

6

The Little Hero of Holland

Supplementary

This is a true story of a little boy with a brave heart and passionate love for his village. Read on the story to find what the little hero of Holland did to save his fellowmen.



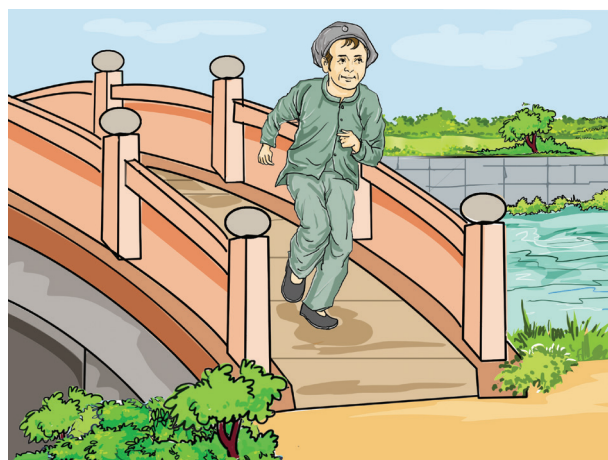
Holland is a country where much of the land lies below sea level. Only great walls called **dikes** keep the North Sea from rushing in and flooding the land. For centuries the people of Holland have worked to keep the walls strong so that their country will be safe and dry. Even the little children know the dikes must be watched every moment, and that a hole no longer than your finger can be a very dangerous thing.

Many years ago there lived in Holland a boy named Peter. Peter's father was one of the men who tended the gates in the dikes, called **sluice**. He opened and closed the sluices so that ships could pass out of Holland's canals into the great sea.

One afternoon in the early fall, when Peter was eight years old, his mother called him from his play. "Come, Peter," she said. "I want you to go across the dike and take these cakes to your friend, the blind man. If you go quickly, and do not stop to play, you will be home again before dark."

The little boy was glad to go on such an errand, and started off with a light heart. He stayed with the poor blind man a little while to tell him about his walk along the dike and about the sun and the flowers and the ships far out at sea. Then

he remembered his mother's wish that he should return before dark and, bidding his friend goodbye, he set out for home.



As he walked beside the canal, he noticed how the rains had swollen the waters, and how they beat against the side of the dike, and he thought of his father's gates.

"I am glad they are so strong," he said to himself. "If they gave way what would become of us? These pretty fields would be covered with water. Father always calls them the 'angry waters.' I suppose he thinks they are angry at him for keeping them out so long."

As he walked along he sometimes stopped to pick the pretty blue flowers that grew beside the road, or to listen to the rabbits' soft tread as they rustled through the grass. But oftener he smiled