

Rise of the Dutch Republic, the — Volume 05: 1559-60 eBook

Rise of the Dutch Republic, the — Volume 05: 1559-60 by John Lothrop Motley

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Title: The Rise of the Dutch Republic, 1559-60

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MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, PG EDITION, VOLUME 5.

THE RISE OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

John Lothrop Motley, D.C.L., LL.D.

1855

ADMINISTRATION OF THE DUCHESS MARGARET.

1559-1560 [*Chapter I.*]

Biographical sketch and portrait of Margaret of Parma—The state council—Berlaymont—Viglius—Sketch of William the Silent—Portrait of Antony Perrenot, afterwards Cardinal Granvelle—General view of the political, social and religious condition of the Netherlands— Habits of the aristocracy—Emulation in extravagance—Pecuniary embarrassments—Sympathy for the Reformation, steadily increasing among the people, the true cause of the impending revolt—Measures of the government.—Edict of 1550 described—Papal Bulls granted to Philip for increasing the number of Bishops in the Netherlands— Necessity for retaining the Spanish troops to enforce the policy of persecution.



Margaret of Parma, newly appointed Regent of the Netherlands, was the natural daughter of Charles the Fifth, and his eldest born child. Her mother, of a respectable family called Van der Genst, in Oudenarde, had been adopted and brought up by the distinguished house of Hoogstraaten. Peculiar circumstances, not necessary to relate at length, had palliated the fault to which Margaret owed her imperial origin, and gave the child almost a legitimate claim upon its father's protection. The claim was honorably acknowledged. Margaret was in her infancy placed by the Emperor in the charge of his paternal aunt, Margaret of Savoy, then Regent of the provinces. Upon the death of that princess, the child was entrusted to the care of the Emperor's sister, Mary, Queen Dowager of Hungary, who had succeeded to the government, and who occupied it until the abdication. The huntress-queen communicated her tastes to her youthful niece, and Margaret soon outrivalled her instructress. The ardor with which she pursued the stag, and the courageous horsemanship which she always displayed,



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proved her, too, no degenerate descendant of Mary of Burgundy. Her education for the distinguished position in which she had somewhat surreptitiously been placed was at least not neglected in this particular. When, soon after the memorable sack of Rome, the Pope and the Emperor had been reconciled, and it had been decided that the Medici family should be elevated upon the ruins of Florentine liberty, Margaret's hand was conferred in marriage upon the pontiff's nephew Alexander. The wretched profligate who was thus selected to mate with the Emperor's eldest born child and to appropriate the fair demesnes of the Tuscan republic was nominally the offspring of Lorenzo de Medici by a Moorish slave, although generally reputed a bastard of the Pope himself. The nuptials were celebrated with great pomp at Naples, where the Emperor rode at the tournament in the guise of a Moorish warrior. At Florence splendid festivities had also been held, which were troubled with omens believed to be highly unfavorable. It hardly needed, however, preternatural appearances in heaven or on earth to proclaim the marriage ill-starred which united a child of twelve years with a worn-out debauchee of twenty-seven. Fortunately for Margaret, the funereal portents proved true. Her husband, within the first year of their wedded life, fell a victim to his own profligacy, and was assassinated by his kinsman, Lorenzino de Medici. Cosmo, his successor in the tyranny of Florence, was desirous of succeeding to the hand of Margaret, but the politic Emperor, thinking that he had already done enough to conciliate that house, was inclined to bind to his interests the family which now occupied the papal throne. Margaret was accordingly a few years afterwards united to Ottavio Farnese, nephew of Paul the Third. It was still her fate to be unequally matched. Having while still a child been wedded to a man of more than twice her years, she was now, at the age of twenty, united to an immature youth of thirteen. She conceived so strong an aversion to her new husband, that it became impossible for them to live together in peace. Ottavio accordingly went to the wars, and in 1541 accompanied the Emperor in his memorable expedition to Barbary.

Rumors of disaster by battle and tempest reaching Europe before the results of the expedition were accurately known, reports that the Emperor had been lost in a storm, and that the young Ottavio had perished with him, awakened remorse in the bosom of Margaret. It seemed to her that he had been driven forth by domestic inclemency to fall a victim to the elements. When, however, the truth became known, and it was ascertained that her husband, although still living, was lying dangerously ill in the charge of the Emperor, the repugnance which had been founded upon his extreme youth changed to passionate fondness. His absence, and his faithful military attendance upon her father, caused a revulsion in her feelings, and awakened her admiration. When Ottavio, now created Duke of Parma and Piacenza, returned to Rome, he was received by his wife with open arms. Their union was soon blessed with twins, and but for a certain imperiousness of disposition which Margaret had inherited from her father, and which she was too apt to exercise even upon her husband, the marriage would have been sufficiently fortunate.

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Various considerations pointed her out to Philip as a suitable person for the office of Regent, although there seemed some mystery about the appointment which demanded explanation. It was thought that her birth would make her acceptable to the people; but perhaps, the secret reason with Philip was, that she alone of all other candidates would be amenable to the control of the churchman in whose hand he intended placing the real administration of the provinces. Moreover, her husband was very desirous that the citadel of Piacenza, still garrisoned by Spanish troops, should be surrendered to him. Philip was disposed to conciliate the Duke, but unwilling to give up the fortress. He felt that Ottavio would be flattered by the nomination of his wife to so important an office, and be not too much dissatisfied at finding himself relieved for a time from her imperious fondness. Her residence in the Netherlands would guarantee domestic tranquillity to her husband, and peace in Italy to the King. Margaret would be a hostage for the fidelity of the Duke, who had, moreover, given his eldest son to Philip to be educated in his service.

She was about thirty-seven years of age when she arrived in the Netherlands, with the reputation of possessing high talents, and a proud and energetic character. She was an enthusiastic Catholic, and had sat at the feet of Loyola, who had been her confessor and spiritual guide. She felt a greater horror for heretics than for any other species of malefactors, and looked up to her father's bloody edicts as if they had been special revelations from on high. She was most strenuous in her observance of Roman rites, and was accustomed to wash the feet of twelve virgins every holy week, and to endow them in marriage afterwards.—Her acquirements, save that of the art of horsemanship, were not remarkable.

Carefully educated in the Machiavellian and Medicean school of politics, she was versed in that "dissimulation," to which liberal Anglo-Saxons give a shorter name, but which formed the main substance of statesmanship at the court of Charles and Philip. In other respects her accomplishments were but meagre, and she had little acquaintance with any language but Italian. Her personal appearance, which was masculine, but not without a certain grand and imperial fascination, harmonized with the opinion generally entertained of her character. The famous moustache upon her upper lips was supposed to indicate authority and virility of purpose, an impression which was confirmed by the circumstance that she was liable to severe attacks of gout, a disorder usually considered more appropriate to the sterner sex.

Such were the previous career and public reputation of the Duchess Margaret. It remains to be unfolded whether her character and endowments, as exemplified in her new position, were to justify the choice of Philip.

The members of the state council, as already observed, were Berlaymont, Viglius, Arras, Orange, and Egmont.



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The first was, likewise, chief of the finance department. Most of the Catholic writers described him as a noble of loyal and highly honorable character. Those of the Protestant party, on the contrary, uniformly denounced him as greedy, avaricious, and extremely sanguinary. That he was a brave and devoted soldier, a bitter papist, and an inflexible adherent to the royal cause, has never been disputed. The Baron himself, with his four courageous and accomplished sons, were ever in the front ranks to defend the crown against the nation. It must be confessed, however, that fanatical loyalty loses most of the romance with which genius and poetry have so often hallowed the sentiment, when the "legitimate" prince for whom the sword is drawn is not only an alien in tongue and blood, but filled with undisguised hatred for the land he claims to rule.

Viglius van Aytta van Zuichem was a learned Frisian, born, according to some writers, of "boors' degree, but having no inclination for boorish work". According to other authorities, which the President himself favored, he was of noble origin; but, whatever his race, it is certain that whether gentle or simple, it derived its first and only historical illustration from his remarkable talents and acquirements. These in early youth were so great as to acquire the commendation of Erasmus. He had studied in Louvain, Paris, and Padua, had refused the tutorship Philip when that prince was still a child, and had afterwards filled a professorship at Ingolstadt. After rejecting several offers of promotion from the Emperor, he had at last accepted in 1542 a seat in the council of Mechlin, of which body he had become president in 1545. He had been one of the peace commissioners to France in 1558, and was now president of the privy council, a member of the state council, and of the inner and secret committee of that board, called the Consults. Much odium was attached to his name for his share in the composition of the famous edict of 1550. The rough draught was usually attributed to his pen, but he complained bitterly, in letters written at this time, of injustice done him in this respect, and maintained that he had endeavored, without success, to induce the Emperor to mitigate the severity of the edict. One does not feel very strongly inclined to accept his excuses, however, when his general opinions on the subject of religion are remembered. He was most bigoted in precept and practice. Religious liberty he regarded as the most detestable and baleful of doctrines; heresy he denounced as the most unpardonable of crimes.

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From no man's mouth flowed more bitter or more elegant commonplaces than from that of the learned president against those blackest of malefactors, the men who claimed within their own walls the right to worship God according to their own consciences. For a common person, not learned in law or divinity, to enter into his closet, to shut the door, and to pray to Him who seeth in secret, was, in his opinion, to open wide the gate of destruction for all the land, and to bring in the Father of Evil at once to fly away with the whole population, body and soul. "If every man," said he to Hopper, "is to believe what he likes in his own house, we shall have hearth gods and tutelal divinities, again, the country will swarm with a thousand errors and sects, and very few there will be, I fear, who will allow themselves to be enclosed in the sheepfold of Christ. I have ever considered this opinion," continued the president, "the most pernicious of all. They who hold it have a contempt for all religion, and are neither more nor less than atheists. This vague, fireside liberty should be by every possible means extirpated; therefore did Christ institute shepherds to drive his wandering sheep back into the fold of the true Church; thus only can we guard the lambs against the ravening wolves, and prevent their being carried away from the flock of Christ to the flock of Belial. Liberty of religion, or of conscience, as they call it, ought never to be tolerated."

This was the cant with which Viglius was ever ready to feed not only his faithful Hopper, but all the world beside. The president was naturally anxious that the fold of Christ should be entrusted to none but regular shepherds, for he looked forward to taking one of the most lucrative crooks into his own hand, when he should retire from his secular career.

It is now necessary to say a few introductory words concerning the man who, from this time forth, begins to rise upon the history of his country with daily increasing grandeur and influence. William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, although still young in years, is already the central personage about whom the events and the characters of the epoch most naturally group themselves; destined as he is to become more and more with each succeeding year the vivifying source of light, strength, and national life to a whole people.

The Nassau family first emerges into distinct existence in the middle of the eleventh century. It divides itself almost as soon as known into two great branches. The elder remained in Germany, ascended the imperial throne in the thirteenth century in the person of Adolph of Nassau and gave to the country many electors, bishops, and generals. The younger and more illustrious branch retained the modest property and petty sovereignty of Nassau Dillenbourg, but at the same time transplanted itself to the Netherlands, where it attained at an early period to great power and large possessions.



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The ancestors of William, as Dukes of Gueldres, had begun to exercise sovereignty in the provinces four centuries before the advent of the house of Burgundy. That overshadowing family afterwards numbered the Netherland Nassaus among its most staunch and powerful adherents. Engelbert the Second was distinguished in the turbulent councils and in the battle-fields of Charles the Bold, and was afterwards the unwavering supporter of Maximilian, in court and camp. Dying childless, he was succeeded by his brother John, whose two sons, Henry and William, of Nassau, divided the great inheritance after their father's death, William succeeded to the German estates, became a convert to Protestantism, and introduced the Reformation into his dominions. Henry, the eldest son, received the family possessions and titles in Luxembourg, Brabant, Flanders and Holland, and distinguished himself as much as his uncle Engelbert, in the service of the Burgundo-Austrian house. The confidential friend of Charles the Fifth, whose governor he had been in that Emperor's boyhood, he was ever his most efficient and reliable adherent. It was he whose influence placed the imperial crown upon the head of Charles. In 1515 he espoused Claudia de Chalons, sister of Prince Philibert of Orange, "in order," as he wrote to his father, "to be obedient to his imperial Majesty, to please the King of France, and more particularly for the sake of his own honor and profit."

His son Rene de Nassau-Chalons succeeded Philibert. The little principality of Orange, so pleasantly situated between Provence and Dauphiny, but in such dangerous proximity to the seat of the "Babylonian captivity" of the popes at Avignon, thus passed to the family of Nassau. The title was of high antiquity. Already in the reign of Charlemagne, Guillaume au Court-Nez, or "William with the Short Nose," had defended the little—town of Orange against the assaults of the Saracens. The interest and authority acquired in the demesnes thus preserved by his valor became extensive, and in process of time hereditary in his race. The principality became an absolute and free sovereignty, and had already descended, in defiance of the Salic law, through the three distinct families of Orange, Baux, and Chalons.

In 1544, Prince Rene died at the Emperor's feet in the trenches of Saint Dizier. Having no legitimate children, he left all his titles and estates to his cousin-german, William of Nassau, son of his father's brother William, who thus at the age of eleven years became William the Ninth of Orange. For this child, whom the future was to summon to such high destinies and such heroic sacrifices, the past and present seemed to have gathered riches and power together from many sources. He was the descendant of the Othos, the Engelberts, and the Henries, of the Netherlands, the representative of the Philiberts and the Renes of France; the chief of a house, humbler in resources and position in Germany, but still of high rank, and which had already done good service to humanity by being among the first to embrace the great principles of the Reformation.



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His father, younger brother of the Emperor's friend Henry, was called William the Rich. He was, however, only rich in children. Of these he had five sons and seven daughters by his wife Juliana of Stolberg. She was a person of most exemplary character and unaffected piety. She instilled into the minds of all her children the elements of that devotional sentiment which was her own striking characteristic, and it was destined that the seed sown early should increase to an abundant harvest. Nothing can be more tender or more touching than the letters which still exist from her hand, written to her illustrious sons in hours of anxiety or anguish, and to the last, recommending to them with as much earnest simplicity as if they were still little children at her knee, to rely always in the midst of the trials and dangers which were to beset their paths through life, upon the great hand of God. Among the mothers of great men, Juliana of Stolberg deserves a foremost place, and it is no slight eulogy that she was worthy to have been the mother of William of Orange and of Lewis, Adolphus, Henry, and John of Nassau.

At the age of eleven years, William having thus unexpectedly succeeded to such great possessions, was sent from his father's roof to be educated in Brussels. No destiny seemed to lie before the young prince but an education at the Emperor's court, to be followed by military adventures, embassies, viceroyalties, and a life of luxury and magnificence. At a very early age he came, accordingly, as a page into the Emperor's family. Charles recognized, with his customary quickness, the remarkable character of the boy. At fifteen, William was the intimate, almost confidential friend of the Emperor, who prided himself, above all other gifts, on his power of reading and of using men. The youth was so constant an attendant upon his imperial chief that even when interviews with the highest personages, and upon the gravest affairs, were taking place, Charles would never suffer him to be considered superfluous or intrusive. There seemed to be no secrets which the Emperor held too high for the comprehension or discretion of his page. His perceptive and reflective faculties, naturally of remarkable keenness and depth, thus acquired a precocious and extraordinary development. He was brought up behind the curtain of that great stage where the world's dramas were daily enacted. The machinery and the masks which produced the grand delusions of history had no deceptions for him. Carefully to observe men's actions, and silently to ponder upon their motives, was the favorite occupation of the Prince during his apprenticeship at court. As he advanced to man's estate, he was selected by the Emperor for the highest duties. Charles, whose only merit, so far as the provinces were concerned, was in having been born in Ghent, and that by an ignoble accident, was glad to employ this representative of so many great Netherland houses, in the defence of

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the land. Before the Prince was twenty-one he was appointed general-in-chief of the army on the French frontier, in the absence of the Duke of Savoy. The post was coveted by many most distinguished soldiers: the Counts of Buren, Bossu, Lalain, Aremberg, Meghem, and particularly by Count Egmont; yet Charles showed his extraordinary confidence in the Prince of Orange, by selecting him for the station, although he had hardly reached maturity, and was moreover absent in France. The young Prince acquitted himself of his high command in a manner which justified his appointment.

It was the Prince's shoulder upon which the Emperor leaned at the abdication; the Prince's hand which bore the imperial insignia of the dethroned monarch to Ferdinand, at Augsburg. With these duties his relations with Charles were ended, and those with Philip begun. He was with the army during the hostilities which were soon after resumed in Picardy; he was the secret negotiator of the preliminary arrangement with France, soon afterwards confirmed by the triumphant treaty of April, 1559. He had conducted these initiatory conferences with the Constable Montmorency and Marshal de Saint Andre with great sagacity, although hardly a man in years, and by so doing he had laid Philip under deep obligations. The King was so inexpressibly anxious for peace that he would have been capable of conducting a treaty upon almost any terms. He assured the Prince that "the greatest service he could render him in this world was to make peace, and that he desired to have it at any price what ever, so eager was he to return to Spain." To the envoy Suriano, Philip had held the same language. "Oh, Ambassador," said he, "I wish peace on any terms, and if the King of France had not sued for it, I would have begged for it myself."

With such impatience on the part of the sovereign, it certainly manifested diplomatic abilities of a high character in the Prince, that the treaty negotiated by him amounted to a capitulation by France. He was one of the hostages selected by Henry for the due execution of the treaty, and while in France made that remarkable discovery which was to color his life. While hunting with the King in the forest of Vincennes, the Prince and Henry found themselves alone together, and separated from the rest of the company. The French monarch's mind was full of the great scheme which had just secretly been formed by Philip and himself, to extirpate Protestantism by a general extirpation of Protestants. Philip had been most anxious to conclude the public treaty with France, that he might be the sooner able to negotiate that secret convention by which he and his Most Christian Majesty were solemnly to bind themselves to massacre all the converts to the new religion in France and the Netherlands. This conspiracy of the two Kings against their subjects was the matter nearest the hearts of both. The Duke of Alva, a fellow hostage with William of Orange, was the plenipotentiary

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to conduct this more important arrangement. The French monarch, somewhat imprudently imagining that the Prince was also a party to the plot, opened the whole subject to him without reserve. He complained of the constantly increasing numbers of sectaries in his kingdom, and protested that his conscience would never be easy, nor his state secure until his realm should be delivered of "that accursed vermin." A civil revolution, under pretext of a religious reformation, was his constant apprehension, particularly since so many notable personages in the realm, and even princes of the blood, were already tainted with heresy. Nevertheless, with the favor of heaven, and the assistance of his son and brother Philip, he hoped soon to be master of the rebels. The King then proceeded, with cynical minuteness, to lay before his discreet companion the particulars of the royal plot, and the manner in which all heretics, whether high or humble, were to be discovered and massacred at the most convenient season. For the furtherance of the scheme in the Netherlands, it was understood that the Spanish regiments would be exceedingly efficient. The Prince, although horror-struck and indignant at the royal revelations, held his peace, and kept his countenance. The King was not aware that, in opening this delicate negotiation to Alva's colleague and Philip's plenipotentiary, he had given a warning of inestimable value to the man who had been born to resist the machinations of Philip and of Alva. William of Orange earned the surname of "the Silent," from the manner in which he received these communications of Henry without revealing to the monarch, by word or look, the enormous blunder which he had committed. His purpose was fixed from that hour. A few days afterwards he obtained permission to visit the Netherlands, where he took measures to excite, with all his influence, the strongest and most general opposition to the continued presence of the Spanish troops, of which forces, touch against his will, he had been, in conjunction with Egmont, appointed chief. He already felt, in his own language, that "an inquisition for the Netherlands had been, resolved upon more cruel than that of Spain; since it would need but to look askance at an image to be cast into the flames." Although having as yet no spark of religious sympathy for the reformers, he could not, he said, "but feel compassion for so many virtuous men and women thus devoted to massacre," and he determined to save them if he could! At the departure of Philip he had received instructions, both patent and secret, for his guidance as stadholder of Holland, Friesland, and Utrecht. He was ordered "most expressly to correct and extirpate the sects reprobated by our Holy Mother Church; to execute the edicts of his Imperial Majesty, renewed by the King, with absolute rigor. He was to see that the judges carried out the edicts, without infraction, alteration, or moderation, since they were there to

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enforce, not to make or to discuss the law.” In his secret instructions he was informed that the execution of the edicts was to be with all rigor, and without any respect of persons. He was also reminded that, whereas some persons had imagined the severity of the law “to be only intended against Anabaptists, on the contrary, the edicts were to be enforced on Lutherans and all other sectaries without distinction.” Moreover, in one of his last interviews with Philip, the King had given him the names of several “excellent persons suspected of the new religion,” and had commanded him to have them put to death. This, however, he not only omitted to do, but on the contrary gave them warning, so that they might effect their escape, “thinking it more necessary to obey God than man.”

William of Orange, at the departure of the King for Spain, was in his twenty-seventh year. He was a widower; his first wife, Anne of Egmont, having died in 1558, after seven years of wedlock. This lady, to whom he had been united when they were both eighteen years of age, was the daughter of the celebrated general, Count de Buren, and the greatest heiress in the Netherlands. William had thus been faithful to the family traditions, and had increased his possessions by a wealthy alliance. He had two children, Philip and Mary. The marriage had been more amicable than princely marriages arranged for convenience often prove. The letters of the Prince to his wife indicate tenderness and contentment. At the same time he was accused, at a later period, of “having murdered her with a dagger.” The ridiculous tale was not even credited by those who reported it, but it is worth mentioning, as a proof that no calumny was too senseless to be invented concerning the man whose character was from that hour forth to be the mark of slander, and whose whole life was to be its signal, although often unavailing, refutation.

Yet we are not to regard William of Orange, thus on the threshold of his great career, by the light diffused from a somewhat later period. In no historical character more remarkably than in his is the law of constant development and progress illustrated. At twenty-six he is not the “pater patriae,” the great man struggling upward and onward against a host of enemies and obstacles almost beyond human strength, and along the dark and dangerous path leading through conflict, privation, and ceaseless labor to no repose but death. On the contrary, his foot was hardly on the first step of that difficult ascent which was to rise before him all his lifetime. He was still among the primrose paths. He was rich, powerful, of sovereign rank. He had only the germs within him of what was thereafter to expand into moral and intellectual greatness. He had small sympathy for the religious reformation, of which he was to be one of the most distinguished champions. He was a Catholic, nominally, and in outward observance. With doctrines he troubled himself but little.



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He had given orders to enforce conformity to the ancient Church, not with bloodshed, yet with comparative strictness, in his principality of Orange. Beyond the compliance with rites and forms, thought indispensable in those days to a personage of such high degree, he did not occupy himself with theology. He was a Catholic, as Egmont and Horn, Berlaymont and Mansfeld, Montigny and even Brederode, were Catholic. It was only tanners, dyers and apostate priests who were Protestants at that day in the Netherlands. His determination to protect a multitude of his harmless inferiors from horrible deaths did not proceed from sympathy with their religious sentiments, but merely from a generous and manly detestation of murder. He carefully averted his mind from sacred matters. If indeed the seed implanted by his pious parents were really the germ of his future conversion to Protestantism, it must be confessed that it lay dormant a long time. But his mind was in other pursuits. He was disposed for an easy, joyous, luxurious, princely life. Banquets, masquerades, tournaments, the chase, interspersed with the routine of official duties, civil and military, seemed likely to fill out his life. His hospitality, like his fortune, was almost regal. While the King and the foreign envoys were still in the Netherlands, his house, the splendid Nassau palace of Brussels, was ever open. He entertained for the monarch, who was, or who imagined himself to be, too poor to discharge his own duties in this respect, but he entertained at his own expense. This splendid household was still continued. Twenty-four noblemen and eighteen pages of gentle birth officiated regularly in his family. His establishment was on so extensive a scale that upon one day twenty-eight master cooks were dismissed, for the purpose of diminishing the family expenses, and there was hardly a princely house in Germany which did not send cooks to learn their business in so magnificent a kitchen. The reputation of his table remained undiminished for years. We find at a later period, that Philip, in the course of one of the nominal reconciliations which took place several times between the monarch and William of Orange, wrote that, his head cook being dead, he begged the Prince to "make him a present of his chief cook, Master Herman, who was understood to be very skilful."

In this hospitable mansion, the feasting continued night and day. From early morning till noon, the breakfast-tables were spread with wines and luxurious viands in constant succession, to all comers and at every moment.—The dinner and supper were daily banquets for a multitude of guests. The highest nobles were not those alone who were entertained. Men of lower degree were welcomed with a charming hospitality which made them feel themselves at their ease. Contemporaries of all parties unite in eulogizing the winning address and gentle manners of the Prince. "Never," says a most bitter Catholic historian,

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“did an arrogant or indiscreet word fall from his lips. He, upon no occasion, manifested anger to his servants, however much they might be in fault, but contented himself with admonishing them graciously, without menace or insult. He had a gentle and agreeable tongue, with which he could turn all the gentlemen at court any way he liked. He was beloved and honored by the whole community.” His manner was graceful, familiar, caressing, and yet dignified. He had the good breeding which comes from the heart, refined into an inexpressible charm from his constant intercourse, almost from his cradle, with mankind of all ranks.

It may be supposed that this train of living was attended with expense. Moreover, he had various other establishments in town and country; besides his almost royal residence in Brussels. He was ardently fond of the chase, particularly of the knightly sport of falconry. In the country he “consoled himself by taking every day a heron in the clouds.” His falconers alone cost him annually fifteen hundred florins, after he had reduced their expenses to the lowest possible point. He was much in debt, even at this early period and with his princely fortune. “We come of a race,” he wrote carelessly to his brother Louis, “who are somewhat bad managers in our young days, but when we grow older, we do better, like our late father: *‘sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper et in secula seculorum’*. My greatest difficulty,” he adds, “as usual, is on account of the falconers.”

His debts already amounted, according to Granvelle’s statement, to 800,000 or 900,000 florins. He had embarrassed himself, not only through his splendid extravagance, by which all the world about him were made to partake of his wealth, but by accepting the high offices to which he had been appointed. When general-in-chief on the frontier, his salary was three hundred florins monthly; “not enough,” as he said, “to pay the servants in his tent,” his necessary expenses being twenty-five hundred florins, as appears by a letter to his wife. His embassy to carry the crown to Ferdinand, and his subsequent residence as a hostage for the treaty in Paris, were also very onerous, and he received no salary; according to the economical system in this respect pursued by Charles and Philip. In these two embassies or missions alone, together with the entertainments offered by him to the court and to foreigners, after the peace at Brussels, the Prince spent, according to his own estimate, 1,500,000 florins. He was, however, although deeply, not desperately involved, and had already taken active measures to regulate and reduce his establishment. His revenues were vast, both in his own right and in that of his deceased wife. He had large claims upon the royal treasury for service and expenditure. He had besides ample sums to receive from the ransoms of the prisoners of St. Quentin and Gravelines, having served in both campaigns.

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The amount to be received by individuals from this source may be estimated from the fact that Count Horn, by no means one of the most favored in the victorious armies, had received from Leonor d'Orleans, Due de Loggieville, a ransom of eighty thousand crowns. The sum due, if payment were enforced, from the prisoners assigned to Egmont, Orange, and others, must have been very large. Granvelle estimated the whole amount at two millions; adding, characteristically, "that this kind of speculation was a practice" which our good old fathers, lovers of virtue, would not have found laudable. In this the churchman was right, but he might have added that the "lovers of virtue" would have found it as little "laudable" for ecclesiastics to dispose of the sacred offices in their gift, for carpets, tapestry, and annual payments of certain percentages upon the cure of souls. If the profits respectively gained by military and clerical speculators in that day should be compared, the disadvantage would hardly be found to lie with those of the long robe.

Such, then, at the beginning of 1560, was William of Orange; a generous, stately, magnificent, powerful grandee. As a military commander, he had acquitted himself very creditably of highly important functions at an early age. Nevertheless it was the opinion of many persons, that he was of a timid temperament. He was even accused of having manifested an unseemly panic at Philippeville, and of having only been restrained by the expostulations of his officers, from abandoning both that fortress and Charlemont to Admiral Coligny, who had made his appearance in the neighborhood, merely at the head of a reconnoitring party. If the story were true, it would be chiefly important as indicating that the Prince of Orange was one of the many historical characters, originally of an excitable and even timorous physical organization, whom moral courage and a strong will have afterwards converted into dauntless heroes. Certain it is that he was destined to confront open danger in every form, that his path was to lead through perpetual ambush, yet that his cheerful confidence and tranquil courage were to become not only unquestionable but proverbial. It may be safely asserted, however, that the story was an invention to be classed with those fictions which made him the murderer of his first wife, a common conspirator against Philip's crown and person, and a crafty malefactor in general, without a single virtue. It must be remembered that even the terrible Alva, who lived in harness almost from the cradle to the grave, was, so late as at this period, censured for timidity, and had been accused in youth of flat cowardice. He despised the insinuation, which for him had no meaning. There is no doubt too that caution was a predominant characteristic of the Prince. It was one of the chief sources of his greatness. At that period, perhaps at any period, he would have been incapable of such brilliant and dashing exploits as had made the name of Egmont so famous. It had even become a proverb, "the counsel of Orange, the execution of Egmont," yet we shall have occasion to see how far this physical promptness which had been so felicitous upon the battle-field was likely to avail the hero of St. Quentin in the great political combat which was approaching.

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As to the talents of the Prince, there was no difference of opinion. His enemies never contested the subtlety and breadth of his intellect, his adroitness and capacity in conducting state affairs, his knowledge of human nature, and the profoundness of his views. In many respects it must be confessed that his surname of The Silent, like many similar appellations, was a misnomer. William of Orange was neither “silent” nor “taciturn,” yet these are the epithets which will be forever associated with the name of a man who, in private, was the most affable, cheerful, and delightful of companions, and who on a thousand great public occasions was to prove himself, both by pen and by speech, the most eloquent man of his age. His mental accomplishments were considerable: He had studied history with attention, and he spoke and wrote with facility Latin, French, German, Flemish, and Spanish.

The man, however, in whose hands the administration of the Netherlands was in reality placed, was Anthony Perrenot, then Bishop of Arras, soon to be known by the more celebrated title of Cardinal Granvelle. He was the chief of the Consults, or secret council of three, by whose deliberations the Duchess Regent was to be governed. His father, Nicholas Perrenot, of an obscure family in Burgundy, had been long the favorite minister and man of business to the Emperor Charles. Anthony, the eldest of thirteen children, was born in 1517. He was early distinguished for his talents. He studied at Dole, Padua, Paris, and Louvain. At the age of twenty he spoke seven languages with perfect facility, while his acquaintance with civil and ecclesiastical laws was considered prodigious. At the age of twenty-three he became a canon of Liege Cathedral. The necessary eight quarters of gentility produced upon that occasion have accordingly been displayed by his panegyrists in triumphant refutation of that theory which gave him a blacksmith for his grandfather. At the same period, although he had not reached the requisite age, the rich bishopric of Arras had already been prepared for him by his father’s care. Three years afterwards, in 1543, he distinguished himself by a most learned and brilliant harangue before the Council of Trent, by which display he so much charmed the Emperor, that he created him councillor of state. A few years afterwards he rendered the unscrupulous Charles still more valuable proofs of devotion and dexterity by the part he played in the memorable imprisonment of the Landgrave of Hesse and the Saxon Dukes. He was thereafter constantly employed in embassies and other offices of trust and profit.

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There was no doubt as to his profound and varied learning, nor as to his natural quickness and dexterity. He was ready witted, smooth and fluent of tongue, fertile in expedients, courageous, resolute. He thoroughly understood the art of managing men, particularly his superiors. He knew how to govern under the appearance of obeying. He possessed exquisite tact in appreciating the characters of those far above him in rank and beneath him in intellect. He could accommodate himself with great readiness to the idiosyncrasies of sovereigns. He was a chameleon to the hand which fed him. In his intercourse with the King, he colored himself, as it were, with the King's character. He was not himself, but Philip; not the sullen, hesitating, confused Philip, however, but Philip endowed with eloquence, readiness, facility. The King ever found himself anticipated with the most delicate obsequiousness, beheld his struggling ideas change into winged words without ceasing to be his own. No flattery could be more adroit. The bishop accommodated himself to the King's epistolary habits. The silver-tongued and ready debater substituted protocols for conversation, in deference to a monarch who could not speak. He corresponded with Philip, with Margaret of Parma, with every one. He wrote folios to the Duchess when they were in the same palace. He would write letters forty pages long to the King, and send off another courier on the same day with two or three additional despatches of identical date. Such prolixity enchanted the King, whose greediness for business epistles was insatiable. The painstaking monarch toiled, pen in hand, after his wonderful minister in vain. Philip was only fit to be the bishop's clerk; yet he imagined himself to be the directing and governing power. He scrawled apostilles in the margins to prove that he had read with attention, and persuaded himself that he suggested when he scarcely even comprehended. The bishop gave advice and issued instructions when he seemed to be only receiving them. He was the substance while he affected to be the shadow. These tactics were comparatively easy and likely to be triumphant, so long as he had only to deal with inferior intellects like those of Philip and Margaret. When he should be matched against political genius and lofty character combined, it was possible that his resources might not prove so all-sufficient.

His political principles were sharply defined in reality, but smoothed over by a conventional and decorous benevolence of language, which deceived vulgar minds. He was a strict absolutist. His deference to arbitrary power was profound and slavish. God and "the master," as he always called Philip, he professed to serve with equal humility. "It seems to me," said he, in a letter of this epoch, "that I shall never be able to fulfil the obligation of slave which I owe to your majesty, to whom I am bound by so firm a chain; —at any rate, I shall never fail to struggle for that end with sincerity."



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As a matter of course, he was a firm opponent of the national rights of the Netherlands, however artfully he disguised the sharp sword of violent absolutism under a garland of flourishing phraseology. He had strenuously warned Philip against assembling the States-general before his departure for the sake of asking them for supplies. He earnestly deprecated allowing the constitutional authorities any control over the expenditures of the government, and averred that this practice under the Regent Mary had been the cause of endless trouble. It may easily be supposed that other rights were as little to his taste as the claim to vote the subsidies, a privilege which was in reality indisputable. Men who stood forth in defence of the provincial constitutions were, in his opinion, mere demagogues and hypocrites; their only motive being to curry favor with the populace. Yet these charters were, after all, sufficiently limited. The natural rights of man were topics which had never been broached. Man had only natural wrongs. None ventured to doubt that sovereignty was heaven-born, anointed of God. The rights of the Netherlands were special, not general; plural, not singular; liberties, not liberty; "privileges," not maxims. They were practical, not theoretical; historical, not philosophical. Still, such as they were, they were facts, acquisitions. They had been purchased by the blood and toil of brave ancestors; they amounted—however open to criticism upon broad humanitarian grounds, of which few at that day had ever dreamed—to a solid, substantial dyke against the arbitrary power which was ever chafing and fretting to destroy its barriers. No men were more subtle or more diligent in corroding the foundation of these bulwarks than the disciples of Granvelle. Yet one would have thought it possible to tolerate an amount of practical freedom so different from the wild, social speculations which in later days, have made both tyrants and reasonable lovers of our race tremble with apprehension. The Netherlanders claimed, mainly, the right to vote the money which was demanded in such enormous profusion from their painfully-acquired wealth; they were also unwilling to be burned alive if they objected to transubstantiation. Granvelle was most distinctly of an opposite opinion upon both topics. He strenuously deprecated the interference of the states with the subsidies, and it was by his advice that the remorseless edict of 1550, the Emperor's ordinance of blood and fire, was re-enacted, as the very first measure of Philip's reign. Such were his sentiments as to national and popular rights by representation. For the people itself—"that vile and mischievous animal called the people"—as he expressed it, he entertained a cheerful contempt.

His aptitude for managing men was very great; his capacity for affairs incontestable; but it must be always understood as the capacity for the affairs of absolutism. He was a clever, scheming politician, an adroit manager; it remained to be seen whether he had a claim to the character of a statesman. His industry was enormous. He could write fifty letters a day with his own hand. He could dictate to half a dozen amanuenses at once, on as many different subjects, in as many different languages, and send them all away exhausted.



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He was already rich. His income from his see and other livings was estimated, in 1557, at ten thousand dollars—[1885 approximation. The decimal point more places to the right would in 2000 not be out of line. D.W.]—; his property in ready money, “furniture, tapestry, and the like,” at two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. When it is considered that, as compared with our times, these sums represent a revenue of a hundred thousand, and a capital of two millions and a half in addition, it may be safely asserted that the prelate had at least made a good beginning. Besides his regular income, moreover, he had handsome receipts from that simony which was reduced to a system, and which gave him a liberal profit, generally in the shape of an annuity, upon every benefice which he conferred. He was, however, by no means satisfied. His appetite was as boundless as the sea; he was still a shameless mendicant of pecuniary favors and lucrative offices. Already, in 1552, the Emperor had roundly rebuked his greediness. “As to what you say of getting no ‘merced’ nor ‘ayuda de costa,’” said he, “‘tis merced and ayuda de costa quite sufficient, when one has fat benefices, pensions, and salaries, with which a man might manage to support himself.” The bishop, however, was not easily abashed, and he was at the epoch which now occupies us, earnestly and successfully soliciting from Philip the lucrative abbey of Saint Armand. Not that he would have accepted this preferment, “could the abbey have been annexed to any of the new bishoprics;” on the contrary, he assured the king that “to carry out so holy a work as the erection of those new sees, he would willingly have contributed even out of his own miserable pittance.”

It not being considered expedient to confiscate the abbey to any particular bishop, Philip accordingly presented it to the prelate of Arras, together with a handsome sum of money in the shape of an “ayuda de costa” beside. The thrifty bishop, who foresaw the advent of troublous times in the Netherlands, however, took care in the letters by which he sent his thanks, to instruct the King to secure the money upon crown property in Arragon, Naples, and Sicily, as matters in the provinces were beginning to look very precarious.

Such, at the commencement of the Duchess Margaret’s administration, were the characters and the previous histories of the persons into whose hands the Netherlands were entrusted. None of them have been prejudged. We have contented ourselves with stating the facts with regard to all, up to the period at which we have arrived. Their characters have been sketched, not according to subsequent developments, but as they appeared at the opening of this important epoch.

The aspect of the country and its inhabitants offered many sharp contrasts, and revealed many sources of future trouble.



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The aristocracy of the Netherlands was excessively extravagant, dissipated, and already considerably embarrassed in circumstances. It had been the policy of the Emperor and of Philip to confer high offices, civil, military, and diplomatic, upon the leading nobles, by which enormous expenses were entailed upon them, without any corresponding salaries. The case of Orange has been already alluded to, and there were many other nobles less able to afford the expense, who had been indulged with these ruinous honors. During the war, there had been, however, many chances of bettering broken fortunes. Victory brought immense prizes to the leading officers. The ransoms of so many illustrious prisoners as had graced the triumphs of Saint Quentin and Gravelines had been extremely profitable. These sources of wealth had now been cut off; yet, on the departure of the King from the Netherlands, the luxury increased instead of diminishing, "Instead of one court," said a contemporary, "you would have said that there were fifty." Nothing could be more sumptuous than the modes of life in Brussels. The household of Orange has been already painted. That of Egmont was almost as magnificent. A rivalry in hospitality and in display began among the highest nobles, and extended to those less able to maintain themselves in the contest. During the war there had been the valiant emulation of the battlefield; gentlemen had vied with each other how best to illustrate an ancient name with deeds of desperate valor, to repair the fortunes of a ruined house with the spoils of war. They now sought to surpass each other in splendid extravagance. It was an eager competition who should build the stateliest palaces, have the greatest number of noble pages and gentlemen in waiting, the most gorgeous liveries, the most hospitable tables, the most scientific cooks. There was, also, much depravity as well as extravagance. The morals of high society were loose. Gaming was practised to a frightful extent. Drunkenness was a prevailing characteristic of the higher classes. Even the Prince of Orange himself, at this period, although never addicted to habitual excess, was extremely convivial in his tastes, tolerating scenes and companions, not likely at a later day to find much favor in his sight. "We kept Saint Martin's joyously," he wrote, at about this period, to his brother, "and in the most jovial company. Brederode was one day in such a state that I thought he would certainly die, but he has now got over it." Count Brederode, soon afterwards to become so conspicuous in the early scenes of the revolt, was, in truth, most notorious for his performances in these banqueting scenes. He appeared to have vowed as uncompromising hostility to cold water as to the inquisition, and always denounced both with the same fierce and ludicrous vehemence. Their constant connection with Germany at that period did not improve the sobriety of the Netherlands' nobles. The aristocracy of



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that country, as is well known, were most “potent at potting.” “When the German finds himself sober,” said the bitter Badovaro, “he believes himself to be ill.” Gladly, since the peace, they had welcomed the opportunities afforded for many a deep carouse with their Netherlands cousins. The approaching marriage of the Prince of Orange with the Saxon princess—an episode which will soon engage our attention—gave rise to tremendous orgies. Count Schwartzburg, the Prince’s brother-in-law, and one of the negotiators of the marriage, found many occasions to strengthen the bonds of harmony between the countries by indulgence of these common tastes. “I have had many princes and counts at my table,” he wrote to Orange, “where a good deal more was drunk than eaten. The Rhinegrave’s brother fell down dead after drinking too much malvoisie; but we have had him balsamed and sent home to his family.”

These disorders among the higher ranks were in reality so extensive as to justify the biting remark of the Venetian: “The gentlemen intoxicate themselves every day,” said he, “and the ladies also; but much less than the men.” His remarks as to the morality, in other respects, of both sexes were equally sweeping, and not more complimentary.

If these were the characteristics of the most distinguished society, it may be supposed that they were reproduced with more or less intensity throughout all the more remote but concentric circles of life, as far as the seductive splendor of the court could radiate. The lesser nobles emulated the grandees, and vied with each other in splendid establishments, banquets, masquerades, and equipages. The natural consequences of such extravagance followed. Their estates were mortgaged, deeply and more deeply; then, after a few years, sold to the merchants, or rich advocates and other gentlemen of the robe, to whom they had been pledged. The more closely ruin stared the victims in the face, the more heedlessly did they plunge into excesses. “Such were the circumstances,” moralizes a Catholic writer, “to which, at an earlier period, the affairs of Catiline, Cethegus, Lentulus, and others of that faction had been reduced, when they undertook to overthrow the Roman republic.” Many of the nobles being thus embarrassed, and some even desperate, in their condition, it was thought that they were desirous of creating disturbances in the commonwealth, that the payment of just debts might be avoided, that their mortgaged lands might be wrested by main force from the low-born individuals who had become possessed of them, that, in particular, the rich abbey lands held by idle priests might be appropriated to the use of impoverished gentlemen who could turn them to so much better account. It is quite probable that interested motives such as these were not entirely inactive among a comparatively small class of gentlemen. The religious reformation in every land of Europe derived a portion of its strength

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from the opportunity it afforded to potentates and great nobles for helping themselves to Church property. No doubt many Netherlanders thought that their fortunes might be improved at the expense of the monks, and for the benefit of religion. Even without apostasy from the mother Church, they looked with longing eyes on the wealth of her favored and indolent children. They thought that the King would do well to carve a round number of handsome military commanderies out of the abbey lands, whose possessors should be bound to military service after the ancient manner of fiefs, so that a splendid cavalry, headed by the gentlemen of the country, should be ever ready to mount and ride at the royal pleasure, in place of a horde of lazy epicureans, telling beads and indulging themselves in luxurious vice.

Such views were entertained; such language often held. These circumstances and sentiments had their influence among the causes which produced the great revolt now impending. Care should be taken, however, not to exaggerate that influence. It is a prodigious mistake to refer this great historical event to sources so insufficient as the ambition of a few great nobles, and the embarrassments of a larger number of needy gentlemen. The Netherlands revolt was not an aristocratic, but a popular, although certainly not a democratic movement. It was a great episode—the longest, the darkest, the bloodiest, the most important episode in the history of the religious reformation in Europe. The nobles so conspicuous upon the surface at the outbreak, only drifted before a storm which they neither caused nor controlled. Even the most powerful and the most sagacious were tossed to and fro by the surge of great events, which, as they rolled more and more tumultuously around them, seemed to become both irresistible and unfathomable.

For the state of the people was very different from the condition of the aristocracy. The period of martyrdom had lasted long and was to last longer; but there were symptoms that it might one day be succeeded by a more active stage of popular disease. The tumults of the Netherlands were long in ripening; when the final outbreak came it would have been more philosophical to enquire, not why it had occurred, but how it could have been so long postponed. During the reign of Charles, the sixteenth century had been advancing steadily in strength as the once omnipotent Emperor lapsed into decrepitude. That extraordinary century had not dawned upon the earth only to increase the strength of absolutism and superstition. The new world had not been discovered, the ancient world reconquered, the printing-press perfected, only that the inquisition might reign undisturbed over the fairest portions of the earth, and chartered hypocrisy fatten upon its richest lands. It was impossible that the most energetic and quick-witted people of Europe should not feel sympathy with the great effort made by Christendom to shake off the

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incubus which had so long paralyzed her hands and brain. In the Netherlands, where the attachment to Rome had never been intense, where in the old times, the Bishops of Utrecht had been rather Ghibelline than Guelph, where all the earlier sects of dissenters—Waldenses, Lollards, Hussites—had found numerous converts and thousands of martyrs, it was inevitable that there should be a response from the popular heart to the deeper agitation which now reached to the very core of Christendom. In those provinces, so industrious and energetic, the disgust was likely to be most easily awakened for a system under which so many friars batted in luxury upon the toils of others, contributing nothing to the taxation, nor to the military defence of the country, exercising no productive avocation, except their trade in indulgences, and squandering in taverns and brothels the annual sums derived from their traffic in licences to commit murder, incest, and every other crime known to humanity.

The people were numerous, industrious, accustomed for centuries to a state of comparative civil freedom, and to a lively foreign trade, by which their minds were saved from the stagnation of bigotry. It was natural that they should begin to generalize, and to pass from the concrete images presented them in the Flemish monasteries to the abstract character of Rome itself. The Flemish, above all their other qualities, were a commercial nation. Commerce was the mother of their freedom, so far as they had acquired it, in civil matters. It was struggling to give birth to a larger liberty, to freedom of conscience. The provinces were situated in the very heart of Europe. The blood of a world-wide traffic was daily coursing through the thousand arteries of that water-in-woven territory. There was a mutual exchange between the Netherlands and all the world; and ideas were as liberally interchanged as goods. Truth was imported as freely as less precious merchandise. The psalms of Marot were as current as the drugs of Molucca or the diamonds of Borneo. The prohibitory measures of a despotic government could not annihilate this intellectual trade, nor could bigotry devise an effective quarantine to exclude the religious pest which lurked in every bale of merchandise, and was wafted on every breeze from East and West.

The edicts of the Emperor had been endured, but not accepted. The horrible persecution under which so many thousands had sunk had produced its inevitable result. Fertilized by all this innocent blood, the soil of the Netherlands became as a watered garden, in which liberty, civil and religious, was to flourish perennially. The scaffold had its daily victims, but did not make a single convert. The statistics of these crimes will perhaps never be accurately adjusted, nor will it be ascertained whether the famous estimate of Grotius was an exaggerated or an inadequate calculation. Those who love horrible details may find ample material.

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The chronicles contain the lists of these obscure martyrs; but their names, hardly pronounced in their life-time, sound barbarously in our ears, and will never ring through the trumpet of fame. Yet they were men who dared and suffered as much as men can dare and suffer in this world, and for the noblest cause which can inspire humanity. Fanatics they certainly were not, if fanaticism consists in show, without corresponding substance. For them all was terrible reality. The Emperor and his edicts were realities, the axe, the stake were realities, and the heroism with which men took each other by the hand and walked into the flames, or with which women sang a song of triumph while the grave-digger was shovelling the earth upon their living faces, was a reality also.

Thus, the people of the Netherlands were already pervaded, throughout the whole extent of the country, with the expanding spirit of religious reformation. It was inevitable that sooner or later an explosion was to arrive. They were placed between two great countries, where the new principles had already taken root. The Lutheranism of Germany and the Calvinism of France had each its share in producing the Netherland revolt, but a mistake is perhaps often made in estimating the relative proportion of these several influences. The Reformation first entered the provinces, not through the Augsburg, but the Huguenot gate. The fiery field-preachers from the south of France first inflamed the excitable hearts of the kindred population of the south-western Netherlands. The Walloons were the first to rebel against and the first to reconcile themselves with papal Rome, exactly as their Celtic ancestors, fifteen centuries earlier, had been foremost in the revolt against imperial Rome, and precipitate in their submission to her overshadowing power. The Batavians, slower to be moved but more steadfast, retained the impulse which they received from the same source which was already agitating their "Welsh" compatriots. There were already French preachers at Valenciennes and Tournay, to be followed, as we shall have occasion to see, by many others. Without undervaluing the influence of the German Churches, and particularly of the garrison-preaching of the German military chaplains in the Netherlands, it may be safely asserted that the early Reformers of the provinces were mainly Huguenots in their belief: The Dutch Church became, accordingly, not Lutheran, but Calvinistic, and the founder of the commonwealth hardly ceased to be a nominal Catholic before he became an adherent to the same creed.



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In the mean time, it is more natural to regard the great movement, psychologically speaking, as a whole, whether it revealed itself in France, Germany, the Netherlands, England, or Scotland. The policy of governments, national character, individual interests, and other collateral circumstances, modified the result; but the great cause was the same; the source of all the movements was elemental, natural, and single. The Reformation in Germany had been adjourned for half a century by the Augsburg religious peace, just concluded. It was held in suspense in France through the Macchiavellian policy which Catharine de Medici had just adopted, and was for several years to prosecute, of balancing one party against the other, so as to neutralize all power but her own. The great contest was accordingly transferred to the Netherlands, to be fought out for the rest of the century, while the whole of Christendom were to look anxiously for the result. From the East and from the West the clouds rolled away, leaving a comparatively bright and peaceful atmosphere, only that they might concentrate themselves with portentous blackness over the devoted soil of the Netherlands. In Germany, the princes, not the people, had conquered Rome, and to the princes, not the people, were secured the benefits of the victory—the spoils of churches, and the right to worship according to conscience. The people had the right to conform to their ruler's creed, or to depart from his land. Still, as a matter of fact, many of the princes being Reformers, a large mass of the population had acquired the privilege for their own generation and that of their children to practise that religion which they actually approved. This was a fact, and a more comfortable one than the necessity of choosing between what they considered wicked idolatry and the stake—the only election left to their Netherland brethren. In France, the accidental splinter from Montgomery's lance had deferred the Huguenot massacre for a dozen years. During the period in which the Queen Regent was resolved to play her fast and loose policy, all the persuasions of Philip and the arts of Alva were powerless to induce her to carry out the scheme which Henry had revealed to Orange in the forest of Vincennes. When the crime came at last, it was as blundering as it was bloody; at once premeditated and accidental; the isolated execution of an interregal conspiracy, existing for half a generation, yet exploding without concert; a wholesale massacre, but a piecemeal plot.

The aristocracy and the masses being thus, from a variety of causes, in this agitated and dangerous condition, what were the measures of the government?

The edict of 1550 had been re-enacted immediately after Philip's accession to sovereignty. It is necessary that the reader should be made acquainted with some of the leading provisions of this famous document, thus laid down above all the constitutions as the organic law of the land. A few plain facts, entirely without rhetorical varnish, will prove more impressive in this case than superfluous declamation. The American will judge whether the wrongs inflicted by Laud and Charles upon his Puritan ancestors were the severest which a people has had to undergo, and whether the Dutch Republic does not track its source to the same high, religious origin as that of our own commonwealth.

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“No one,” said the edict, “shall print, write, copy, keep, conceal, sell, buy or give in churches, streets, or other places, any book or writing made by Martin Luther, John Ecolampadius, Ulrich Zwinglius, Martin Bucer, John Calvin, or other heretics reprobated by the Holy Church; nor break, or otherwise injure the images of the holy virgin or canonized saints.... nor in his house hold conventicles, or illegal gatherings, or be present at any such in which the adherents of the above-mentioned heretics teach, baptize, and form conspiracies against the Holy Church and the general welfare..... Moreover, we forbid,” continues the edict, in name of the sovereign, “all lay persons to converse or dispute concerning the Holy Scriptures, openly or secretly, especially on any doubtful or difficult matters, or to read, teach, or expound the Scriptures, unless they have duly studied theology and been approved by some renowned university..... or to preach secretly, or openly, or to entertain any of the opinions of the above-mentioned heretics..... on pain, should anyone be found to have contravened any of the points above-mentioned, as perturbators of our state and of the general quiet, to be punished in the following manner.” And how were they to be punished? What was the penalty inflicted upon the man or woman who owned a hymn-book, or who hazarded the opinion in private, that Luther was not quite wrong in doubting the power of a monk to sell for money the license to commit murder or incest; or upon the parent, not being a Roman Catholic doctor of divinity, who should read Christ’s Sermon on the Mount to his children in his own parlor or shop? How were crimes like these to be visited upon the transgressor? Was it by reprimand, fine, imprisonment, banishment, or by branding on the forehead, by the cropping of the ears or the slitting of nostrils, as was practised upon the Puritan fathers of New England for their nonconformity? It was by a sharper chastisement than any of these methods. The Puritan fathers of the Dutch Republic had to struggle against a darker doom. The edict went on to provide—

“That such perturbators of the general quiet are to be executed, to wit: the men with the sword and the women to be buried alive, if they do not persist in their errors; if they do persist in them, then they are to be executed with fire; all their property in both cases being confiscated to the crown.”

Thus, the clemency of the sovereign permitted the repentant heretic to be beheaded or buried, alive, instead of being burned.

The edict further provided against all misprision of heresy by making those who failed to betray the suspected liable to the same punishment as if suspected or convicted themselves: “we forbid,” said the decree, “all persons to lodge, entertain, furnish with food, fire, or clothing, or otherwise to favor any one holden or notoriously suspected of being a heretic;..... and any one failing to denounce any such we ordain shall be liable to the above-mentioned punishments.”



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The edict went on to provide, “that if any person, being not convicted of heresy or error, but greatly suspected thereof, and therefore condemned by the spiritual judge to abjure such heresy, or by the secular magistrate to make public fine and reparation, shall again become suspected or tainted with heresy—although it should not appear that he has contravened or violated any one of our abovementioned commands— nevertheless, we do will and ordain that such person shall be considered as relapsed, and, as such, be punished with loss of life and property, without any hope of moderation or mitigation of the above-mentioned penalties.”

Furthermore, it was decreed, that “the spiritual judges, desiring to proceed against any one for the crime of heresy, shall request any of our sovereign courts or provincial councils to appoint any one of their college, or such other adjunct as the council shall select, to preside over the proceedings to be instituted against the suspected. All who know of any person tainted with heresy are required to denounce and give them up to all judges, officers of the bishops, or others having authority on the premises, on pain of being punished according to the pleasure of the judge. Likewise, all shall be obliged, who know of any place where such heretics keep themselves, to declare them to the authorities, on pain of being held as accomplices, and punished as such heretics themselves would be if apprehended.”

In order to secure the greatest number of arrests by a direct appeal to the most ignoble, but not the least powerful principle of human nature, it was ordained “that the informer, in case of conviction, should be entitled to one half the property of the accused, if not more than one hundred pounds Flemish; if more, then ten per cent. of all such excess.”

Treachery to one’s friends was encouraged by the provision, “that if any man being present at any secret conventicle, shall afterwards come forward and betray his fellow-members of the congregation, he shall receive full pardon.”

In order that neither the good people of the Netherlands, nor the judges and inquisitors should delude themselves with the notion that these fanatic decrees were only intended to inspire terror, not for practical execution, the sovereign continued to ordain—“to the end that the judges and officers may have no reason, under pretext that the penalties are too great and heavy and only devised to terrify delinquents, to punish them less severely than they deserve—that the culprits be really punished by the penalties above declared; forbidding all judges to alter or moderate the penalties in any manner forbidding any one, of whatsoever condition, to ask of us, or of any one having authority, to grant pardon, or to present any petition in favor of such heretics, exiles, or fugitives, on penalty of being declared forever incapable of civil and military office, and of being, arbitrarily punished besides.”

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Such were the leading provisions of this famous edict, originally promulgated in 1550 as a recapitulation and condensation of all the previous ordinances of the Emperor upon religious subjects. By its style and title it was a perpetual edict, and, according to one of its clauses, was to be published forever, once in every six months, in every city and village of the Netherlands. It had been promulgated at Augsburg, where the Emperor was holding a diet, upon the 25th of September. Its severity had so appalled the Dowager Queen of Hungary, that she had made a journey to Augsburg expressly to procure a mitigation of some of its provisions. The principal alteration which she was able to obtain of the Emperor was, however, in the phraseology only. As a concession to popular prejudice, the words "spiritual judges" were substituted for "inquisitors" wherever that expression had occurred in the original draft.

The edict had been re-enacted by the express advice of the Bishop of Arras, immediately on the accession of Philip: The prelate knew the value of the Emperor's name; he may have thought, also, that it would be difficult to increase the sharpness of the ordinances. "I advised the King," says Granvelle, in a letter written a few years later, "to make no change in the placards, but to proclaim the text drawn up by the Emperor, republishing the whole as the King's edict, with express insertion of the phrase, 'Carolus,' etc. I recommended this lest men should calumniate his Majesty as wishing to introduce novelties in the matter of religion."

This edict, containing the provisions which have been laid before the reader, was now to be enforced with the utmost rigor; every official personage, from the stadholders down, having received the most stringent instructions to that effect, under Philip's own hand. This was the first gift of Philip and of Granvelle to the Netherlands; of the monarch who said of himself that he had always, "from the beginning of his government, followed the path of clemency, according to his natural disposition, so well known to all the world;" of the prelate who said of himself, "that he had ever combated the opinion that any thing could be accomplished by terror, death, and violence."

During the period of the French and Papal war, it has been seen that the execution of these edicts had been permitted to slacken. It was now resumed with redoubled fury. Moreover, a new measure had increased the disaffection and dismay of the people, already sufficiently filled with apprehension. As an additional security for the supremacy of the ancient religion, it had been thought desirable that the number of bishops should be increased. There were but four sees in the Netherlands, those of Arras, Cambray, Tournay, and Utrecht. That of Utrecht was within the archiepiscopate of Cologne; the other three were within that of Rheims. It seemed proper that the prelates of the Netherlands should owe no

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extraprovincial allegiance. It was likewise thought that three millions of souls required more than four spiritual superintendents. At any rate, whatever might be the interest of the flocks, it was certain that those broad and fertile pastures would sustain more than the present number of shepherds. The wealth of the religious houses in the provinces was very great. The abbey of Afflighem alone had a revenue of fifty thousand florins, and there were many others scarcely inferior in wealth. But these institutions were comparatively independent both of King and Pope. Electing their own superiors from time to time, in nowise desirous of any change by which their ease might be disturbed and their riches endangered, the honest friars were not likely to engage in any very vigorous crusade against heresy, nor for the sake of introducing or strengthening Spanish institutions, which they knew to be abominated by the people, to take the risk, of driving all their disciples into revolt and apostacy. Comforting themselves with an Erasmian philosophy, which they thought best suited to the times, they were as little likely as the Sage of Rotterdam himself would have been, to make martyrs of themselves for the sake of extirpating Calvinism. The abbots and monks were, in political matters, very much under the influence of the great nobles, in whose company they occupied the benches of the upper house of the States-general.

Doctor Francis Sonnius had been sent on a mission to the Pope, for the purpose of representing the necessity of an increase in the episcopal force of the Netherlands. Just as the King was taking his departure, the commissioner arrived, bringing with him the Bull of Paul the Fourth, dated May 18, 1559. This was afterwards confirmed by that of Pius the Fourth, in January of the following year. The document stated that "Paul the Fourth, slave of slaves, wishing to provide for the welfare of the provinces and the eternal salvation of their inhabitants, had determined to plant in that fruitful field several new bishoprics. The enemy of mankind being abroad," said the Bull, "in so many forms at that particular time, and the Netherlands, then under the sway of that beloved son of his holiness, Philip the Catholic, being compassed about with heretic and schismatic nations, it was believed that the eternal welfare of the land was in great danger. At the period of the original establishment of Cathedral churches, the provinces had been sparsely peopled; they had now become filled to overflowing, so that the original ecclesiastical arrangement did not suffice. The harvest was plentiful, but the laborers were few."

In consideration of these and other reasons, three archbishoprics were accordingly appointed. That of Mechlin was to be principal, under which were constituted six bishoprics, those, namely, of Antwerp, Bois le Due, Rurmond, Ghent, Bruges and Ypres. That of Cambrai was second, with the four subordinate dioceses of Tournay, Arras, Saint Omer and Namur. The third archbishopric was that of Utrecht, with the five sees of Haarlem, Middelburg, Leeuwarden, Groningen and Deventer.

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The nomination to these important offices was granted to the King, subject to confirmation by the Pope. Moreover, it was ordained by the Bull that “each bishop should appoint nine additional prebendaries, who were to assist him in the matter of the inquisition throughout his bishopric, two of whom were themselves to be inquisitors.”

To sustain these two great measures, through which Philip hoped once and forever to extinguish the Netherland heresy, it was considered desirable that the Spanish troops still remaining in the provinces, should be kept there indefinitely.

The force was not large, amounting hardly to four thousand men, but they were unscrupulous, and admirably disciplined. As the entering wedge, by which a military and ecclesiastical despotism was eventually to be forced into the very heart of the land, they were invaluable. The moral effect to be hoped from the regular presence of a Spanish standing army during a time of peace in the Netherlands could hardly be exaggerated. Philip was therefore determined to employ every argument and subterfuge to detain the troops.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Burned alive if they objected to transubstantiation
German finds himself sober—he believes himself ill
Govern under the appearance of obeying
Informer, in case of conviction, should be entitled to one half
Man had only natural wrongs (No natural rights)
No calumny was too senseless to be invented
Ruinous honors
Sovereignty was heaven-born, anointed of God
That vile and mischievous animal called the people
Understood the art of managing men, particularly his superiors
Upon one day twenty-eight master cooks were dismissed
William of Nassau, Prince of Orange

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