

## Chapter Twenty-four

*How the miserable ninny was delivered from his lamentable condition and set aright again*

Whilst in my wretched misery and distress, I was mulling over the above-narrated thoughts, which without any doubt my good angel put into my head as a result of a special divine glance of grace, I looked about me and became aware that no more (at least few more) murdering soldiers were present on the battlefield, but rather only physicians of the soul and the body, by which I mean to say a priest and several army surgeons or barbers, of whom the former was laboring to heal and bind up the departing souls of the dying and the latter the wounds of the injured bodies. I raised my voice pitifully and called to them, especially however to the pater, crying: "O, noble Christian! Venerable father! Have mercy upon me and permit me to prosper through your help so that just as your grace through your faithful spiritual zeal most assiduously takes pains to see to it that the expiring may reach the blessed place, I may, through your help and cooperation, find help for my body from the surgeons present here." And when he thereupon came up to me I said to him: "I am one of the contingent of Hollanders, although not one by birth, who voluntarily betook themselves hither to defend their fatherland and, as you, good father, can see with your own eyes, have received the reward for the wickedness and rash folly of taking up arms in quite heedless fashion and without any coercion whatsoever, against the arms of the most Christian King; I intend to donate, should I escape with my life, 1,000 Imperial sovereigns to the first monastery which your order undertakes to erect for the beneficence which I receive from your grace; and I intend to pay a second thousand Imperial

sovereigns for my ransom, for recompensing the surgeons, and, over and above this, to pay separately all my expenses for board." I found merciful ears and well-meaning army surgeons, without doubt because of these lavish promises; each wanted to be the first to practice the business of his profession on me. But inasmuch as I was speaking in a strong voice, and particularly since the army surgeon assured the pater that my life was not yet in any danger, and particularly since I had placed myself in the protection of the pater, despite the fact that it was not his profession to take prisoners, look you, I was laid on four pikes and carried to safety in the clergyman's wagon in the baggage train, where the barbers not only bound my wounds but also put salve on all the bruises I had gotten while still invulnerable to shot when the horses trampled me and the musket balls hit me, and they gave me a drink to dissolve and eliminate the coagulated blood so that I got better things and enjoyed more beneficence than I ever in all my days deserved of either God or the French, in which I was much helped by the fact that I was able to *parler* their language. My money, which I had on my person and had taken as booty only the day before and which consisted of naught but Louis d'ors, I distributed in several parts among the surgeons, because the pater did not wish to touch it, so that I was not subjected to a body search, and kept in my power the art of making myself invisible.

Several days later my pater came to quarters in Utrecht, just when the pain of my wounds was the greatest and I was beginning to cast up coagulated and clotted blood the length of a coat sleeve; and because my pater for that reason thought I was about to give up the ghost, he admonished me to confess my sins, which I was all the more willing to do because the surgeons had persuaded me that I had been shot with a poisoned musket ball which would probably first make my whole leg inflamed and in the end, contrary to their first better expectations, might kill me. I was inclined to confess, as

noted, not only because of the fear or anxiety that I might die, but also principally because I now began to palpably notice that since my money had been stolen from me I had been, body and soul, in the power of wretched Satan, who had (perhaps even at the beginning) aroused, moved, strengthened and helped to their fulfillment the divers lusts which I already had, till he had dragged me, as if on a chain, from one sin to another, yea through the abyss and the deepest ruins of sins onto the *campus Mortis* like a goat onto thin ice, where, in his opinion, I should receive the reward of my folly and should be sacrificed up to him in his infernal kitchen as a fat roast; but I feared that if I were to tell the good pater about all of my adulterous fornications, horrible magic infernal arts, and other rascalries and thieves' tricks, he might become bored and thereby lose all patience; which good father confessors otherwise must needs not lack in the least.

But I found more forbearance than I should ever have imagined, and detected in him a strange joy which he felt, because of which I considered on my own and in detail the magnitude and heinousness of my sins, how low I had fallen, and on what a dangerous twig I was perched, even though he concealed this joy from me. But why should I chatter on to you, dear reader, about how the confession went? I should never hope that you might be so immodest as to deem me capable of telling you about it. Moreover, dear reader, I have indeed already told you in this history so candidly and of my own accord about so many of the wicked deeds I committed that you may well imagine yourself what I and my father confessor might have discussed in the confession, and besides, one is not supposed to divulge anything said in confession, anyway. But this you may know about my confession, and you may believe me surely, that after I had made it and received absolution, I felt as light as if I might be able to fly, although I had felt as heavy before as if a large millstone were pressing on my heart.

However, what happened to me to my edification after the confession, I am gladly and from the bottom of my heart willing to tell you, esteemed reader, since it is a report which will be useful to you. The entire essence of this short instruction, however, is mainly this: after I had been preserved from temporal and eternal death by God's superabundant grace and mercy, had been raised up again after the severe fall I had taken, and had been pulled out of the deepest quagmire and sink of corruption of most heinous vices in which I had hitherto been mired up over my ears, and had again, it is to be hoped, been placed in the state of God's grace, therefore I should take this to heart every day of my life, with the most humble gratitude toward God and my guardian angel; yea, every instant and moment I should bring this to mind, and by remembering this and calling for divine assistance should labor and exert most zealous diligence to see to it that I nevermore (like a bathed swine who is wont to return to his old morass) fall upon and arrive at the path of abomination which I had formerly taken, but rather should persevere with persistence in the white garment of innocence which I had received in holy baptism and which had now been cleansed again, through penitence, in the blood of the lamb, and should nevermore through my folly lose the grace of God which I had again received. God's mercifulness, my father confessor said, is, to be sure, unfathomably deep and bottomless, but wanton sinners who sinned with serious intent, and of pure wickedness, as I had done, would not always partake of it; what had befallen me, he said, had been a special grace of God.

To rush to hell apace  
Is easy in the main,  
But to escape that place  
All efforts are in vain.

The citizens of Utrecht, who had no stomach for living under the Most Christian King, but who had been overtaken and compelled by the rapid progress of his victorious forces to be with person and property in their city and in their conqueror's power, were generally deliberating to determine how they might secretly bring as much of their cash money as possible to safety elsewhere, among which persons was my pater's landlord. When he learned that I had been one of the volunteers who had so indefatigably risked his life for the fatherland, and not the least one in heroic bravery either (if one may call the foolhardiness of a rash sorcerer who blindly rushes in, relying on his magic arts "bravery"), he not only developed a particular confidence in me, but also a wondrous affection for me, as a result of which he served me the choicest morsels which were to be had; he visited and entertained me quite often with his friendly conversation and made no secret of the fact that he desired nothing more than to be assured that his cash worries, of which he had several thousand thalers on hand, were in safety somewhere or other. He would rather have a thousand in Amsterdam any time, he said, than two thousand in Utrecht, where he would never be sure that it was his property. Now this was just what I was wishing for, since I should have liked to have with me what I had in Amsterdam, in order to pay the pater the 1000 Imperial sovereigns and whatever else I had promised. When I told him what I had in mind, he was happy to set up a bill of exchange with me, and offered to give me 10 *pro cento*, whereupon I gave him a letter to my friends there, who had custody of my holdings, with instructions to pay out to my landlord's authorized agent everything save the jewelry and whatever was not minted and issue a receipt on the transactions. And thus I got my money from Amsterdam to Utrecht, which, counting the lagio which the landlord gave me, amounted to almost 3,000 Imperial sovereigns.

Of this amount I gave the pater 1,000 Imperial sovereigns to use for a new monastery, also 300 Imp. sovs. for my ransom, for I had been given to him by the colonel as a present; to the army surgeons and those who had carried me on the four pikes I gave as a gratuity 200 Imp. sovs., and also to them to heal my wounds, 100 Imp. sovs. for both their efforts and for medicaments, and to the pater's servant, because he had diligently attended to me, 30 Imp. sovs. I also wanted to disburse something to our landlord for my board, but the pater would not allow it, and the landlord was not willing to accept anything either, because I had fallen into this misfortune for the sake of the fatherland. Indeed, he assured me that if the unhappy status of the United Provinces were to change again and I were for that reason to offer myself again in the future, he would see to it that there would be bestowed upon me not only indemnification for the harm I had suffered but also, as an example to others, a considerable recompense because of the loyalty I had displayed and the services I had rendered. And in this case this landlord of mine was not merely full of hot air either, for these days there is not a people under the sun except the Venetians who remember with such gratitude and praise those who have been of service to their state as just these Dutch. Years ago they had a ship's captain who, in order to open a path in the polar ice, had two large iron saws mounted on each side of his ship and with them sailed far into the frozen ocean; and even though he was able to achieve nothing because of the great distance and the much too thick ice, he did so much that one must needs wonder at it. And when afterwards the Dutch got into a war with Portugal, which was lying with its fleet at Gibraltar and had blocked off the sea to its advantage with heavy iron chains, this captain put his saws on his ship, sawed the chain in two with them, and was one reason for a magnificent victory of his principals; and even though he lost his life doing this, the Dutch were nevertheless grateful and had it publicly

advertised and proclaimed that whoever devised the pithiest and most beautiful epitaph for this captain should have as a gratuity 400 florins. Thereupon many ingenious poetic minds went to work, from amongst whom the following two lines carried off both the prize and the 400 florins:

Here he lies who pushed through iron and ice;  
At Gibraltar with his life he paid the price.

It sounds far more beautiful in Dutch, and one can find this epitaph hewn in black marble with gold letters in the main church in Amsterdam as a perpetual remembrance.

