

Rise of the Dutch Republic, the — Volume 25: 1577, part II eBook

Rise of the Dutch Republic, the — Volume 25: 1577, part II by John Lothrop Motley

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MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, Project Gutenberg Edition, Vol. 27

THE RISE OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC, 1577

By John Lothrop Motley

1855

1577 [Chapter II.]

Triumphal entrance of Don John into Brussels—Reverse of the picture —Analysis of the secret correspondence of Don John and Escovedo with Antonio Perez—Plots against the Governor's liberty—His desponding language and gloomy anticipations—Recommendation of severe measures—Position and principles of Orange and his family— His private views on the question of peace and war—His toleration to Catholics and Anabaptists censured by his friends—Death of Viglius—New mission from the Governor to Orange—Details of the Gertruydenberg conferences—Nature and results of these negotiations—Papers exchanged between the envoys and Orange—Peter Panis executed for heresy—Three parties in the Netherlands— Dissimulation of Don John—His dread of capture.



As already narrated, the soldiery had retired definitely from the country at the end of April, after which Don John made his triumphal entrance into Brussels on the 1st of May. It was long since so festive a May-day had gladdened the hearts of Brabant. So much holiday magnificence had not been seen in the Netherlands for years. A solemn procession of burghers, preceded by six thousand troops, and garnished by the free companies of archers and musketeers, in their picturesque costumes, escorted the young prince along the streets of the capital. Don John was on horseback, wrapped in a long green cloak, riding between the Bishop of Liege and the Papal nuncio. He passed beneath countless triumphal arches. Banners waved before him, on which the battle of Lepanto, and other striking scenes in his life, were emblazoned. Minstrels sang verses, poets recited odes, rhetoric clubs enacted fantastic dramas in his honor, as he rode along. Young virgins crowned him with laurels. Fair women innumerable were clustered at every window, roof, and balcony, their bright robes floating like summer clouds above him. "Softly from



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those lovely clouds," says a gallant chronicler, "descended the gentle rain of flowers." Garlands were strewed before his feet, laurelled victory sat upon his brow. The same conventional enthusiasm and decoration which had characterized the holiday marches of a thousand conventional heroes were successfully produced. The proceedings began with the church, and ended with the banquet, the day was propitious, the populace pleased, and after a brilliant festival, Don John of Austria saw himself Governor-General of the provinces.

Three days afterwards, the customary oaths, to be kept with the customary conscientiousness, were rendered at the Town House, and for a brief moment all seemed smiling and serene.

There was a reverse to the picture. In truth, no language can describe the hatred which Don John entertained for the Netherlands and all the inhabitants. He had come to the country only as a stepping-stone to the English throne, and he never spoke, in his private letters, of the provinces or the people but in terms of abhorrence. He was in a "Babylon of disgust," in a "Hell," surrounded by "drunkards," "wineskins," "scoundrels," and the like. From the moment of his arrival he had strained every nerve to retain the Spanish troops, and to send them away by sea when it should be no longer feasible to keep them. Escovedo shared in the sentiments and entered fully into the schemes of his chief. The plot, the secret enterprise, was the great cause of the advent of Don John in the uncongenial clime of Flanders. It had been, therefore, highly important, in his estimation, to set, as soon as possible, about the accomplishment of this important business. He accordingly entered into correspondence with Antonio Perez, the King's most confidential Secretary of State at that period. That the Governor was plotting no treason is sufficiently obvious from the context of his letters: At the same time, with the expansiveness of his character, when he was dealing with one whom he deemed his close and trusty friend, he occasionally made use of expressions which might be made to seem equivocal. This was still more the case with poor Escovedo. Devoted to his master, and depending most implicitly upon the honor of Perez, he indulged in language which might be tortured into a still more suspicious shape when the devilish arts of Perez and the universal distrust of Philip were tending steadily to that end. For Perez—on the whole, the boldest, deepest, and most unscrupulous villain in that pit of duplicity, the Spanish court—was engaged at that moment with Philip, in a plot to draw from Don John and Escovedo, by means of this correspondence, the proofs of a treason which the King and minister both desired to find. The letters from Spain were written with this view—those from Flanders were interpreted to that end. Every confidential letter received by Perez was immediately laid by him before the King, every letter which the

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artful demon wrote was filled with hints as to the danger of the King's learning the existence of the correspondence, and with promises of profound secrecy upon his own part, and was then immediately placed in Philip's hands, to receive his comments and criticisms, before being copied and despatched to the Netherlands. The minister was playing a bold, murderous, and treacherous game, and played it in a masterly manner. Escovedo was lured to his destruction, Don John was made to fret his heart away, and Philip—more deceived than all—was betrayed in what he considered his affections, and made the mere tool of a man as false as himself and infinitely more accomplished.

Almost immediately after the arrival of Don John in the Netherlands; he had begun to express the greatest impatience for Escovedo, who had not been able to accompany his master upon his journey, but without whose assistance the Governor could accomplish none of his undertakings. "Being a man, not an angel, I cannot do all which I have to do," said he to Perez, "without a single person in whom I can confide." He protested that he could do no more than he was then doing. He went to bed at twelve and rose at seven, without having an hour in the day in which to take his food regularly; in consequence of all which he had already had three fevers. He was plunged into a world of distrust. Every man suspected him, and he had himself no confidence in a single individual throughout that whole Babylon of disgusts. He observed to Perez that he was at liberty to show his letters to the King, or to read them in the Council, as he meant always to speak the truth in whatever he should write. He was sure that Perez would do all for the best; and there is something touching in these expressions of an honest purpose towards Philip, and of generous confidence in Perez, while the two were thus artfully attempting to inveigle him into damaging revelations. The Netherlanders certainly had small cause to love or trust their new Governor, who very sincerely detested and suspected them, but Philip had little reason to complain of his brother. "Tell me if my letters are read in Council, and what his Majesty says about them," he wrote; "and, above all, send money. I am driven to desperation at finding myself sold to this people, utterly unprovided as I am, and knowing the slow manner in which all affairs are conducted in Spain."

He informed the King that there was but one man in the Netherlands, and that he was called the Prince of Orange. To him everything was communicated, with him everything was negotiated, opinions expressed by him were implicitly followed. The Governor vividly described the misgivings with which he had placed himself in the power of the states by going to Louvain, and the reluctance with which he had consented to send away the troops. After this concession, he complained that the insolence of the states had increased. "They think that they can do



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and undo what they like, now that I am at their mercy," he wrote to Philip. "Nevertheless, I do what you command without regarding that I am sold, and that I am in great danger of losing, my liberty, a loss which I dread more than anything in the world, for I wish to remain justified before God and men." He expressed, however, no hopes as to the result. Disrespect and rudeness could be pushed no further than it had already gone, while the Prince of Orange, the actual governor of the country, considered his own preservation dependent upon maintaining things as they then were. Don John, therefore, advised the King steadily to make preparations for "a rude and terrible war," which was not to be avoided, save by a miracle, and which ought not—to find him in this unprepared state. He protested that it was impossible to exaggerate the boldness which the people felt at seeing him thus defenseless. "They say publicly," he continued, "that your Majesty is not to be feared, not being capable of carrying on a war, and having consumed and exhausted every resource. One of the greatest injuries ever inflicted upon us was by Marquis Havre, who, after his return from Spain, went about publishing everywhere the poverty of the royal exchequer. This has emboldened them to rise, for they believe that, whatever the disposition, there is no strength to chastise them. They see a proof of the correctness of their reasoning in the absence of new levies, and in the heavy arrearages due to the old troops."

He protested that he desired, at least, to be equal to the enemy, without asking, as others had usually done, for double the amount of the hostile force. He gave a glance at the foreign complications of the Netherlands, telling Philip that the estates were intriguing both with France and England. The English envoy had expressed much uneasiness at the possible departure of the Spanish troops from the Netherlands by sea, coupling it with a probable attempt to liberate the Queen of Scots. Don John, who had come to the provinces for no other purpose, and whose soul had been full of that romantic scheme, of course stoutly denied and ridiculed the idea. "Such notions," he had said to the envoy, "were subjects for laughter. If the troops were removed from the country, it was to strengthen his Majesty's force in the Levant." Mr. Rogers, much comforted, had expressed the warm friendship which Elizabeth entertained both for his Majesty and his Majesty's representative; protestations which could hardly seem very sincere, after the series of attempts at the Queen's life, undertaken so recently by his Majesty and his Majesty's former representative. Nevertheless, Don John had responded with great cordiality, had begged for Elizabeth's portrait, and had expressed the intention, if affairs went as he hoped, to go privately to England for the purpose of kissing her royal hand. Don John further informed the King, upon the envoy's authority, that Elizabeth had refused assistance to the estates, saying, if she stirred it would be to render aid to Philip, especially if France should meddle in the matter. As to France, the Governor advised Philip to hold out hopes to Alencon of espousing the Infanta, but by no means ever to fulfil such a promise, as the Duke, "besides being the shield of heretics, was unscrupulously addicted to infamous vices."



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A month later, Escovedo described the downfall of Don John's hopes and his own in dismal language.—“You are aware,” he wrote to Perez, “that a throne—a chair with a canopy—is our intention and our appetite, and all the rest is good for nothing. Having failed in our scheme, we are desperate and like madmen. All is now weariness and death.” Having expressed himself in such desponding accents, he continued, a few days afterwards, in the same lugubrious vein, “I am ready to hang myself,” said he, “and I would have done it already, if it were not for keeping myself as executioner for those who have done us so much harm. Ah, Senor Antonio Perez!” he added, “what terrible pertinacity have those devils shown in making us give up our plot. It seems as though Hell were opened and had sent forth heaps of demons to oppose our schemes.” After these vigorous ejaculations he proceeded to inform his friend that the English envoy and the estates, governed by the Prince of Orange, in whose power were the much-coveted ships, had prevented the departure of the troops by sea. “These devils complain of the expense,” said he; “but we would willingly swallow the cost if we could only get the ships.” He then described Don John as so cast down by his disappointment as to be fit for nothing, and most desirous of quitting the Netherlands as soon as possible. He had no disposition to govern these wineskins. Any one who ruled in the provinces was obliged to do exactly what they ordered him to do. Such rule was not to the taste of Don John. Without any comparison, a woman would answer the purpose better than any man, and Escovedo accordingly suggested the Empress Dowager, or Madame de Parma, or even Madame de Lorraine. He further recommended that the Spanish troops, thus forced to leave the Netherlands by land, should be employed against the heretics in France. This would be a salve for the disgrace of removing them. “It would be read in history,” continued the Secretary, “that the troops went to France in order to render assistance in a great religious necessity; while, at the same time, they will be on hand to chastise these drunkards, if necessary. To have the troops in France is almost as well as to keep them here.” He begged to be forgiven if he spoke incoherently. ’T was no wonder that he should do so, for his reason had been disordered by the blow which had been received. As for Don John, he was dying to leave the country, and although the force was small for so great a general, yet it would be well for him to lead these troops to France in person. “It would sound well in history,” said poor Escovedo, who always thought of posterity, without ever dreaming that his own private letters would be destined, after three centuries, to comment and earnest investigation; “it would sound well in history, that Don John went to restore, the French kingdom and to extirpate heretics, with six thousand foot and two thousand horse. ’Tis a better employment, too, than to govern such vile creatures as these.”



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If, however, all their plans should fail, the Secretary suggested to his friend Antonio, that he must see and make courtiers of them. He suggested that a strong administration might be formed in Spain, with Don John, the Marquis de Los Velez, and the Duke of Sesa. "With such chiefs, and with Anthony and John—[Viz., John of Escovedo and Antony Perez.]— for acolytes," he was of opinion that much good work might be done, and that Don John might become "the staff for his Majesty's old age." He implored Perez, in the most urgent language, to procure Philip's consent that his brother should leave the provinces. "Otherwise," said he, "we shall see the destruction of the friend whom we so much love! He will become seriously ill, and if so, good night to him! His body is too delicate." Escovedo protested that he would rather die himself. "In the catastrophe of Don John's death," he continued, "adieu the court, adieu the world!" He would incontinently bury himself among the mountains of San Sebastian, "preferring to dwell among wild animals than among courtiers." Escovedo, accordingly, not urged by the most disinterested motives certainly, but with as warm a friendship for his master as princes usually inspire, proceeded to urge upon Perez the necessity of, aiding the man who was able to help them. The first step was to get him out of the Netherlands. That was his constant thought, by day and night. As it would hardly be desirable for him to go alone, it seemed proper that Escovedo should, upon some pretext, be first sent to Spain. Such a pretext would be easily found, because, as Don John had accepted the government, "it would be necessary for him to do all which the rascals bade him." After these minute statements, the Secretary warned his correspondent of the necessity of secrecy, adding that he especially feared "all the court ladies, great and small, but that he in everything confided entirely in Perez."

Nearly at the same time, Don John wrote to Perez in a similar tone. "Ah, Senor Antonio," he exclaimed, "how certain is my disgrace and my misfortune. Ruined is our enterprise, after so much labor and such skilful management." He was to have commenced the work with the very Spanish soldiers who were now to be sent off by land, and he had nothing for it but to let them go, or to come to an open rupture with the states. "The last, his conscience, his duty, and the time, alike forbade." He was therefore obliged to submit to the ruin of his plans, and "could think of nothing save to turn hermit, a condition in which a man's labors, being spiritual, might not be entirely in vain." He was so overwhelmed by the blow, he said, that he was constantly thinking of an anchorite's life. That which he had been leading had become intolerable. He was not fitted for the people of the Netherlands, nor they for him. Rather than stay longer than was necessary in order to appoint his successor, there was no resolution

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he might not take, even to leaving everything and coming upon them when they least expected him, although he were to receive a bloody punishment in consequence. He, too, suggested the Empress, who had all the qualities which he lacked himself, or Madame de Parma, or Madame de Lorraine, as each of them was more fit to govern the provinces than he pretended to be. "The people," said he, plainly, "are beginning to abhor me, and I abhor them already." He entreated Perez to get him out of the country by fair means or foul, "per fas aut per nefas." His friends ought to procure his liberation, if they wished to save him from the sin of disobedience, and even of infamy. He expressed the most unbounded confidence in the honor of his correspondent, adding that if nothing else could procure his release, the letter might be shown to the King. In general, the Governor was always willing that Perez should make what changes he thought advisable in the letters for his Majesty, altering or softening whatever seemed crude or harsh, provided always the main point—that of procuring his recal—were steadily kept in view, in this, said the Governor, vehemently, my life, my honor, and my soul are all at stake; for as to the two first, I shall forfeit them both certainly, and, in my desperate condition, I shall run great risk of losing the last.

On the other hand, Perez was profuse in his professions of friendship both to Don John and to Escovedo; dilating in all his letters upon the difficulty of approaching the King upon the subject of his brother's recal, but giving occasional information that an incidental hint had been ventured which might not remain without effect. All these letters, were, however, laid before Philip, for his approval, before being despatched, and the whole subject thoroughly and perpetually discussed between them, about which Perez pretended that he hardly dared breathe a syllable to his Majesty. He had done what he could, he said, while reading, piece by piece, to the King, during a fit of the gout, the official despatches from the Netherlands, to insinuate such of the arguments used by the Governor and Escovedo as might seem admissible, but it was soon obvious that no impression could be made upon the royal mind. Perez did not urge the matter, therefore, "because," said he, "if the King should suspect that we had any other object than his interests, we should all be lost." Every effort should be made by Don John and all his friends to secure his Majesty's entire confidence, since by that course more progress would be made in their secret plans, than by proceedings concerning which the Governor wrote "with such fury and anxiety of heart." Perez warned his correspondent, therefore, most solemnly, against the danger of "striking the blow without hitting the mark," and tried to persuade him that his best interests required him to protract his residence in the provinces for a longer period. He informed Don John that his disappointment as to the English scheme had met with the warmest sympathy of the King, who had wished his brother success. "I have sold to him, at as high a price as I could," said Perez, "the magnanimity with which your Highness had sacrificed, on that occasion, a private object to his service."

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The minister held the same language, when writing, in a still more intimate and expansive style, to Escovedo. "We must avoid, by a thousand—leagues, the possibility of the King's thinking us influenced by private motives," he observed; "for we know the King and the delicacy of these matters. The only way to gain the good-will of the man is carefully to accommodate ourselves to his tastes, and to have the appearance of being occupied solely with his interests." The letter, like all the rest, being submitted to "the man" in question before being sent, was underlined by him at this paragraph and furnished with the following annotation: "but you must enlarge upon the passage which I have marked—say more, even if you are obliged to copy the letter, in order that we may see the nature of the reply."

In another letter to Escovedo, Perez enlarged upon the impropriety, the impossibility of Don John's leaving the Netherlands at that time. The King was so resolute upon that point, he said, that 'twas out of the question to suggest the matter. "We should, by so doing, only lose all credit with him in other things. You know what a terrible man he is; if he should once suspect us of having a private end in view, we should entirely miss our mark." Especially the secretary was made acquainted with the enormous error which would be committed by Don John in leaving his post.

Perez "had ventured into the water" upon the subject, he said, by praising the Governor warmly to his Majesty. The King had responded by a hearty eulogium, adding that the greatest comfort in having such a brother was, that he might be where his Majesty could not be. Therefore, it was out of the question for Don John to leave the provinces. The greatest tact was necessary, urged Perez, in dealing with the King. If he should once "suspect that we have a private purpose, we are lost, and no Demosthenes or Cicero would be able to influence him afterwards." Perez begged that his ardent attachment to Don John might be represented in the strongest colors to that high personage, who was to be assured that every effort would be made to place him at the head of affairs in Spain, according to the suggestion of Escovedo. "It would never do, however," he continued, "to let our man see that we desire it, for then we should never succeed. The only way to conquer him is to make him believe that things are going on as he wishes, not as his Highness may desire, and that we have none of us any will but the King's." Upon this passage the "terrible man" made a brief annotation: "this paragraph does admirably," he said, adding, with characteristic tautology, "and what you say in it is also excellent."

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Therefore," continued the minister, "God forbid, Master Escovedo, that you should come hither now; for we should all be lost. In the English matter, I assure you that his Majesty was extremely anxious that the plan should succeed, either through the Pope, or otherwise. That puts me in mind," added Perez, "to say, body of God! Senor Escovedo! how the devil came you to send that courier to Rome about the English plot without giving me warning?" He then proceeded to state that the papal nuncio in Spain had been much troubled in mind upon the subject, and had sent for him. "I went," said Perez, "and after he, had closed the door, and looked through the keyhole to see that there were no listeners, he informed me that he had received intelligence from the Pope as to the demands made by Don John upon his Holiness for bulls, briefs, and money to assist him in his English scheme, and that eighty thousand ducats had already been sent to him in consequence." Perez added that the nuncio was very anxious to know how the affair should best be communicated to the King, without prejudice to his Highness. He had given him the requisite advice, he continued, and had himself subsequently told the King that, no doubt, letters had been written by Don John to his Majesty, communicating these negotiations at Rome, but that probably the despatches had been forgotten. Thus, giving himself the appearance of having smoothed the matter with the King, Perez concluded with a practical suggestion of much importance—the necessity, namely, of procuring the assassination of the Prince of Orange as soon as possible. "Let it never be absent from your mind," said he, "that a good occasion must be found for finishing Orange, since, besides the service which will thus be rendered to our master, and to the states, it will be worth something to ourselves.

No apology is necessary for laying a somewhat extensive analysis of this secret correspondence before the reader. If there be any value in the examples of history, certainly few chronicles can furnish a more instructive moral. Here are a despotic king and his confidential minister laying their heads together in one cabinet; the viceroy of the most important provinces of the realm, with his secretary, deeply conferring in another, not as to the manner of advancing the great interests, moral or material, of the people over whom God has permitted them to rule, but as to the best means of arranging conspiracies against the throne and life of a neighboring sovereign, with the connivance and subsidies of the Pope. In this scheme, and in this only, the high conspirators are agreed. In every other respect, mutual suspicion and profound deceit characterize the scene. The Governor is filled with inexpressible loathing for the whole nation of "drunkards and wineskins" who are at the very moment strewing flowers in his path, and deafening his ears with shouts of welcome; the king, while expressing unbounded confidence in



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the viceroy, is doing his utmost, through the agency of the subtlest intriguer in the world, to inveigle him into confessions of treasonable schemes, and the minister is filling reams of paper with protestations of affection for the governor and secretary, with sneers at the character of the King, and with instructions as to the best method of deceiving him, and then laying the despatches before his Majesty for correction and enlargement. To complete the picture, the monarch and his minister are seen urging the necessity of murdering the foremost man of the age upon the very dupe who, within a twelvemonth, was himself to be assassinated by the self-same pair; while the arch-plotter who controls the strings of all these complicated projects is equally false to King, Governor, and Secretary, and is engaging all the others in these blind and tortuous paths, for the accomplishment of his own secret and most ignoble aims.

In reply to the letters of Perez, Don John constantly expressed the satisfaction and comfort which he derived from them in the midst of his annoyances. "He was very disconsolate," he said, "to be in that hell, and to be obliged to remain in it," now that the English plot had fallen to the ground, but he would nevertheless take patience, and wait for a more favorable conjuncture.

Escovedo expressed the opinion, however, notwithstanding all the suggestions of Perez, that the presence of Don John in the provinces had become entirely superfluous. "An old woman with her distaff," suggested the Secretary, "would be more appropriate; for there would be nothing to do, if the states had their way, save to sign everything which they should command. "If there should be war, his Highness would, of course, not abandon his post; even if permitted to do so; but otherwise, nothing could be gained by a prolonged residence. As to the scheme of assassinating the Prince of Orange, Escovedo prayed Perez to believe him incapable of negligence on the subject. "You know that the finishing of Orange is very near my heart," wrote the poor dupe to the man by whom he was himself so soon to be finished. "You may believe that I have never forgotten it, and never will forget it, until it be done. Much, and very much artifice is, however, necessary to accomplish this object. A proper person to undertake a task fraught with such well-known danger, is hard to find. Nevertheless, I will not withdraw my attention from the subject till such a person be procured, and the deed be done."

A month later, Escovedo wrote that he was about to visit Spain. He complained that he required rest in his old age, but that Perez could judge how much rest he could get in such a condition of affairs. He was, unfortunately, not aware, when he wrote, how soon his correspondent was to give him a long repose. He said, too, that the pleasure of visiting his home was counterbalanced by the necessity of travelling back to the Netherlands; but he did not know that Perez was to spare him that trouble, and to send him forth upon a much longer journey.



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The Governor-General, had, in truth, not inspired the popular party or its leader with confidence, nor did he place the least reliance upon them. While at Louvain, he had complained that a conspiracy had been formed against his life and liberty. Two French gentlemen, Bonnavet and Bellangreville, had been arrested on suspicion of a conspiracy to secure his person, and to carry him off a prisoner to Rochelle. Nothing came of the examination which followed; the prisoners were released, and an apology was sent by the states-general to the Duke of Alencon, as well for the indignity which had been offered to two of his servants, as for the suspicion which had been cast upon himself, Don John, however, was not satisfied. He persisted in asserting the existence of the conspiracy, and made no secret of his belief that the Prince of Orange was acquainted with the arrangement. As may be supposed, nothing was discovered in the course of the investigation to implicate that astute politician. The Prince had indeed secretly recommended that the Governor should be taken into custody on his first arrival, not for the purpose of assassination or personal injury, but in order to extort better terms from Philip, through the affection or respect which he might be supposed to entertain for his brother. It will be remembered that unsuccessful attempts had also been made to capture the Duke of Alva and the Commander Requesens. Such achievements comported with the spirit of the age, and although it is doubtful whether any well-concerted plot existed against the liberty of the Governor, it is certain that he entertained no doubt on the subject himself. In addition to these real or suspected designs, there was an ever-present consciousness in the mind of Don John that the enthusiasm which greeted his presence was hollow, that no real attachment was felt for his person, that his fate was leading him into a false position, that the hearts of the people were fixed upon another, and that they were never to be won by himself. Instinctively he seemed to feel a multitude of invisible threads twining into a snare around him, and the courageous heart and the bounding strength became uneasily conscious of the act in which they were to be held captive till life should be wasted quite away.

The universal affection for the rebel Prince, and the hopeless abandonment of the people to that deadliest of sins, the liberty of conscience, were alike unquestionable. "They mean to remain free, sire," wrote Escovedo to Philip, "and to live as they please. To that end they would be willing that the Turk should come to be master of the country. By the road which they are travelling, however, it will be the Prince of Orange—which comes to quite the same thing." At the same time, however, it was hoped that something might be made of this liberty of conscience. All were not equally sunk in the horrible superstition, and those who were yet faithful to Church and King might be set against their besotted



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brethren. Liberty of conscience might thus be turned to account. While two great parties were “by the ears, and pulling out each other’s hair, all might perhaps be reduced together.” His Majesty was warned, nevertheless, to expect the worst, and to believe that the country could only be cared with fire and blood. The position of the Governor was painful and perplexing. “Don John,” said Escovedo, “is thirty years old. I promise your Majesty nothing, save that if he finds himself without requisite assistance, he will take himself off when your Majesty is least thinking of such a thing.”

Nothing could be more melancholy than the tone of the Governor’s letters. He believed himself disliked, even in the midst of affectionate demonstrations. He felt compelled to use moderate counsels, although he considered moderation of no avail. He was chained to his post, even though the post could, in his opinion, be more advantageously filled by another. He would still endeavour to gain the affections of the people, although he believed them hopelessly alienated. If patience would cure the malady of the country, he professed himself capable of applying the remedy, although the medicine had so far done but little good, and although he had no very strong hopes as to its future effects. “Thus far, however,” said he, “I am but as one crying in the wilderness.” He took occasion to impress upon his Majesty, in very strong language, the necessity of money. Secret agents, spies, and spies upon spies, were more necessary than ever, and were very expensive portions of government machinery. Never was money more wanted. Nothing could be more important than, to attend faithfully to the financial suggestions of Escovedo, and Don John, therefore, urged his Majesty, again and again, not to dishonor their drafts. “Money is the gruel,” said he, “with which we must cure this sick man;” and he therefore prayed all those who wished well to his efforts, to see that his Majesty did not fail him in this important matter. Notwithstanding, however, the vigor of his efforts, and the earnestness of his intentions, he gave but little hope to his Majesty of any valuable fruit from the pacification just concluded. He saw the Prince of Orange strengthening himself, “with great fury,” in Holland and Zeeland; he knew that the Prince was backed by the Queen of England, who, notwithstanding her promises to Philip and himself, had offered her support to the rebels in case the proposed terms of peace were rejected in Holland, and he felt that “nearly the whole people was at the devotion of the Prince.”



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Don John felt more and more convinced, too, that a conspiracy was on foot against his liberty. There were so many of the one party, and so few of the other, that if he were once fairly "trussed," he affirmed that not a man among the faithful would dare to budge an inch. He therefore informed his Majesty that he was secretly meditating a retreat to some place of security; judging very properly that, if he were still his own master, he should be able to exert more influence over those who were still well disposed, than if he should suffer himself to be taken captive. A suppressed conviction that he could effect nothing, except with his sword, pierced through all his more prudent reflections. He maintained that, after all, there was no remedy for the body but to cut off the diseased parts at once, and he therefore begged his Majesty for the means of performing the operation handsomely. The general expressions which he had previously used in favor of broths and mild treatment hardly tallied with the severe amputation thus recommended. There was, in truth, a constant struggle going on between the fierceness of his inclinations and the shackles which had been imposed upon him. He already felt entirely out of place, and although he scorned to fly from his post so long as it seemed the post of danger, he was most anxious that the King should grant him his dismissal, so soon as his presence should no longer be imperiously required. He was sure that the people would never believe in his Majesty's forgiveness until the man concerning whom they entertained so much suspicion should be removed; for they saw in him only the "thunderbolt of his Majesty's wrath." Orange and England confirmed their suspicions, and sustained their malice. Should he be compelled, against his will, to remain, he gave warning that he might do something which would be matter of astonishment to everybody.

Meantime, the man in whose hands really lay the question of war and peace, sat at Middelburg, watching the deep current of events as it slowly flowed towards the precipice. The whole population of Holland and Zealand hung on his words. In approaching the realms of William the Silent, Don John felt that he had entered a charmed circle, where the talisman of his own illustrious name lost its power, where his valor was paralyzed, and his sword rusted irrevocably in its sheath. "The people here," he wrote, "are bewitched by the Prince of Orange. They love him, they fear him, and wish to have him for their master. They inform him of everything, and take no resolution without consulting him."



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While William was thus directing and animating the whole nation with his spirit, his immediate friends became more and more anxious concerning the perils to which he was exposed. His mother, who had already seen her youngest-born, Henry, her Adolphus, her chivalrous Louis, laid in their bloody graves for the cause of conscience, was most solicitous for the welfare of her "heart's-beloved lord and son," the Prince of Orange. Nevertheless, the high-spirited old dame was even more alarmed at the possibility of a peace in which that religious liberty for which so much dear blood had been, poured forth should be inadequately secured. "My heart longs for certain tidings from my lord," she wrote to William, "for methinks the peace now in prospect will prove but an oppression for soul and conscience. I trust my heart's dearly-beloved lord and son will be supported by Divine grace to do nothing against God and his own soul's salvation. 'Tis better to lose the temporal than the eternal." Thus wrote the mother of William, and we can feel the sympathetic thrill which such tender and lofty words awoke in his breast. His son, the ill-starred Philip, now for ten years long a compulsory sojourner in Spain, was not yet weaned from his affection for his noble parent, but sent messages of affection to him whenever occasion offered, while a less commendable proof of his filial affection he had lately afforded, at the expense of the luckless captain of his Spanish guard. That officer having dared in his presence to speak disrespectfully of his father, was suddenly seized about the waist by the enraged young Count, hurled out of the window, and killed stone-dead upon the spot. After this exhibition of his natural feelings, the Spanish government thought it necessary to take more subtle means to tame so turbulent a spirit. Unfortunately they proved successful.

Count John of Nassau, too, was sorely pressed for money. Six hundred thousand florins; at least, had been advanced by himself and brothers to aid the cause of Netherland freedom. Louis and himself had, unhesitatingly and immediately, turned into that sacred fund the hundred thousand crowns which the King of France had presented them for their personal use, for it was not the Prince of Orange alone who had consecrated his wealth and his life to the cause, but the members of his family, less immediately interested in the country, had thus furnished what may well be called an enormous subsidy, and one most disproportioned to their means. Not only had they given all the cash which they could command by mortgaging their lands and rents, their plate and furniture, but, in the words of Count John himself, "they had taken the chains and jewels from the necks of their wives, their children, and their mother, and had hawked them about, as if they had themselves been traders and hucksters." And yet, even now, while stooping under this prodigious debt, Count John asked not for present repayment. He only wrote to the Prince to signify his extreme embarrassment, and to request some obligation or recognition from the cities of Holland and Zeeland, whence hitherto no expression of gratitude or acknowledgment had proceeded.

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The Prince consoled and assured, as best he could, his mother, son, wife, and brother, even at the same moment that he comforted his people. He also received at this time a second and more solemn embassy from Don John. No sooner had the Governor exchanged oaths at Brussels, and been acknowledged as the representative of his Majesty, than he hastened to make another effort to conciliate the Prince. Don John saw before him only a grand seignior of lofty birth and boundless influence, who had placed himself towards the Crown in a false position, from which he might even yet be rescued; for to sacrifice the whims of a reforming and transitory religious fanaticism, which had spun itself for a moment about so clear a brain, would, he thought, prove but a trifling task for so experienced a politician as the Prince. William of Orange, on the other hand, looked upon his young antagonist as the most brilliant impersonation which had yet been seen of the foul spirit of persecution.

It will be necessary to follow, somewhat more in detail than is usually desirable, the interchange of conversations, letters, and protocols, out of which the brief but important administration of Don John was composed; for it was exactly in such manifestations that the great fight was really proceeding. Don John meant peace, wise William meant war, for he knew that no other issue was possible. Peace, in reality, was war in its worst shape. Peace would unchain every priestly tongue, and unsheath every knightly sword in the fifteen provinces against little Holland and Zeeland. He had been able to bind all the provinces together by the hastily forged chain of the Ghent treaty, and had done what he could to strengthen that union by the principle of mutual religious respect. By the arrival of Don John that work had been deranged. It had, however, been impossible for the Prince thoroughly to infuse his own ideas on the subject of toleration into the hearts of his nearest associates. He could not hope to inspire his deadly enemies with a deeper sympathy. Was he not himself the mark of obloquy among the Reformers, because of his leniency to Catholics? Nay more, was not his intimate councillor, the accomplished Saint Aldegonde, in despair because the Prince refused to exclude the Anabaptists of Holland from the rights of citizenship? At the very moment when William was straining every nerve to unite warring sects, and to persuade men's hearts into a system by which their consciences were to be laid open to God alone—at the moment when it was most necessary for the very existence of the fatherland that Catholic and Protestant should mingle their social and political relations, it was indeed a bitter disappointment for him to see wise statesmen of his own creed unable to rise to the idea of toleration. "The affair of the Anabaptists," wrote Saint Aldegonde, "has been renewed. The Prince objects to exclude them from citizenship. He answered me sharply, that their yea was equal

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to our oath, and that we should not press this matter, unless we were willing to confess that it was just for the Papists to compel us to a divine service which was against our conscience." It seems hardly credible that this sentence, containing so sublime a tribute to the character of the Prince, should have been indited as a bitter censure, and that, too, by an enlightened and accomplished Protestant. "In short," continued Saint Aldegonde, with increasing vexation, "I don't see how we can accomplish our wish in this matter. The Prince has uttered reproaches to me that our clergy are striving to obtain a mastery over consciences. He praised lately the saying of a monk who was not long ago here, that our pot had not gone to the fire as often as that of our antagonists, but that when the time came it would be black enough. In short, the Prince fears that after a few centuries the clerical tyranny on both sides will stand in this respect on the same footing."

Early in the month of May, Doctor Leoninus and Caspar Schetz, Seigneur de Grobbendonck, had been sent on a mission from the states-general to the Prince of Orange. While their negotiations were still pending, four special envoys from Don John arrived at Middelburg. To this commission was informally adjoined Leoninus, who had succeeded to the general position of Viglius. Viglius was dead. Since the memorable arrest of the State Council, he had not appeared on the scene of public affairs. The house-arrest, to which he had been compelled by a revolutionary committee, had been indefinitely prolonged by a higher power, and after a protracted illness he had noiselessly disappeared from the stage of life. There had been few more learned doctors of both laws than he. There had been few more adroit politicians, considered from his point of view. His punning device was "Vita mortalium vigilia," and he acted accordingly, but with a narrow interpretation. His life had indeed been a vigil, but it must be confessed that the vigils had been for Viglius.

[Bor, x. 812. Meteren, vi. 120.—Another motto of his was, "En groot Jurist een booser Christ;" that is to say, A good lawyer is a bad Christian.—Unfortunately his own character did not give the lie satisfactorily to the device.]

The weatherbeaten Palinurus, as he loved to call himself, had conducted his own argosy so warily that he had saved his whole cargo; and perished in port at last, while others, not sailing by his compass, were still tossed by the tempest.

The agents of Don John were the Duke of Aerschot, the Seigneur de Hierges, Seigneur de Willerval, and Doctor Meetkercke, accompanied by Doctor Andrew Gaill, one of the imperial commissioners. The two envoys from the states-general, Leoninus and Schetz, being present at Gertruydenberg were added to the deputation. An important conference took place, the details of which have been somewhat minutely preserved.



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The Prince of Orange, accompanied by Saint Aldegonde and four other councillors, encountered the seven champions from Brussels in a long debate, which was more like a passage of arms or a trial of skill than a friendly colloquy with a pacific result in prospect; for it must be remembered that the Prince of Orange did not mean peace. He had devised the Pacification of Ghent as a union of the other provinces with Holland and Zealand, against Philip. He did not intend that it should be converted into a union of the other provinces with Philip, against Holland and Zealand.

Meetkercke was the first to speak. He said that the Governor had despatched them to the Prince, to express his good intentions, to represent the fidelity with which his promises had thus far been executed, and to entreat the Prince, together with the provinces of Holland and Zealand, to unite with their sister provinces in common allegiance to his Majesty. His Highness also proposed to advise with them concerning the proper method of convoking the states-general. As soon as Meetkercke had finished his observations, the Prince demanded that the points and articles should be communicated to him in writing. Now this was precisely what the envoys preferred to omit. It was easier, and far more agreeable to expatiate in a general field of controversy,— than to remain tethered to distinct points. It was particularly in these confused conferences, where neither party was entirely sincere, that the volatile word was thought preferable to the permanent letter. Already so many watery lines had been traced, in the course of these fluctuating negotiations, that a few additional records would be if necessary, as rapidly effaced as the rest.

The commissioners, after whispering in each other's ears for a few minutes, refused to put down anything in writing. Protocols, they said, only engendered confusion.

"No, no," said the Prince, in reply, "we will have nothing except in black and white. Otherwise things will be said on both sides, which will afterwards be interpreted in different ways. Nay, it will be denied that some important points have been discussed at all. We know that by experience. Witness the solemn treaty of Ghent, which ye have tried to make fruitless, under pretence that some points, arranged by word of mouth, and not stated particularly in writing, had been intended in a different sense from the obvious one. Governments given by royal commission, for example; what point could be clearer? Nevertheless, ye have hunted up glosses and cavils to obscure the intention of the contracting parties. Ye have denied my authority over Utrecht, because not mentioned expressly in the treaty of Ghent."

"But," said one of the envoys, interrupting at this point, "neither the Council of State nor the Court of Mechlin consider Utrecht as belonging to your Excellency's government."

"Neither the Council of State," replied the Prince, "nor the Court of Mechlin have anything to do with the matter. 'Tis in my commission, and all the world knows it." He

added that instead of affairs being thrown into confusion by being reduced to writing, he was of opinion, on the contrary, that it was by that means alone they could be made perfectly clear.



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Leoninus replied, good naturedly, that there should be no difficulty upon that score, and that writings should be exchanged. In the meantime, however, he expressed the hope that the Prince would honor them with some preliminary information as to the points in which he felt aggrieved, as well as to the pledges which he and the states were inclined to demand.

“And what reason have we to hope,” cried the Prince, “that your pledges, if made; will be redeemed? That which was promised so solemnly at Ghent, and ratified by Don John and his Majesty, has not been fulfilled.”

“Of what particular point do you complain?” asked Schetz. “Wherein has the Pacification been violated?”

Hereupon the Prince launched forth upon a flowing stream of invective. He spoke to them of his son detained in distant captivity—of his own property at Breda withheld—of a thousand confiscated estates—of garrisons of German mercenaries—of ancient constitutions annihilated— of the infamous edicts nominally suspended, but actually in full vigor. He complained bitterly that the citadels, those nests and dens of tyranny, were not yet demolished. “Ye accuse me of distrust,” he cried; “but while the castles of Antwerp, Ghent, Namur, and so many more are standing, ’tis yourselves who show how utterly ye are without confidence in any permanent and peaceful arrangement.”

“And what,” asked a deputy, smoothly, “is the point which touches you most nearly? What is it that your Excellency most desires? By what means will it be possible for the government fully to give you contentment?”

“I wish,” he answered, simply, “the full execution of the Ghent Pacification. If you regard the general welfare of the land, it is well, and I thank you. If not, ’tis idle to make propositions, for I regard my country’s profit, not my own.”

Afterwards, the Prince simply repeated his demand that the Ghent treaty should be executed; adding, that after the states-general should have been assembled, it would be time to propose the necessary articles for mutual security.

Hereupon Doctor Leoninus observed that the assembly of the states-general could hardly be without danger. He alluded to the vast number of persons who would thus be convoked, to the great discrepancy of humors which would thus be manifested. Many men would be present neither discreet nor experienced. He therefore somewhat coolly suggested that it might be better to obviate the necessity of holding any general assembly at all. An amicable conference, for the sake of settling doubtful questions, would render the convocation superfluous, and save the country from the dangers by which the step would be attended. The Doctor concluded by referring to the recent assemblies of France, the only result of which had been fresh dissensions. It thus

appeared that the proposition on the part of Don John meant something very different from its apparent signification. To advise with

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the Prince as to the proper method of assembling the estates really meant, to advise with him as to the best means of preventing any such assembly. Here, certainly, was a good reason for the preference expressed by the deputies, in favor of amicable discussions over formal protocols. It might not be so easy in a written document to make the assembly, and the prevention of the assembly, appear exactly the same thing.

The Prince replied that there was a wide difference between the condition of France and of the Netherlands. Here, was one will and one intention. There, were many factions, many partialities, many family intrigues. Since it had been agreed by the Ghent treaty that certain points should be provisionally maintained and others settled by a speedy convocation of the states-general, the plainest course was to maintain the provisional points, and to summon the states-general at once. This certainly was concise and logical. It is doubtful, however, whether he were really as anxious for the assembly-general as he appeared to be. Both parties were fencing at each other, without any real intention of carrying their points, for neither wished the convocation, while both affected an eagerness for that event. The conversation proceeded.

“At least,” said an envoy, “you can tell beforehand in what you are aggrieved, and what you have to propose.”

“We are aggrieved in nothing, and we have nothing to propose,” answered the Prince, “so long as you maintain the Pacification. We demand no other pledge, and are willing to refer everything afterwards to the assembly.”

“But,” asked Schetz, “what security do you offer us that you will yourselves maintain the Pacification?”

“We are not bound to give assurances,” answered the Prince. “The Pacification is itself an assurance. ’Tis a provisional arrangement, to be maintained by both parties, until after the decision of the assembly. The Pacification must therefore be maintained or disavowed. Choose between the two. Only, if you mean still to acknowledge it, you must keep its articles. This we mean to do, and if up to the present time you have any complaint to make of our conduct, as we trust you have not, we are ready to give you satisfaction.”

“In short,” said an envoy, “you mean, after we shall have placed in your hands the government of Utrecht, Amsterdam: and other places, to deny us any pledges on your part to maintain the Pacification.”

“But,” replied the Prince, “if we are already accomplishing the Pacification, what more do you wish?”



“In this fashion,” cried the others, “after having got all that you ask, and having thus fortified yourselves more than you were ever fortified before, you will make war upon us.”

“War?” cried the Prince, “what are you afraid of? We are but a handful of people; a worm compared to the King of Spain. Moreover, ye are fifteen provinces to two. What have you to fear?”



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“Ah,” said Meetkercke, “we have seen what you could do, when you were masters of the sea. Don’t make yourselves out quite so little.”

“But,” said the Prince, “the Pacification of Ghent provides for all this. Your deputies were perfectly satisfied with the guarantees it furnished. As to making war upon you, ’tis a thing without foundation or appearance of probability. Had you believed then that you had anything to fear, you would not have forgotten to demand pledges enough. On the contrary, you saw how roundly we were dealing with you then, honestly disgarnishing the country, even before the peace had been concluded. For ourselves, although we felt the right to demand guarantees, we would not do it, for we were treating with you on terms of confidence. We declared expressly that had we been dealing with the King, we should have exacted stricter pledges. As to demanding them of us at the moment, ’tis nonsense. We have neither the means of assailing you, nor do we deem it expedient to do so.”

“To say the truth,” replied Schetz, “we are really confident that you will not make war upon us. On the other hand, however, we see you spreading your religion daily, instead of keeping it confined within your provinces. What assurance do you give us that, after all your demand shall have been accorded, you will make no innovation in religion.”

“The assurance which we give you,” answered the Prince, “is that we will really accomplish the Pacification.”

“But,” persisted Schetz, “do you fairly, promise to submit to all which the states-general shall ordain, as well on this point of religious exercise in Holland and Zeeland, as on all the others?”

This was a home thrust. The Prince parried it for a while. In his secret thoughts he had no expectation or desire that the states-general, summoned in a solemn manner by the Governor-General, on the basis of the memorable assembly before which was enacted the grand ceremony of the imperial abdication, would ever hold their session, and although he did not anticipate the prohibition by such assembly, should it take place, of the Reformed worship in Holland and Zeeland, he did not intend to submit to it, even should it be made.

“I cannot tell,” said he, accordingly, in reply to the last question, “for ye have yourselves already broken and violated the Pacification; having made an accord with Don John without our consent, and having already received him as Governor.”

“So that you don’t mean,” replied Schetz, “to accept the decision of the states?”

“I don’t say that,” returned the Prince, continuing to parry; “it is possible that we might accept it; it is possible that we might not. We are no longer in our entire rights, as we were at the time of our first submission at Ghent.”



“But we will make you whole,” said Schetz.

“That you cannot do,” replied the Prince, “for you have broken the Pacification all to pieces. We have nothing, therefore, to expect from the states, but to be condemned off-hand.”

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“You don’t mean, then,” repeated Schetz, “to submit to the estates touching the exercise of religion?”

“No, we do not!” replied the Prince, driven into a corner at last, and striking out in his turn. “We certainly do not. To tell you the truth, we see that you intend our extirpation, and we don’t mean to be extirpated.”

“Ho!” said the Duke of Aerschot, “there is nobody who wishes that.”

“Indeed, but you do,” said the Prince. “We have submitted ourselves to you in good faith, and you now would compel us and all the world to maintain exclusively the Catholic religion. This cannot be done except by extirpating us.”

A long, learned, vehement discussion upon abstract points, between Saint Aldegonde, Leoninus, and Doctor Gaill, then ensued, during which the Prince, who had satisfied himself as to the result of the conference, retired from the apartment. He afterwards had a private convention with Schetz and Leoninus, in which he reproached them with their inclination to reduce their fatherland to slavery. He also took occasion to remark to Hiergea, that it was a duty to content the people; that whatever might be accomplished for them was durable, whereas the will of kings was perishing. He told the Duke of Aerschot that if Utrecht were not restored, he would take it by force. He warned the Duke that to trust the King was to risk his head. He, at least, would never repose confidence in him, having been deceived too often. The King cherished the maxim, ‘hereticis non est servanda fides;’ as for himself he was ‘calbo y calbanista,’ and meant to die so.

The formal interchange of documents soon afterwards took place. The conversation thus held between the different parties shows, however, the exact position of affairs. There was no change in the intentions of either; Reformers or Royalists. Philip and his representatives still contended for two points, and claimed the praise of moderation that their demands were so few in number. They were willing to concede everything, save the unlimited authority of the King and the exclusive maintenance of the Catholic religion. The Prince of Orange, on his side, claimed two points also—the ancient constitutions of the country and religious freedom. It was obvious enough that the contest was, the same in reality, as it had ever been. No approximation had been made towards reconciling absolutism with national liberty, persecution with toleration. The Pacification of Ghent had been a step in advance. That Treaty opened the door to civil and religious liberty, but it was an agreement among the provinces, not a compact between the people and the monarch. By the casuists of Brussels and the licentiates of Louvain, it had, to be sure, been dogmatically pronounced orthodox, and had been confirmed by royal edict. To believe, however, that his Catholic Majesty had faith in the dogmas propounded, was as absurd as to believe in the dogmas themselves. If the Ghent Pacification really had made no breach in royal and Roman infallibility, then the efforts of Orange and the exultation of the Reformers had indeed been idle.



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The envoys accordingly, in obedience to their instructions, made a formal statement to the Prince of Orange and the states of Holland and Zealand, on the part of Don John. They alluded to the departure of the Spaniards, as if that alone had fulfilled every duty and authorized every claim. They therefore demanded the immediate publication in Holland and Zealand of the Perpetual Edict. They insisted on the immediate discontinuance of all hostile attempts to reduce Amsterdam to the jurisdiction of Orange; required the Prince to abandon his pretensions to Utrecht, and denounced the efforts making by him and his partisans to diffuse their heretical doctrines through the other provinces. They observed, in conclusion, that the general question of religion was not to be handled, because reserved for the consideration of the states-general, according to the treaty of Ghent.

The reply, delivered on the following day by the Prince of Orange and the deputies, maintained that the Perpetual Edict was widely different from the Pacification of Ghent, which it affected to uphold; that the promises to abstain from all violation of the ancient constitutions had not been kept; that the German troops had not been dismissed, that the property of the Prince in the Netherlands and Burgundy had not been restored, that his son was detained in captivity, that the government of Utrecht was withheld from him, that the charters and constitution of the country, instead of being extended, had been contracted, and that the Governor had claimed the right to convoke the states-general at his pleasure, in violation of the ancient right to assemble at their own. The document further complained that the adherents of the Reformed religion were not allowed to frequent the different provinces in freedom, according to the stipulations of Ghent; that Don John, notwithstanding all these short-comings, had been acknowledged as Governor-General, without the consent of the Prince; that he was surrounded with a train of Spaniards Italians, and other foreigners—Gonzaga, Escovedo, and the like—as well as by renegade Netherlanders like Tassis, by whom he was unduly influenced against the country and the people, and by whom a “back door was held constantly open” to the admission of evils innumerable. Finally, it was asserted that, by means of this last act of union, a new form of inquisition had been introduced, and one which was much more cruel than the old system; inasmuch as the Spanish Inquisition did not take information against men: except upon suspicion, whereas, by the new process, all the world would be examined as to their conscience and religion, under pretence of maintaining the union.

Such was the result of this second mission to the Prince of Orange on the part of the Governor-General. Don John never sent another. The swords were now fairly measured between the antagonists, and the scabbard was soon to be thrown away. A few weeks afterwards, the Governor wrote to Philip that there was nothing in the world which William of Orange so much abhorred as his Majesty; adding, with Castillian exaggeration, that if the Prince could drink the King’s blood he would do so with great pleasure.



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Don John, being thus seated in the saddle, had a moment's leisure to look around him. It was but a moment, for he had small confidence in the aspect of affairs, but one of his first acts after assuming the government afforded a proof of the interpretation which he had adopted of the Ghent Pacification. An edict was issued, addressed to all bishops, "heretic-masters," and provincial councils, commanding the strict enforcement of the Canons of Trent, and other ecclesiastical decrees. These authorities were summoned instantly to take increased heed, of the flocks under their charge, "and to protect them from the ravening wolves which were seeking to devour them."

The measure bore instant fruit. A wretched tailor of Mechlin, Peter Penis by name, an honest man, but a heretic, was arrested upon the charge of having preached or exhorted at a meeting in that city. He confessed that he had been present at the meeting, but denied that he had preached. He was then required to denounce the others who had been present, and the men who had actually officiated. He refused, and was condemned to death. The Prince of Orange, while the process was pending, wrote an earnest letter to the Council of Mechlin, imploring them not now to rekindle the fires of religious persecution. His appeal was in vain. The poor tailor was beheaded at Mechlin on the 15th of June, the Conqueror of Lepanto being present at the execution, and adding dignity to the scene. Thus, at the moment when William of Orange was protecting the Anabaptists of Middelburg in their rights of citizenship, even while they refused its obligations, the son of the Emperor was dipping his hands in the blood of a poor wretch who had done no harm but to listen to a prayer without denouncing the preacher. The most intimate friends of the Prince were offended with his liberality. The imperial shade of Don John's father might have risen to approve the son who had so dutifully revived his bloody edicts and his ruthless policy.

Three parties were now fairly in existence: the nobles, who hated the Spaniards, but who were disposed to hold themselves aloof from the people; the adherents of Don John, commonly called "Johanists;" and the partisans of the Prince of Orange—for William the Silent had always felt the necessity of leaning for support on something more substantial than the court party, a reed shaken by the wind, and failing always when most relied upon. His efforts were constant to elevate the middle class, to build up a strong third party which should unite much of the substantial wealth and intelligence of the land, drawing constantly from the people, and deriving strength from national enthusiasm—a party which should include nearly all the political capacity of the country; and his efforts were successful. No doubt the Governor and his Secretary were right when they said the people of the Netherlands were inclined to brook the Turk as easily as the Spaniard for their master, and that their hearts were in reality devoted to the Prince of Orange.

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As to the grandees, they were mostly of those who “sought to swim between two waters,” according to the Prince’s expression. There were but few unswerving supporters of the Spanish rule, like the Berlaymont and the Tassis families. The rest veered daily with the veering wind. Aerschot, the great chief of the Catholic party, was but a cringing courtier, false and fawning both to Don John and the Prince. He sought to play a leading part in a great epoch; he only distinguished himself by courting and betraying all parties, and being thrown away by all. His son and brother were hardly more respectable. The Prince knew how little dependence could be placed on such allies, even although they had signed and sworn the Ghent Pacification. He was also aware how little it was the intention of the Governor to be bound by that famous Treaty. The Spanish troops had been, indeed, disbanded, but there were still, between ten and fifteen thousand German mercenaries in the service of the King; these were stationed in different important places, and held firm possession of the citadels. The great keys of the country were still in the hands of the Spaniards. Aerschot, indeed, governed the castle of Antwerp, in room of Sancho d’Avila, but how much more friendly would Aerschot be than Avila, when interest prompted him to sustain Don John against the Prince?

Meanwhile; the estates, according to their contract, were straining every nerve to raise the requisite sum for the payment of the German troops. Equitable offers were made, by which the soldiers were to receive a certain proportion of the arrears due to them in merchandize, and the remainder in cash. The arrangement was rejected, at the secret instance of Don John. While the Governor affected an ingenuous desire to aid the estates in their efforts to free themselves from the remaining portion of this incumbrance, he was secretly tampering with the leading German officers, in order to prevent their acceptance of any offered terms. He persuaded these military chiefs that a conspiracy existed, by which they were not only to be deprived of their wages but of their lives. He warned them to heed no promises, to accept no terms. Convincing them that he, and he only, was their friend, he arranged secret plans by which they should assist him in taking the fortresses of the country into still more secure possession, for he was not more inclined to trust to the Aerschots and the Havres than was the Prince himself.

The Governor lived in considerable danger, and in still greater dread of capture, if not of assassination. His imagination, excited by endless tales of ambush and half-discovered conspiracies, saw armed soldiers behind every bush; a pitfall in every street. Had not the redoubtable Alva been nearly made a captive? Did not Louis of Nassau nearly entrap the Grand Commander? No doubt the Prince of Orange was desirous of accomplishing a feat by which he would be placed in regard to Philip



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on the vantage ground which the King had obtained by his seizure of Count Van Buren, nor did Don John need for warnings coming from sources far from obscure. In May, the Viscount De Gand had forced his way to his bedside in the dead of night; and waking him from his sleep, had assured him, with great solemnity, that his life was not worth a pin's purchase if he remained in Brussels. He was aware, he said, of a conspiracy by which both his liberty and his life were endangered, and assured him that in immediate flight lay his only safety.

The Governor fled to Mechlin, where the same warnings were soon afterwards renewed, for the solemn sacrifice of Peter Panis, the poor preaching tailor of that city, had not been enough to strike terror to the hearts of all the Netherlanders. One day, toward the end of June, the Duke of Aerschot, riding out with Don John, gave him a circumstantial account of plots, old and new, whose existence he had discovered or invented, and he showed a copy of a secret letter, written by the Prince of Orange to the estates, recommending the forcible seizure of his Highness. It is true that the Duke was, at that period and for long after, upon terms of the most "fraternal friendship" with the Prince, and was in the habit of signing himself "his very affectionate brother and cordial friend to serve him," yet this did not prevent him from accomplishing what he deemed his duty, in secretly denouncing his plans. It is also true that he, at the same time, gave the Prince private information concerning the government, and sent him intercepted letters from his enemies, thus easing his conscience on both sides, and trimming his sails to every wind which might blow. The Duke now, however, reminded his Highness of the contumely with which he had been treated at Brussels, of the insolent threats with which the citizens had pursued his servants and secretaries even to the very door of his palace. He assured him that the same feeling existed at Mechlin, and that neither himself nor family were much safer there than in the capital, a plot being fully organized for securing his person. The conspirators, he said, were openly supported by a large political party who called themselves anti-Johanists, and who clothed themselves in symbolic costume, as had been done by the disaffected in the days of Cardinal Granvelle. He assured the Governor that nearly all the members of the states-general were implicated in these schemes. "And what becomes, then, of their promises?" asked Don John. "That for their promises!" cried the Duke, snapping his fingers; "no man in the land feels bound by engagements now." The Governor demanded the object of the states in thus seeking to deprive him of his liberty. The Duke informed him that it was to hold him in captivity until they had compelled him to sign every paper which they chose to lay before him. Such things had been done in the Netherlands in former days, the Duke observed, as he proceeded to narrate how a predecessor

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of his Highness and a prince of the land, after having been compelled to sign innumerable documents, had been, in conclusion, tossed out of the windows of his own palace, with all his retinue, to perish upon the pikes of an insurgent mob below. The Governor protested that it did not become the son of Charles the Fifth and the representative of his Catholic Majesty to hear such intimations a second time. After his return, he brooded over what had been said to him for a few days, and he then broke up his establishment at Mechlin, selling off his superfluous furniture and even the wine in his cellars. Thus showing that his absence, both from Brussels and Mechlin, was to be a prolonged one, he took advantage of an unforeseen occurrence again to remove his residence.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A good lawyer is a bad Christian
Claimed the praise of moderation that their demands were so few
Confused conferences, where neither party was entirely sincere
Customary oaths, to be kept with the customary conscientiousness
Deadliest of sins, the liberty of conscience
I regard my country's profit, not my own
Made no breach in royal and Roman infallibility
Neither wished the convocation, while both affected an eagerness
Our pot had not gone to the fire as often
Peace, in reality, was war in its worst shape
Those who "sought to swim between two waters"
Volatile word was thought preferable to the permanent letter

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