeronimo had merely shrugged his shoulders when a messenger on horseback had ridden overland from Fort Pearl bringing the first detailed account of what had happened on the river near Antwerp. How grimly his comrades had borne themselves, but the old soldier who had served under the Dukes of Alba, Requesens and Farnese had merely turned his back on the messenger and walked back to his company.

"And do they still think they can force this people into compliance with them?" he mumbled to himself. "How long already have they been burying the cream of Spain's youth, the core of its strength in this muddy ground? I pity my poor fatherland."

The cannon in front of Kruisschanze had interrupted his monologue. In the morning mist it was starting to softly snow. It was now no longer possible to see three feet ahead of one.

"Yes, yes," the old soldier mumbled to himself, "fire blindly at them! Listen. There it is again, that damned tune, the funeral dirge for the might and land of Spain. Save your powder. You'll not destroy them with it. Yes, that's right, shoot. Their song sounds all the clearer for it! We all of us know it off by heart now."

Through the cannon fire and the blare of Dutch trumpets Captain Jeronimo hummed to himself:

I am a prince of Orange,
Unharm'd up until now,
Who has the king of Spain
Always allowed his due.

He had not got to the end of this ditty when a cannonball landed in the midst of his company right next to him and six men were killed by it or knocked to the ground wounded. This cannonball had come from the Andrea Doria. Jan Norris had opened fire as he sailed past Fort Liefkenhoek. The fort's cannon answered immediately in the most uncompromising fashion without, however, causing the beggars any significant harm.

On the deck of the Andrea Doria Myga van Bergen stood next to her betrothed. Her eyes were sparkling. What did Spanish cannonballs matter to her? Above the couple's heads the beggars' flag fluttered victoriously and Spinola's standard lay torn under their feet.

"Another broadside, lads, that's the way! Fire, fire, fire in honour of my Myga!" shouted Jan Norris, waving his hat. "There goes the top gallant mast overboard! Never mind, Myga, my sweet! Clear water! Clear water! Listen to how the black galley is surging ahead before Fort Lillo! Sultan before Pope! Clear water! Empty sea! Sweetest Myga, fair and lovely bride, how much I love you!"

"Oh Jan, Jan, never was a bride won so proudly! What great things you have done for me!"

"What things?" laughed Jan Norris. "I merely struck down a foreign ship's officer and bundled overboard the body of a foreign captain. The black galley rescued both of us. Long live the black galley!"

"Long live the black galley!" cheered the crew of the Andrea Doria and, further on to starboard, the black ship itself thundered a riposte, sailing on under the walls of Fort Lillo.

"Leave me be," said Captain Jeronimo to his comrades, who wanted to take him below from the ramparts. "Let me die in the open air. I'll die happier. God be with you, comrades. God be with you all. Look after yourselves. All I can see are young and youthful faces around me. Comrades, I wish you more luck than was granted to Spain's former army here. We did our duty. Dig for us on the battlefield of Jemmingen, in Mockerheide, near Gembloers and Antwerp. It is not to our dishonour that we still occupy the same piece of ground. God be with you, comrades. The old army is going to its grave. God be with you and with Spain forever. Poor Spain!"

Captain Jeronimo was dead, and the officers and soldiers of Fort Liefkenhoek's garrison surrounded him in silence.

The noise of cannon fire had died away. All the Dutch ships had gone by the enemy Spanish forts with their sea-borne prize. In the distance the strains of a battle hymn from 1568 were still audible:

Before God I will witness,
And all His angel host,
That I at all times have
The King of Spain despised,
Because I have Our Lord,
Who dwells in majesty,
Obeyed without demur
As righteousness decreed.

Towards the open sea these strains continued unabated while the proud sea beggar squadron sailed on with its prize and its bloody wounds and glory slid downstream in a fog that was becoming ever thicker.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BLACK GALLEY ***

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