MY LADY OF ORANGE

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PART II.

CHAPTER V.
THE LION'S DEN.

"Little man, little man, halt!" It was a stalwart, swarthy Walloon sentry stepped suddenly forward, shouting. I judged he meant me by his words, and I paused.

"I bring an offer to the Duke of Alva," I cried.

"What, from the vermin eaters in Breuthe? Nay, then, come on. We have wasted long enough over this mouse hole. So you have eaten the last worm, eh, little man?"

"Yes; we cooked it by the fire in your camp," said I.

"Nay, if you come to Alva, speak not of firing the camp, or you are like to try a fire's heat yourself."

"You liked it not, then?" I asked.

"By Beelzebub! you had best bridle your tongue in time, little man, else— But here is the guard. Lieutenant, the little man has an offer for the duke from Breuthe."

The lieutenant, a fox-faced Italian, looked at me sharply.

"Why do you not come with a flag of truce, knave?"

"Because I was not anxious to tell of my coming to the good people of Breuthe," I answered quietly.

"Ah, so!" he said, and fixing his eyes on my face. "Well, what is your offer?" he asked, lightly.

"It is to the Duke of Alva," quoth I.

"You rate yourself high—and your offer, too, my friend."

"I know what both are," I answered.

"Are you so sure? Perhaps the duke will teach you better," he said, showing his teeth like a dog. "We shall see. Lead on, there."

"Ay, we shall see," said I.

Outside a tent rather larger than most we halted, and the lieutenant entered alone. Then I heard a rattling Spanish oath from within, suddenly broken off, and a gruff voice speaking quickly and anxiously. There followed a moment's silence; then a sharp command, and the lieutenant appeared to bid me enter.

Before me sat Ferdinando of Alva, the greatest soldier in Europe, who wielded the forces of the greatest power in the world, the master of all the Netherlands save Breuthe town. And Breuthe town I had come to sell. Far away in Delft was William of Orange, who had trusted me to do him what good I could. Ay, there sat Alva, with is long, lean, sallow face, frowning at me from two yards distance, caressing his iron-gray beard with a thin, sinewy hand.

"Take away his sword," he said in a grating voice.

I laughed. This was not the way of Orange. The huge fat man who sat by him stared at me for a minute.

"Why, 'tis the Englishman, Newstead!" he cried. Alva's forehead gathered into a frown, and the hand that lay on the table clenched hard. Then his thin lips parted, and he grinned like a wolf.

"Praise be to the Virgin!" he said. "Let him be burned by a slow fire under their walls."

The lieutenant laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Bethink you!" I cried. "Dead I shall do you little good; alive I can do much."

Alva waved his hand.

"A slow fire!" he repeated.

The fat man—Chiapin Vitelli—bent over and whispered in his ear. I stood there waiting, the lieutenant's claw-like hand still on my shoulder. Cordieu! I am no coward, but I do not wish to pass such minutes as those again. For a long time the two dark faces hung near each other and Vitelli whispered on, while I could feel my heart beat, and Alva's steady cold eye never left my face. I do not think my color changed. At last Vitelli ended. Alva stroked his beard once, twice, thrice. Then suddenly the grating voice broke out again:

"Why do you dare come here?" he said.

I started. I hardly knew what he said.

"Why do you dare come here?" he repeated, angrily.

"I—I bring you an offer," I stammered. Vitelli looked with an air of triumph at Alva.

"Ha! Breuthe will surrender? You will get no terms from me."

"Breuthe will never surrender!" said I.

The wolf's look—it was never long absent—came back to Alva's face.

"Well, your offer, your offer," said Vitelli.

"I will open the gates to a party of your men."

"Ah;" Vitelli said, and he smiled.

"You may go," cried Alva to the lieutenant. "Is that all?" he asked sharply, turning to me.

"The rest comes from you, sir," I answered coolly.

"With a pardon you will be well paid," he snarled.

"I should, of course, request that," I said.

"For yourself and your men," said Vitelli.

"They are good soldiers," I answered. "They would be more use alive."

"You want more?" Alva asked sharply.

I bowed.

"What do you ask?"

"There was a girl we lost—" I began. Alva waved his hand carelessly.

"Pho! You can buy her to-night for a few ducats!" cried Vitelli. "Girls are cheap." I looked angrily at the coarse, fat face, and I did not love Chiapin Vitelli, though he had saved my life a little before.

"Is that all?" said Alva.

"Would such a service be overpaid, sir, with 7,000 crowns?"

"Seven thousand fiends!" thundered Alva. "By the eyes of God! Do you forget you are a traitor to the king and the church, and in my power?"

"Breuthe is not, sir," said I.

"And if Breuthe were fastened by chains to hell I would break them! Am I to pay a king's ransom to a heretic? You shall be paid, rascal; you shall be paid! You shall repent asking money for aiding the cause of God!" Again Vitelli leaned forward and whispered, and, as he talked, the angry light died out of Alva's eyes, and they both glanced covertly at me; and at last Alva began to smile. Then Vitelli lay back in his chair and licked his lips.

"As you are a heretic, rascal," he began, and coughed a little; "as you are a heretic, I suppose you must be paid for aiding us. Well, you shall be paid." He paused, and whispered to Vitelli.

"A thousand crowns now, 6,000 when you open the gates. Do you accept?"

I bowed.

"As soon as it is dark to-morrow I will open the main gate," said I. "I would urge you to send at least 500 men."

"I will send enough," said Alva, with a short laugh. "You may go. Vitelli, give him his hire."

"I want a safe conduct," I answered.

"Fool, why should we harm you now?" said Alva with a sneer.

"For the girl," I said.

He scrawled on a parchment and tossed it across the table to me. Vitelli took me out and gave me a bag of money.

"There, my clever fool," said he, and laughed.

Was I a fool? Ask Chiapin Vitelli now. You will find him in—nay, I know not where you will find him. He was a brave man and he saved my life—though the deed was better than the purpose.

"And the girl?"

"The woman's auction, fool. Listen and look!"

He pointed to a ring of yellow, smoky light in the midst of the camp, whence wild shouts and screams and evil laughter came. A drum beat loudly.

The auction of women! Yes, that was the end of Alva's forays. The auction of Gabrielle de St. Trond! That was the end of my foray.

There stood the women; some silent, some sobbing loudly, some with their faces buried in their hands, some with their hands tied and struggling yet, some standing still, dry-eyed, looking right on away and beyond, some praying, some laughing. God! I have heard much, but sometimes I hear those laughs still. I fought for Alva once.

Some fool mounted a little platform, while my eyes wandered over the group eagerly.

"Gentlemen of the sword, get ready your purses. Sweet little love birds we have for you to-night. Bring up the dark little filly, Pedro!"

A girl scarce 16 at the most was dragged forward, and two fellows, each bearing a torch, took stand on either side of her, so that the light fell full on her face. It was dully white, like the faces of men who have bled to death.

"Here, gentlemen, a sweet object for your endeavors and your ducats. The very Lily of Holland! Worth double to any honest gentleman when he has kissed the roses back into her cheeks." He laid hold of her dress at the collar, tore it, held it open for a moment with a grin at the crowd, and then put it back. "No, gentlemen, I will not wrong the happy possessor," he cried. And the girl stood like death itself. "What are your bids, gentlemen?"

The bidding reached three ducats.

"No more? Will no cavalier go higher? Nay, then, Julian, she is yours!"

The owner, a young, thin-faced Spaniard, came up with a smile and led her away through the jeering crowd. As she passed me I slipped the hilt of my dagger into her hand. For a moment she stared at me dully, and then all at once her face lighted up as she went by. Cordieu! 'Twas the saddest thing I ever saw.

Have I not done the like myself, you ask? No. This is a game only the Spaniards play. Do you wonder the Dutchmen hate them?

At last, aye, at last! 'Twas she herself. God! I cannot tell how she looked. I could not see then; I can scarce write of it now! There she stood * * *

"Here, gentlemen, gay with the Orange colors—white and gold and blue." The fellow touched her hair, and—pah! I cannot write it.

"Ten crowns!" I shouted.

"Ho, ho! Here is a cavalier with money, comrades." The fellow turned toward me. "And who may you be, senor? So fond of Orange, are you? Why should I sell to you?"

I thrust through the crowd easily enough, and I forced the safe conduct into his hands.

"Read it, fool!" I cried.

"Oh! * * * a safe conduct through the lines for the girl you choose * * * Alva * * * Oh! well, I suppose you must take her. Where's the money?"

I flung the money hard in his face, and dashed my fist after it.

"There is your price," I cried. "Will you jest with the messenger of Alva?"

So Gabrielle de St. Trond and I hurried away from the auction of women. Neither of us spoke; she held my hand and almost dragged me through the camp with half-mad strength. She would scarce pause while I parleyed for a moment with two sentries, and when at last we had left Alva behind us she turned and looked at that camp with wide, fearful eyes, and caught her breath and laughed a little sobbing laugh, and then the wet blue eyes looked up at mine.

"I knew you would come," she said.

"You knew?" I cried.

"Yes, I knew," she said again.

"'Tis my fault you were ever taken," I said, slowly. "I do not hope you can forgive me. I have done what I could since."

We walked on in the moonlight in silence

"If—if I do not thank you," she said, slowly, "it is because I do not know what to say. I—I always believed you would come, even come alone into Alva's camp to save me. Are any thanks enough for that?"

I did not answer her. Alone into Alva's camp to save her? Was that the reason? Vitelli's thousand crowns jingled under my cloak.

She stumbled over a stone and fell with a little cry. I bent over her and saw her shoes were torn through. I picked her up and carried her.

"I am sorry," she said, "but indeed I am very tired," and her head dropped on my shoulder contentedly. So I walked on with Gabrielle in my arms and the money inside my cloak.

The wicket in the postern opened as I came up, and Vermeil met me with a frown.

"Was that why you went, captain?" he asked, pointing to Gabrielle, and the man at the gate chuckled. Gabrielle woke at the noise.

"Let me go, let me go to my father," she said.

"Ah, captain, it's the way of the world," quoth Vermeil, solemnly shaking his head. "'Tis always another——"

"See that the lady be taken to the governor's house," said I, sharply.

"Well, and what of Breuthe?" asked Vermeil, as we moved away. "He is moving heaven and earth, and hell, too, our good Gaspar. How did your errand prosper?"

"Cordieu! man; let me sleep! You shall hear in the morning."

"As you will," said Vermeil, sulkily. "But I should like to know if you went for the girl's sake or the men's."

CHAPTER VI.
THE BARGAIN OF ALVA.

But there was to be little sleep for me that night. I went to my quarters, flung off my cloak, and sat. I was not ill-pleased with myself. And the bag of money looked better, now Gabrielle had gone. You sneer? Well, I am but a man; and truly I had spoiled the Egyptians. Oh, my honest friends, 'tis we cruel, cunning soldiers who give you the chance to be honest in safety!

A heavy step sounded on the stair, and Gaspar Wiederman flung open the door:

"Ach! so the fox is back in his hole," he grunted. "You must come with me, my brave captain! Devil of devils! have you got your wages already?" he cried, and he caught up the bag of crowns.

"I never waste time," quoth I.

"Gott! nor I. So come on, my brave traitor!"

"Whither?"

"To Laurenz de St. Trond, my peddler!"

"Laurenz de St. Trond!" I repeated. "Does he know I—" I began.

"Aye, he knows," said Gaspar, with a grim chuckle. We went out into the street. As we passed the postern I saw it was guarded by burghers now. Some of my own men lounging in the doorways laughed as we went by.

"Which side are we on, captain?" cried one as I passed. "Only tell us and we fight! Only tell us!"

"We are not all cowards!" he grunted in my ear.

But further on Vermeil met us with a little troop.

"Do you go of your own will, captain?" he cried.

"Yes," I answered. "Keep the peace!"

Vermeil fell back frowning, and Gaspar chuckled again.

We turned into the street where the burgomaster's house stood, and began to pass through a little throng of burghers. When they saw my face they began to hoot and jeer and hiss.

"Are you proud of your friends?" I said to Gaspar.

"This is your wages," he grunted.

In a large bare room sat Laurenz de St. Trond and the burgomaster of Breuthe town, talking anxiously together.

"He came like a sheep!" quoth Gaspar as we entered. The burgomaster scowled at me. He was a little man with red hair and a freckled face and nervous, fidgety hands.

"Two halberdiers!" he said in a piping voice, and two of their weedy citizen soldiers took their stand by me.

St. Trond sat up in his chair, and I saw by his face that he knew I had brought his daughter back. The deep-set eyes were almost gay now; but then, as he looked at me they grew gloomy again.

"John Newstead!" he said in a low voice. "It is charged against you that you, an officer, bearing the commission of William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, have been false to him in seeking to betray the town of Breuthe into the hands of the enemy. Are you guilty or not guilty?" Gaspar chuckled.

"Not guilty!" said I.

St. Trond looked at me keenly, and his lips twitched as he bent his brows. He was trying to believe the best of me; and—cordieu! you will agree things looked black. But I saved his daughter.

Gaspar stepped forward.

"This afternoon he spoke of selling Breuthe; this evening he went into Alva's camp. Gott! do you ask for more? He came back safe!"

"You swear that for the truth?" cried the burgomaster.

"I swear it," said Gaspar.

"And how much does that prove?" I asked.

"Enough to hang you," squeaked the burgomaster.

"It proves little," said Laurenz de St. Trond slowly. "Why did you go to the camp?"

"To save Breuthe!" said I. St. Trond frowned gravely. "Call my daughter!" Gaspar shifted his chair with a grunt of surprise.

She entered; her face was white as her dress.

"Tell us how you escaped," said St. Trond.

She began to speak in a low voice, with her eyes on the ground.

"It was at the auction," she said, and the blood came up into her face. "Master Newstead was there among all the Spaniards. And he brought me away safe through all their men."

"Ay, but how?" quoth Gaspar, leaning forward.

"He bought me," she answered; and we could scarce hear her words. There was a moment's silence.

"Ach! But why did they let him? And how did you pass their lines?" said Gaspar at last.

She looked at me for a moment, and her eyes were wet. I can feel it now. Then she turned to her father with a silent entreaty.

"Answer," said St. Trond.

"He had a safe conduct," she said.

"From Alva? I thought so," grunted Gaspar.

"'Tis enough!" cried the burgomaster.

"But he came to the camp to save me, not to betray the town," said Gabrielle.

"Did he say so?" grunted Gaspar.

"N—no," she said. "I—I thought so."

"Ha! Then why did he bring this back?" quoth Gaspar, and he flung down on the table the bag of 1,000 crowns. The money jingled as it fell, and St. Trond and Gabrielle both turned toward me.

"O!" cried Gabrielle. Aye, it stung.

The burgomaster opened the bag and began to count, amid silence.

"Nine hundred and ninety crowns!" he said at last.

"Do you still want proof?" grunted Gaspar.

St. Trond fell back in his chair with a sigh, and Gabrielle—well, I did not look at Gabrielle. But I glanced from the burgomaster's glaring green eyes to the grim smile on Gaspar's face, and then—and then I laughed aloud.

"Have you finished, quite finished, my good Gaspar?" said I. His jaw dropped and the smile faded.

"Do not trifle with the court!" squeaked the little burgomaster. I looked around again. St. Trond and Gabrielle were both intent on me, and Gabrielle's eyes were round and big with eagerness.

"O, the court?" Ay, ay, the court!" said I. "Well, in truth you have trifled long enough."

"Do you bandy words with me?" squeaked the burgomaster.

"Nay, most illustrious, I am no such fool. You have heard one-half the story. Listen now to the other. I went to Alva; yes, I confess it. I offered to open the gates to 500 Spaniards for 7,000 crowns and a girl. Well, am I a traitor?"

"Ach! what else?" grunted Gaspar.

"Seven thousand?" quoth the burgomaster.

"For the rest of the money, and the rest of the story, wait. Now, think for a little of Breuthe. Ere we came you had not food for a week. Is that true?"

"True enough," said St. Trond.

"We brought you more food, but we brought more men to eat it. Is there food for two weeks now?"

"Teufel! No. I told you that," grunted Gaspar.

"Then what hope had you? Aye, what hope have you even now?"

"'He hath girded us with strength for the battle. He shall throw down mine enemies under me,'" said St. Trond, slowly.

"It may be; but how?" I asked.

"What is all this to the purpose?" cried the burgomaster.

"Much," I answered. "Is not the only hope for Breuthe a blow struck at Alva's very heart?"

"Teufel! Was yours the way to strike it?" growled Gaspar.

"Mine is the only way," I said. "You dare not risk a sortie. You have tried it too often. Well, let Alva make the sortie. Let it be he that fails."

"Ach! So!" grunted Gaspar.

"And now, to come back to my story. I open the gates to Alva on the morrow at sunset. They come in, 500 strong or more. What say you, Gaspar, will they go out again?"

Gaspar sprang to his feet.

"No Ten thousand fiends! No!" he shouted. "By the main gate into the market place? At dusk?"

"Ay. They bring the money with them."

"So. Gott What a plan! Musketeers in the houses all round!"

I paused and curled my mustache. The little burgomaster was smiling and rubbing his hands.

"You mean to admit a force of Spaniards, and massacer them after bringing them on by fair works?" asked St. Trond, slowly.

"Call it what you will, it is safety for Breuthe."

"I call it murder," said he.

Gaspar shrugged his shoulders.

"I tell you the town cannot be saved else. It will be saved thus. Cordieu! I know what war means, and I know Alva. I tell you it is the only way!" I cried.

"You think—it will drive him back?" said the burgomaster.

"He must raise the blockade in any case."

St. Trond turned to Gaspar:

"Do you approve, too?" he asked.

"Approve? Gott, yes! If we only get enough to kill."

St. Trond shuddered. In despair—I think it was despair—he came to the burgomaster again.

"What say you?" he asked.

"It is the hand of God!" said the little burgomaster. There was a long silence.

"Then I commit it to you, gentlemen," St. Trond said at last. "On your honor, you see no other way?" he cried, sharply.

"None," said I.

"None," grunted Gaspar.

St. Trond rose and we went out. Gabrielle followed without a glance for any of us. Laurenz de St. Trond was a good man. Perhaps that is why he was ill-fitted to cope with Alva.

When he was gone the little burgomaster rose and held out his hand:

"Sir, I ask your pardon. You will do me the justice to admit that the evidence was black."

"I thank you. Good night to you," said I.

"And our plans for the Spaniards, sir?" he cried.

"I must sleep sometimes, sir. The morrow will be time enough."

Gaspar and I passed out. The burghers had dwindled to twos and threes. They eyed me askance, but made no sound.

"Well, Gaspar?" said I, at length.

"Well, captain, I called you a coward. I ask your pardon; you are not. I thought you a knave and—umph! Would you like some advice?"

"What is it?"

"Look after the rest of your crowns."

I slept sound. The hazard of the morrow did not trouble me. I never knew a hazard so great that it kept me from my sleep, and yet my life has walked over some narrow bridges. When I woke in the morning the thought that was in my brain was not of Alva or Breuthe town, but of the deep blue eyes that had looked up into mine and white cheek that had lain on my shoulder last night. I say the thought was in my brain; and, cordieu! it seemed loth to go. I lay there smiling like a very child; it was a pleasant thought. 'Tis no ill one now. Oh, aye, 'twas folly; I give you that. I, who should have been thinking how to account for my friends, the Spaniards, lay grinning at the air. Oh, aye, 'twas folly.

Soon Vermeil came in.

"So we have not changed sides, captain?" quoth he.

"It was not 'the only way,' Vermeil," said I.

"Ah! no?" said Vermeil, seating himself coolly. "Where is our pay?" he asked with a cunning glance.

"How far will 7,000 crowns go, Vermeil?"

"A bird in the hand—captain," said he with a sneer.

"A thousand now; six thousand before they enter. Are you happy now?"

"Ah, it is well done, truly," said Vermeil, slowly. "You meant to let them in from the first, I know, but I should like to know, indeed, I should like to know—"

"Well, out with it man!"

"Whether you made the rest of your plan before you got hold of the girl—or—after!"

I laughed; it is well enough to be cunning; sometimes it leads men astray.

"O, you are very clever, Vermeil. Do you remember I said to you: 'There will be more risk in my meeting Alva before all is done?' Do you know what I meant, now?"

He stared at me.

"Yes, I know," he muttered. "'Twill go hard with any of us who fall into Alva's hands after this!"

"Tut, tut! We all have brains, Vermeil," quoth I.

"Will brains get us out of Alva's hands?"

"The brains of some of us!" I answered.

Just then Gaspar entered.

"So we're all of one mind now, Gaspar," said I, seeing he glanced at Vermeil.

"One mind? One side!" grunted Gaspar. "And that is the safe one," he muttered in my ear.

"We had best set to work soon."

"Aye, after breakfast," quoth Gaspar.

"Captain, do you know what day it is? St. Bartholomew!" He chuckled grimly.

St. Bartholomew! A year ago the she wolf of the Medici and the Guises had butchered Coligny in the Paris streets. Who gained by it? Not Charles of Valois, king of France. I can remember when Anjou was bidding for the throne of the Netherlands, in the parleys that we held then, St. Aldegonde asked what sureties he would give for the reformed faith.

"The word of a Valois," quoth he. St. Aldegonde shrugged his shoulders.

"Is not my word enough?" cried Anjou.

"No, your highness; by St. Bartholomew, no," said I.

Ay, but for Bartholomew day Anjou might have held the Netherlands for his house. Charles himself might have been emperor. The men who gained by it were Alva and Philip of Spain. Out of the 25,000 Huguenots who fell on one day in France how many would have refused to come to the help of William of Orange? How soon would Alva have taken Mons but for the Bartholomew? Nay, the man who gained was Alva. And now a year had gone by and St. Bartholomew had come again, and another party of another faith were coming into another town. Alva had had a year of triumph, and the grass grown streets of Harlem bore witness how thorough it had been. Now the fate of Holland was swinging in the scale against Alva's power. Was it chance that the day was the day of St. Bartholomew.

CHAPTER VII.—"MAN AGAINST TIME."

We were busy in the market place, toiling under a burning sun and a hot, parching wind, and the little burgomaster was the busiest of all. He was squeaking in every corner, Gaspar, his arms and chest bare, stood vomiting German oaths and giving a push here and a pull there and a cuff now and again. Our men worked well; there was talk of money now, and if a free lance will work ever, 'tis for the hope of a hard fight with gold at the end. The burghers were nothing behind them; there was no hissing me now, only stern labor with the first smiles there had been in Breuthe for many a day.

"So far so well," I said at last. It was drawing toward afternoon. "Give them a meal and let them rest."

The burgomaster came bustling up and took me by the doublet.

"And now, sir, in the matter of money," he said.

"Oh!" I paused and wiped my forehead. "For the money I must give my men 20 crowns apiece. You see——" Just then I saw Gabrielle hurrying along through the market place. I swept off my hat and made a step forward. She seemed not to see me.

"Well, sir?" squeaked the burgomaster.

"You see there will be little left. I must have the money."

"You are welcome to all the money," cried the burgomaster.

Gabrielle heard, and I saw her wince. I bowed again. She passed us, looking away. I muttered an oath.

"I can spare you 500 crowns," I said sharply.

"Sir, we do not grudge you money. We are fighting for our wives and children, our freedom and our faith." He spoke quietly and quickly. "I did not come to ask you for it. We are a small town, and we are not rich now; but, sir, you have come to our aid in our utmost need, and all we can give you is yours. That is all." He turned and left me.

"Curse the money!" I muttered under my breath, as I walked slowly away. "Curse the money!" Why had Alva's money come between me and the girl, when I might have had money in Breuthe for the asking? Who would care to have a girl think his first thoughts were always for money, like any peddling knave from London? Gaspar bade me look after my crowns; well, the crowns were mine. Cordieu! I did not want them for myself, and I could not help it if the girl were a fool. It made no difference to me what the girl thought. What was the girl to me? Cordieu! 'twas not wrong to spoil Alva! And I resolved to take the other 6,000 crowns. For I had thought of letting them go.

The shadows lengthened and the sun went down in the west, and within the town we made ready to play for our last stake. The main gate opened on to the market place, and every street, every lane that led from it was barricaded, and the barricades held by the burghers. In the houses my musketeers were posted, about half the force in all. Under the walls on either side the gate two little picked companies waited to charge when all the Spaniards were in and shut the gates again. Behind the two transport wagons waited, ready horsed, to be overturned in the gateway when the gates were shut, that they might not be opened again. Vermeil led one company, and our quartermaster, Nicholas Zouch, the other. It was a dangerous task, for from the barricade behind them to the gate was scarce room to gather speed for the charge; but you cannot win battles without risk.

It was dark at last, with the heavy darkness that comes ere the moon rises, and a faint tramp came from without the walls. I stood by the wicket in the main gate, with my horse at my side. They were thronged without now, and I opened the wicket a little way.

"The money! the money!" I whispered in Spanish.

"No play, no pay! Let us in first."

I opened the wicket and half a dozen men rushed in pellmell.

"And now the gate, senor," said their leader. I turned the great key and pulled it out again. The gate swung open and the Spaniards rushed in.

"There are your wages!" cried the leader, and he thrust the bag into my hand; and, as I turned, another stabbed at me. I sprang aside, but the dagger was through my arm. Swords were out all round me; I broke through to my horse and dashed away into the darkness to Zouch. And then the Spaniards poured into a silent town, shouting now as they came.

"Wounded, captain?" asked Zouch in a whisper.

"Aye, but I have the gate key still. And 6,000 crowns," said I.

Zouch chuckled.

"Charge now?" he muttered.

"Nay, wait," I said, as I twisted a handkerchief round my arm and peered into the darkness to count the numbers that came. They grew thinner at last.

"Enough now," muttered Zouch. I nodded to the drummer at my elbow. The drum spoke loudly, and Zouch dashed at the gate. Vermeil should have charged at the same instant, but nothing came from the other side, and Zouch was left alone.

"Cordieu! Sound again! Sound again!" I cried. Again the drum spoke, louder than before. And now Vermeil charged; but the Spaniards were ready to meet him, and each charge singly was feeble. The minutes went by and our chance was going fast.

"With the wagons! Both wagons!" I yelled. By the mercy of God, they heard on the other side, and we went at the Spaniards together. The horses did not flinch, and the Spaniards fell apart as the wagons clove into the heavy mass. We had gone a little wide of the gate, and Zouch and his men had come in between it and the wagon. The wagons jammed together and Zouch, with a couple of men, clashed the gate to. I tossed him the great key; he turned it in the lock and the Spaniards were caught at last. In the darkness those who had come first knew not what was passing, and Zouch and I, with a few men, broke back to the barricade and clambered over.

"This is all of them," said Zouch. "Scarce any outside."

"Aye, enough, too," I answered. Alva had said he would send enough; there were some 700 within the market place. The moon rose clear and bright.

Was it butchery? Had you seen those Spaniards fight you would scarce call it that. Time and again they surged up to the main barricade and more than once all but mounted it. But the burghers fought well; it was each race at its best; charge after charge came thundering up to that barricade, and charge after charge was broken and driven back by those grim, stubborn Dutchmen. And the Spaniards' headlong courage drove them on yet again, while the musketry tore through their close-packed ranks, and Gaspar, on the main barricade with the burgomaster, leant on a pike and chuckled as the moments went by.

Man against time! That was the fight in the market place, and the Spaniards knew it as well as we. If they could not break through soon, the odds would be too great. And the deadly musketry never paused. Another charge, and another! Zouch and I peered forward anxiously through the flickering moonlight.

"By the fiend! They're over!" he cried.

Three men had crested the barricade, and others were struggling up behind them. They stood out tall and dark against the moonlight. Taller still rose another figure, and one Spaniard was caught on a pike. Gaspar—aye, no man in the town but Gaspar could have done it—Gaspar swung him round on the pike end and crashed the wretch against his fellows. The three fell on their struggling comrades below, and that charge dropped back, too.

The charges grew feebler and slower, and few men now there were to make them. Man against time! The victory was not to be with man. The charges had ceased; there was little movement in the market place save the writhings of those who were not yet dead. The musketry died slowly away, and Zouch and I came over the barricade onto the bloody stones. There, in the middle of the market place, I paused and looked round over the dying and the dead. Seven hundred good, of the very flower of Alva's army, lay there, crushed at my feet. Oh, Vitelli, Chiapin Vitelli, who was the fool?

Gaspar came down to meet me. His arms were dyed red, and there were smears and splashes of blood across his face and his beard.

"So much for Breuthe's guests," he cried. "Ach! captain, 'twas a good fight. Would that Alva had seen it!"

"There's a party at the postern, captain!" cried a man at my elbow.

"So! Let us give them a message for Ferdinando Alvarez!" He hurried through the streets, mounted the wall by the postern, and there, looking down at the Spaniards who waited for their comrades:

"No es nada!" he shouted, "no es nada!" 'Twas a catchword of Alva's he used in all disasters: "It is nothing; it is nothing."

And while Gaspar stood shouting and shaking his bloody pike at the Spaniards, who fell hurriedly back, away in the market place by the barricade they had kept right bravely, the burghers of Breuthe were singing a psalm:

"I will give thanks unto Thee O Lord, with my whole heart." I heard the first words echoing over the town.

"That will tell Alva who won, Gaspar," said I. "Come down, come down."

"Ach! captain, captain, that was a fight worth fighting," he said as he turned. "I never saw men fight better."

"Than which?"

"Than either! Gott! never will I laugh at burghers again. I wish our own were as stout."

"Aye; what in hell's name ailed Vermeil?" I asked sharply. Gaspar shrugged his shoulders.

"The fool near ruined us all," I said. "Is he safe?"

"He is no fool, alive or dead," quoth Gaspar.

The burghers were still singing, and the words rose with an exultant shout:

"* * * The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made; in the same net which they hid privily is their foot taken."

The psalm ended, and the burghers drifted back to their homes for the sleep and the rest they had earned.

"Need we post guards, sir?" asked the little burgomaster, wearily.

"A few at the gates were safer," I answered. "But I think the work is done."

"God has been very gracious," said the burgomaster sleepily, looking round at the dead. "Indeed, sir, the work is done."

As he spoke the marketplace clock began to strike. One, two, three, the deep chimes rang out as we stood there silent, looking at our work; the chimes died echoing away at last, and Gaspar's eyes met mine.

"Midnight!" grunted Gaspar.

"The end of St. Bartholomew!" I said. Was it chance? Was it chance, senors?

I did not rise too early the next morning, but once risen I betook myself to the walls. Alva's tents still lay there grinning at the town; but under them now were fewer men far, and the grin was like a toothless crone's. While I stood there St. Trond came up too, and stood looking at the camp in silence. At last he turned to me.

"And so, sir, that—that work—was in vain," he said, sadly.

"That work has not been done twelve hours yet," I answered.

"I would to God it had never been done at all!" he cried. I shrugged my shoulders. He went on talking, half to himself. "And yet it is just," he said, "it is just. No good could come of such a crime."

"Oh, wait, wait!" I said sharply. "For the crime—I will take the blame if I may take the credit too."

"The blame is mine, who suffered you to persuade me," he said.

"I told you 'twould drive Alva away; you shall see it yet."

He shook his head, and was turning away when Gaspar came up.

"Gott! captain! work like that makes a man sleep well."

St. Trond shuddered.

"Have you seen the marketplace this morning?" he asked of Gaspar.

"Aye, a grand sight! There they lie, higgledy-piggledy, our good Spaniards. Ach! 'twas a good fight! And so Ferdinando has not gone yet?"

St. Trond hurried away. Aye, he was a good man and a brave, but fighting was not his work.

"The stubborn Ferdinando!" quoth Gasper. "I wonder if you have been too clever, captain?"

I did not answer. I did not believe I was wrong, but if, after all, it had been in vain, if Alva could still cling to the town, there was no hope for Breuthe, or for any inside its walls. Alva would scarce be turned to mercy by last night's work. The thought was not comforting.

"He must go!" I said sharply at last.

Gaspar did not hear; he was looking with a sneering smile at another figure which drew near.

"Ho, ho! here's the Frenchman, captain," he said.

"Cordieu! yes, Vermeil, why did you fail to charge at the drum?" I said angrily.

"Because I did not hear the first beat," said Vermeil, looking me straight in the face. Gaspar laughed gruffly.

"It is—possible," I answered. I think he knew what I meant—at least he gave me as good again.

"And that Alva may go is—possible," quoth he.

We left him on the walls, and Gaspar and I went down to the market place, where the sunlight fell across men maimed and mangled, and writhing in torment, crying aloud with curses for water, and then falling back on the hard, red, greasy stones. The wounded and dead of the burghers had been carried away with the earliest dawn, and only the Spaniards lay there now. But moving about among them were women with water and wine, and Gaspar and I looked at each other, and we both swore together.

The burgomaster was clearing away the barricades, and to him we came.

"Cordieu! Sir, do you allow this?" I cried. "There will be murder ere long; a dagger in the breast will end this charity."

"Aye, a Spaniard is harmless when he is dead," grunted Gaspar.

"It is but Christian duty, sir," quoth the burgomaster.

"Christian duty! Christian donkeys!" burst out Gaspar. "Did you start it?"

"Well, indeed, gentlemen. I, too, thought it was dangerous, but—but—the daughter of the governor—she said—she asked—she said—was I a murderer as well? And I did not know what to say."

"As well, eh? Grateful girl, captain!"

"She is there!" I cried.

"Yes, sir. If you, too, wish it stopped and think it dangerous, I will do what I can," squeaked the little burgomaster, trotting along at our heels as Gaspar and I hurried across the dead.

She was bending over a young, stalwart Spaniard with a wet, ragged, gaping wound in his chest. As I saw his face I started; it was the man who had put her up for sale! I put my hand on her shoulder:

"This is no place for women," said I. She looked up, and winced as she saw my face. For a moment she could not speak, and in that moment, while my eyes were on her face, the ruffian at our feet stabbed upward. But Gaspar, standing beside me, saw it, if we did not, and caught the arm and held it fixed.

"Look, mistress," said he. She turned, and started back with a cry, and I ran the fellow through. A wounded man? Yes.

"I told you it was not safe," I said. She put out her hand to thrust me away.

"Do not speak to me! Do not speak to me!" she cried.

"Ach! the ways of women," grunted Gaspar.

"Indeed, you wrong the gentleman," cried the burgomaster. "He saved your life. And it is not safe to wander among these wounded men; if it must be done, it is not work for women."

"And would men do it?" she cried.

"Not I," quoth Gaspar.

"And yet you—it was you made it thus," she said, turning on me.

"It was I," I answered. "Will you go?"

"I will not! Oh, have you no heart at all? Can you see them lying there in the heat? I will not!"

"I say you must," said I.

"I will not!"

"The work was given me to do by your father, and I will do it to the end. I will not throw good lives after bad. Will you make me call a guard to clear the market place?"

"You—you will force me?"

"If you ask for force."

"Ah!" She drew in her breath with a sob. Then she called the other women round her and hurried away. "I did not think there was anything so cruel as you in the world," she said, looking back.

"And yet she has bene in Alva's camp," gunted Gaspar.

I stood there looking after her, with many thoughts in my head. Two months ago I should have cared little for any one calling me cruel, but now the words rankled. I was right, I knew I was right; that is not always enough; a man likes other people to think him right, too. I turned sharply to the burgomaster:

"We must clear this place and bury the dead, or we shall have a pestilence upon us."

"Yes, sir. I will see to it. I hear Alva has not gone yet," he said, meekly. Last night's courage had gone.

"He will," I answered. "He must."

"I trust so, sir."

The morning passed into afternoon, and the sun grew hotter, as I sat on the walls watching the camp. Alva's batteries spoke now and again, and now and again a shot from the town replied. The walls were thick with watchers, for all knew we had played our last stake. Our last card lay on the table, and they waited to see what was in Alva's hand. Toward evening Alva's batteries fired more often, and faces on the wall grew long. My men were quiet enough; 20 crowns apiece that morning had given them much trust in me; but the burghers, who had more to lose and less reason far to believe my way the best, now looked askance at me again. And as Gaspar and I walked back to our quarters for a scanty meal the little throngs at street corners hissed and jeered.

Darkness came over Breuthe, and the watchers went back to their homes to pray. The wind had gone round to the west, and clouds were scurrying over the dark sky. Gaspar and I stood by a tower on the ramparts alone. There were lights and fires in the camp below us.

"A good night for flitting," quoth Gaspar.

"Aye," I said shortly.

For hours we stood there silent, the only noise near us a sentry's footsteps or the grating of the stone as we shifted our feet. But from the camp came a steady hum, as always; a Spanish camp does not sleep early.

The night grew blacker yet, and the stars went out slowly. There came a spot or two of rain, and Gaspar pulled his cloak round him. One by one the fires in the camp died out into the blue darkness, and the rain began to patter on the walls. Suddenly the wind dropped for a moment, and we heard a dull sound coming up on the wet air. The wind blew gustily again, and we could hear nothing but the pelting rain. But ere long, the blast was over, and the rain fell straight; and as we strained to listen, the same dull sound reached us—fainter a little, now—with a steady, ordered movement like the tramp of feet. Gaspar's hand fell on my shoulder with a thud.

"We win, captain, we win," he cried, and there on the wet walls, with the rain beating through to our skin, we gripped hands hard. Soon a bright gray streak came out on the eastern sky, and the pale light struggled through. The tents of Alva were gone! Along the walls one man cried to another, and men, half dressed came running out of their houses to see if the shouts were true. The streets grew dark with men and women greeting one another wildly, standing there in the rain, laughing and crying in mad relief. As we passed along, they caught us by the hand, the arm, the cloak, and the children danced in front of us, and the women pressed their lips to our hands. Hardly could we struggle on through the gathering crowds, and the cheering grew and grew to a loud, deafening roar.

"Aye, they cheer now," grunted Gaspar.

And then the rain stopped, and the sun broke through the clouds, and there far over the bare plain a man on the wall saw Alva's army moving slowly away, and broke into a psalm as he saw it.

Oh, Chiapin Vitelli, was I the fool?

(To be Continued.)

Sabbath-School Lesson.

FOR APRIL 7, 1901

The Resurrection of Jesus.—Luke XXIV. 1-13.

BY JOHN R. WHITNEY—Copyright, 1901.

Golden Text—Now is Christ risen from the dead.—I. Cor., xv., 20.

When President Lincoln prepared and submitted to his cabinet the final draft of his famous proclamation giving freedom to all men held as slaves in this country, it was a complete and finished document. It fully met the necessities of the case and made full provision for every slave in the land. But