

Rise of the Dutch Republic, the — Volume 30: 1579-80 eBook

Rise of the Dutch Republic, the — Volume 30: 1579-80 by John Lothrop Motley

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MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, Project Gutenberg Edition, Vol. 32

THE RISE OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC, 1579-1580

By John Lothrop Motley

1855

CHAPTER II.

Parma's feint upon Antwerp—He invests Maestricht—Deputation and letters from the states-general, from Brussels, and from Parma, to the Walloon provinces—Active negotiations by Orange and by Farnese —Walloon envoys in Parma's camp before Maestricht—Festivities—The Treaty of Reconciliation—Rejoicings of the royalist party —Comedy enacted at the Paris theatres—Religious tumults in Antwerp, Utrecht, and other cities—Religious Peace enforced by Orange— Philip Egmont's unsuccessful attempt upon Brussels—Siege of Maestricht—Failure at the Tongres gate—Mining and countermining— Partial destruction of the Tongres ravelin—Simultaneous attack upon the Tongres and Bolls-le-Duo gates—The Spaniards repulsed with great loss—Gradual encroachments of the besiegers—Bloody contests —The town taken—Horrible massacre—Triumphal entrance and solemn thanksgiving—Calumnious attacks upon



Orange—Renewed troubles in Ghent—Imbue and Dathenus—The presence of the Prince solicited— Coup d'etat of Imbue—Order restored, and Imbue expelled by Orange

The political movements in both directions were to be hastened by the military operations of the opening season. On the night of the 2nd of March, 1579, the Prince of Parma made a demonstration against Antwerp. A body of three thousand Scotch and English, lying at Borgerhout, was rapidly driven in, and a warm skirmish ensued, directly under the walls of the city. The Prince of Orange, with the Archduke Matthias, being in Antwerp at the time, remained on the fortifications; superintending the action, and Parma was obliged to retire after an hour or two of sharp fighting, with a loss of four hundred men. This demonstration was, however, only a feint. His real design was upon Maestricht; before which important city he appeared in great force, ten days afterwards, when he was least expected.



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Well fortified, surrounded by a broad and deep moat; built upon both sides of the Meuse, upon the right bank of which river, however, the portion of the town was so inconsiderable that it was merely called the village of Wyk, this key to the German gate of the Netherlands was, unfortunately, in brave but feeble hands. The garrison was hardly one thousand strong; the trained bands of burghers amounted to twelve hundred more; while between three and four thousand peasants; who had taken refuge within the city walls, did excellent service as sappers and miners. Parma, on the other hand, had appeared before the walls with twenty thousand men; to which number he received constant reinforcements. The Bishop of Liege, too, had sent him four thousand pioneers—a most important service; for mining and countermining was to decide the fate of Maestricht.

Early in January the royalists had surprised the strong chateau of Carpen, in the neighbourhood of the city, upon which occasion the garrison were all hanged by moonlight on the trees in the orchard. The commandant shared their fate; and it is a curious fact that he had, precisely a year previously, hanged the royalist captain, Blomaert, on the same spot, who, with the rope around his neck, had foretold a like doom to his destroyer.

The Prince of Orange, feeling the danger of Maestricht, lost no time in warning the states to the necessary measures, imploring them “not to fall asleep in the shade of a peace negotiation,” while meantime Parma threw two bridges over the Meuse, above and below the city, and then invested the place so closely that all communication was absolutely suspended. Letters could pass to and fro only at extreme peril to the messengers, and all possibility of reinforcing the city at the moment was cut off.

While this eventful siege was proceeding, the negotiations with the Walloons were ripening. The siege and the conferences went hand in hand. Besides the secret arrangements already described for the separation of the Walloon provinces, there had been much earnest and eloquent remonstrance on the part of the states-general and of Orange—many solemn embassies and public appeals. As usual, the Pacification of Ghent was the two-sided shield which hung between the parties to cover or to justify the blows which each dealt at the other. There is no doubt as to the real opinion entertained concerning that famous treaty by the royal party. “Through the peace of Ghent,” said Saint Vaast, “all our woes have been brought upon us.” La Motte informed Parma that it was necessary to pretend a respect for the Pacification, however, on account of its popularity, but that it was well understood by the leaders of the Walloon movement, that the intention was to restore the system of Charles the Fifth. Parma signified his consent to make use of that treaty as a basis, “provided always it were interpreted healthily, and not dislocated by cavillations and

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sinister interpolations, as had been done by the Prince of Orange.” The Malcontent generals of the Walloon troops were inexpressibly anxious lest the cause of religion should be endangered; but the arguments by which Parma convinced those military casuists as to the compatibility of the Ghent peace with sound doctrine have already been exhibited. The influence of the reconciled nobles was brought to bear with fatal effect upon the states of Artois, Hainault, and of a portion of French Flanders. The Gallic element in their blood, and an intense attachment to the Roman ceremonial, which distinguished the Walloon population from their Batavian brethren, were used successfully by the wily Parma to destroy the unity of the revolted Netherlands. Moreover, the King offered good terms. The monarch, feeling safe on the religious point, was willing to make liberal promises upon the political questions. In truth, the great grievance of which the Walloons complained was the insolence and intolerable outrages of the foreign soldiers. This, they said, had alone made them malcontent. It was; therefore, obviously the cue of Parma to promise the immediate departure of the troops. This could be done the more easily, as he had no intention of keeping the promise.

Meantime the efforts of Orange, and of the states-general, where his influence was still paramount, were unceasing to counteract the policy of Parma. A deputation was appointed by the generality to visit the estates of the Walloon provinces. Another was sent by the authorities of Brussels. The Marquis of Havre, with several colleagues on behalf of the states-general, waited upon the Viscount of Ghent, by whom they were received with extreme insolence. He glared upon them, without moving, as they were admitted to his presence; “looking like a dead man, from whom the soul had entirely departed.” Recovering afterwards from this stony trance of indignation, he demanded a sight of their instructions. This they courteously refused, as they were accredited not to him, but to the states of Artois. At this he fell into a violent passion, and threatened them with signal chastisement for daring to come thither with so treasonable a purpose. In short, according to their own expression; he treated them “as if they had been rogues and vagabonds.” The Marquis of Havre, high-born though he was, had been sufficiently used to such conduct. The man who had successively served and betrayed every party, who had been the obsequious friend and the avowed enemy of Don John within the same fortnight, and who had been able to swallow and inwardly digest many an insult from that fiery warrior, was even fain to brook the insolence of Robert Melun.



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The papers which the deputation had brought were finally laid before the states of Artois, and received replies as prompt and bitter as the addresses were earnest and eloquent. The Walloons, when summoned to hold to that aegis of national unity, the Ghent peace, replied that it was not they, but the heretic portion of the states-general, who were for dashing it to the ground. The Ghent treaty was never intended to impair the supremacy of the Catholic religion, said those provinces, which were already on the point of separating for ever from the rest. The Ghent treaty was intended expressly to destroy the inquisition and the placards, answered the national-party. Moreover, the “very marrow of that treaty” was the-departure of the foreign soldiers, who were even then overrunning the land. The Walloons answered that Alexander had expressly conceded the withdrawal of the troops. “Believe not the fluting and the piping of the crafty foe,” urged the patriots. “Promises are made profusely enough—but only to lure you to perdition. Your enemies allow you to slake your hunger and thirst with this idle hope of the troops’ departure, but you are still in fetters, although the chain be of Spanish pinchbeck, which you mistake for gold.” “’Tis not we,” cried the Walloons, “who wish to separate from the generality; ’tis the generality which separates from us. We had rather die the death than not maintain the union. In the very same breath, however, they boasted of the excellent terms which the monarch was offering, and of their strong inclination to accept them.” “Kings, struggling to recover a lost authority, always promise golden mountains and every sort of miracles,” replied the patriots; but the warning was uttered in vain.

Meantime the deputation from the city of Brussels arrived on the 28th of March at Mons, in Hainault, where they were received with great courtesy by Count de Lalain, governor of the province. The enthusiasm with which he had espoused the cause of Queen Margaret and her brother Anjou had cooled, but the Count received the Brussels envoys with a kindness in marked contrast with the brutality of Melun. He made many fine speeches—protesting his attachment to, the union, for which he was ready to shed the last drop of his blood—entertained the deputies at dinner, proposed toasts to the prosperity of the united provinces, and dismissed his guests at last with many flowery professions. After dancing attendance for a few days, however, upon the estates of the Walloon provinces, both sets of deputies were warned to take their instant departure as mischief-makers and rebels. They returned, accordingly, to Brussels, bringing the written answers which the estates had vouchsafed to send.



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The states-general, too, inspired by William of Orange, addressed a solemn appeal to their sister provinces, thus about to abjure the bonds of relationship for ever. It seemed right, once for all, to grapple with the Ghent Pacification for the last time, and to strike a final blow in defence of that large statesmanlike interpretation, which alone could make the treaty live. This was done eloquently and logically. The Walloons were reminded that at the epoch of the Ghent peace the number of Reformers outside of Holland and Zealand was supposed small. Now the new religion had spread its roots through the whole land, and innumerable multitudes desired its exercise. If Holland and Zealand chose to reestablish the Catholic worship within their borders, they could manifestly do so without violating the treaty of Ghent. Why then was it not competent to other provinces, with equal allegiance to the treaty, to sanction the Reformed religion within their limits?

Parma, on his part, publicly invited the states-general, by letter, to sustain the Ghent treaty by accepting the terms offered to the Walloons, and by restoring the system of the Emperor Charles, of very lofty memory. To this superfluous invitation the states-general replied, on the 19th of March, that it had been the system of the Emperor Charles; of lofty memory, to maintain the supremacy of Catholicism and of Majesty in the Netherlands by burning Netherlanders—a custom which the states, with common accord, had thought it desirable to do away with.

In various fervently-written appeals by Orange, by the states-general, and by other bodies, the wavering provinces were warned against seduction. They were reminded that the Prince of Parma was using this minor negotiation “as a second string to his bow;” that nothing could be more puerile than to suppose the Spaniards capable, after securing Maestricht, of sending away their troops thus “deserting the bride in the midst of the honeymoon.” They expressed astonishment at being invited to abandon the great and general treaty which had been made upon the theatre of the whole world by the intervention of the principal princes of Christendom, in order to partake in underhand negotiation with the commissioners of Parma-men, “who, it would not be denied, were felons and traitors.” They warned their brethren not to embark on the enemy’s ships in the dark, for that, while chaffering as to the price of the voyage, they would find that the false pilots had hoisted sail and borne them away in the night. In vain would they then seek to reach the shore again. The example of La Motte and others, “bird-limed with Spanish gold,” should be salutary for all-men who were now driven forward with a whip, laughed to scorn by their new masters, and forced to drink the bitter draught of humiliation along with the sweet poison of bribery. They were warned to study well the intercepted letters of Curiel, in order fully to fathom the deep designs and secret contempt of the enemy.



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Such having been the result of the negotiations between the states-general and the Walloon provinces, a strong deputation now went forth from those provinces, towards the end of April, to hold a final colloquy with Parma, then already busied with the investment of Maestricht. They were met upon the road with great ceremony, and escorted into the presence of Farnese with drum, trumpet, and flaunting banners. He received them with stately affability, in a magnificently decorated pavilion, carelessly inviting them to a repast, which he called an afternoon's lunch, but which proved a most sumptuous and splendidly appointed entertainment. This "trifling foolish banquet" finished, the deputies were escorted, with great military parade, to the lodgings which had been provided for them in a neighbouring village. During the period of their visit, all the chief officers of the army and the household were directed to entertain the Walloons with showy festivals, dinners, suppers, dances, and carousals of all kinds. At one of the most brilliant of these revels—a magnificent ball, to which all the matrons and maids of the whole country round had been bidden—the Prince of Parma himself unexpectedly made his appearance. He gently rebuked the entertainers for indulging in such splendid hospitality without, at least, permitting him to partake of it. Charmingly affable to the ladies assembled in the ball-room, courteous, but slightly reserved, towards the Walloon envoys, he excited the admiration of all by the splendid decorum of his manners. As he moved through the halls, modulating his steps in grave cadence to the music, the dignity and grace of his deportment seemed truly majestic; but when he actually danced a measure himself the enthusiasm was at its height. They should, indeed, be rustics, cried the Walloon envoys in a breath, not to give the hand of fellowship at once to a Prince so condescending and amiable. The exclamation seemed to embody the general wish, and to foreshadow a speedy conclusion.

Very soon afterwards a preliminary accord was signed between the King's government and the Walloon provinces. The provisions on his Majesty's part were sufficiently liberal. The religious question furnishing no obstacle, it was comparatively easy for Philip to appear benignant. It was stipulated that the provincial privileges should be respected; that a member of the King's own family, legitimately born, should always be Governor-General, and that the foreign troops should be immediately withdrawn. The official exchange and ratification of this treaty were delayed till the 4th of the following September, but the news that, the reconciliation had been definitely settled soon spread through the country. The Catholics were elated, the patriots dismayed. Orange—the "Prince of Darkness," as the Walloons of the day were fond of calling him—still unwilling to despair, reluctant to accept this dismemberment, which he foresaw was to be a perpetual one, of his



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beloved country, addressed the most passionate and solemn adjurations to the Walloon provinces, and to their military chieftains. He offered all his children as hostages for his good faith in keeping sacredly any covenant which his Catholic countrymen might be willing to close with him. It was in vain. The step was irretrievably taken; religious bigotry, patrician jealousy, and wholesale bribery, had severed the Netherlands in twain for ever. The friends of Romanism, the enemies of civil and religious liberty, exulted from one end of Christendom to the other, and it was recognized that Parma had, indeed, achieved a victory which although bloodless, was as important to the cause of absolutism as any which even his sword was likely to achieve.

The joy of the Catholic party in Paris manifested itself in a variety of ways. At the principal theatre an uncouth pantomime was exhibited, in which his Catholic Majesty was introduced upon the stage, leading by a halter a sleek cow, typifying the Netherlands. The animal by a sudden effort, broke the cord, and capered wildly about. Alexander of Parma hastened to fasten the fragments together, while sundry personages, representing the states-general, seized her by the horns, some leaping upon her back, others calling upon the bystanders to assist in holding the restive beast. The Emperor, the King of France, and the Queen of England—which last personage was observed now to smile upon one party, now to affect deep sympathy with the other—remained stationary; but the Duke of Alencon rushed upon the stage, and caught the cow by the tail. The Prince of Orange and Hans Casimir then appeared with a bucket, and set themselves busily to milk her, when Alexander again seized the halter. The cow gave a plunge, upset the pail, prostrated Casimir with one kick and Orange with another, and then followed Parma with docility as he led her back to Philip. This seems not very “admirable fooling,” but it was highly relished by the polite Parisians of the sixteenth century, and has been thought worthy of record by classical historians.

The Walloon accord was an auspicious prelude, in the eyes of the friends of absolutism, to the negotiations which were opened in the month of May, at Cologne. Before sketching, as rapidly as possible, those celebrated but barren conferences, it is necessary, for the sake of unity in the narrative, to cast a glance at certain synchronical events in different parts of the Netherlands.

The success attained by the Catholic party in the Walloon negotiations had caused a corresponding bitterness in the hearts of the Reformers throughout the country. As usual, bitterness had begot bitterness; intolerance engendered intolerance. On the 28th of May, 1579, as the Catholics of Antwerp were celebrating the Ommegang—the same festival which had been the exciting cause of the memorable tumults of the year sixty-five—the irritation of the populace could not be repressed.



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The mob rose in its wrath to put down these demonstrations—which, taken in connection with recent events, seemed ill-timed and insolent—of a religion whose votaries then formed but a small minority of the Antwerp citizens. There was a great tumult. Two persons were killed. The Archduke Matthias, who was himself in the Cathedral of Notre Dame assisting at the ceremony, was in danger of his life. The well known cry of “paapen uit” (out with the papists) resounded through the streets, and the priests and monks were all hustled out of town amid a tempest of execrations. Orange did his utmost to quell the mutiny, nor were his efforts fruitless—for the uproar, although seditious and disgraceful, was hardly sanguinary. Next day the Prince summoned the magistracy, the Monday council, the guild officers, with all the chief municipal functionaries, and expressed his indignation in decided terms. He protested that if such tumults, originating in that very spirit of intolerance which he most deplored, could not be repressed for the future, he was determined to resign his offices, and no longer to affect authority in a city where his counsels were derided. The magistrates, alarmed at his threats, and sympathizing with his anger, implored him not to desert them, protesting that if he should resign his offices, they would instantly lay down their, own. An ordinance was then drawn up and immediately, proclaimed at the Town House, permitting the Catholics to re-enter the city, and to enjoy the privileges of religious worship. At the same time, it was announced that a new draft of a religious peace would be forthwith issued for the adoption of every city.

A similar tumult, arising from the same cause, at Utrecht, was attended with the like result. On the other hand, the city of Brussels was astonished by a feeble and unsuccessful attempts at treason, made by a youth who bore an illustrious name. Philip, Count of Egmont, eldest son of the unfortunate Lamoral, had command of a regiment in the service of the states. He had, besides, a small body of cavalry in immediate attendance upon his person. He had for some time felt inclined—like the Lalains, Meluns, La Mottes, and others to reconcile himself with the Crown, and he wisely thought that the terms accorded to him would be more liberal if he could bring the capital of Brabant with him as a peace offering to his Majesty. His residence was in Brussels. His regiment was stationed outside the gates, but in the immediate neighbourhood of the city. On the morning of the 4th of June he despatched his troopers— as had been frequently his custom—on various errands into the country. On their return, after having summoned the regiment, they easily mastered and butchered the guard at the gate through which they had re-entered, supplying their place with men from their own ranks. The Egmont regiment then came marching through the gate in good order—Count Philip at their head—and proceeded to station

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themselves upon the Grande Place in the centre of the city. All this was at dawn of day. The burghers, who looked forth from their houses, were astounded and perplexed by this movement at so unwonted an hour, and hastened to seize their weapons. Egmont sent a detachment to take possession of the palace. He was too late. Colonel Van der Tympel, commandant of the city, had been beforehand with him, had got his troops under arms, and now secured the rebellious detachment. Meantime, the alarm had spread. Armed burghers came from every house, and barricades were hastily thrown up across every one of the narrow streets leading to the square. Every issue was closed. Not a man of Egmont's adherents—if he indeed had adherents among the townsmen—dared to show his face. The young traitor and his whole regiment, drawn up on the Grande Place, were completely entrapped. He had not taken Brussels, but assuredly Brussels had taken him. All day long he was kept in his self-elected prison and pillory, bursting with rage and shame. His soldiers, who were without meat or drink, became insolent and uproarious, and he was doomed also to hear the bitter and well-merited taunts of the towns-people. A thousand stinging gibes, suggested by his name and the locality, were mercilessly launched upon him. He was asked if he came thither to seek his father's head. He was reminded that the morrow was the anniversary of that father's murder upon that very spot— by those with whom the son would now make his treasonable peace. He was bidden to tear up but a few stones from the pavement beneath his feet, that the hero's blood might cry out against him from the very ground.

Tears of shame and fury sprang from the young man's eyes as he listened to these biting sarcasms, but the night closed upon that memorable square, and still the Count was a prisoner. Eleven years before, the summer stars had looked down upon a more dense array of armed men within that place. The preparations for the pompous and dramatic execution, which on the morrow was to startle all Europe, had been carried out in the midst of a hushed and overawed population; and now, on the very anniversary of the midnight in which that scaffold had risen, should not the grand spectre of the victim have started from the grave to chide his traitorous son?

Thus for a whole day and night was the baffled conspirator compelled to remain in the ignominious position which he had selected for himself. On the morning of the 5th of June he was permitted to depart, by a somewhat inexplicable indulgence, together with all his followers. He rode out of the gate at early dawn, contemptible and crest-fallen, at the head of his regiment of traitors, and shortly afterwards—pillaging and levying black mail as he went—made his way to Montigny's quarters.



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It might have seemed natural, after such an exhibition, that Philip Egmont should accept his character of renegade, and confess his intention of reconciling himself with the murderers of his father. On the contrary, he addressed a letter to the magistracy of Brussels, denying with vehemence “any intention of joining the party of the pernicious Spaniards,” warmly protesting his zeal and affection for the states, and denouncing the “perverse inventors of these calumnies against him as the worst enemies of the poor afflicted country.” The magistrates replied by expressing their inability to comprehend how the Count, who had suffered villainous wrongs from the Spaniards, such as he could never sufficiently deplore or avenge, should ever be willing to enslave himself, to those tyrants. Nevertheless, exactly at the moment of this correspondence, Egmont was in close negotiation with Spain, having fifteen days before the date of his letter to the Brussels senate, conveyed to Parma his resolution to “embrace the cause of his Majesty and the ancient religion”—an intention which he vaunted himself to have proved “by cutting the throats of three companies of states’ soldiers at Nivelles, Grandmont, and Ninove.” Parma had already written to communicate the intelligence to the King, and to beg encouragement for the Count. In September, the monarch wrote a letter to Egmont, full of gratitude and promises, to which the Count replied by expressing lively gratification that his Majesty was pleased with his little services, by avowing profound attachment to Church and King, and by asking eagerly for money, together with the government of Alost. He soon became singularly importunate for rewards and promotion, demanding, among other posts, the command of the “band of ordnance,” which had been his father’s. Parma, in reply, was prodigal of promises, reminding the young noble “that he was serving a sovereign who well knew how to reward the distinguished exploits of his subjects.” Such was the language of Philip the Second and his Governor to the son of the headless hero of Saint Quentin; such was the fawning obsequiousness with which Egmont could kiss that royal hand reeking with his father’s blood.

Meanwhile the siege of Maestricht had been advancing with steady precision. To military minds of that epoch—perhaps of later ages—this achievement of Parma seemed a masterpiece of art. The city commanded the Upper Meuse, and was the gate into Germany. It contained thirty-four thousand inhabitants. An army, numbering almost as many Souls, was brought against it; and the number of deaths by which its capture was at last effected, was probably equal to that of a moiety of the population. To the technical mind, the siege no doubt seemed a beautiful creation of human intelligence. To the honest student of history, to the lover of human progress, such a manifestation of intellect seems a sufficiently sad exhibition. Given, a city with strong walls and towers, a slender garrison and a devoted population on one side; a consummate chieftain on the other, with an army of veterans at his back, no interruption to fear, and a long season to work in; it would not seem to an unsophisticated mind a very lofty exploit for the soldier to carry the city at the end of four months’ hard labor.



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The investment of Maestricht was commenced upon the 12th of March, 1579. In the city, besides the population, there were two thousand peasants, both men and women, a garrison of one thousand soldiers; and a trained burgher guard; numbering about twelve hundred. The name of the military commandant was Melchior. Sebastian Tappin, a Lorraine officer of much experience and bravery, was next in command, and was, in truth, the principal director of the operations. He had been despatched thither by the Prince of Orange, to serve under La None, who was to have commanded in Maestricht, but had been unable to enter the city. Feeling that the siege was to be a close one, and knowing how much depended upon the issue, Sebastian lost no time in making every needful preparation for coming events. The walls were strengthened everywhere; shafts were sunk, preparatory to the countermining operations which were soon to become necessary; the moat was deepened and cleared, and the forts near the gates were put in thorough repair. On the other hand, Alexander had encircled the city, and had thrown two bridges, well fortified, across the river. There were six gates to the town, each provided with ravelins, and there was a doubt in what direction the first attack should be made. Opinions wavered between the gate of Bois-le-Duc, next the river, and that of Tongres on the south-western side, but it was finally decided to attempt the gate of Tongres.

Over against that point the platforms were accordingly constructed, and after a heavy cannonade from forty-six great guns continued for several days, it was thought, by the 25th of March, that an impression had been made upon the city. A portion of the brick curtain had crumbled, but through the breach was seen a massive terreplein, well moated, which, after six thousand shots already delivered on the outer wall—still remained uninjured. It was recognized that the gate of Tongres was not the most assailable, but rather the strongest portion of the defences, and Alexander therefore determined to shift his batteries to the gate of Bois-le-Duc. At the same time, the attempt upon that of Tongres was to be varied, but not abandoned. Four thousand miners, who had passed half their lives in burrowing for coal in that anthracite region, had been furnished by the Bishop of Liege, and this force was now set to their subterranean work. A mine having been opened at a distance, the besiegers slowly worked their way towards the Tongres gate, while at the same time the more ostensible operations were in the opposite direction. The besieged had their miners also, for the peasants in the city had been used to work with mattock and pickaxe. The women, too, enrolled themselves into companies, chose their officers—or “mine-mistresses,” as they were called—and did good service daily in the caverns of the earth. Thus a whole army of gnomes were noiselessly at work to destroy and defend the beleaguered city. The mine advanced

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towards the gate; the besieged delved deeper, and intersected it with a transverse excavation, and the contending forces met daily, in deadly encounter, within these sepulchral gangways. Many stratagems were, mutually employed. The citizens secretly constructed a dam across the Spanish mine, and then deluged their foe with hogsheads of boiling water. Hundreds were thus scalded to death. They heaped branches and light fagots in the hostile mine, set fire to the pile, and blew thick volumes of smoke along the passage with organ-bellows brought from the churches for the purpose. Many were thus suffocated. The discomfited besiegers abandoned the mine where they had met with such able countermining, and sunk another shaft, at midnight, in secret, at a long distance from the Tongres gate. Still towards that point, however, they burrowed in the darkness; guiding themselves to their destination with magnet, plumbline and level, as the mariner crosses the trackless ocean with compass and chart. They worked their way, unobstructed, till they arrived at their subterranean port, directly beneath the doomed ravelin. Here they constructed a spacious chamber, supporting it with columns, and making all their architectural arrangements with as much precision and elegance as if their object had been purely esthetic. Coffers full of powder, to an enormous amount, were then placed in every direction across the floor, the train was laid, and Parma informed that all was ready. Alexander, having already arrayed the troops destined for the assault, then proceeded in person to the mouth of the shaft, and gave orders to spring the mine. The explosion was prodigious; a part of the tower fell with the concussion, and the moat was choked with heaps of rubbish. The assailants sprang across the passage thus afforded, and mastered the ruined portion of the fort. They were met in the breach, however, by the unflinching defenders of the city, and, after a fierce combat of some hours, were obliged to retire; remaining masters, however, of the moat, and of the ruined portion of the ravelin. This was upon the 3rd of April.

Five days afterwards, a general assault was ordered. A new mine having been already constructed towards the Tongres ravelin, and a faithful cannonade having been kept up for a fortnight against the Bois-le-Duc gate, it was thought advisable to attack at both points at once. On the 8th of April, accordingly, after uniting in prayer, and listening to a speech from Alexander Farnese, the great mass of the Spanish army advanced to the breach. The moat had been rendered practicable in many places by the heaps of rubbish with which it had been encumbered, and by the fagots and earth with which it had been filled by the besiegers. The action at the Bois-le-Duc gate was exceedingly warm. The tried veterans of Spain, Italy, and Burgundy, were met face to face by the burghers of Maestricht, together with their wives and children.



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All were armed to the teeth, and fought with what seemed superhuman valor. The women, fierce as tigresses defending their young, swarmed to the walls, and fought in the foremost rank. They threw pails of boiling water on the besiegers, they hurled firebrands in their faces; they quoited blazing pitch-hoops with, unerring dexterity about their necks. The rustics too, armed with their ponderous flails, worked as cheerfully at this bloody harvesting as if thrashing their corn at home. Heartily did they winnow the ranks of the royalists who came to butcher them, and thick and fast fell the invaders, fighting bravely, but baffled by these novel weapons used by peasant and woman, coming to the aid of the sword; spear, and musket of trained soldiery. More than a thousand had fallen at the Bois-le-Duc gate, and still fresh besiegers mounted the breach, only to be beaten back, or to add to the mangled heap of the slain. At the Tongres gate, meanwhile, the assault had fared no better. A herald had been despatched thither in hot haste, to shout at the top of his lungs, "Santiago! Santiago! the Lombards have the gate of Bois-le-Duc!" while the same stratagem was employed to persuade the invaders on the other side of the town that their comrades had forced the gate of Tongres. The soldiers, animated by this fiction, and advancing with fury against the famous ravelin; which had been but partly destroyed, were received with a broadside from the great guns of the unshattered portion, and by a rattling discharge of musketry from the walls. They wavered a little. At the same instant the new mine—which was to have been sprung between the ravelin and the gate, but which had been secretly countermined by the townspeople, exploded with a horrible concussion, at a moment least expected by the besiegers. Five hundred royalists were blown into the air. Ortiz, a Spanish captain of engineers, who had been inspecting the excavations, was thrown up bodily from the subterranean depth. He fell back again instantly into the same cavern, and was buried by the returning shower of earth which had spouted from the mine. Forty-five years afterwards, in digging for the foundations of a new wall, his skeleton was found. Clad in complete armor, the helmet and cuirass still sound, with his gold chain around his neck, and his mattock and pickaxe at his feet, the soldier lay un mutilated, seeming almost capable of resuming his part in the same war which—even after his half century's sleep—was still ravaging the land.

Five hundred of the Spaniards, perished by the explosion, but none of the defenders were injured, for they, had been prepared. Recovering from the momentary panic, the besiegers again rushed to the attack. The battle raged. Six hundred and seventy officers, commissioned or non-commissioned, had already fallen, more than half mortally wounded. Four thousand royalists, horribly mutilated, lay on the ground. It was time that the day's work should be finished,

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for Maastricht was not to be carried upon that occasion. The best and bravest of the surviving officers besought Parma to put an end to the carnage by recalling the troops; but the gladiator heart of the commander was heated, not softened, by the savage spectacle. "Go back to the breach," he cried, "and tell the soldiers that Alexander is coming to lead them into the city in triumph, or to perish with his comrades." He rushed forward with the fury which had marked him when he boarded Mustapha's galley at Lepanto; but all the generals who were near him threw themselves upon his path, and implored him to desist from such insensate rashness. Their expostulations would have probably been in vain, had not his confidential friend, Serbelloni, interposed with something like paternal authority, reminding him of the strict commands contained in his Majesty's recent letters, that the Governor-General, to whom so much was entrusted, should refrain, on pain of the royal displeasure, from exposing his life like a common fighter.

Alexander reluctantly gave the signal of recal at last, and accepted the defeat. For the future he determined to rely more upon the sapper and miner, and less upon the superiority of veterans to townsmen and rustics in open fight. Sure to carry the city at last, according to line and rule, determined to pass the whole summer beneath the walls, rather than abandon his purpose, he calmly proceeded to complete his circumvallations. A chain of eleven forts upon the left, and five upon the right side of the Meuse, the whole connected by a continuous wall, afforded him perfect security against interruptions, and allowed him to continue the siege at leisure. His numerous army was well housed and amply supplied, and he had built a strong and populous city in order to destroy another. Relief was impossible. But a few thousand men were now required to defend Farnese's improvised town, while the bulk of his army could be marched at any moment against an advancing foe. A force of seven thousand, painfully collected by the Prince of Orange, moved towards the place, under command of Hohenlo and John of Nassau, but struck with wonder at what they saw, the leaders recognized the hopelessness of attempting relief. Maastricht was surrounded by a second Maastricht.

The efforts of Orange were now necessarily directed towards obtaining, if possible, a truce of a few weeks from the negotiators at Cologne. Parma was too crafty, however, to allow Terranova to consent, and as the Duke disclaimed any power over the direct question of peace and war, the siege proceeded. The gates of Bois-le-Duc and Tongres having thus far resisted the force brought against them, the scene was changed to the gate of Brussels. This adjoined that of Tongres, was farthest from the river, and faced westwardly towards the open country. Here the besieged had constructed an additional ravelin, which they had christened, in derision, "Parma,"

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and against which the batteries of Parma were now brought to bear. Alexander erected a platform of great extent and strength directly opposite the new work, and after a severe and constant cannonade from this elevation, followed by a bloody action, the "Parma" fort was carried. One thousand, at least, of the defenders fell, as, forced gradually from one defence to another, they saw the triple walls of their ravelin crumble successively before their eyes. The tower was absolutely annihilated before they abandoned its ruins, and retired within their last defences. Alexander being now master of the fosa and the defences of the Brussels gate, drew up a large force on both aides of that portal, along the margin of the moat, and began mining beneath the inner wall of the city.

Meantime, the garrison had been reduced to four hundred soldiers, nearly all of whom were wounded: wearied and driven to despair, these soldiers were willing to treat. The townspeople, however, answered the proposition with a shout of fury, and protested that they would destroy the garrison with their own hands if such an insinuation were repeated. Sebastian Tappin, too, encouraged them with the hope of speedy relief, and held out to them the wretched consequences of trusting to the mercy of their foes. The garrison took heart again, while that of the burghers and their wives had, never faltered. Their main hope now was in a fortification which they had been constructing inside the Brussels gate—a demilune of considerable strength. Behind it was a breastwork of turf and masonry, to serve as a last bulwark when every other defence should be forced. The whole had been surrounded by a foss thirty feet in depth, and the besiegers, as they mounted upon the breaches which they had at last effected in the outer curtain, near the Brussels gate, saw for the first time this new fortification.

The general condition of the defences, and the disposition of the inhabitants, had been revealed to Alexander by a deserter from the town. Against this last fortress the last efforts of the foe were now directed. Alexander ordered a bridge to be thrown across the city moat. As it was sixty feet wide and as many deep, and lay directly beneath the guns of the new demilune, the enterprise was sufficiently hazardous. Alexander led the way in person, with a mallet in one hand and a mattock in the other. Two men fell dead instantly, one on his right hand and his left, while he calmly commenced, in his own person, the driving of the first piles for the bridge. His soldiers fell fast around him. Count Berlaymont was shot dead, many officers of distinction were killed or wounded, but no soldier dared recoil while their chieftain wrought amid the bullets like a common pioneer. Alexander, unharmed, as by a miracle, never left the spot till the bridge had been constructed, and till ten great guns had been carried across it, and pointed against the demilune. The battery was



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opened, the mines previously excavated were sprung, a part of the demilune was blown into the air, and the assailants sprang into the breach. Again a furious hand-to-hand conflict succeeded; again, after an obstinate resistance, the townspeople were forced to yield. Slowly abandoning the shattered fort, they retired behind the breastwork in its rear—their innermost and last defence. To this barrier they clung as to a spar in shipwreck, and here at last they stood at bay, prepared dearly to sell their lives.

The breastwork, being still strong, was not attempted upon that day. The assailants were recalled, and in the mean time a herald was sent by Parma, highly applauding the courage of the defenders, and begging them to surrender at discretion. They answered the messenger with words of haughty defiance, and, rushing in a mass to the breastwork, began with spade, pickax, and trowel, to add to its strength. Here all the able-bodied men of the town took up their permanent position, and here they ate, drank, and slept upon their posts, while their food was brought to them by the women and children.

A little letter, “written in a fine neat handwriting,” now mysteriously arrived in the city, encouraging them in the name of the Archduke and the Prince of Orange, and assuring them of relief within fourteen days. A brief animation was thus produced, attended by a corresponding languor upon the part of the besiegers, for Alexander had been lying ill with a fever since the day when the demilune had been carried. From his sick bed he rebuked his officers severely that a temporary breastwork, huddled together by boors and burghers in the midst of a siege, should prove an insurmountable obstacle to men who had carried everything before them. The morrow was the festival of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and it was meet that so sacred a day should be hallowed by a Christian and Apostolic victory. Saint Peter would be there with, his keys to open the gate; Saint Paul would lead them to battle with his invincible sword. Orders were given accordingly, and the assault was assigned for the following morning.

Meantime, the guards were strengthened and commanded to be more than usually watchful. The injunction had a remarkable effect. At the dead of night, a soldier of the watch was going his rounds on the outside of the breastwork, listening, if perchance he might catch, as was not unusual, a portion of the conversation among the beleaguered burghers within. Prying about on every side, he at last discovered a chink in the wall, the result, doubtless, of the last cannonade, and hitherto overlooked. He enlarged the gap with his fingers, and finally made an opening wide enough to admit his person. He crept boldly through, and looked around in the clear starlight. The sentinels were all slumbering at their posts. He advanced stealthily in the dusky streets. Not a watchman was going his rounds. Soldiers, burghers, children, women, exhausted by incessant fatigue, were all asleep. Not a footfall was heard; not a whisper broke the silence; it seemed a city of the dead. The soldier crept back through the crevice, and hastened to apprise his superiors of his adventure.



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Alexander, forthwith instructed as to the condition of the city, at once ordered the assault, and the last wall was suddenly stormed before the morning broke. The soldiers forced their way through the breach or sprang over the breastwork, and surprised at last—in its sleep—the city which had so long and vigorously defended itself. The burghers, startled from their slumber, bewildered, unprepared, found themselves engaged in unequal conflict with alert and savage foes. The battle, as usual when Netherland towns were surprised by Philip's soldiers, soon changed to a massacre. The townspeople rushed hither and thither, but there was neither escape, nor means of resisting an enemy who now poured into the town by thousands upon thousands. An indiscriminate slaughter succeeded: Women, old men, and children, had all been combatants; and all, therefore, had incurred the vengeance of the conquerors. A cry of agony arose which was distinctly heard at the distance of a league. Mothers took their infants in their arms, and threw themselves by hundreds into the Meuse—and against women the blood-thirst of the assailants was especially directed. Females who had fought daily in the trenches, who had delved in mines and mustered on the battlements, had unsexed themselves in the opinion of those whose comrades they had helped to destroy. It was nothing that they had laid aside the weakness of women in order to defend all that was holy and dear to them on earth. It was sufficient that many a Spanish, Burgundian, or Italian mercenary had died by their hands. Women were pursued from house to house, and hurled from roof and window. They were hunted into the river; they were torn limb from limb in the streets. Men and children fared no better; but the heart sickens at the oft-repeated tale. Horrors, alas, were commonplaces in the Netherlands. Cruelty too monstrous for description, too vast to be believed by a mind not familiar with the outrages practised by the soldiers of Spain and Italy upon their heretic fellow-creatures, were now committed afresh in the streets of Maestricht.

On the first day four thousand men and women were slaughtered. The massacre lasted two days longer; nor would it be an exaggerated estimate, if we assume that the amount of victims upon the two last days was equal to half the number sacrificed on the first. It was said that not four hundred citizens were left alive after the termination of the siege. These soon wandered away, their places being supplied by a rabble rout of Walloon sutlers and vagabonds. Maestricht was depopulated as well as captured. The booty obtained after the massacre was very large, for the city had been very thriving, its cloth manufacture extensive and important. Sebastian Tappin, the heroic defender of the place, had been shot through the shoulder at the taking of the Parma ravelin, and had been afterwards severely injured at the capture of the demilune. At the fall of the city he was mortally wounded, and carried a prisoner to the hostile camp, only to expire. The governor, Swartsenberg, also lost his life.



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Alexander, on the contrary, was raised from his sick bed with the joyful tidings of victory, and as soon as he could be moved, made his appearance in the city. Seated in a splendid chair of state, borne aloft on the shoulders of his veterans, with a golden canopy above his head to protect him from the summer's sun, attended by the officers of his staff, who were decked by his special command in, their gayest trappings, escorted by his body-guard, followed by his "plumed troops," to the number of twenty thousand, surrounded by all the vanities of war, the hero made his stately entrance into the town. His way led through deserted streets of shattered houses. The pavement ran red with blood. Headless corpses, mangled limbs—an obscene mass of wretchedness and corruption, were spread on every side, and tainted the summer air. Through the thriving city which, in the course of four months Alexander had converted into a slaughter-house and a solitude, the pompous procession took its course to the church of Saint Servais. Here humble thanks were offered to the God of Love, and to Jesus of Nazareth, for this new victory. Especially was gratitude expressed to the Apostles Paul and Peter; upon whose festival, and by whose sword and key the crowning mercy had been accomplished,—and by whose special agency eight thousand heretics now lay unburied in the streets. These acts of piety performed, the triumphal procession returned to the camp, where, soon afterwards, the joyful news of Alexander Farnese's entire convalescence was proclaimed.

The Prince of Orange, as usual, was blamed for the tragical termination to this long drama. All that one man could do, he had done to awaken his countrymen to the importance of the siege. He had repeatedly brought the subject solemnly before the assembly, and implored for Maestricht, almost upon his knees. Lukewarm and parsimonious, the states had responded to his eloquent appeals with wrangling addressee and insufficient votes. With a special subsidy obtained in April and May, he had organized the slight attempt at relief, which was all which he had been empowered to make, but which proved entirely unsuccessful. Now that the massacre to be averted was accomplished, men were loud in reproof, who had been silent, and passive while there was yet time to speak and to work. It was the Prince, they said, who had delivered so many thousands of his fellow-countrymen to, butchery. To save himself, they insinuated he was now plotting to deliver the land into the power of the treacherous Frenchman, and he alone, they asserted, was the insuperable obstacle to an honorable peace with Spain.

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A letter, brought by an unknown messenger, was laid before the states' assembly, in full session, and sent to the clerk's table, to be read aloud. After the first few sentences, that functionary faltered in his recital. Several members also peremptorily ordered him to stop; for the letter proved to be a violent and calumnious libel upon Orange, together with a strong appeal in favor of the peace propositions then under debate at Cologne. The Prince alone, of all the assembly, preserving his tranquillity, ordered the document to be brought to him, and forthwith read it aloud himself, from beginning to end. Afterwards, he took occasion to express his mind concerning the ceaseless calumnies of which he was the mark. He especially alluded to the oft-repeated accusation that he was the only obstacle to peace, and repeated that he was ready at that moment to leave the land, and to close his lips for ever, if by so doing he could benefit his country, and restore her to honorable repose. The outcry, with the protestations of attachment and confidence which at once broke from the assembly, convinced him, however, that he was deeply rooted in the hearts of all patriotic Netherlanders, and that it was beyond the power of slanderers to loosen his hold upon their affection.

Meantime, his efforts had again and again been demanded to restore order in that abode of anarchy, the city of Ghent. After his visit during the previous winter, and the consequent departure of John Casimir to the palatinate, the pacific arrangements made by the Prince had for a short time held good. Early in March, however, that master of misrule, John van Imbize, had once more excited the populace to sedition. Again the property of Catholics, clerical and lay, was plundered; again the persons of Catholics, of every degree, were maltreated. The magistrates, with first senator Imbize at their head, rather encouraged than rebuked the disorder; but Orange, as soon as he received official intelligence of the event, hastened to address them in the words of earnest warning and wisdom. He allowed that the inhabitants of the province had reason to be discontented with the presence and the misconduct of the Walloon soldiery. He granted that violence and the menaces of a foreign tyranny made it difficult for honest burghers to gain a livelihood. At the same time he expressed astonishment that reasonable men should seek a remedy for such evils in tumults which would necessarily bring utter destruction upon the land. "It was," he observed, "as if a patient should from impatience, tear the bandages from his wounds, and, like a maniac, instead of allowing himself to be cured, plunge a dagger into his own heart."



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These exhortations exerted a wholesome effect for a moment, but matters soon went from bad to worse. Imbize, fearing the influence of the Prince, indulged in open-mouthed abuse of a man whose character he was unable even to comprehend. He accused him of intriguing with France for his own benefit, of being a Papist in disguise, of desiring to establish what he called a “religious peace,” merely to restore Roman idolatry. In all these insane ravings, the demagogue was most ably seconded by the ex-monk. Incessant and unlicensed were the invectives hurled by Peter Dathenus from his pulpit upon William the Silent’s head. He denounced him—as he had often done before—as an atheist in heart; as a man who changed his religion as easily as his garments; as a man who knew no God but state expediency, which was the idol of his worship; a mere politician who would tear his shirt from his back and throw it in the fire, if he thought it were tainted with religion.

Such witless but vehement denunciation from a preacher who was both popular and comparatively sincere, could, not but affect the imagination of the weaker portion of his hearers. The faction of Imbize became triumphant. Ryhove—the ruffian whose hands were stained with the recent blood of Visch and Hessels—rather did damage than service to the cause of order. He opposed himself to the demagogue who was prating daily of Greece, Rome, and Geneva, while his clerical associate was denouncing William of Orange, but he opposed himself in vain. An attempt to secure the person of Imbize failed, but by the influence of Ryhove, however, a messenger was despatched to Antwerp in the name of a considerable portion of the community of Ghent. The counsel and the presence of the man to whom all hearts in every part of the Netherlands instinctively turned in the hour of need, were once more invoked.

The Prince again addressed them in language which none but he could employ with such effect. He told them that his life, passed in service and sacrifice, ought to witness sufficiently for his fidelity. Nevertheless, he thought it necessary—in view of the calumnies which were circulated—to repeat once more his sentiment that no treaty of peace, war, or alliance, ought to be negotiated, save with the consent of the people. His course in Holland and Zeeland had proved, he said, his willingness always to consult the wishes of his countrymen. As for the matter of religion it was almost incredible that there should be any who doubted the zeal which he bore the religion for which he had suffered so much. “I desire,” he continued, fervently, “that men should compare that which has been done by my accusers during ten years past with that which I have done. In that which touches the true advancement of religion, I will yield to no man. They who so boldly accuse me have no liberty of speech, save that which has been acquired for them by the blood of my kindred, by my labors, and my excessive expenditures. To me they owe it that they dare speak at all.” This letter, (which was dated on the 24th of July, 1579) contained an assurance that the writer was about to visit Ghent.



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On the following day, Imbize executed a coup d'etat. Having a body of near two thousand soldiers at his disposal, he suddenly secured the persons of all the magistrates and other notable individuals not friendly to his policy, and then, in violation of all law, set up a new board of eighteen irresponsible functionaries, according to a list prepared by himself alone. This was his way of enforcing the democratic liberty of Greece, Rome, and Geneva, which was so near to his heart. A proclamation, in fourteen articles, was forthwith issued, justifying this arbitrary proceeding. It was declared that the object of the somewhat irregular measure "was to prevent the establishment of the religious peace, which was merely a method of replanting uprooted papistry and the extirpated tyranny of Spain." Although the arrangement's had not been made in strict accordance with formal usage and ceremony, yet they were defended upon the ground that it had been impossible, by other means, to maintain their ancient liberties and their religious freedom. At the same time a pamphlet, already prepared for the occasion by Dathenus, was extensively circulated. In this production the arbitrary revolution effected by a demagogue was defended with effrontery, while the character, of Orange, was loaded with customary abuse. To prevent the traitor from coming to Ghent, and establishing what he called his religious peace, these irregular measures, it was urged, had been wisely taken.

Such were the efforts of John Imbize—such the calumnies of Peter Dathenus—in order to counteract the patriotic endeavors of the Prince; but neither the ruffianism of John nor the libels of Peter were destined upon this occasion to be successful. William the Silent treated the slanders of the scolding monk with dignified contempt. "Having been informed," said he to the magistrates of Ghent, "that Master Peter Dathenns has been denouncing me as a man without religion or fidelity, and full of ambition, with other propositions hardly becoming his cloth; I do not think it worth while to answer more at this time than that I willingly refer myself to the judgment of all who know me."

The Prince came to Ghent, great as had been the efforts of Imbize and his partisans to prevent his coming. His presence was like magic. The demagogue and his whole flock vanished like unclean birds at the first rays of the sun. Imbize dared not look the Father of his country in the face. Orange rebuked the populace in the strong and indignant language that public and private virtue, energy, and a high purpose enabled such a leader of the people to use. He at once set aside the board of eighteen—the Grecian-Roman-Genevese establishment of Imbize—and remained in the city until the regular election, in conformity with the privileges, had taken place. Imbize, who had shrunk at his approach, was meantime discovered by his own companions. He had stolen forth secretly on the night before the Prince's arrival, and was found cowering in the cabin of a vessel, half dead with fear, by an ale-house keeper who had been his warm partisan. "No Skulking," cried the honest friend; seizing the tribune of the people by the shoulder; "no sailing away in the night-time. You have got us all into this bog, and must come back, and abide the issue with your supporters."



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In this collapsed state was the windy demagogue, who had filled half Flanders with his sound and fury, conveyed before the patriot Prince. He met with grave and bitter rebukes, but felt sufficiently relieved when allowed to depart unharmed. Judging of his probable doom by the usual practice of himself and his fellows in similar cases, he had anticipated nothing short of the gibbet. That punishment, however, was to be inflicted at a later period, by other hands, and not until he had added treason to his country and a shameless recantation of all his violent professions in favor of civil and religious liberty to the list of his crimes. On the present occasion he was permitted to go free. In company with his clerical companion, Peter Dathenus, he fled to the abode of his excellent friend, John Casimir, who received both with open arms, and allowed them each a pension.

Order being thus again restored in Ghent by the exertions of the Prince, when no other human hand could have dispelled the anarchy which seemed to reign supreme, William the Silent, having accepted the government of Flanders, which had again and again been urged upon him, now returned to Antwerp.

CHAPTER III.

The Cologne conferences—Intentions of the parties—Preliminary attempt by government to purchase the Prince of Orange—Offer and rejection of various articles among the plenipotentiaries—Departure of the imperial commissioner—Ultimatum of the States compared with that of the royal government—Barren negotiations terminated—Treason of De Bours, Governor of Mechlin—Liberal theories concerning the nature of government—Abjuration of Philip imminent—Self-denial of Orange—Attitude of Germany—of England—Marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Anjou—Orange favors the election of the Duke as sovereign—Address and speeches of the Prince—Parsimony and interprovincial jealousy rebuked—Secret correspondence of Count Renneberg with the royal government—His treason at Groningen.

Since the beginning of May, the Cologne negotiations had been dragging their slow length along. Few persons believed that any good was likely to result from these stately and ponderous conferences; yet men were so weary of war, so desirous that a termination might be put to the atrophy under which the country was languishing, that many an eager glance was turned towards the place where the august assembly was holding its protracted session. Certainly, if wisdom were to be found in mitred heads—if the power to heal angry passions and to settle the conflicting claims of prerogative and conscience were to be looked for among men of lofty station, then the Cologne conferences ought to have made the rough places smooth and the crooked paths straight throughout all Christendom. There was the Archbishop of Rossano, afterwards Pope Urban VII, as plenipotentiary from Rome; there was

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Charles of Aragon, Duke of Terranova, supported by five councillors, as ambassador from his Catholic Majesty; there were the Duke of Aerschot, the Abbot of Saint Gertrude, the Abbot of Marolles, Doctor Bucho Ayta, Caspar Schetz, Lord of Grobbendonck, that learned Frisian, Aggeus van Albada, with seven other wise men, as envoys from the states-general: There were their Serene Highnesses the Elector and Archbishops of Cologne and Treves, with the Bishop of Wurtzburg. There was also a numerous embassy from his Imperial Majesty, with Count Otto de Schwartzenburg at its head.

Here then were holiness, serenity, dignity, law, and learning in abundance. Here was a pope 'in posse', with archbishops, princes, dukes, jurisconsults, and doctors of divinity 'in esse', sufficient to remodel a world, if worlds were to be remodelled by such instruments. If protocols, replications, annotations, apostilles, could heal a bleeding country, here were the physicians to furnish those drugs in unlimited profusion. If reams of paper, scrawled over with barbarous technicalities, could smother and bury a quarrel which had its origin in the mutual antagonism of human elements, here were the men to scribble unflinchingly, till the reams were piled to a pyramid. If the same idea presented in many aspects could acquire additional life, here were the word-mongers who, could clothe one shivering thought in a hundred thousand garments, till it attained all the majesty which decoration could impart. In truth, the envoys came from Spain, Rome, and Vienna, provided with but two ideas. Was it not a diplomatic masterpiece, that from this frugal store they could contrive to eke out seven mortal months of negotiation? Two ideas—the supremacy of his Majesty's prerogative, the exclusive exercise of the Roman Catholic religion—these were the be-all and the end-all of their commission. Upon these two strings they were to harp, at least till the walls of Maestricht had fallen. The envoys did their duty well; they were sent to enact a solemn comedy, and in the most stately manner did they walk through their several parts. Not that the King was belligerent; on, the contrary, he was heartily weary of the war. Prerogative was weary—Romanism was weary—Conscience was weary—the Spirit of Freedom was weary but the Prince of Orange was not weary. Blood and treasure had been pouring forth so profusely during twelve flaming years, that all but that one tranquil spirit were beginning to flag.

At the same time, neither party had more disposition to concede than stomach to fight. Certainly the royal party had no inclination to yield. The King had granted easy terms to the Walloons, because upon the one great point of religion there was, no dispute, and upon the others there was no intention of keeping faith. With regard to the present negotiation, it was desirable to gain a little time. It was thought probable that the religious difference, judiciously managed at this juncture, might be used



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to effect a permanent severance of the provinces so lately banded together in a common union. "To, divide them," wrote Tassis, in a very confidential letter, "no better method can be found than to amuse them with this peace negotiation. Some are ready for a pacification from their desire of repose, some from their fear of war, some from the differences which exist among themselves, and which it is especially important to keep alive." Above all things, it was desirable to maintain the religious distraction till Maestricht had been taken. That siege was the key to the whole situation. If the separate Walloon accord could be quietly made in a corner, while Parma was battering that stronghold on the Meuse, and while decorous negotiation was smoothly holding its course on the Rhine, much disorganization, it was hoped, would be handsomely accomplished before the end of the year.

"As for a suspension of arms," wrote Alexander to Terranova, on the 21st of May, "the longer 'tis deferred the better. With regard to Maestricht, everything depends upon it that we possess, or desire to possess. Truly, if the Prince of Orange can relieve the city he will do it. If he does so, neither will this expedition of ours, nor any other expedition, be brought to a good end. As soon as men are aware that our affairs are looking badly, they will come again to a true union, and all will join together, in hope to accomplish their boasts." Therefore, it was natural that the peace-wrights of Cologne should industriously ply their task.

It is not desirable to disturb much of that learned dust, after its three centuries' repose. A rapid sketch of the course of the proceedings, with an indication of the spirit which animated the contending parties, will be all that is necessary. They came and they separated with precisely opposite views. "The desires of Terranova and of the estates," says the royalist, Tassis, "were diametrically contrary, to each other. The King wished that the exercise of the Roman Catholic religion should be exclusively established, and the absolute prerogative preserved in its integrity." On the other hand, the provinces desired their charters and a religious' peace. In these perpetual lines and curves ran the asymptotical negotiation from beginning to end—and so it might have run for two centuries, without hope of coincidence. Neither party was yet vanquished. The freshly united provinces were no readier now than before to admit that the Holy Office formed part of their national institutions. The despotic faction was not prepared to renounce that establishment. Foiled, but not disheartened, sat the Inquisition, like a beldame, upon the border, impotently threatening the land whence she had been for ever excluded; while industrious as the Parcae, distaff in hand, sat, in Cologne, the inexorable three—Spain, the Empire, and Rome—grimly, spinning and severing the web of mortal destinies.



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The first step in the proceedings had been a secret one. If by any means the Prince of Orange could be detached from his party—if by bribery, however enormous, he could be induced—to abandon a tottering cause, and depart for the land of his birth—he was distinctly but indirectly given to understand that he had but to name his terms. We have seen the issue of similar propositions made by Don John of Austria. Probably there was no man living who would care to make distinct application of this dishonorable nature to the Father of his country. The Aerschots, the Meluns, the Lalains, and a swarm of other nobles, had their price, and were easily transferable from one to another, but it was not easy to make a direct offer to William of Orange. They knew—as he said shortly afterwards in his famous Apology—that “neither for property nor for life, neither for wife nor for children, would he mix in his cup a single drop of treason.” Nevertheless, he was distinctly given to understand that “there was nothing he could demand for himself personally that would not be granted.” All his confiscated property, restoration of his imprisoned son, liberty of worship for himself, payment of all his debts, reimbursement of all his past expenses, and anything else which he could desire, were all placed within his reach. If he chose to retire into another land, his son might be placed in possession of all his cities, estates, and dignities, and himself indemnified in Germany; with a million of money over and above as a gratuity. The imperial envoy, Count Schwartzenburg, pledged his personal honor and reputation that every promise which might be made to the Prince should be most sacredly fulfilled.

It was all in vain. The indirect applications of the imperial commissioners made to his servants and his nearest relations were entirely unsuccessful. The Prince was not to be drawn into a negotiation in his own name or for his own benefit. If the estates were satisfied, he was satisfied. He wanted no conditions but theirs; “nor would he directly, or indirectly,” he said, “separate himself from the cause on which hung all his evil or felicity.” He knew that it was the object of the enemy to deprive the country of its head, and no inducements were sufficient to make him a party to the plot. At the same time, he was unwilling to be an obstacle, in his own person, to the conclusion of an honorable peace. He would resign his offices which he held at the solicitation of the whole country, if thus a negotiation were likely to be more successful. “The Prince of Parma and the disunited provinces,” said he to the states-general, “affect to consider this war as one waged against me and in my name—as if the question alone concerned the name and person of the general. If it be so, I beg you to consider whether it is not because I have been ever faithful to the land. Nevertheless, if I am an obstacle, I am ready to remove it. If you, therefore, in order to deprive the enemy of every right to inculcate us, think proper to choose another head and conductor of your affairs, I promise you to serve and to be obedient to him with all my heart. Thus shall we leave the enemy no standing-place to work dissensions among us.” Such was his language to friend and foe, and here, at least, was one man in history whom kings were not rich enough to purchase.

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On the 18th of May, the states' envoys at Cologne presented fourteen articles, demanding freedom of religion and the ancient political charters. Religion, they said, was to be referred; not to man, but to God. To him the King was subject as well as the people. Both King and people—"and by people was meant every individual in the land"—were bound to serve God according to their conscience.

The imperial envoys found such language extremely reprehensible, and promptly refused, as umpires, to entertain the fourteen articles. Others drawn up by Terranova and colleagues, embodying the claims of the royal and Roman party, were then solemnly presented, and as promptly rejected. Then the imperial umpires came forward with two bundles of propositions—approved beforehand by the Spanish plenipotentiaries. In the political bundle; obedience due to the King was insisted upon, "as in the time of the Emperor Charles." The religious category declared that "the Roman religion—all others excluded—should thenceforth be exercised in all the provinces." Both these categories were considered more objectionable by the states' envoys than the terms of Terranova, and astonishment was expressed that "mention should again be made of the edicts—as if blood enough had not been shed already in the cause of religion."

The Netherland envoys likewise gave the imperial commissioners distinctly to understand that—in case peace were not soon made—"the states would forthwith declare the King fallen from his sovereignty;" would for ever dispense the people from their oaths of allegiance to him, and would probably accept the Duke of Anjou in his place. The states-general, to which body the imperial propositions had been sent, also rejected the articles in a logical and historical argument of unmerciful length.

An appeal secretly made by the imperial and Spanish commissioners, from the states' envoys to the states themselves, and even to the people of the various provinces, had excited the anger of the plenipotentiaries. They complained loudly of this violation of all diplomatic etiquette, and the answer of the states-general, fully confirming the views of their ambassadors, did not diminish their wrath.

On the 13th of November, 1579, the states' envoys were invited into the council chamber of the imperial commissioners, to hear the last solemn commonplaces of those departing, functionaries. Seven months long they had been waiting in vain, they said, for the states' envoys to accede to moderate demands. Patience was now exhausted. Moreover, their mediatory views had been the subject of bitter lampooning throughout the country, while the authorities of many cities had publicly declared that all the inhabitants would rather, die the death than accept such terms. The peace-makers, accordingly, with endless protestations as to, their own purity, wisdom, and benevolence, left the whole "in the hands of God and the parties concerned."

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The reply to this elaborate farewell was curt and somewhat crusty. "Had they known," said the states' envoys, "that their transparencies and worthinesses had no better intention, and the Duke of Terranova no ampler commission, the whole matter might have been despatched, not in six months, but in six days."

Thus ended the conferences, and the imperial commissioners departed. Nevertheless, Schwartzenburg remained yet a little time at Cologne, while five of the states' envoys also protracted their stay, in order to make their private peace with the King. It is hardly necessary to observe that the chief of these penitents was the Duke of Aerschot. The ultimatum of the states was deposited by the departing envoys with Schwartzenburg, and a comparison of its terms with those offered by the imperial mediators, as the best which could be obtained from Spain, shows the hopelessness of the pretended negotiation. Departure of the foreign troops, restitution of all confiscated property, unequivocal recognition of the Ghent treaty and the perpetual edict, appointment to office of none but natives, oaths of allegiance to the King and the states-general, exercise of the Reformed religion and of the Confession of Augsburg in all places where it was then publicly practised: such were the main demands of the patriot party.

In the secret instructions furnished by the states to their envoys, they were told to urge upon his Majesty the absolute necessity, if he wished to retain the provinces, of winking at the exercise of the Reformed and the Augsburg creeds. "The new religion had taken too deep root," it was urged, "ever to be torn forth, save with the destruction of the whole country."

Thus, after seven dreary months of negotiation, after protocols and memoranda in ten thousand folia, the august diplomatists had travelled round to the points from which they had severally started. On the one side, unlimited prerogative and exclusive Catholicism; on the other, constitutional liberty, with freedom of conscience for Catholic and Protestant alike: these were the claims which each party announced at the commencement, and to which they held with equal firmness at the close of the conferences.

The congress had been expensive. Though not much had been accomplished for the political or religious advancement of mankind, there had been much excellent eating and drinking at Cologne during the seven months. Those drouthy deliberations had needed moistening. The Bishop of Wurtzburg had consumed "eighty hogsheads of Rhenish wine and twenty great casks of beer." The expense of the states' envoys were twenty-four thousand guldens. The Archbishop of Cologne had expended forty thousand thalers. The deliberations were, on the whole, excessively detrimental to the cause of the provinces, "and a great personage" wrote to the states-general, that the King had been influenced by no motive save to cause dissension. This was an exaggeration, for his Majesty would have been well pleased to receive the whole of the country on the same terms which had been accepted by the Walloons. Meantime, those southern provinces had made their separate treaty, and the Netherlands were

permanently dissevered. Maestricht had fallen. Disunion and dismay had taken possession of the country.



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During the course of the year other severe misfortunes had happened to the states. Treachery, even among the men who had done good service to the cause of freedom, was daily showing her hateful visage. Not only the great chieftains who had led the Malcontent Walloon party, with the fickle Aerschot and the wavering Havre besides, had made their separate reconciliation with Parma, but the epidemic treason had mastered such bold partisans as the Seigneur de Bours, the man whose services in rescuing the citadel of Antwerp had been so courageous and valuable. He was governor of Mechlin; Count Renneberg was governor of Friesland. Both were trusted implicitly by Orange and by the estates; both were on the eve of repaying the confidence reposed in them by the most venal treason.

It was already known that Parma had tampered with De Bours; but Renneberg was still unsuspected. "The Prince," wrote Count John, "is deserted by all the noblemen; save the stadholder of Friesland and myself, and has no man else in whom he can repose confidence." The brothers were doomed to be rudely awakened from the repose with regard to Renneberg, but previously the treason of a less important functionary was to cause a considerable but less lasting injury to the national party.

In Mechlin was a Carmelite friar, of audacious character and great eloquence; a man who, "with his sweet, poisonous tongue, could ever persuade the people to do his bidding." This dangerous monk, Peter Lupus, or Peter Wolf, by name, had formed the design of restoring Mechlin to the Prince of Parma, and of obtaining the bishopric of Namur as the reward of his services. To this end he had obtained a complete mastery over the intellect of the bold but unprincipled De Bours. A correspondence was immediately opened between Parma and the governor, and troops were secretly admitted into the city. The Prince of Orange, in the name of the Archduke and the estates, in vain endeavoured to recal the infatuated governor to his duty. In vain he conjured him, by letter after letter, to be true to his own bright fame so nobly earned. An old friend of De Bours, and like himself a Catholic, was also employed to remonstrate with him. This gentleman, De Fromont by name, wrote him many letters; but De Bours expressed his surprise that Fromont, whom he had always considered a good Catholic and a virtuous gentleman, should wish to force him into a connection with the Prince of Orange and his heretic supporters. He protested that his mind was quite made up, and that he had been guaranteed by Parma not only the post which he now held, but even still farther advancement.

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De Fromont reminded him, in reply, of the frequent revolutions of fortune's wheel, and warned him that the advancement of which he boasted would probably be an entire degradation. He bitterly recalled to the remembrance of the new zealot for Romanism his former earnest efforts to establish Calvinism. He reproached him, too, with having melted up the silver images of the Mechlin churches, including even the renowned shrine of Saint Rombout, which the Prince of Orange had always respected. "I don't say how much you took of that plunder for your own share," continued the indignant De Fromont, "for the very children cry it in your ears as you walk the streets. 'Tis known that if God himself had been changed into gold you would have put him in your pocket."

This was plain language, but as just as it was plain. The famous shrine of Saint Rombout—valued at seventy thousand guldens, of silver gilt, and enriched with precious stones—had been held sacred alike by the fanatical iconoclasts and the greedy Spaniards who had successively held the city. It had now been melted up, and appropriated by Peter Lupin; the Carmelite, and De Bours, the Catholic convert, whose mouths were full of devotion to the ancient Church and of horror for heresy.

The efforts of Orange and of the states were unavailing. De Bours surrendered the city, and fled to Parma, who received him with cordiality, gave him five thousand florins—the price promised for his treason, besides a regiment of infantry—but expressed surprise that he should have reached the camp alive. His subsequent career was short, and he met his death two years afterwards, in the trenches before Tournay. The archiepiscopal city was thus transferred to the royal party, but the gallant Van der Tynpel, governor of Brussels, retook it by surprise within six months of its acquisition by Parma, and once more restored it to the jurisdiction of the states. Peter Lupus, the Carmelite, armed to the teeth, and fighting fiercely at the head of the royalists, was slain in the street, and thus forfeited his chance for the mitre of Namur.

During the weary progress of the Cologne negotiations, the Prince had not been idle, and should this august and slow-moving congress be unsuccessful in restoring peace, the provinces were pledged to an act of abjuration. They would then be entirely without a head. The idea of a nominal Republic was broached by none. The contest had not been one of theory, but of facts; for the war had not been for revolution, but for conservation, so far as political rights were concerned. In religion, the provinces had advanced from one step to another, till they now claimed the largest liberty—freedom of conscience—for all. Religion, they held, was God's affair, not man's, in which neither people nor king had power over each other, but in which both were subject to God alone. In politics it was different. Hereditary sovereignty was acknowledged as a fact, but at the same time, the spirit of freedom was already learning its appropriate language. It already claimed boldly the natural right of mankind to be governed according to the laws of reason and of divine justice. If a prince were a shepherd, it was at least lawful to deprive him of his crook when he butchered the flock which he had been appointed to protect.



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“What reason is there,” said the states-general, “why the provinces should suffer themselves to be continually oppressed by their sovereign, with robbings, burnings, stranglings, and murderings? Why, being thus oppressed, should they still give their sovereign—exactly as if he were well conducting himself—the honor and title of lord of the land?” On the other hand, if hereditary rule were an established fact, so also were ancient charters. To maintain, not to overthrow, the political compact, was the purpose of the states. “Je maintiendrai” was the motto of Orange’s escutcheon. That a compact existed between prince and people, and that the sovereign held office only on condition of doing his duty, were startling truths which men were beginning, not to whisper to each other in secret, but to proclaim in the market-place. “’Tis well known to all,” said the famous Declaration of Independence, two years afterwards, “that if a prince is appointed by God over the land, ’tis to protect them from harm, even as a shepherd to the guardianship of his flock. The subjects are not appointed by God for the behoof of the prince, but the prince for his subjects, without whom he is no prince. Should he violate the laws, he is to be forsaken by his meanest subject, and to be recognized no longer as prince.”

William of Orange always recognized these truths, but his scheme of government contemplated a permanent chief, and as it was becoming obvious that the Spanish sovereign would soon be abjured, it was necessary to fix upon a substitute. “As to governing these provinces in the form of a republic,” said he, speaking for the states-general, “those who know the condition, privileges, and ordinances of the country, can easily understand that ’tis hardly possible to dispense with a head or superintendent.” At the same time, he plainly intimated that this “head or superintendent” was to be, not a monarch—a one-ruler—but merely the hereditary chief magistrate of a free commonwealth.

Where was this hereditary chief magistrate to be found? His own claims he absolutely withdrew. The office was within his grasp, and he might easily have constituted himself sovereign of all the Netherlands. Perhaps it would have been better at that time had he advanced his claims and accepted the sovereignty which Philip had forfeited. As he did not believe in the possibility of a republic, he might honestly have taken into his own hands the sceptre which he considered indispensable. His self-abnegation was, however, absolute. Not only did he decline sovereignty, but he repeatedly avowed his readiness to, lay down all the offices which he held, if a more useful substitute could be found. “Let no man think,” said he, in a remarkable speech to the states-general, “that my good-will is in any degree changed or diminished. I agree to obey—as the least of the lords or gentlemen of the land could do—whatever person it may, please you to select. You have but to command my services wheresoever they are most wanted; to guard a province or a single city, or in any capacity in which I may be found most useful. I promise to do my duty, with all my strength and skill, as God and my conscience are witnesses that I have done it hitherto.”



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The negotiations pointed to a speedy abjuration of Philip; the Republic was contemplated by none; the Prince of Orange absolutely refused to stretch forth his own hand; who then was to receive the sceptre which was so soon to be bestowed? A German Prince—had been tried—in a somewhat abnormal position—but had certainly manifested small capacity for aiding the provinces. Nothing could well be more insignificant than the figure of Matthias; and, moreover, his imperial brother was anything but favorably disposed. It was necessary to manage Rudolph. To treat the Archduke with indignity, now that he had been partly established in the Netherlands, would be to incur the Emperor's enmity. His friendship, however, could hardly be secured by any advancement bestowed upon his brother; for Rudolph's services against prerogative and the Pope were in no case to be expected. Nor was there much hope from the Protestant princes of Germany. The day had passed for generous sympathy with those engaged in the great struggle which Martin Luther had commenced. The present generation of German Protestants were more inclined to put down the Calvinistic schism at home than to save it from oppression abroad. Men were more disposed to wrangle over the thrice-gnawed bones of ecclesiastical casuistry, than to assist their brethren in the field. "I know not," said Gautherus, "whether the calamity of the Netherlands, or the more than bestial stupidity of the Germans, be most deplorable. To the insane contests on theological abstractions we owe it that many are ready to breathe blood and slaughter against their own brethren. The hatred of the Lutherans has reached that point that they can rather tolerate Papists than ourselves."

In England, there was much sympathy for the provinces and there—although the form of government was still arbitrary—the instincts for civil and religious freedom, which have ever characterized the Anglo-Saxon race, were not to be repressed. Upon many a battle-field for liberty in the Netherlands, "men whose limbs were made in England" were found contending for the right. The blood and treasure of Englishmen flowed freely in the cause of their relatives by religion and race, but these were the efforts of individuals. Hitherto but little assistance had been rendered by the English Queen, who had, on the contrary, almost distracted the provinces by her fast-and-loose policy, both towards them and towards Anjou. The political rivalry between that Prince and herself in the Netherlands had, however, now given place to the memorable love-passage from which important results were expected, and it was thought certain that Elizabeth would view with satisfaction any dignity conferred upon her lover.



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Orange had a right to form this opinion. At the same time, it is well known that the chief councillors of Elizabeth—while they were all in favor of assisting the provinces—looked with anything but satisfaction upon the Anjou marriage. “The Duke,” wrote Davidson to Walsingham in July, 1579, “seeks, forsooth, under a pretext of marriage with her Highness, the rather to espouse the Low Countries—the chief ground and object of his pretended love, howsoever it be disguised.” The envoy believed both Elizabeth and the provinces in danger of taking unto themselves a very bad master. “Is there any means,” he added, “so apt to sound the very bottom of our estate, and to hinder and breake the neck of all such good purpose as the necessity of the tyme shall set abroch?”

The provinces of Holland and Zealand, notwithstanding the love they bore to William of Orange, could never be persuaded by his arguments into favoring Anjou. Indeed, it was rather on account of the love they bore the Prince—whom they were determined to have for their sovereign—that they refused to listen to any persuasion in favor of his rival, although coming from his own lips. The states-general, in a report to the states of Holland, drawn up under the superintendence of the Prince, brought forward all the usual arguments for accepting the French duke, in case the abjuration should take place. They urged the contract with Anjou (of August 13th, 1578), the great expenses he had already incurred in their behalf; the danger of offending him; the possibility that in such case he would ally himself with Spain; the prospect that, in consequence of such a result, there would be three enemies in the field against them—the Walloons, the Spaniards, and the French, all whose forces would eventually be turned upon Holland and Zealand alone. It was represented that the selection of Anjou would, on the other hand, secure the friendship of France—an alliance which would inspire both the Emperor and the Spanish monarch with fear; for they could not contemplate without jealousy a possible incorporation of the provinces with that kingdom. Moreover, the geographical situation of France made its friendship inexpressibly desirable. The states of Holland and Zealand were, therefore, earnestly invited to send deputies to an assembly of the states-general, in order to conclude measures touching the declaration of independence to be made against the King, and concerning the election of the Duke of Anjou.

The official communications by speech or writing of Orange to the different corporations and assemblies, were at this period of enormous extent. He was moved to frequent anger by the parsimony, the inter-provincial jealousy, the dull perception of the different estates, and he often expressed his wrath in unequivocal language. He dealt roundly with all public bodies. His eloquence was distinguished by a bold, uncompromising, truth-telling spirit, whether the words might prove palatable or bitter to his audience. His language rebuked his hearers more frequently than it caressed them, for he felt it impossible, at all times, to consult both the humors and the high interests of the people, and he had no hesitation, as guardian of popular liberty, in denouncing the popular vices by which it was endangered.



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By both great parties, he complained, his shortcomings were all noted, the good which he had accomplished passed over in silence.

[Letter to the States-general, August, 1579, apud Bor, xiv. 97, sqq. This was the opinion frequently expressed by Languet: "Cherish the friendship of the Prince, I beseech you," he writes to Sir Philip Sydney, "for there is no man like him in all Christendom. Nevertheless, his is the lot of all men of prudence—to be censured by all parties. The people complain that he despises them; the nobility declare that it is their order which he hates; and this is as sensible as if you were to tell me that you were the son of a clown."]

He solemnly protested that he desired, out of his whole heart, the advancement of that religion which he publicly professed, and with God's blessing, hoped to profess to the end of his life, but nevertheless, he reminded the states that he had sworn, upon taking office as Lieutenant-General, to keep "all the subjects of the land equally under his protection," and that he had kept his oath. He rebuked the parsimony which placed the accepted chief of the provinces in a sordid and contemptible position. "The Archduke has been compelled," said he, in August, to the states-general, "to break up housekeeping, for want of means. How shameful and disreputable for the country, if he should be compelled, for very poverty, to leave the land!" He offered to lay down all the power with which he had himself been clothed, but insisted, if he were to continue in office, upon being provided with, larger means of being useful. "'Twas impossible," he said, "for him to serve longer on the same footing as heretofore; finding himself without power or authority, without means, without troops, without money, without obedience." He reminded the states-general that the enemy—under pretext of peace negotiations—were ever circulating calumnious statements to the effect that he was personally the only obstacle to peace. The real object of these hopeless conferences was to sow dissension through the land, to set burgher against burgher, house against house. As in Italy, Guelphs and Ghibellines—as in Florence, the Neri and Bianchi—as in Holland, the Hooks and Cabbeljaws had, by their unfortunate quarrels, armed fellow countrymen and families against each other—so also, nothing was so powerful as religious difference to set friend against friend, father against son, husband against wife.

He warned the States against the peace propositions of the enemy. Spain had no intention to concede, but was resolved to extirpate. For himself; he had certainly everything to lose by continued war. His magnificent estates were withheld, and—added he with simplicity—there is no man who does not desire to enjoy his own. The liberation of his son, too, from his foreign captivity, was, after the glory of God and the welfare of the fatherland, the dearest object of his heart. Moreover, he



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was himself approaching the decline of life. Twelve years he had spent in perpetual anxiety and labor for the cause. As he approached old age, he had sufficient reason to desire repose. Nevertheless, considering the great multitude of people who were leaning upon him, he should account himself disgraced if, for the sake of his own private advantage, he were to recommend a peace which was not perfectly secure. As regarded his own personal interests, he could easily place himself beyond danger—yet it would be otherwise with the people. The existence of the religion which, through the mercy of God he professed, would be sacrificed, and countless multitudes of innocent men would, by his act, be thrown bodily into the hands of the blood-thirsty inquisitors who, in times past, had murdered so many persons, and so utterly desolated the land. In regard to the ceaseless insinuations against his character which men uttered “over their tables and in the streets,” he observed philosophically, that “mankind were naturally inclined to calumny, particularly against those who exercised government over them. His life was the best answer to those slanders. Being overwhelmed with debt, he should doubtless do better in a personal point of view to accept the excellent and profitable offers which were daily made to him by the enemy.” He might be justified in such a course, when it was remembered how many had deserted him and forsworn their religion. Nevertheless, he had ever refused, and should ever refuse to listen to offers by which only his own personal interests were secured. As to the defence of the country, he had thus far done all in his power, with the small resources placed at his command. He was urged by the “nearer-united states” to retain the post of Lieutenant-General. He was ready to consent. He was, however, not willing to hold office a moment, unless he had power to compel cities to accept garrisons, to enforce the collection of needful supplies throughout the provinces, and in general to do everything which he judged necessary for the best interests of the country.

Three councils were now established—one to be in attendance upon the Archduke and the Prince of Orange, the two others to reside respectively in Flanders and in Utrecht. They were to be appointed by Matthias and the Prince, upon a double nomination from the estates of the united provinces. Their decisions were to be made according to a majority of votes,—and there was to be no secret cabinet behind and above their deliberations. It was long, however, before these councils were put into working order. The fatal jealousy of the provincial authorities, the small ambition of local magistrates, interposed daily obstacles to the vigorous march of the generality. Never was jealousy more mischievous, never circumspection more misapplied. It was not a land nor a crisis in which there was peril of centralization: Local municipal government was in truth the only force left. There was no possibility



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of its being merged in a central authority which did not exist. The country was without a centre. There was small chance of apoplexy where there was no head. The danger lay in the mutual repulsiveness of these atoms of sovereignty—in the centrifugal tendencies which were fast resolving a nebulous commonwealth into chaos. Disunion and dissension would soon bring about a more fatal centralization—that of absorption in a distant despotism.

At the end of November, 1579, Orange made another remarkable speech in the states-general at Antwerp. He handled the usual topics with his customary vigor, and with that grace and warmth of delivery which always made his eloquence so persuasive and impressive. He spoke of the countless calumnies against himself, the chaffering niggardliness of the provinces, the slender result produced by his repeated warnings. He told them bluntly the great cause of all their troubles. It was the absence of a broad patriotism; it was the narrow power grudged rather than given to the deputies who sat in the general assembly. They were mere envoys, tied by instructions. They were powerless to act, except after tedious reference to the will of their masters, the provincial boards. The deputies of the Union came thither, he said, as advocates of their provinces or their cities, not as councillors of a commonwealth—and sought to further those narrow interests, even at the risk of destruction to their sister states. The contributions, he complained, were assessed unequally, and expended selfishly. Upon this occasion, as upon all occasions, he again challenged inquiry into the purity of his government, demanded chastisement, if any act of mal-administration on his part could be found, and repeated his anxious desire either to be relieved from his functions, or to be furnished with the means of discharging them with efficiency.

On the 12th of December, 1579, he again made a powerful speech in the states-general. Upon the 9th of January 1580, following, he made an elaborate address upon the state of the country, urging the necessity of raising instantly a considerable army of good and experienced soldiers. He fixed the indispensable number of such a force at twelve thousand foot, four thousand horse, and at least twelve hundred pioneers. "Weigh well the matters," said he, in conclusion; "which I have thus urged, and which are of the most extreme necessity. Men in their utmost need are daily coming to me for refuge, as if I held power over all things in my hand." At the same time he complained that by reason of the dilatoriness of the states, he was prevented from alleviating misery when he knew the remedy to be within reach. "I beg you, however, my masters," he continued, "to believe that this address of mine is no simple discourse. 'Tis a faithful presentment of matters which, if not reformed, will cause the speedy and absolute ruin of the land. Whatever betide, however, I pray you to hold yourselves assured, that with God's help, I am determined to live with you or to die with you."



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Early in the year 1580, the Prince was doomed to a bitter disappointment, and the provinces to a severe loss, in the treason of Count Renneberg, governor of Friesland. This young noble was of the great Lalain family. He was a younger brother of: Anthony, Count of Hoogstraaten—the unwavering friend of Orange. He had been brought up in the family of his cousin, the Count de Lalain, governor of Hainault, and had inherited the title of Renneberg from an uncle, who was a dignitary of the church. For more than a year there had been suspicions of his fidelity. He was supposed to have been tampered with by the Duke of Terranova, on the first arrival of that functionary in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the Prince of Orange was unwilling to listen to the whispers against him. Being himself the mark of calumny, and having a tender remembrance of the elder brother, he persisted in reposing confidence in a man who was in reality unworthy of his friendship. George Lalain, therefore, remained stadholder of Friesland and Drenthe, and in possession of the capital city, Groningen.

The rumors concerning him proved correct. In November, 1579, he entered into a formal treaty with Terranova, by which he was to receive—as the price of “the virtuous resolution which he contemplated”—the sum of ten thousand crowns in hand, a further sum of ten thousand crowns within three months, and a yearly pension of ten thousand florins. Moreover, his barony of Ville was to be erected into a marquisate, and he was to receive the order of the Golden Fleece at the first vacancy. He was likewise to be continued in the same offices under the King which he now held from the estates. The bill of sale, by which he agreed with a certain Quislain le Bailly to transfer himself to Spain, fixed these terms with the technical scrupulousness of any other mercantile transaction. Renneberg sold himself as one would sell a yoke of oxen, and his motives were no whit nobler than the cynical contract would indicate. “See you not,” said he in a private letter to a friend, “that this whole work is brewed by the Nassaus for the sake of their own greatness, and that they are everywhere provided with the very best crumbs. They are to be stadholders of the principal provinces; we are to content ourselves with Overijssel and Drente. Therefore I have thought it best to make my peace with the King, from whom more benefits are to be got.”

Jealousy and selfishness; then, were the motives of his “virtuous resolution.” He had another, perhaps a nobler incentive. He was in love with the Countess Meghen, widow of Lancelot Berlaymont, and it was privately stipulated that the influence of his Majesty’s government should be employed to bring about his marriage with the lady. The treaty, however, which Renneberg had made with Quislain le Bailly was not immediately carried out. Early in February, 1580, his sister and evil genius, Cornelia Lalain, wife of Baron Monceau, made him a visit at



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Groningen. She implored him not to give over his soul to perdition by oppressing the Holy Church. She also appealed to his family pride, which should keep him, she said, from the contamination of companionship with “base-born weavers and furriers.” She was of opinion that to contaminate his high-born fingers with base bribes were a lower degradation. The pension, the crowns in hand, the marquisate, the collar of the Golden Fleece, were all held before his eyes again. He was persuaded, moreover, that the fair hand of the wealthy widow would be the crowning prize of his treason, but in this he was destined to disappointment. The Countess was reserved for a more brilliant and a more bitter fate. She was to espouse a man of higher rank, but more worthless character, also a traitor to the cause of freedom, to which she was herself devoted, and who was even accused of attempting her life in her old age, in order to supply her place with a younger rival.

The artful eloquence of Cornelia de Lalain did its work, and Renneberg entered into correspondence with Parma. It is singular with how much indulgence his conduct and character were regarded both before and subsequently to his treason. There was something attractive about the man. In an age when many German and Netherland nobles were given to drunkenness and debauchery, and were distinguished rather for coarseness of manner and brutality of intellect than for refinement or learning, Count Renneberg, on the contrary, was an elegant and accomplished gentleman—the Sydney of his country in all but loyalty of character. He was a classical scholar, a votary of music and poetry, a graceful troubadour, and a valiant knight. He was “sweet and lovely of conversation,” generous and bountiful by nature. With so many good gifts, it was a thousand pities that the gift of truth had been denied him. Never did treason look more amiable, but it was treason of the blackest die. He was treacherous, in the hour of her utmost need, to the country which had trusted him. He was treacherous to the great man who had leaned upon his truth, when all others had abandoned him. He was treacherous from the most sordid of motives jealousy of his friend and love of place and pelf; but his subsequent remorse and his early death have cast a veil over the blackness of his crime.

While Cornelia de Lalain was in Groningen, Orange was in Holland. Intercepted letters left no doubt of the plot, and it was agreed that the Prince, then on his way to Amsterdam, should summon the Count to an interview. Renneberg’s trouble at the proximity of Orange could not be suppressed. He felt that he could never look his friend in the face again. His plans were not ripe; it was desirable to dissemble for a season longer; but how could he meet that tranquil eye which “looked quite through the deeds of men?” It was obvious to Renneberg that his deed was to be done forthwith, if he would escape discomfiture. The Prince would soon be in Groningen, and his presence would dispel the plots which had been secretly constructed.



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On the evening of March the 3rd, 1580, the Count entertained a large number of the most distinguished families of the place at a ball and banquet. At the supper-table, Hildebrand, chief burgomaster of the city, bluntly interrogated his host concerning the calumnious reports which were in circulation, expressing the hope that there was no truth in these inventions of his enemies. Thus summoned, Renneberg, seizing the hands of Hildebrand in both his own, exclaimed, "Oh; my father! you whom I esteem as my father, can you suspect me of such guilt? I pray you, trust me, and fear me not!"

With this he restored the burgomaster and all the other guests to confidence. The feast and dance proceeded, while Renneberg was quietly arranging his plot. During the night all the leading patriots were taken out of their beds, and carried to prison, notice being at the same time given to the secret adherents of Renneberg. Before dawn, a numerous mob of boatmen and vagrants, well armed, appeared upon the public square. They bore torches and standards, and amazed the quiet little city with their shouts. The place was formally taken into possession, cannon were planted in front of the Town House to command the principal streets, and barricades erected at various important points. Just at daylight, Renneberg himself, in complete armor, rode into the square, and it was observed that he looked ghastly as a corpse. He was followed by thirty troopers, armed like himself, from head to foot. "Stand by me now," he cried to the assembled throng; "fail me not at this moment, for now I am for the first time your stadholder."

While he was speaking, a few citizens of the highest class forced their way through the throng and addressed the mob in tones of authority. They were evidently magisterial persons endeavoring to quell the riot. As they advanced, one of Renneberg's men-at-arms discharged his carabine at the foremost gentleman, who was no other than burgomaster Hildebrand. He fell dead at the feet of the stadholder—of the man who had clasped his hands a few hours before, called him father, and implored him to entertain no suspicions of his honor. The death of this distinguished gentleman created a panic, during which Renneberg addressed his adherents, and stimulated them to atone by their future zeal in the King's service for their former delinquency. A few days afterwards the city was formally reunited to the royal government; but the Count's measures had been precipitated to such an extent, that he was unable to carry the province with him, as he had hoped. On the contrary, although he had secured the city, he had secured nothing else. He was immediately beleaguered by the states' force in the province under the command of Barthold Entes, Hohenlo, and Philip Louis Nassau, and it was necessary to send for immediate assistance from Parma.

The Prince of Orange, being thus bitterly disappointed. by the treachery of his friend, and foiled in his attempt to avert the immediate consequences, continued his interrupted journey to Amsterdam. Here he was received with unbounded enthusiasm.



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All the majesty which decoration could impart
Amuse them with this peace negotiation
Conflicting claims of prerogative and conscience
It is not desirable to disturb much of that learned dust
Logical and historical argument of unmerciful length
Mankind were naturally inclined to calumny
Men were loud in reproof, who had been silent
More easily, as he had no intention of keeping the promise
Not to fall asleep in the shade of a peace negotiation
Nothing was so powerful as religious difference
On the first day four thousand men and women were slaughtered
Power grudged rather than given to the deputies
The disunited provinces
There is no man who does not desire to enjoy his own
To hear the last solemn commonplaces
Word-mongers who, could clothe one shivering thought

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