

complexion, and blue eyes of her country; there is a brightness in her eye, and an archness in her smile, which saves her from the besetting fault of the beauties of Holland, tameness and insipidity. But now her face is rather sad, and well it may be. Her lot is thrown in very troublesome times; distress and danger are gathering round her; three fourths of Holland are in the hands of the enemy, and two or three days at farthest may send the tide of war into Muiden itself. There is a step on the garden walk; she starts up, and the door opens,—a tall strongly-built man enters, throws off his dripping cloak, and folds her in his arms.

'Well, father!'

'It is too true,' is the reply. 'The French are in full advance on Naarden. They say the place cannot hold out a day, and then—it is our turn.'

'And what do you mean to do?'

'I stay here, French or no French. It shall never be said that old Gerard van Kampon left his post without orders. But you must to Amsterdam, and that by to-morrow at latest.'

'But, father, I cannot leave you here; I will not, indeed. If it is your duty to stay by the sluices, it is mine to stay with you.'

'You must not think of it, Elsjé. The French soldiers are devils in human form. I have heard of doings of theirs at Woerden, which make one's blood run cold. Go you must, and that by daylight to-morrow; and I shall step out and hold counsel with the rest how we may best send the women there, by land or by sea. By noon to-morrow there must be nothing but men in the place.'

I must stop a moment to explain as briefly as may be how affairs then stood in Holland. Louis XIV., claiming the United Provinces in right of his wife, as a portion of the Spanish monarchy, poured an army of 170,000 men, under Condé, Turenne, and Luxembourg, from the south-east; Guelderland, Overijssel, and the Province of Utrecht were overrun. The city of Utrecht opened its gates. Town after town, fortress after fortress was captured; scarcely an hour but brought intelligence to Louis, then keeping his court in a villa in the pleasant village of Duerbergen, of some new conquest. His ally, our Charles II., was straining an exhausted exchequer to equip a fleet capable of matching that of De Ruyter; and the terms—if terms they can be called—which were proposed to the Dutch, almost involved their annihilation as a separate people. William of Orange had an army, such as it was, of 70,000 men, but the greater part had never been under fire, and the whole were demoralized by surrender upon surrender, and retreat after retreat. The allies attempted to bribe him to desert the cause of his country, by offering him the independent crown of the province of Holland. 'You cannot hope,' said they; 'otherwise to escape seeing the ruin of the

United Provinces.' 'That,' he replied, 'lies in my own hands; I shall die in the last ditch before that ruin comes.'

Grieved, terrified, perplexed, Gerard was a true Hollander in one respect; he never lost his appetite. Little taste had poor Elsjé for her supper that evening; but her father, seating himself with great deliberation at the table, and fortifying himself by his accustomed dram, commenced a fearful attack on the good brown bread and well cured bacon which adorned it, cutting slice after slice of both one and the other, replenishing his tankard more than once, and concluding his repast with a still vigorous assault on the Purmerend cheese.

'Come, Elsjé,' said he, 'you must keep up your spirits,—and be glad that we have a refuge so near at hand. How long Amsterdam itself will be safe, God only knows; but it is safe at least as yet: your good aunt will be glad to give you a home, I know, till I find lodgings for us both there.'

'It is you I am thinking of, father. If those terrible French come here,—what will become of you?'

'I shall be safe enough, child; I'll warrant you that I have taken care of myself before. When they are fairly on the road from Naarden, I shall be off on that to Amsterdam: but there are reasons why, till that, my post is here. Get what things you want together, and remember that you will most likely never see again what you leave behind. I daresay I shall be out for a couple of hours.'

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Now at that same time, and not so very far from that same place, there was one who was thinking—O how fondly and anxiously!—of Elsjé. And good right had Egbert Vandenvelde to let his thoughts wander to the cottage that lay at the dyke side, and the fireplace with its Scriptural tiles, and the dear mistress of both. For was she not his own affianced bride? And, when peace should be made, was he not to bring her back to his snug little farm near Weesp, to be the sunshine there that she had been in the cottage of her birth? But not now was he in that farm. There had been heavy firing all day from the north-east: night had closed in; but still the roar and the flash of the French cannon startled the darkness. It was understood that Naarden was at the last extremity;—all day long the road to Amsterdam had been thronged with flyers:—and now, close under the huge church of S. Laurence, some of the bravest hearts in the little town were assembled, and held anxious debate as to the possibility of any defence. Egbert Vandenvelde was among them. The night had cleared. It was chilly after the rain, and a fire, hastily kindled in the market-place, threw fantastic shadows on the tall brick tower of the church, and the stepped gables, and the quaint barge-boards of the surrounding houses.