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“THE MISERIES OF IDLENESS NONE BUT THE IDLERS TRULY KNOW.”

at his feet; senators, soldiers, citizens, fell fast around him, and he sank at last upon a heap of slain. With him effectual resistance ended. The remaining combatants were butchered, or were slowly forced downward to perish in the Scheld. Women, children, old men, were killed in countless numbers, and still, through all this havoc, directly over the heads of the struggling throng, suspended in mid-air above the din and smoke of the conflict, there sounded, every half-quarter, or every half-hour, as if in gentle mockery, from the belfry of the cathedral, the tender and melodious chimes.

“Never was there a more monstrous massacre, even in the blood-stained history of the Netherlands. It was estimated that, in course of this and the two following days, not less than eight thousand human beings were murdered. The Spaniards seemed to cast off even the vizard of humanity. Hell seemed emptied of its fiends. Night fell upon the scene before the soldiers were masters of the city; but worse horrors began after the contest was ended. This army of brigands had come thither with a definite, practical purpose—for it was not blood-thirst, nor lust, nor revenge, which had impelled them, but it was avarice, greediness for gold. For gold they had waded through all this blood and fire. Never had men more simplicity of purpose, more directness in its execution. They had conquered their India at last; its gold mines lay all before them. . . . For gold, infants were dashed out of existence in their mothers’ arms; for gold, parents were tortured in their children’s presence; for gold, brides were scourged to death before their husbands’ eyes. Wherever treasure was suspected, every expedient which ingenuity, sharpened by greediness, could suggest, was employed to extort it from its possessors. . . . The strong boxes of the merchants, the gold, silver, and precious jewellery, the velvets, satins, laces, and other portable plunder, were rapidly appropriated. The cash, plate, and other valuables of individuals were not so easily discovered. Torture was, therefore, at once employed to discover the hidden treasures. After all had been given, if the sum seemed too little the proprietors were brutally punished for their poverty or their supposed dissimulation. A gentlewoman, named Fabry, with her aged mother and other females of the family, had taken refuge in the cellar of her mansion. As the day was drawing to a close, a band of plunderers entered, who, after ransacking the house, descended to the cellarage. Finding the door barred, they forced it open with gunpowder. The mother, who was nearest the entrance, fell dead on the threshold. Stepping across the mangled body, the brigands sprung upon her daughter, loudly demanding the property which they believed to be concealed. They likewise insisted on being informed where the master of the house had taken refuge. Protestations of ignorance as to hidden treasure, or the whereabouts of her husband, who, for aught she knew, was lying dead in the streets, were of no avail. To make her more communicative, they hanged her on a beam in the cellar, and after a few moments on her down before life was extinct. Still receiving no satisfactory reply, where a satisfactory reply was impossible, they hanged her again. Again, after another brief interval, they gave her a second release, and a fresh interrogatory. This barbarity they repeated several times, till they were satisfied that there was nothing to be gained by it, while, on the other hand, they were losing much valuable time. Hoping to be more successful elsewhere, they left her hanging for the last time, and trooped off to fresher fields. Strange to relate, the person thus horribly tortured, survived. A servant in her family, married to a Spanish soldier, providentially entered the house in time to rescue her perishing mistress. She was restored to existence, but never to reason. Her brain was hopelessly crazed, and she passed the remainder of her life, wandering about her house, or feebly digging in her garden for the buried treasure which she had been thus fiercely solicited to reveal.”

Mr. Motley then proceeds to describe how the wedding of a young couple, members of an opulent family of Antwerp, was savagely interrupted:—

“Preceded by their captain, a large number of soldiers forced their way into the house, ransacking every chamber, no opposition being offered by the family and friends, too few and powerless to cope with this band of well-armed ruffians. Plate, chests, wardrobes, desks, caskets of jewellery, were freely offered,

eagerly accepted, but not found sufficient; and to make the luckless wretches furnish more than they possessed, the usual brutalities were employed. The soldiers began by striking the bridegroom dead. The bride fell shrieking into her mother’s arms, whence she was torn by the murderers, who immediately put the mother to death, and an indiscriminate massacre then followed the fruitless attempts to obtain by threats and torture treasure which did not exist. The bride who was of remarkable beauty, was carried off to the citadel. Maddened by this last outrage, the father, who was the only man of the party left alive, rushed upon the Spaniards. Wresting a sword from one of the crew, the old man dealt with it so fiercely that he stretched more than one enemy dead at his feet, but it is needless to add that he was soon despatched. Meantime, while the party were concluding the plunder of the mansion, the bride was left in a lonely apartment of the fortress. Without wasting time in fruitless lamentation, she resolved to quit the life which a few hours had made so desolate. She had almost succeeded in hanging herself with a massive gold chain which she wore, when her captor entered the apartment. Inflamed, not with lust, but with avarice, excited not by her charms but by her jewellery, he rescued her from her perilous position. He then took possession of her chain and the other trinkets with which her wedding dress was adorned, and caused her to be entirely stripped of her clothing. She was then scourged with rods till her beautiful body was all bathed in blood, and at last, alone, naked, nearly mad, was sent back into the city. Here the forlorn creature wandered up and down through the blazing streets, among the heaps of dead and dying, till she was at last put out of her misery by a gang of soldiers.

“Such are a few isolated instances, accidentally preserved in their details, of the general horrors inflicted on this occasion. Others innumerable have sunk into oblivion. On the morning of the 5th November, Antwerp presented a ghastly sight. The magnificent marble town-house, celebrated as a ‘world’s wonder,’ even in that age and country, in which so much splendour was lavished on municipal palaces, stood a blackened ruin—all but the walls destroyed, while its archives, accounts, and other valuable contents had perished. The more splendid portion of the city had been consumed; at least five hundred palaces, mostly of marble or hammered stone, being a smouldering mass of destruction. The dead bodies of those fallen in the massacre were on every side, in greatest profusion around the Place de Meer, among the Gothic pillars of the Exchange, and in the streets near the Town-house. The German soldiers lay in their armour, some with their heads burned from their bodies, some with legs and arms consumed by the flames through which they had fought. . . .

“Two days longer the havoc lasted in the city. Of all the crimes which men can commit, whether from deliberate calculation, or in the frenzy of passion, hardly one was omitted, for riot, gaming, rape, which had been postponed to the more stringent claims of robbery and murder, was now rapidly added to the sum of atrocities. History has recorded the account indelibly on her brazen tablets; it can be adjusted only at the judgment-seat above. . . .

“Three thousand dead bodies were discovered in the streets, as many more were estimated to have perished in the Scheld, and nearly an equal number were burned or destroyed in other ways. Eight thousand persons undoubtedly were put to death. Six millions of property were destroyed by the fire, and at least as much more was obtained by the Spaniards. . . . Neither paupers nor criminals were safe. Captain Caspar Ortis made a brilliant speculation by taking possession of the *Stein*, or city prison, whence he ransomed all the inmates who could find means to pay for their liberty. Robbers, murderers, even Anabaptists, were thus again let loose. Rarely has so small a band obtained in three days’ robbery so large an amount of wealth.”

But amidst all these scenes of carnage, it is marvellous that only so few as two hundred Spaniards were slain; and this is explained by the fact that the burghers were insufficiently armed; and that a great many of their defenders turned treacherously against them; and this, combined with the awful panic that prevailed, may account for the great discrepancy.