

HISTORY OF PROTESTANTISM IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Chapter 1

The Netherlands and Their Inhabitants

DESCENDING from the summits of the Alps, and rolling its floods along the vast plain which extends from the Ural Mountains to the shores of the German Ocean, the Rhine, before finally falling into the sea, is parted into two streams which enclose between them an island of goodly dimensions. This island is the heart of the Low Countries. Its soil spongy, its air humid, it had no attractions to induce man to make it his dwelling, save indeed that nature had strongly fortified it by enclosing it on two of its sides with the broad arms of the disparted river, and on the third and remaining one with the waves of the North Sea. Its earliest inhabitants, it is believed, were Celts. About a century before our era it was left uninhabited; its first settlers being carried away, partly in the rush southward of the first horde of warriors that set out to assail the Roman Empire,

and partly by a tremendous inundation of the ocean, which submerged many of the huts which dotted its forlorn surface, and drowned many of its miserable inhabitants. Finding it empty, a German tribe from the Hercynian forest took possession of it, and called it Betauw, that is, the "Good Meadow," a name that has descended to our day in the appellative Batavia.

North and south of the "Good Meadow" the land is similar in character and origin. It owes its place on the surface of the earth to the joint action of two forces -- the powerful current of the Rhine on the one side, continually bringing down vast quantities of materials from the mountains and higher plains, and the tides of the restless ocean on the other, casting up sand and mud from its bed. Thus, in the course of ages, slowly rose the land which was destined in the sixteenth century to be the seat of so many proud cities, and the theater of so many sublime actions.

An expanse of shallows and lagoons, neither land nor water, but a thin consistency, quaking

beneath the foot, and liable every spring and winter to the terrible calamities of being drowned by the waves, when the high tides or the fierce tempests heaped up the waters of the North Sea, and to be over-flown by the Rhine, when its floods were swollen by the long-continued rains, what, one asks, tempted the first inhabitant to occupy a country whose conditions were so wretched, and which was liable moreover to be overwhelmed by catastrophes so tremendous? Perhaps they saw in this oozy and herbless expanse the elements of future fertility. Perhaps they deemed it a safe retreat, from which they might issue forth to spoil and ravage, and to which they might retire and defy pursuit. But from whatever cause, both the center island and the whole adjoining coast soon found inhabitants. The Germans occupied the center; the Belgae took possession of the strip of coast stretching to the south, now known as Belgium. The similar strip running off to the north, Holland namely, was possessed by the Frisians, who formed a population in which the German and Celtic elements were blended without uniting.

The youth of these three tribes was a severe one. Their first struggle was with the soil; for while other nations choose their country, the Netherlanders had to create theirs. They began by converting the swamps and quicksands of which they had taken possession into grazing-lands and corn-fields. Nor could they rest even after this task had been accomplished: they had to be continually on the watch against the two great enemies that were ever ready to spring upon them, and rob them of the country which their industry had enriched and their skill embellished, by rearing and maintaining great dykes to defend themselves on the one side from the sea, and on the other from the river.

Their second great struggle was with the Roman power. The mistress of the world, in her onward march over the West, was embracing within her limits the forests of Germany, and the warlike tribes that dwelt in them. It is the pen of Julius Caesar, recording his victorious advance, that first touches the darkness that shrouded this land. When the curtain rises, the tribe of the Nervii

is seen drawn up on the banks of the Sambre, awaiting the approach of the master of the world. We see them closing in terrific battle with his legions, and maintaining the fight till a ghastly bank of corpses proclaimed that they had been exterminated rather than subdued.[1]

The tribes of Batavia now passed under the yoke of Rome, to which they submitted with great impatience. When the empire began to totter they rose in revolt, being joined by their neighbors, the Frisians and the Belgae, in the hope of achieving their liberty; but the Roman power, though in decay, was still too strong to be shaken by the assault of these tribes, however brave; and it was not till the whole German race, moved by an all-pervading impulse, rose and began their march upon Rome, that they were able, in common with all the peoples of the North, to throw off the yoke of the oppressor.

After four centuries of chequered fortunes, during which the Batavian element was inextricably blended with the Frisian, the Belgic,

and the Frank, the Netherlanders, for so we may now call the mixed population, in which however the German element predominated, came under the empire of Charlemagne. They continued under his sway and that of his successors for some time. The empire whose greatness had severely taxed the energies of the father was too heavy for the shoulders of his degenerate sons, and they contrived to lighten the burden by dividing it. Germany was finally severed from France, and in AD 922 Charles the Simple, the last of the Carovingian line, presented to Count Dirk the northern horn of this territory, the portion now known as Holland, which henceforth became the inheritance of his descendants; and about the same time, Henry the Fowler, of Germany, acquired the sovereignty of the southern portion, together with that of Lotharinga, the modern Lorraine, and thus the territory was broken into two, each part remaining connected with the German Empire; but loosely so, its rulers yielding only a nominal homage to the head of the empire, while they exercised sovereign rights in their own special domain.[2]

The reign of Charlemagne had effaced the last traces of free institutions and government by law which had lingered in Holland and Belgium since the Roman era, and substituted feudalism, or the government of the sword. Commerce began to flow, and from the thirteenth century its elevating influence was felt in the Netherlands. Confederations of trading towns arose, with their charters of freedom, and their leagues of mutual defense, which greatly modified the state of society in Europe. These confederated cities were, in fact, free republics flourishing in the heart of despotic empires. The cities which were among the first to rise into eminence were Ghent and Bruges. The latter became a main entrepot of the trade carried on with the East by way of the Mediterranean. "The wives and daughters of the citizens outvied, in the richness of their dress, that of a queen of France.... At Mechlin, a single individual possessed counting-houses and commercial establishments at Damascus and Grand Cairo." [3] To Bruges the merchants of Lombardy brought the wares of Asia, and thence were they dispersed among the towns of

Northern Europe, and along the shores of the German Sea. "A century later, Antwerp, the successful rival of Venice, could, it is said, boast of almost five hundred vessels daily entering her ports, and two thousand carriages laden with merchandise passing through her gates every week." [4] Venice, Verona, Nuremberg, and Bruges were the chief links of the golden chain that united the civilised and fertile East with the comparatively rude and unskillful West. In the former the arts had long flourished. There men were expert in all that is woven on the loom or embroidered by the needle; they, were able to engrave on iron, and to set precious jewels in cunningly-wrought frames of gold and silver and brass. There, too, the skillful use of the plough and the pruning-hook, combined with a vigorous soil, produced in abundance all kinds of luxuries; and along the channel we have indicated were all these various products poured into countries where arts and husbandry were yet in their infancy. [5]

Such was the condition of Holland and Flanders at the end of the fifteenth and the

beginning of the sixteenth centuries. They had come to rival the East, with which they traded. The surface of their country was richly cultivated. Their cities were numerous; they were enclosed within strong ramparts, and adorned with superb public buildings and sumptuous churches. Their rights and privileges were guaranteed by ancient charters, which they jealously guarded and knew how to defend. They were governed by a senate, which possessed legislative, judicial, and administrative powers, subject to the Supreme Council at Mechlin -- as that was to the sovereign authority. The population was numerous, skillful, thriving, and equally expert at handling the tool or wielding the sword. These artisans and weavers were divided into guilds, which elected their own deans or rulers. They were brave, and not a little turbulent. When the bell tolled to arms, the inmate of the workshop could, in a few minutes, transform himself into a soldier; and these bands of artificers and weavers would present the appearance as well as the reality of an army. "Nations at the present day scarcely named," says Muller, "supported their struggle against great armies with a heroism that

reminds us of the valor of the Swiss."[6]

Holland, lying farther to the north, did not so largely share in the benefits of trade and commerce as the cities of Flanders. Giving itself to the development of its internal resources, it clothed its soil with a fertility and beauty which more southern lands might have envied. Turning to its seas, it reared a race of fishermen, who in process of time developed into the most skillful and adventurous seamen in Europe. Thus were laid the foundations of that naval ascendancy which Holland for a time enjoyed, and that great colonial empire of which this dyke-encircled territory was the mother and the mistress. "The common opinion is, "says Cardinal Bentivoglio, who was sent as Papal nuncio to the Low Countries in the beginning of the seventeenth century -- " The common opinion is that the navy of Holland, in the number of vessels, is equal to all the rest of Europe together."[7] Others have written that the United Provinces have more ships than houses.[8] And Bentivoglio, speaking of the Exchange of Amsterdam, says that if its harbour was crowded

with ships, its piazza was not less so with merchants, "so that the like was not to be seen in all Europe; nay, in all the world." [9]

By the time the Reformation was on the eve of breaking out, the liberties of the Netherlanders had come to be in great peril. For a century past the Burgundo-Austrian monarchs had been steadily encroaching upon them. The charters under which their cities enjoyed municipal life had become little more than nominal. Their senates were entirely subject to the Supreme Court at Mechlin. The forms of their ancient liberties remained, but the spirit was fast ebbing. The Netherlanders were fighting a losing battle with the empire, which year after year was growing more powerful, and stretching its shadow over the independence of their towns. They had arrived at a crisis in their history. Commerce, trade, liberty, had done all for them they would ever do. This was becoming every day more clear.

Decadence had set in, and the Netherlanders would have fallen under the power of the empire

and been reduced to vassalage, had not a higher principle come in time to save them from this fate. It was at this moment that a celestial fire descended upon the nation: the country shook off the torpor which had begun to weigh upon it, and girding itself for a great fight, it contended for a higher liberty than any it had yet known.[10]

Footnotes:

1. Caesar, Comment. de Bello Gallico, lib. 2., cap. 15-30. "Hoc praelio facto, et prope ad interneccionem gente, ac nomine Nerviorum redacto," are the words of the conqueror (lib. 2., cap. 28). Niebuhr, Lectures on Roman History, vol. 3., PD. 43, 44; Lond. and Edin, 1850.
2. Muller, Univ. Hist., vol. 2., bk. 14., sec. 13-18.
3. Stevens, Hist. of the Scot. Church, Rotterdam, pp. 259, 260; Edin., 1833.
4. Ibid., p. 260.
5. See "Historical Introduction" to Rise of the Dutch Republic by John Lothrop Motley; Edin. and Lond., 1859.

6. Muller, Univ. Hist., vol. 2., p. 230.
7. Relationi del Cardinal Bentivoglio, in Pareigi, 1631; lib. 1., cap. 7, p. 32.
8. Misson, Travels, vol. 1., p. 4.
9. Relat. Card. Bentiv., lib. 1., cap. 7, p. 32: "Che sia non solo in Europa, ma in tutto il mondo."
10. The Papal nuncio, Bentivoglio, willingly acknowledges their great physical and mental qualities, and praises them alike for their skill in arts and their bravery in war. "Gli huomini, che produce il paese, sono ordinariamente di grande statura; di bello, e candido aspetto, e di corpo vigorose, e robusto. Hanno gli animi non men vigorosi de' corpi; e cio s' e veduto in quella si lunga, e si pertinace resistenza, che da loro s' e fatta all' armi Spagnuole," etc. (Relat. Card. Bentiv., lib. 1., cap. 3, pp. 4, 5)

Chapter 2

Introduction of Protestantism into the Netherlands

THE great struggle for religion and liberty, of which the Netherlands became the theater in the middle of the sixteenth century, properly dates from 1555, when the Emperor Charles V. is seen elevating to the throne, from which he himself has just descended, his son Philip II. In order to the right perception of that momentous conflict, it is necessary that we should rapidly survey the three centuries that preceded it. The Church of Rome in the Netherlands is beheld, in the thirteenth century, flourishing in power and riches. The Bishops of Utrecht had become the Popes of the North.

Favoured by the emperors, whose quarrel they espoused against the Popes in the Middle Ages, these ambitious prelates were now all but independent of Rome. "They gave place," says Brandt, the historian of the Netherlands'

Reformation, "to neither kings nor emperors in the state and magnificence of their court; they reckoned the greatest princes in the Low Countries among their feudatories because they held some land of the bishopric in fee, and because they owed them homage. Accordingly, Baldwin, the second of that name and twenty-ninth bishop of the see, summoned several princes to Utrecht, to receive investiture of the lands that were so holden by them: the Duke of Brabant as first steward; the Count of Flanders as second; the Count of Holland as marshal." [1] The clergy regulated their rank by the spiritual principedom established at Utrecht. They were the grandees of the land. They monopolised all the privileges but bore none of the burdens of the State. They imposed taxes on others, but they themselves paid taxes to no one. Numberless dues and offerings had already swollen their possessions to an enormous amount, while new and ever-recurring exactions were continually enlarging their territorial domains. Their immoralities were restrained by no sense of shame and by no fear of punishment, seeing that to the opinion of their countrymen they paid no

deference, and to the civil and criminal tribunals they owed no accountability. They framed a law, and forced it upon the government, that no charge should be received against a cardinal-bishop, unless supported by seventy-two witnesses; nor against a cardinal-priest, but by forty-four; nor against a cardinal-deacon, but by twenty-seven; nor against the lowest of the clergy, but by seven.[2] If a voice was raised to hint that these servants of the Church would exalt themselves by being a little more humble, and enrich themselves by being a little less covetous, and that charity and meekness were greater ornaments than sumptuous apparel and gaily-caparisoned mules, instantly the ban of the Church was evoked to crush the audacious complainer; and the anathema in that age had terrors that made even those look pale who had never trembled on the battle-field. But the power, affluence, and arrogance of the Church of Rome in the Low Countries had reached their height; and in the fourteenth century we find an ebb setting in, in that tide which till now had continued at flood. Numbers of the Waldenses and Albigenses, chased from Southern France or from the valleys of the

Alps, sought refuge in the cities of the Netherlands, bringing with them the Romaunt version of the Bible, which was translated into Low Dutch rhymes.[3]

The city of Antwerp occupies a most distinguished place in this great movement. So early as 1106, before the disciples of Peter Waldo had appeared in these parts, we find a celebrated preacher, Tanchelinus by name, endeavoring to purge out the leaven of the Papacy, and spread purer doctrine not only in Antwerp, but in the adjoining parts of Brabant and Flanders; and, although vehemently opposed by the priests and by Norbert, the first founder of the order of Premonstratensians, his opinions took a firm hold of some of the finest minds.[4] In the following century, the thirteenth, William Cornelius, also of Antwerp, taught a purer doctrine than the common one on the Eucharistic Sacrament, which he is said to have received from the disciples of Tanchelinus. Nor must we omit to mention Nicolas, of Lyra, a town in the east of Brabant, who lived about 1322, and who impregnated his Commentary on the Bible

with the seeds of Gospel truth. Hence the remark of Julius Pflugius, the celebrated Romish doctor [5] -- "Si Lyra non lirasset, Lutherus non saltasset." [6] In the fourteenth century came another sower of the good seed of the Word in the countries of which we speak, Gerard of Groot. Nowhere, in short, had forerunners of the Reformation been so numerous as on this famous sea-board, a fact doubtless to be accounted for, in part at least, by the commerce, the intelligence, and the freedom which the Low Countries then enjoyed.

Voices began to be heard prophetic of greater ones to be raised in after-years. Whence came these voices? From the depth of the convents. The monks became the reprovers and accusers of one another. The veil was lifted upon the darkness that hid the holy places of the Roman Church. In 1290, Henry of Ghent, Archbishop of Tournay, published a book against the Papacy, in which he boldly questioned the Pope's power to transform what was evil into good. Guido, the forty-second Bishop of Utrecht, refused -- rare modesty in those times -- the red hat and scarlet mantle from the Pope. He

contrasts with Wevelikhoven, the fiftieth bishop of that see, who in 1380 dug the bones of a Lollard out of the grave, and burned them before the gates of his episcopal palace, and cast the ashes into the town ditch. His successor, the fifty-first Bishop of Utrecht, cast into a dungeon a monk named Matthias Grabo, for writing a book in support of the thesis that "the clergy are subject to the civil powers." The terrified author recanted the doctrine of his book, but the magistrates of several cities esteemed it good and sound notwithstanding. As in the greater Papacy of Rome, so in the lesser Papacy at Utrecht, a schism took place, and rival Popes thundered anathemas at one another; this helped to lower the prestige of the Church in the eyes of the people. Henry Loeder, Prior of the Monastery of Fredesweel, near Northova, wrote to his brother in the following manner -- " Dear brother, the love I bear your state, and welfare for the sake of the Blood of Christ, obliges me to take a rod instead of a pen into my hand... I never saw those cloisters flourish and increase in godliness which daily increased in temporal estates and possessions... The filth of your cloister greatly wants the broom and

the mop... Embrace the Cross and the Crucified Jesus; therein ye shall find full content." Near Haarlem was the cloister of "The Visitation of the Blessed Lady," of which John van Kempen was prior. We find him censuring the lives of the monks in these words -- "We would be humble, but cannot bear contempt; patient, without oppressions or sufferings; obedient, without subjection; poor, without wanting anything, etc. Our Lord said the kingdom of heaven is to be entered by force." Henry Wilde, Prior of the Monastery of Bois le Duc, purged the hymn-books of the wanton songs which the monks had inserted with the anthems. "Let them pray for us," was the same prior wont to say when asked to sing masses for the dead; "our prayers will do them no good." We obtain a glimpse of the rigour of the ecclesiastical laws from the attempts that now began to be made to modify them. In 1434 we find Bishop Rudolph granting power to the Duke of Burgundy to arrest by his bailiffs all drunken and fighting priests, and deliver them up to the bishop, who promises not to discharge them till satisfaction shall have been given to the duke. He promises farther not to grant

the protection of churches and churchyards to murderers and similar malefactors; and that no subject of Holland shall be summoned to appear in the bishop's court at Utrecht, upon any account whatsoever, if the person so summoned be willing to appear before the spiritual or temporal judge to whose jurisdiction he belongs.[7]

There follow, as it comes nearer the Reformation, the greater names of Thomas a. Kempis and John Wessel. We see them trim their lamp and go onward to show men the Way of Life. It was a feeble light that now began to break over these lands; still it was sufficient to reveal many things which had been unobserved or unthought of during the gross darkness that preceded it. It does not become Churchmen, the barons now began to say, to be so enormously rich, and so effeminately luxurious; these possessions are not less ours than they are theirs, we shall share them with them.

These daring barons, moreover, learned to deem the spiritual authority not quite so impregnable as they had once believed it to be, and

the consequence of this was that they held the persons of Churchmen in less reverence, and their excommunications in less awe than before. There was planted thus an incipient revolt. The movement received an impulse from the writings of Wicliffe, which began to be circulated in the Low Countries in the end of the fourteenth century.[8] There followed, in the beginning of the next century, the martyrdoms of Huss and Jerome. The light which these two stakes shed over the plains of Bohemia was reflected as far as to the banks of the Rhine and the shores of the North Sea, and helped to deepen the inquiry which the teachings of the Waldenses and the writings of Wicliffe had awakened among the burghers and artisans of the Low Countries. The execution of Huss and Jerome was followed by the Bohemian campaigns. The victories of Ziska spread the terror of the Hussite arms, and to some extent also the knowledge of the Hussite doctrines, over Western Europe. In the great armaments which were raised by the Pope to extinguish the heresy of Huss, numerous natives of Holland and Belgium enrolled themselves; and of these, some at least returned to

their native land converts to the heresy they had gone forth to subdue.[9] Their opinions, quietly disseminated among their countrymen, helped to prepare the way for that great struggle in the Netherlands which we are now to record, and, which expanded into so much vaster dimensions than that which had shaken Bohemia in the fifteenth century.

To these causes, which conspired for the awakening of the Netherlands, is to be added the influence of trade and commerce. The tendency of commerce to engender activity of mind, and nourish independence of thought, is too obvious to require that we should dwell upon it. The tiller of the soil seldom permits his thoughts to stray beyond his native acres, the merchant and trader has a whole hemisphere for his mental domain. He is compelled to reflect, and calculate, and compare, otherwise he loses his ventures. He is thus lifted out of the slough in which the agriculturist or the herdsman is content to lie all his days. The Low Countries, as we have said in the previous chapter, were the heart of the commerce of the nations.

They were the clearing-house of the world. This vast trade brought with it knowledge as well as riches; for the Fleming could not meet his customers on the wharf, or on the Bourse, without hearing things to him new and strange. He had to do with men of all nations, and he received from them not only foreign coin, but foreign ideas.

The new day was coming apace. Already its signals stood displayed before the eyes of men. One powerful instrumentality after another stood up to give rapid and universal diffusion to the new agencies that were about to be called into existence. Nor have the nations long to wait. A crash is heard, the fall of an ancient empire shakes the earth, and the sacred languages, so long imprisoned within the walls of Constantinople, are liberated, and become again the inheritance of the race. The eyes of men begin to be turned on the sacred page, which may now be read in the very words in which the inspired men of old time wrote it. Not for a thousand years had so fair a morning visited the earth. Men felt after the long darkness that truly "light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is

for the eyes to behold the sun." The dawn was pale and chilly in Italy, but in the north of Europe it brought with it, not merely the light of pagan literature, but the warmth and brightness of Christian truth.

We have already seen with what fierce defiance Charles V. flung down the gage of battle to Protestantism. In manner the most public, and with vow the most solemn and awful, he bound himself to extirpate heresy, or to lose armies, treasures, kingdoms, body and soul, in the attempt. Germany, happily, was covered from the consequences of that mortal threat by the sovereign rights of its hereditary princes, who stood between their subjects and that terrible arm that was now uplifted to crush them. But the less fortunate Netherlands enjoyed no such protection. Charles was master there. He could enforce his will in his patrimonial estates, and his will was that no one in all the Netherlands should profess another than the Roman creed.

One furious edict was issued after another, and

these were publicly read twice every year, that no one might pretend ignorance.[10] These edicts did not remain a dead letter as in Germany; they were ruthlessly executed, and soon, alas! the Low Countries were blazing with stakes and swimming in blood. It is almost incredible, and yet the historian Meteren asserts that during the last thirty years of Charles's reign not fewer than 50,000 Protestants were put to death in the provinces of the Netherlands.

Grotius, in his Annals, raises the number to 100,000. [11] Even granting that these estimates are extravagant, still they are sufficient to convince us that the number of victims was great indeed. The bloody work did not slacken owing to Charles's many absences in Spain and other countries. His sister Margaret, Dowager-queen of Hungary, who was appointed regent of the provinces, was compelled to carry out all his cruel edicts. Men and women, whose crime was that they did not believe in the mass, were beheaded, hanged, burned, or buried alive. These proceedings were zealously seconded by the divines of

Louvain, whom Luther styled "bloodthirsty heretics, who, teaching impious doctrines which they could make good neither by reason nor Scripture, betook themselves to force, and disputed with fire and sword.[12] This terrible work went on from the 23rd of July, 1523, when the proto-martyrs of the provinces were burned in the great square of Brussels,[13] to the day of the emperor's abdication. The Dowager-queen, in a letter to her brother, had given it as her opinion that the good work of purgation should stop only when to go farther would be to effect the entire depopulation of the country. The "Christian Widow," as Erasmus styled her, would not go the length of burning the last Netherlander; she would leave a few orthodox inhabitants to repeople the land.

Meanwhile the halter and the axe were gathering their victims so fast, that the limits traced by the regent -- -wide as they were -- bade fair soon to be reached. The genius and activity of the Netherlanders were succumbing to the terrible blows that were being unremittingly dealt them. Agriculture was beginning to languish; life was

departing from the great towns; the step of the artisan, as he went to and returned from his factory at the hours of meal, was less elastic, and his eye less bright; the workshops were being weeded of their more skillful workmen; foreign Protestant merchants were fleeing from the country; and the decline of the internal trade kept pace with that of the external commerce.

It was evident to all whom bigotry had not rendered incapable of reflection, that, though great progress had been made towards the ruin of the country, the extinction of heresy was still distant, and likely to be reached only when the land had become a desert, the harbours empty, and the cities silent. The blood with which the tyrant was so profusely watering the Netherlands, was but nourishing the heresy which he sought to drown.

Footnotes:

1. Brandt, History of the Reformation in the Low Countries, vol. 1., p. 14; Lond., 1720.
2. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 14.

3. Ibid.
4. Gerdesius, *Hist. Evan. Ren.*, tom. 3., p. 3; Groning., 1749.
5. Gerdesius, tom. 3., p. 3.
6. "If Lyra had not piped, Luther had not danced."
7. Brandt, bk. 1., passim.
8. Ibid., vol. 1., p. 17.
9. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 19.
10. Sleidan, bk. 16., p. 342; Lond., 1689.
11. Grot., *Annal.*, lib. 1., 17; Amsterdam, 1658. Watson, Philip II, vol. 1., p. 113.
12. Sleidan, bk. 16., p. 343.
13. See ante, vol. 1., bk. 9., chap. 3, p. 490.

Chapter 3

Antwerp: Its Confessors and Martyrs

NO city did the day that was now breaking over the Low Countries so often touch with its light as Antwerp. Within a year after Luther's appearance, Jacob Spreng, prior of the Augustinian convent in that town, confessed himself a disciple of the Wittemberg monk, and began to preach the same doctrine. He was not suffered to do so long. In 1519 he was seized in his own convent, carried to Brussels, and threatened with the punishment of the fire. Though his faith was genuine, he had not courage to be a martyr. Vanquished by the fear of death, he consented to read in public his recantation. Being let go, he repaired to Bremen, and there, "walking softly from the memory of his fall," he passed the remaining years of his life in preaching the Gospel as one of the pastors of that northern town.[1]

The same city and the same convent furnished another Reformer yet more intrepid than Spreng. This was Henry of Zutphen. He, too, had sat at the feet of Luther, and along with his doctrine had carried away no small amount of Luther's dramatic power in setting it forth. Christ's office as a Savior he finely put into the following antitheses: -- "He became the servant of the law that he might be its master. He took all sin that he might take away sin.[2] He is at once the victim and the vanquisher of death; the captive of hell, yet he it was by whom its gates were burst open." But though he refused to the sinner any share in the great work of expiating sin, reserving that entirely and exclusively to the Savior, Zutphen strenuously insisted that the believer should be careful to maintain good works. "Away," he said, "with a dead faith." His career in Antwerp was brief. He was seized and thrown into prison. He did not deceive himself as to the fate that awaited him. He kept awake during the silent hours of night, preparing for the death for which he looked on the coming day.

Suddenly a great uproar arose round his prison.

The noise was caused by his townsmen, who had come to rescue him. They broke open his gaol, penetrated to his cell, and bringing him forth, made him escape from the city. Henry of Zutphen, thus rescued from the fires of the Inquisition, visited in the course of his wanderings several provinces and cities, in which he preached the Gospel with great eloquence and success. Eventually he went to Holstein, where, after laboring some time, a mob, instigated by the priests, set upon him and murdered him [3] in the atrociously cruel and barbarous manner we have described in a previous part of our history.[4]

It seemed as if the soil on which the convent of the Augustines in Antwerp stood produced heretics. It must be dug up. In October, 1522, the convent was dismantled. Such of the monks as had not caught the Lutheran disease had quarters provided for them elsewhere. The Host was solemnly removed from a place, the very air of which was loaded with deadly pravity, and the building, like the house of the leper of old, was razed to the ground.[5] No man lodged under that

roof any more for ever. But the heresy was not driven away from Brabant, and the inquisitors began to wreak their vengeance on other objects besides the innocent stones and timbers of heretical monasteries. In the following year (1523) three monks, who had been inmates of that same monastery whose ruins now warned the citizens of Antwerp to eschew Lutheranism as they would the fire, were burned at Brussels.[6] When the fire was kindled, they first recited the Creed; then they chanted the Te Deum Laudamus. This hymn they sang, each chanting the alternate verse, till the flames had deprived them of both voice and life.[7]

In the following year the monks signalised their zeal by a cruel deed. The desire to hear the Gospel continuing to spread in Antwerp and the adjoining country, the pastor of Meltz, a little place near Antwerp, began to preach to the people. His church was often unable to contain the crowds that came to hear him, and he was obliged to retire with his congregation to the open fields. In one of his sermons, declaiming against the priests of his time, he said: -- "We are worse than Judas, for he both

sold and delivered the Lord; but we sell him to you, and do not deliver him." This was doctrine, the public preaching of which was not likely to be tolerated longer than the priests lacked power to stop it. Soon there appeared a placard or proclamation silencing the pastor, as well as a certain Augustinian monk, who preached at times in Antwerp. The assemblies of both were prohibited, and a reward of thirty gold caroli set upon their heads. Nevertheless, the desire for the Gospel was not extinguished, and one Sunday the people convened in great numbers in a ship-building yard on the banks of the Scheldt, in the hope that some one might minister to them the Word of Life. In that gathering was a young man, well versed in the Scriptures, named Nicholas, who seeing no one willing to act as preacher, rose himself to address the people. Entering into a boat that was moored by the river's brink, he read and expounded to the multitude the parable of the five loaves and the two small fishes. The thing was known all over the city. It was dangerous that such a man should be at large; and the monks took care that he should preach no second sermon. Hiring

two butchers, they waylaid him next day, forced him into a sack, tied it with a cord, and hastily carrying him to the river, threw him in. When the murder was known a thrill of horror ran through the citizens of Antwerp.[8]

Ever since, the emperor's famous fulmination against Luther, in 1521, he had kept up a constant fire of placards, as they were termed -- that is, of persecuting edicts -- upon the Netherlands. They were posted up in the streets, read by all, and produced universal consternation and alarm. They succeeded each other at brief intervals; scarcely had the echoes of one fulmination died away when a new and more terrible peal was heard resounding over the startled and affrighted provinces. In April, 1524, came a placard forbidding the printing of any book without the consent of the officers who had charge of that matter.[9] In 1525 came a circular letter from the regent Margaret, addressed to all the monasteries of Holland, enjoining them to send out none but discreet preachers, who would be careful to make no mention of Luther's name. In March, 1526, came another placard against Lutheranism,

and in July of the same year yet another and severer. The preamble of this edict set forth that the "vulgar had been deceived and misled, partly by the contrivance of some ignorant fellows, who took upon them to preach the Gospel privately, without the leave of their superiors, explaining the same, together with other holy writings, after their own fancies, and not according to the orthodox sense of the doctors of the Church, racking their brains to produce new-fangled doctrines.

Besides these, divers secular and regular priests presumed to ascend the pulpit, and there to relate the errors and sinister notions of Luther and his adherents, at the same time reviving the heresies of ancient times, and some that had likewise been propagated in these countries, recalling to men's memories the same, with other false and damnable opinions that had never till now been heard, thought, or spoken of.. Wherefore the edict forbids, in the emperor's name, all assemblies in order to read, speak, confer, or preach concerning the Gospel or other holy writings in Latin, Flemish, or in the Walloon languages -- as likewise to preach,

teach, or in any sort promote the doctrines of Martin Luther; especially such as related to the Sacrament of the altar, or to confession, and other Sacraments of the Church, or anything else that affected the honor of the holy mother Mary, and the saints and saintesses, and their images..By this placard it was further ordered that, together with the books of Luther, etc., and all their adherents of the same sentiments, all the gospels, epistles, prophecies, and other books of the Holy Scriptures in High Dutch, Flemish, Walloon, or French, that had marginal notes, or expositions according to the doctrine of Luther, should be brought to some public place, and there burned; and that whoever should presume to keep any of the aforesaid books and writings by them after the promulgation of this placard should forfeit life and goods." [10]

In 1528 a new placard was issued against prohibited books, as also against monks who had abandoned their cloister. There followed in 1529 another and more severe edict, condemning to death without pardon or reprieve all who had not brought their Lutheran books to be burned, or had

otherwise contravened the former edicts. Those who had relapsed after having abjured their errors were to die by fire; as for others, the men were to die by the sword, and the women by the pit -- that is, they were to be buried alive. To harbour or conceal a heretic was death and the forfeiture of goods. Informers were to have one-half of the estates of the accused on conviction; and those who were commissioned to put the placard in execution were to proceed, not with "the tedious formalities of trial," but by summary process.[11]

It was about this time that Erasmus addressed a letter to the inhabitants of the Low Countries, in which he advised them thus: -- "Keep yourselves in the ark, that you do not perish in the deluge. Continue in the little ship of our Savior, lest ye be swallowed by the waves. Remain in the fold of the Church, lest ye become a prey to the wolves or to Satan, who is always going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour. Stay and see what resolutions will be taken by the emperor, the princes, and afterwards by a General Council." [12] It was thus that the man who was reposing in the

shade exhorted the men who were in the fire. As regarded a "General Council," for which they were bidden to wait, the Reformers had had ample experience, and the result had been uniform -- the mountain had in every case brought forth a mouse. They were able also by this time to guess, one should think, what the emperor was likely to do for them. Almost every year brought with it a new edict, and the space between each several fulmination was occupied in giving practical application to these decrees -- that is, in working the axe, the halter, the stake, and the pit.

A new impetus was given about this time to the Reform movement, by the translation of Luther's version of the Scriptures into Low Dutch. It was not well executed; nevertheless, being read in their assemblies, the book instructed and comforted these young converts. Many of the priests who had been in office for years, but who had never read a single line of the Bible, good-naturedly taking it for granted that it amply authenticated all that the Church taught, dipped into it, and being much astonished at its contents, began to bring both their

life and doctrine into greater accordance with it. One of the printers of this first edition of the Dutch Bible was condemned to death for his pains, and died by the axe. Soon after this, some one made a collection of certain passages from the Scriptures, and published them under the title of "The Well of Life." The little book, with neither note nor comment, contained but the words of Scripture itself; nevertheless it was very obnoxious to the zealous defenders of Popery. A "Well of Life" to others, it was a Well of Death to their Church and her rites, and they resolved on stopping it. A Franciscan friar of Brabant set out on purpose for Amsterdam, where the little book had been printed, and buying up the whole edition, he committed it to the flames. He had only half done his work, however. The book was printed in other towns. The Well would not be stopped; its water would gush out; the journey and the expense which the friar had incurred had been in vain.

We pass over the edicts that were occasionally seeing the light during the ten following years, as well as the Anabaptist opinions and excesses, with

the sanguinary wars to which they led. These we have fully related in a previous part of our history.[13] In 1540 came a more atrocious edict than any that had yet been promulgated. The monks and doctors of Louvain, who spared no pains to root out the Protestant doctrine, instigated the monarch to issue a new placard, which not only contained the substance of all former edicts, but passed them into a perpetual law. It was dated from Brussels, the 22nd September, 1540, and was to the following effect: -- That the heretic should be incapable of holding or disposing of property; that all gifts, donations, and legacies made by him should be null and void; that informers who themselves were heretics should be pardoned that once; and it especially revived and put in force against Lutherans an edict that had been promulgated in 1535, and specially directed against Anabaptists -- -namely, that those who abandoned their errors should have the privilege, if men, of dying by the sword; and if women, of being buried alive; such as should refuse to recant were to be burned.[14]

It was an aggravation of these edicts that they were in violation of the rights of Holland. The emperor promulgated them in his character of Count of Holland; but the ancient Counts of Holland could issue no decree or law till first they had obtained the consent of the nobility and Commons. Yet the emperor issued these placards on his own sole authority, and asked leave of no one. Besides, they were a virtual establishment of the Inquisition. They commanded that when evidence was lacking, the accused should themselves be put to the question -- that is, by torture or other inquisitorial methods. Accordingly, in 1522, and while only at the beginning of the terrible array of edicts which we have recited, the emperor appointed Francis van Hulst to make strict inquiry into people's opinions in religious matters all throughout the Netherlands; and he gave him as his fellow-commissioner, Nicolas van Egmont, a Carmelite monk. These two worthies Erasmus happily and characteristically hit off thus: -- - "Hulst," said he, "is a wonderful enemy to learning," and "Egmont is a madman with a sword in his hand." "These men," says Brandt, "first

threw men into prison, and then considered what they should lay to their charge." [15]

Meanwhile the Reformed doctrine was spreading among the inhabitants of Holland, Brabant, and Flanders. At Bois-le-Duc all the Dominican monks were driven out of the city. At Antwerp, in spite of the edicts of the emperor, the conventicles were kept up. The learned Hollander, Dorpius, Professor of Divinity at Louvain, was thought to favor Luther's doctrine, and he, as well as Erasmus, was in some danger of the stake. Nor did the emperor's secretary at the Court of Brabant, Philip de Lens, escape the suspicion of heresy. At Naarden, Anthony Frederick became a convert to Protestantism, and was followed by many of the principal inhabitants -- among others, Nicolas Quich, under-master of the school there. At Utrecht the Reformation was embraced by Rhodius, Principal of the College of St. Jerome, and in Holland by Cornelius Honius, a learned civilian, and counsellor in the Courts of Holland. Honius interpreted the text, "This is my body," by the words, "This signifies my body " -- an

interpretation which he is said to have found among the papers of Jacob Hook, sometime Dean of Naldwick, and which was believed to have been handed down from hand to hand for two hundred years.[16] Among the disciples of Honius was William Gnaphaeus, Rector of the Gymnasium at the Hague. To these we may add Cornelius Grapheus, Secretary of Antwerp, a most estimable man, and an enlightened friend of the Reformation.

The first martyr of the Reformation in Holland deserves more particular notice. He was John de Bakker, of Woerden, which is a little town between Utrecht and Leyden. He was a priest of the age of twenty-seven years, and had incurred the suspicion of heresy by speaking against the edicts of the emperor, and by marrying. Joost Laurence, a leading member of the Inquisition, presided at his trial. He declared before his judges that "he could submit to no rule of faith save Holy Writ, in the sense of the Holy Ghost, ascertained in the way of interpreting Scripture by Scripture." He held that "men were not to be forced to 'come in,' otherwise than God forces them, which is not by prisons,

stripes, and death, but by gentleness, and by the strength of the Divine Word, a force as soft and lovely as it is powerful." Touching the celibacy of priests, concerning which he was accused, he did "not find it enjoined in Scripture, and an angel from heaven could not, he maintained, introduce a new article of faith, much less the Church, which was subordinate to the Word of God, but had no authority over it." His aged father, who was churchwarden -- -although after this expelled from his office -- was able at times to approach his son, as he stood upon his trial, and at these moments the old man would whisper into his ear, "Be strong, and persevere in what is good; as for me, I am contented, after the example of Abraham, to offer up to God my dearest child, that never offended me."

The presiding judge condemned him to die. The next day, which was the 15th of September, 1525, he was led out upon a high scaffold, where he was divested of his clerical garments, and dressed in a short yellow coat. "They put on his head," says the Dutch Book of Martyrs, "a yellow

hat, with flaps like a fool's cap. When they were leading him away to execution," continues the martyrologist, "as he passed by the prison where many more were shut up for the faith, he cried with a loud voice, ' Behold! my dear brethren, I have set my foot upon the threshold of martyrdom; have courage, like brave soldiers of Jesus Christ, and being stirred up by my example, defend the truths of the Gospel against all unrighteousness.' He had no sooner said this than he was answered by a shout of joy, triumph, and clapping of hands by the prisoners; and at the same time they honored his martyrdom with ecclesiastical hymns, singing the Te Deum Laudamus, Certamen Magnum, and O beata Martyrum Solemnia. Nor did they cease till he had given up the ghost. When he was at the stake, he cried, ' O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?' And again, 'Death is swallowed up in the victory of Christ.'

And last of all, 'Lord Jesus, forgive them, for they know not what they do. O Son of God! remember me, and have mercy upon me.' And thus, after they had stopped his breath, he departed as in

a sweet sleep, without any motions or convulsions of his head and body, or contortions of his eyes. This was the end of John de Bakker, the first martyr in Holland for the doctrine of Luther. The next day Bernard the monk, Gerard Wormer, William of Utrecht, and perhaps also Gnaphaeus himself, were to have been put to death, had not the constancy of our proto-martyr softened a little the minds of his judges." [17]

Footnotes:

1. Gerdesius, tom. 3., pp. 23 -- 25.
2. "Totum peccatum tolerans et tollens."
(Gerdesius, tom. 3., Appendix, p. 18.)
3. Gerdesius, tom. 3., pp. 28 -- 30.
4. See ante, vol. 1, bk. 9., chap. 6, p. 506.
5. "Dirutum est penitusque eversum." (Gerdesius tom. 3., p. 29.)
6. See ante, vol. 1., bk. 9., chap. 3, p. 490.
7. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 45.
8. Gerdesius, tom. 3., p. 37. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 51.
9. Gerdesius, tom. 3., p. 39.
10. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 56. Gerdesius, tom. 3., p. 56.

11. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 57, 58.
12. Ibid.
13. See ante, vol. 1., bk. 9., chap. 8; and vol. 2., bk. 12., chap. 2.
14. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 79; Gerdesius, tom. 3., p, 143.
15. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 42.
16. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 52.
17. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 53.

Chapter 4

Abdication of Charles V and Accession of Philip II

IN the midst of his cruel work, and, we may say, in the midst of his years, the emperor was overtaken by old age. The sixteenth century is waxing in might around him; its great forces are showing no sign of exhaustion or decay; on the contrary, their rigour is growing from one year to another; it is plain that they are only in the opening of their career, while in melancholy contrast Charles V. is closing his, and yielding to the decrepitude that is creeping over himself and his empire. The scepter and the faggot -- so closely united in his case, and to be still more closely united in that of his successor -- he must hand over to his son Philip. Let us place ourselves in the hall where the act of abdication is about to take place, and be it ours not to record the common-places of imperial flattery, so lavishly bestowed on this occasion, nor to describe the pomps under

which the greatest monarch, of his age so adroitly hid his fall, but to sketch the portraits of some of those men who await a great part in the future, and whom we shall frequently meet in the scenes that are about to open.

We enter the great hall of the old palace of Brabant, in Brussels. It is the 25th of October, 1555, and this day the Estates of the Netherlands have met here, summoned by an imperial edict, to be the witnesses of the surrender of the sovereignty of his realms by Charles to his son. With the act of abdication one tragedy closes, and another and bloodier tragedy begins. No one in that glittering throng could forecast the calamitous future which was coming along with the new master of the Spanish monarchy. Charles V. enters the gorgeously tapestried hall, leaning his arm on the shoulder of William of Nassau. Twenty-five years before, we saw the emperor enter Augsburg, bestriding a steed of "brilliant whiteness," and exciting by his majestic port, his athletic frame, and manly countenance, the enthusiasm of the spectators, who, with a touch of exaggeration

pardonable in the circumstances, pronounced him "the handsomest man in the empire." And now what a change in Charles! How sad the ravages which toil and care have, during these few years, made on this iron frame! The bulky mould in which the outer man of Charles was cast still remains to him -- the ample brow, the broad chest, the muscular limbs; but the force that animated that powerful framework, and enabled it to do such feats in the tournament, the bull-ring, and the battle-field, has departed. His limbs totter, he has to support his steps with a crutch, his hair is white, his eyes have lost their brightness, his shoulders stoop -- in short, age has withered and crippled him all over; and yet he has seen only fifty-five years. The toils that had worn him down he briefly and affectingly summarised in his address to the august assemblage before him. Resting this hand on his crutch, and that on the shoulder of the young noble by his side, he proceeds to count up forty expeditions undertaken by him since he was seventeen -- nine to Germany, six to Spain, seven to Italy, four to France, ten to the Netherlands, two to England, and two to Africa. He had made eleven

voyages by sea; he had fought four battles, won victories, held Diets, framed treaties -- -so ran the tale of work. He had passed nights and nights in anxious deliberation over the growth of Protestantism, and he had sought to alleviate the mingled mortification and alarm its progress caused him, by fulminating one persecuting edict after another in the hope of arresting it.

In addition to marches and battles, thousands of halts and stakes had he erected; but of these he is discreetly silent. He is silent too regarding the success which had crowned these mighty efforts and projects. Does he retire because he has succeeded? No; he retires because he has failed. His infirm frame is but the image of his once magnificent empire, over which decrepitude and disorder begin to creep. One young in years, and alert in body, is needed to recruit those armies which battle has wasted, to replenish that exchequer which so many campaigns have made empty, to restore the military prestige which the flight, from Innspruck and succeeding disasters have tarnished, to quell the revolts that are

springing up in the various kingdoms which form his vast monarchy, and to dispel those dark clouds which his eye but too plainly sees to be gathering all round the horizon, and which, should he, with mind enfeebled and body crippled, continue to linger longer on the scene, will assuredly burst in ruin. Such is the true meaning of that stately ceremonial in which the actors played so adroitly, each his part, in the Brabant palace at Brussels, on the 25th of October, 1555. The tyrant apes the father; the murderer of his subjects would fain seem the paternal ruler; the disappointed, baffled, fleeing opponent of Protestantism puts on the airs of the conqueror, and strives to hide defeat under the pageantries of State, and the symbols of victory. The closing scene of Charles V. is but a repetition of Julian's confession of discomfiture -- "Thou hast overcome, O Galilean."

We turn to the son, who, in almost all outward respects, presents a complete contrast to the father. If Charles was prematurely old, Philip, on the other hand, looked as if he never had been young. He did not attain to middle height. His small body was

mounted on thin legs. Nature had not fitted him to shine in either the sports of the tournament or the conflicts of the battle-field; and both he shunned, he had the ample brow, the blue eyes, and the aquiline nose of his father; but these agreeable features were forgotten in the ugliness of the under part of his face. His lower jaw protruded. It was a Burgundian deformity, but in Philip's case it had received a larger than the usual family development. To this disagreeable feature was added another repulsive one, also a family peculiarity, a heavy hanging under-lip, which enlarged the apparent size of his mouth, and strengthened the impression, which the unpleasant protrusion of the jaw made on the spectator, of animal voracity and savageness.

The puny, meagre, sickly-looking man who stood beside the warlike and once robust form of Charles, was not more unlike his father in body than he was unlike him in mind. Not one of his father's great qualities did he possess. He lacked his statesmanship; he had no knowledge of men, he could not enter into their feelings, nor

accommodate himself to their ways, nor manifest any sympathy in what engaged and engrossed them; he, therefore, shunned them. He had the shy, shrinking air of the valetudinarian, and looked around with something like the scowl of the misanthrope on his face. Charles moved about from province to province of his vast dominions, speaking the language and conforming to the manners of the people among whom he chanced for the time to be; he was at home in all places. Philip was a stranger everywhere, save in Spain. He spoke no language but his mother tongue. Amid the gay and witty Italians -- amid the familiar and courteous Flemings -- amid the frank and open Germans -- Philip was still the Spaniard: austere, haughty, taciturn, unapproachable. Only one quality did he share with his father -- the intense passion, namely, for extinguishing the Reformation.[1]

From the two central figures we turn to glance at a third, the young noble on whose shoulder the emperor is leaning. He is tall and well-formed, with a lofty brow, a brown eye, and a peaked

beard. His service in camps has bronzed his complexion, and given him more the look of a Spaniard than a Fleming. He is only in his twenty-third year, but the quick eye of Charles had discovered the capacity of the young soldier, and placed him in command of the army on the frontier, where resource and courage were specially needed, seeing he had there to confront some of the best generals of France. Could the emperor, who now leaned so confidently on his shoulder, have foreseen his future career, how suddenly would he have withdrawn his arm! The man on whom he reposed was destined to be the great antagonist of his son. Despotism and Liberty stood embodied in the two forms on either hand of the abdicating emperor -- Philip, and William, Prince of Orange; for it was he on whom Charles leaned. The contest between them was to shake Christendom, bring down from its pinnacle of power that great monarchy which Charles was bequeathing to his son, raise the little Holland to a pitch of commercial prosperity and literary glory which Spain had never known, and leave to William a name in the wars of liberty far surpassing that

which Charles had won by his many campaigns -- a name which can perish only with the Netherlands themselves.

Besides the three principal figures there were others in that brilliant gathering, who were either then, or soon to be, celebrated throughout Europe, and whom we shall often meet in the stirring scenes that are about to open. In the glittering throng around the platform might be seen the bland face of the Bishop of Arras; the tall form of Lamoral of Egmont, with his long dark hair and soft eye, the representative of the ancient Frisian kings; the bold but sullen face, and fan-shaped beard, of Count Horn; the debauched Brederode; the infamous Noircarmes, on whose countenance played the blended lights of ferocity and greed; the small figure of the learned Viglius, with his yellow hair and his green glittering eye, and round rosy face, from which depended an ample beard; and, to close our list, there was the slender form of the celebrated Spanish grandee, Ruy Gomez, whose coal-black hair and burning eye were finely set off by a face which intense application had rendered as

colourless almost as the marble.

The pageant was at an end. Charles had handed over to another that vast possession of dominion which had so severely taxed his manhood, and which was crushing his age. The princes, knights, warriors, and counsellors have left the hall, and gone forth to betake them each to his own several road -- Charles to the monastic cell which he had interposed between him and the grave; Philip to that throne from which he was to direct that fearful array of armies, inquisitors, and executioners, that was to make Europe swim in blood; William of Orange to prepare for that now not distant struggle, which he saw to be inevitable if bounds were to be set to the vast ambition and fanatical fury of Spain, and some remnants of liberty preserved in Christendom. Others went forth to humbler yet important tasks; some to win true glory by worthy deeds, others to leave behind them names which should be an execration to posterity; but nearly all of them to expire, not on the bed of peace, but on the battle-field, on the scaffold, or by the poignard of the assassin.

Footnotes:

1. Badovaro MS., apud Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, pt. 1., chap. 1; Edin., 1859.

Chapter 5

Philip Arranges the Government of the Netherlands, and Departs for Spain

SOME few years of comparative tranquillity were to intervene between the accession of Philip II., and the commencement of those terrible events which made his reign one long dark tragedy. But even now, though but recently seated on the throne, one startling and ominous act gave warning to the Netherlands and to Europe of what was in store for them under the austere, bigoted, priest-ridden man, whom half a world had the misfortune to call master. In 1559, four years after his accession, Philip renewed that atrociously inhuman edict which his father had promulgated in 1540. This edict had imported into the civilised Netherlands the disgusting spectacles of savage lands; it kept the gallows and the stake in constant operation, and

made such havoc in the ranks of the friends of freedom of conscience, that the more moderate historians have estimated the number of its victims, as we have already said, at 50,000.

The commencement of this work, as our readers know, was in 1521, when the emperor issued at Worms his famous edict against "Martin," who was "not a man, but a devil under the form of a man." That bolt passed harmlessly over Luther's head, not because being "not a man," but a spirit, even the imperial sword could not slay him, but simply because he lived on German soil, where the emperor might issue as many edicts as he pleased, but could not execute one of them without the consent of the princes. But the shaft that missed Luther struck deep into the unhappy subjects of Charles's Paternal Estates. "Death or forfeiture of goods" was the sentence decreed against all Lutherans in the Netherlands, and to effect the unsparing and vigorous execution of the decree, a new court was erected in Belgium, which bore a startling resemblance to the Inquisition of Spain. In Antwerp, in Brussels, and in other towns piles

began straightway to blaze.

The fires once kindled, there followed similar edicts, which kept the flames from going out. These made it death to pray with a few friends in private; death to read a page of the Scriptures; death to discuss any article of the faith, not on the streets only, but in one's own house; death to mutilate an image; death to have in one's possession any of the writings of Luther, or Zwingle, or Ecolampadius; death to express doubt respecting the Sacraments of the Church, the authority of the Pope, or any similar dogma. After this, in 1535, came the edict of which we have just made mention, consigning to the horrors of a living grave even repentant heretics, and to the more dreadful horrors, as they were deemed, of the stake, obstinate ones. There was no danger of these cruel laws remaining inoperative, even had the emperor been less in earnest than he was. The Inquisition of Cologne, the canons of Louvain, and the monks of Mechlin saw to their execution; and the obsequiousness of Mary of Hungary, the regent of the kingdom, pushed on the bloody work, nor

thought of pause till she should have reached the verge of "entire depopulation."

When Philip II. re-enacted the edict of 1540, he re-enacted the whole of that legislation which had disgraced the last thirty years of Charles's reign, and which, while it had not extinguished, nor even lessened the Lutheranism against which it was directed, had crippled the industry and commerce of the Low Countries. There had been a lull in the terrible work of beheading and burning men for conscience sake during the few last years of the emperor's reign; Charles's design, doubtless, being to smooth the way for his son. The fires were not extinguished, but they were lowered; the scaffolds were not taken down, but the blood that flooded them was less deep; and as during the last years of Charles, so also during the first years of Philip, the furies of persecution seemed to slumber. But now they awoke; and not only was the old condition of things brought back, but a new machinery, more sure, swift, and deadly than that in use under Charles, was constructed to carry out the edicts which Philip had published anew. The emperor had

established a court in Flanders that sufficiently resembled the Inquisition; but Philip II. made a still nearer approach to that redoubtable institution, which has ever been the pet engine of the bigot and persecutor, and the execration of all free men. The court now established by Philip was, in fact, the Inquisition. It did not receive the name, it is true; but it was none the less the Inquisition, and lacked nothing which the "Holy Office" in Spain possessed. Like it, it had its dungeons and screws and racks. It had its apostolic inquisitors, its secretaries and sergeants. It had its familiars dispersed throughout the Provinces, and who acted as spies and informers. It apprehended men on suspicion, examined them by torture, and condemned them without confronting them with the witnesses, or permitting them to lead proof of their innocence. It permitted the civil judges to concern themselves with prosecutions for heresy no farther than merely to carry out the sentences the inquisitors had pronounced. The goods of the victims were confiscated, and denunciations were encouraged by the promise of rewards, and also the assurance of impunity to informers who had been

co-religionists of the accused.

Even among the submissive natives of Italy and Spain, the establishment of the Inquisition had encountered opposition; but among the spirited and wealthy citizens of the Netherlands, whose privileges had been expanding, and whose love of liberty had been growing, ever since the twelfth century, the introduction of a court like this was regarded with universal horror, and awakened no little indignation. One thing was certain, Papal Inquisition and Netherland freedom could not stand together. The citizens beheld, in long and terrible vista, calamity coming upon calamity; their dwellings entered at midnight by masked familiars, their parents and children dragged to secret prisons, their civic dignitaries led through the streets with halters round their necks, the foreign Protestant merchants fleeing from their country, their commerce dying, autos da fe blazing in all their cities, and liberty, in the end of the day, sinking under an odious and merciless tyranny.

There followed another measure which

intensified the alarm and anger of the Netherlanders. The number of bishops was increased by Philip from four to seventeen. The existing sees were those of Arras, Cambray, Tournay, and Utrecht; to these thirteen new sees were added, making the number of bishoprics equal to that of the Provinces. The bull of Pius IV., ratified within a few months by that of Paul IV., stated that "the enemy of mankind being abroad, and the Netherlands, then under the sway of the beloved son of his Holiness, Philip the Catholic, being compassed about with heretic and schismatic nations, it was believed that the eternal welfare of the land was in great danger;" hence the new laborers sent forth into the harvest. The object of the measure was transparent; nor did its authors affect to conceal that it was meant to strengthen the Papacy in Flanders, and extend the range of its right arm, the Inquisition. These thirteen new bishops were viewed by the citizens but as thirteen additional inquisitors. These two tyrannical steps necessitated a third. Philip saw it advisable to retain a body of Spanish troops in the country to compel submission to the new arrangements. The

number of Spanish soldiers at that moment in Flanders was not great: they amounted to only 4,000: but they were excellently disciplined: the citizens saw in them the sharp end of the wedge that was destined to introduce a Spanish army, and reduce their country under a despotism; and in truth such was Philip's design. Besides, these troops were insolent and rapacious to a degree. The inhabitants of Zealand refused to work on their dykes, saying they would rather that the ocean should swallow them up at once, than that they should be devoured piece-meal by the avarice and cruelty of the Spanish soldiers.[1]

The measures adopted by Philip caused the citizens the more irritation and discontent, from the fact that they were subversive of the fundamental laws of the Provinces. At his accession Philip had taken an oath to uphold all the chartered rights of the Netherlanders; but the new edicts traversed every one of these rights. He had sworn not to raise the clergy in the Provinces above the state in which he found them. In disregard of his solemn pledge, he had increased the ecclesiastical dioceses from

four to seventeen. This was a formidable augmentation of the clerical force. The nobles looked askance on the new spiritual peers who had come to divide with them their influence; the middle classes regarded them as clogs on their industry, and the artisans detested them as spies on their freedom.

The violation of faith on the part of their monarch rankled in their bosoms, and inspired them with gloomy forebodings as regarded the future. Another fundamental law, ever esteemed by the Netherlanders among the most valuable of their privileges, and which Philip had sworn to respect, did these new arrangements contravene. It was unlawful to bring a foreign soldier into the country. Philip, despite his oath, refused to withdraw his Spanish troops. So long as they remained, the Netherlanders well knew that the door stood open for the entrance of a much larger force. It was also provided in the ancient charters that the citizens should be tried before the ordinary courts and by the ordinary judges. But Philip had virtually swept all these courts away, and substituted in their room

a tribunal of most anomalous and terrific powers: a tribunal that sat in darkness, that permitted those it dragged to its bar to plead no law, to defend themselves by no counsel, and that compelled the prisoner by torture to become his own accuser. Nor was this court required to assign, either to the prisoner himself or to the public, any reasons for the dreadful and horrible sentences it was in the habit of pronouncing. It was allowed the most unrestrained indulgence in a capricious and murderous tyranny. The ancient charters had farther provided that only natives should serve in the public offices, and that foreigners should be ineligible. Philip paid as little respect to this as to the rest of their ancient usages and rights. Introducing a body of foreign ecclesiastics and monks, he placed the lives and properties of his subjects of the Netherlands at the disposal of these strangers.

The ferment was great: a storm was gathering in the Low Countries: nor does one wonder when one reflects on the extent of the revolution which had been accomplished, and which outraged all

classes. The hierarchy had been suddenly and portentously expanded: the tribunals had been placed in the hands of foreigners: in the destruction of their charters, the precious acquisitions of centuries had been swept away, and the citadel of their freedom razed. A foreign army was on their soil. The Netherlanders saw in all this a complete machinery framed and set up on purpose to carry out the despotism of the edicts.

The blame of the new arrangements was generally charged on the Bishop of Arras. He was a plausible, crafty, ambitious man, fertile in expedients, and even of temper. He was the ablest of the counsellors of Philip, who honored him with his entire confidence, and consulted him on all occasions. Arras was by no means anxious to be thought the contriver, or even prompter, of that scheme of despotism which had supplanted the liberties of his native land; but the more he protested, the more did the nation credit him with the plan. To him had been assigned the place of chief authority among the new bishops, the Archbishopric of Mechlin. He was coy at first of

the proffered dignity, and Philip had to urge him before he would accept the archiepiscopal mitre. "I only accepted it," we find him afterwards writing to the king, "that I might not live in idleness, doing nothing for God and your Majesty." If his See of Mechlin brought him labor, which he professed to wish, it brought him what he feigned not to wish, but which nevertheless he greedily coveted, enormous wealth and vast influence; and when the people saw him taking kindly to his new post, and working his way to the management of all affairs, and the control of the whole kingdom, they were but the more confirmed in their belief that the edicts, the new bishops, the Inquisition, and the Spanish soldiers had all sprung from his fertile brain. The Netherlanders had undoubtedly to thank the Bishop of Arras; for the first, the edicts namely, and these were the primal fountains of that whole tyranny that was fated to devastate the Low Countries. As regards the three last, it is not so clear that he had counselled their adoption. Nevertheless the nation persisted in regarding him as the chief conspirator against its liberties; and the odium in which he was held increased from day to

day. Discontent was ripening into revolt.

Philip II. was probably the less concerned at the storm, which he could not but see was gathering, inasmuch as he contemplated an early retreat before it. He was soon to depart for Spain, and leave others to contend with the great winds he had unchained.

Before taking his departure, Philip looked round him for one whom he might appoint regent of this important part of his dominions in his absence. His choice lay between Christina, Duchess of Lorraine (his cousin), and Margaret, Duchess of Parma, a natural daughter of Charles V. He fixed at last on the latter, the Duchess of Parma. The Duchess of Lorraine would have been the wiser ruler; the Duchess of Parma, Philip knew, would be the more obsequious one. Her duchy was surrounded by Philip's Italian dominions, and she was willing, moreover, to send her son -- afterwards the celebrated Alexander Farnese -- on pretense of being educated at the court of Spain, but in reality as a pledge that she would execute to

the letter the injunctions of Philip in her government of the Provinces. Though far away, the king took care to retain a direct and firm grasp of the Netherlands.[2]

Under Margaret as regent, three Councils were organised -- a Council of Finance, a Privy Council, and a Council of State, the last being the one of highest authority. These three Councils were appointed on the pretense of assisting the regent in her government of the Provinces, but in reality to mask her arbitrary administration by lending it the air of the popular will. It was meant that the government of the Provinces should possess all the simplicity of absolutism. Philip would order, Margaret would execute, and the Councils would consent; meanwhile the old charters of freedom would be sleeping their deep sleep in the tomb that Philip had dug for them; and woe to the man who should attempt to rouse them from their slumber! Before setting sail, Philip convoked an assembly of the States at Ghent, in order to deliver to them his parting instructions. Attended by a splendid retinue, Philip presided at their opening meeting,

but as he could not speak the tongue of the Flemings, the king addressed the convention by the mouth of the Bishop of Arras. The orator set forth, with that rhetorical grace of which he was a master, that "intense affection" which Philip bore to the Provinces; he next craved earnest attention to the three millions of gold florins which the king had asked of them; and these preliminaries dispatched, the bishop entered upon the great topic of his harangue, with a fervor that showed how much this matter lay on the heart of his master.

The earnestness of the bishop, or rather of Philip, can be felt only by giving his words. "At this moment," said he, "many countries, and particularly the lands in the immediate neighborhood, were greatly infested by various 'new, reprobate, and damnable sects;' as these sects, proceeding from the foul fiend, father of discord, had not failed to keep those kingdoms in perpetual dissension and misery, to the manifest displeasure of God Almighty; as his Majesty was desirous to avert such terrible evils from his own realms, according to his duty to the Lord God, who would

demand reckoning from him hereafter for the well-being of the Provinces; as all experience proved that change of religion ever brought desolation and confusion to the commonweal; as low persons, beggars, and vagabonds, under color of religion, were accustomed to traverse the land for the purpose of plunder and disturbance; as his Majesty was most desirous of following in the footsteps of his lord and father; as it would be well remembered what the emperor had said to him on the memorable occasion of his abdication, therefore his Majesty had commanded the regent Margaret of Parma, for the sake of religion and the glory of God, accurately and exactly to cause to be enforced the edicts and decrees made by his Imperial Majesty, and renewed by his present Majesty, for the extirpation of all sects and heresies." [3] The charge laid on the regent Margaret was extended to all governors, councillors and others in authority, who were enjoined to trample heresy and heretics out of existence.

The Estates listened with intense anxiety, expecting every moment to hear Philip say that he

would withdraw the Spanish troops, that he would lighten their heavy taxation, and that he would respect their ancient charters, which indeed he had sworn to observe. These were the things that lay near the hearts of the Netherlanders, but upon these matters Philip was profoundly silent. The convention begged till tomorrow to return its answer touching the levy of three millions which the, king had asked for.

On the following day the Estates met in presence of the king, and each province made answer separately. The Estate of Artois was the first to read its address by its representative. They would cheerfully yield to the king, not only the remains of their property, but the last drop of their blood. At the hearing of these loyal words, a gleam of delight shot across the face of Philip. No ordinary satisfaction could have lighted up a face so habitually austere and morose. It was a burst of that "affection" which Philip boasted he bore the Netherlanders, and which showed them that it extended not only to them, but to theirs. But the deputy proceeded to append a condition to this

apparently unbounded surrender; that condition was the withdrawal of the Spanish troops. Instantly Philip's countenance changed, and sinking into his chair of state, with gloomy and wrathful brow, the assembly saw how distasteful to Philip was the proposition to withdraw his soldiers from the Netherlands. The rest of the Estates followed; each, in its turn, making the same offer, but appending to it the same condition. Every florin of the three millions demanded would be forthcoming, but not a soldier must be left on the soil of the Provinces. The king's face grew darker still. Its rapid changes showed the tempest that was raging in his breast. To ask him to withdraw his soldiers was to ask him to give up the Netherlands. Without the soldiers how could he maintain the edicts and Inquisition? and these let go, the haughty and heretical Netherlanders would again be their own masters, and would fill the Provinces with that rampant heresy which he had just cursed. The very idea of such a thing threw the king into a rage which he was at no pains to conceal.

But a still greater mortification awaited him

before the convention broke up. A formal remonstrance on the subject of the Spanish soldiers was presented to Philip in the name of the States-General, signed by the Prince of Orange, Count Egmont, and many other nobles. The king was at the same time asked to annul, or at least to moderate, the edicts; and when one of his ministers represented, in the most delicate terms possible, that to persist in their execution would be to sow the seeds of rebellion, and thereby lose the sovereignty of the Provinces, Philip replied that "he had much rather be no king at all than have heretics for his subjects." [4]

So irritated was the king by these requests that he flung out of the hall in a rage, remarking that as he was a Spaniard it was perhaps expected that he, too, should withdraw himself. A day or two, however, sufficed for his passion to cool, and then he saw that his true policy was dissimulation till he should have tamed the stubbornness and pride of these Netherland nobles. He now made a feint of concession; he would have been glad, he said, to carry his soldiers with him in his fleet, had he been

earlier made acquainted with the wishes of the Estates; he promised, however, to withdraw them in a few months. On the matter of Lutheranism he was inexorable, and could not even bring himself to dissemble. His parting injunction to the States was to pursue heresy with the halter, the axe, the stake, and the other modes of death duly enacted and set forth in his own and his royal father's edicts.

On the 26th of August, Philip II., on the shore of Flushing, received the farewell salutations of the grandees of the Provinces, and then set sail for Spain, attended by a fleet of ninety vessels. He had quitted an angry land; around him was a yet angrier ocean. The skies blackened, the wind rose, and the tempest lay heavy upon the royal squadron. The ships were laden with the precious things of the Netherlands. Tapestries, silks, laces, paintings, marbles, and store of other articles which had been collected by his father, the emperor, in the course of thirty years, freighted the ships of Philip. He meant to fix his capital in Spain, and these products of the needles, the looms, and the pencils of his

skillful and industrious subjects of the Low Countries were meant to adorn his palace. The greedy waves swallowed up nearly all that rich and various spoil. Some of the ships foundered outright; those that continued to float had to lighten themselves by casting their precious cargo into the sea. "Philip," as the historian Meteren remarks, "had robbed the land to enrich the ocean." The king's voyage, however, was safely ended, and on the 8th of September he disembarked at Laredo, on the Biscayan coast.

The gloomy and superstitious mind of Philip interpreted his deliverance from the storm that had burst over his fleet in accordance with his own fanatical notions. He saw in it an authentication of the grand mission with which he had been entrusted as the destroyer of heresy;^[5] and in token of thankfulness to that Power which had rescued him from the waves and landed him safely on Spanish earth, he made a vow, which found its fulfilment in the magnificent and colossal palace that rose in after-years on the savage and boulder strewn slopes of the Sierra Guadarrama -- the

Escorial.

Footnotes:

1. Watson, Philip II., vol. 1., p. 118,
2. Relat. Card. Bent., lib. 2., cap. 1, p. 45.
3. Motley,. Rise of the Dutch Republic, pt. 1., ch. 3, p. 110.
4. Bentivoglio. "Chegli voleva piu tosto restar senza regni che possedergli con heresia."
5. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 132, 133.

Chapter 6

Storms in the Council, and Martyrs at the Stake

THREE councils were organised, as we have said, to assist the Duchess of Parma in the government of the Provinces; the nobles selected to serve in these councils were those who were highest in rank, and who most fully enjoyed the confidence of their countrymen. This had very much the look of popular government. It did not seem exactly the machinery which a despot would set up. The administration of the Provinces appeared to be within the Provinces themselves, and the popular will, expressed through the members of the councils, must needs be an influential element in the decision of all affairs. And yet the administration which Philip had constructed was simply a despotism. He had so arranged it that the three councils were but one council; and the one council was but one man; and that one man was Philip's most obedient tool. Thus

the government of the Netherlands was worked from Madrid, and the hand that directed it was that of the king.

A few words will enable us to explain in what way Philip contrived to convert this semblance of popular rule into a real autocracy. The affairs of the nation were managed neither by the Council of Finance, nor by the Privy Council, nor by the Council of State, but by a committee of the latter. That committee was formed of three members of the Council of State, namely, the Bishop of Arras, Viglius, and Berlaymont. These three men constituted a Consulta, or secret conclave, and it soon became apparent that in that secret committee was lodged the whole power of government. The three were in reality but one; for Viglius and Berlaymont were so thoroughly identified in sentiment and will with their chief, that in point of fact the Bishop of Arras was the Consulta. Arras was entirely devoted to Philip, and the regent, in turn, was instructed to take counsel with Arras, and to do as he should advise. Thus from the depths of the royal cabinet in Spain came the orders that

ruled the Netherlands.

Margaret had been gifted by nature with great force of will. Her talents, like her person, were masculine. In happier circumstances she would have made a humane as well as a vigorous ruler, but placed as she was between an astute despot, whom she dared not disobey, and an unscrupulous and cunning minister, whose tact she could not overrule, she had nothing for it but to carry out the high-handed measures of others, and so draw down upon herself the odium which of right belonged to guiltier parties.

Educated in the school of Machiavelli, her statesmanship was expressed in a single word, dissimulation, and her religion taught her to regard thieves, robbers, and murderers as criminals less vile than Lutherans and Huguenots. Her spiritual guide had been Loyola.

Of Anthony Perrenot, Bishop of Arras, we have already spoken. He had been raised to the See of Mechlin, in the new scheme of the enlarged

hierarchy; and was soon to be advanced to the purple, and to become known in history under the more celebrated title of Cardinal Granvelle. His learning was great, his wit was ready, his eloquence fluent, and his tact exquisite, his appreciation of men was so keen, penetrating, and perfect, that he clothed himself as it were with their feelings, and projects, and could be not so much himself as them. This rare power of sympathy, joined to his unscrupulousness, enabled him to inspire others with his own policy, in manner so natural and subtle that they never once suspected that it was his and not their own. By this masterly art more real than the necromancy in which that age believed -- he seated himself in Philip's cabinet -- in Philip's breast -- and dictated when he appeared only to suggest, and governed when he appeared only to obey. It is the fate of such men to be credited at times with sinister projects which have arisen not in their own brain, but in those of others, and thus it came to pass that the Bishop of Arras was believed to be the real projector, not only of the edicts, which Philip had republished at his suggestion, but also of that whole machinery

which had been constructed for carrying them out - - the new bishops, the Inquisition, and the Spanish soldiers. The idea refused to quit the popular mind, and as grievance followed grievance, and the nation saw one after another of its libraries invaded, the storm of indignation and wrath which was daily growing fiercer took at first the direction of the bishop rather than of Philip.

The new changes began to take effect. The bishops created by the recent bull for the extension of the hierarchy, began to arrive in the country, and claim possession of their several sees. Noble, abbot, and commoner with one consent opposed the entrance of these new dignitaries; the commoners because they were foreigners, the abbots because their abbacies had been partially despoiled to provide livings for them, and the nobles because they regarded them as rivals in power and influence. The regent Margaret, however, knowing how unalterable was Philip's will in the matter, braved the storm, and installed the new bishops. In one case she was compelled to yield. The populous and wealthy city of Antwerp

emphatically refused to receive its new spiritual ruler. With the bishop they knew would come the Inquisition; and with secret denunciations, midnight apprehensions, and stakes blazing in their market-place they foresaw the flight of the foreign merchants from their country, and the ruin of their commerce. They sent deputies to Madrid, who put the matter in this light before Philip; and the king, having respect to the state of his treasury, and the sums with which these wealthy merchants were accustomed to replenish his coffers, was graciously pleased meanwhile to tolerate their opposition.[1]

At the State Council storms were of frequent occurrence. At that table sat men, some of whom were superior in rank to Arras, yet his equals in talent, and who moreover had claims on Philip's regard to which the bishop could make no pretensions, seeing they had laid him under great obligations by the brilliant services which they had rendered in the field. There were especially at that board the Prince of Orange and Counts Egmont and Horn, who in addition to great wealth and distinguished merit, held high position in the State

as the Stadtholders of important Provinces. Yet they were not consulted in the public business, nor was their judgment ever asked in State affairs; on the contrary, all matters were determined in secret by Granvelle. They were but puppets at the Council-board, while an arrogant and haughty ecclesiastic ruled the country.

Meanwhile the popular discontent was growing; Protestantism, which the regent and her ministers were doing all that the axe and the halter enabled them to do to extirpate, was spreading every day wider among the people. Granvelle ascribed this portentous growth to the negligence of the magistrates in not executing the "edicts." Orange and Egmont, on the other hand, threw the blame on the cardinal, who was replacing old Netherland liberty with Spanish despotism, and they demanded that a convention of the States should be summoned to devise a remedy for the commotions and evils that were distracting the kingdom.

This proposal was in the highest degree

distasteful to Granvelle. He could tell beforehand the remedy which the convention would prescribe for the popular discontent. The convention, he felt assured, would demand the cancelling of the edicts, the suppression of the Inquisition, and the revival of those charters under which civil liberty and commercial enterprise had reached that palmy state in which the Emperor Charles had found them when he entered the Netherlands. Granvelle accordingly wrote to his master counselling him not to call a meeting of the States. The advice of the cardinal but too well accorded with the views of Philip. Instead of summoning a convention the king sent orders to the regent to see that the edicts were more vigorously executed. It was not gentleness but rigour, he said, that was needed for these turbulent subjects.

Things were taking an ominous turn. The king's letter showed plainly to the Prince of Orange, and Counts Egmont and Horn, that Philip was resolved at all hazards to carry out his grand scheme against the independence of the Provinces. Not one of the edicts would he cancel; and so long as they

continued in force Philip must have bishops to execute them, and Spanish soldiers to protect these bishops from the violence of an oppressed and indignant people. The regent, in obedience to the king's new missive, sent out fresh orders, urging upon the magistrates the yet hotter prosecution of heresy. The executions were multiplied. The scaffolds made many victims, but not one convert. On the contrary, the Protestants increased, and every day furnished new evidence that sufferers for conscience sake were commanding the admiration of many who did not share their faith, and that their cause was attracting attention in quarters where before it had received no notice. The regent, and especially Granvelle, were daily becoming more odious. The meetings at the Council-board were stormier than ever. The bland insolence and supercilious haughtiness of the cardinal were no longer endurable by Egmont and Horn. Bluff, outspoken, and irascible, they had come to an open quarrel with him. Orange could parry the thrust of Granvelle with a weapon as polished as his own, and so was able still to keep on terms of apparent friendliness with him; but his position in the

Council, where he was denied all share in the government, and yet held responsible for its tyrannical proceedings, was becoming unbearable, and he resolved to bring it to an end. On the 23rd of July, 1561, Orange and Egmont addressed a joint letter to the king, stating how matters stood in Flanders, and craving leave to retire from the Council, or to be allowed a voice in those measures for which they were held to be responsible. The answer, which was far from satisfactory, was brought to Flanders by Count Horn, who had been on a visit to Madrid, and had parted from the king in a fume at the impertinence of the two Flemish noblemen. His majesty expected them to give attendance at the Council-board as aforesaid, without, however, holding out to them any hope that they would be allowed a larger share than heretofore in the business transacted there.

The gulf between Orange and Cardinal Granvelle was widening. The cardinal did not abate a jot of his tyranny. He knew that Philip would support him in the policy he was pursuing; indeed, that he could not retain the favor of his master

unless he gave rigorous execution to the edicts, he must go forward, it mattered not at what amount of odium to himself, and of hanging, burning, and burying alive of Philip's subjects of the Netherlands. Granvelle sat alone in his "smithy" -- for so was his country house, a little outside the walls of Brussels, denominated -- writing daily letters to Philip, insinuating or directly advancing accusations against the nobles, especially Orange and Egmont, and craftily suggesting to Philip the policy he ought to pursue. In reply to these letters would come fresh orders to himself and the regent, to adopt yet sterner measures toward the refractory and the heretical Netherlanders. He had suspended the glory of his reign on the trampling out of heresy in this deeply-infected portion of his dominions, and by what machinery could he do this unless by that which he had set up -- the edicts, the bishops, and the Inquisition? -- the triple wall within which he had enclosed the heretics of the Low Countries, so that not one of them should escape.

The Flemings are a patient and much-enduring

people. Their patience has its limits, however, and these limits once passed, their determination and ire are in proportion to their former forbearance. As yet their submissiveness had not been exhausted; they permitted their houses to be entered at midnight, and themselves dragged from their beds and conducted to the Inquisition, with the meekness of a lamb that is being led to the slaughter; or if they opened their mouths it was only to sing one of Marot's psalms. The familiars of this abhorred tribunal, therefore, encountered hardly any resistance in executing their dreadful office. The nation as yet stood by in silence, and saw the agents of Granvelle and Philip hewing their victims in pieces with axes, or strangling them with halters, or drowning them in ponds, or digging graves for their living entombment, and gave no sign. But all the while these cruelties were writing on the nation's heart, in ineffaceable characters, an abhorrence of the Spanish tyrant, and a stern unconquerable resolve, when the hour came, to throw off his yoke. In the crowd of those monsters who were now revelling in the blood and lives of the Netherlanders, there stands out one

conspicuous monster, Peter Titlemann by name; not that he was more cruel than the rest of the crew, but because his cruelty stands horridly out against a grim pleasantry that seems to have characterised the man. "Contemporary chroniclers," says Motley, "give a picture of him as of some grotesque yet terrible goblin, careering through the country by night or day, alone, on horseback, smiting the trembling peasants on the head with a great club, spreading dismay far and wide, dragging suspected persons from their firesides or their beds, and thrusting them into dungeons, arresting, torturing, strangling, burning, with hardly the shadow of warrant, information, or process." [2]

The whole face of the Low Countries during the years of which we write, (1560-65), was crossed and recrossed with lines of blood, traced by the cruel feet of monsters like this man. It was death to pray to God in one's own closet; it was death not to bow when an image was carried past one in the street; it was death to copy a hymn from a Genevese psalter, or sing a psalm; it was death

not to deny the heresy of which one was suspected when one was questioned, although one had never uttered it. The monster of whom we have made mention above one day arrested Robert Ogier of Ryssel, with his wife and two sons. The crime of which they were accused was that of not going to mass, and of practising worship at home. The civil judges before whom Titlemann brought them examined them touching the rites they practiced in private. One of the sons answered, "We fall on our knees and pray that God may enlighten our minds and pardon our sins; we pray for our sovereign, that his reign may be prosperous, and his life happy; we pray for our magistrates, that God may preserve them." This artless answer, from a mere boy, touched some of the judges, even to tears,. Nevertheless the father and the elder son were adjudged to the flames. "O God," prayed the youth at the stake, "Eternal Father, accept the sacrifice of our lives in the name of thy beloved Son!" "Thou liest, scoundrel!" fiercely interrupted a monk, who was lighting the fire. "God is not your father; ye are the devil's children." The flames rose; again the boy exclaimed, "Look, my father, all heaven is

opening, and I see ten hundred thousand angels rejoicing over us. Let us be glad, for we are dying for the truth." "Thou liest, thou liest," again screamed the monk; "I see hell opening, and ten thousand devils waiting to thrust you into eternal fire." The father and son were heard talking with one another in the midst of the flames, even when they were at the fiercest; and so they continued till both expired.[3]

If the fury of the persecutor was great, not less was the heroism of these martyrs. They refused all communion with Rome, and worshipped in the Protestant forms, in the face of all the dreadful penalties with which they were menaced. Nor was it the men only who were thus courageous; women -- nay, young girls -- animated by an equal faith, displayed an equal fortitude. Some of them refused to flee when the means of escape from prison were offered to them. Wives would take their stand by their husband's stake, and while he was enduring the fire they would whisper words of solace, or sing psalms to cheer him; and so, in their own words, would they bear him company while "he

was celebrating his last wedding feast." Young maidens would lie down in their living grave as if they were entering into their chamber of nightly sleep; or go forth to the scaffold and the fire, dressed in their best apparel, as if they were going to their marriage.[4] In April, 1554, Galein de Mulere, schoolmaster at Oudenard, was arrested by Inquisitor Titlemann. The poor man was in great straits, for he had a wife and five young children, but he feared to deny God and the truth. He endeavored to extricate himself from the dilemma by demanding to be tried before the magistrate and not by the Inquisition. "You are my prisoner," replied Titlemann; "I am the Pope's and the emperor's plenipotentiary." The schoolmaster gave, at first, evasive answers to the questions put to him. "I adjure thee not to trifle with me," said Titlemann, and cited Scripture to enforce his adjuration; "St. Peter," said the terrible inquisitor, "commands us to be ready always to give to every man that asketh us, a reason of the hope that is in us." On these words the schoolmaster's tongue broke loose. "My God, my God, assist me now according to thy promise," prayed he. Then turning

to the inquisitors he said, "Ask me now what you please, I shall plainly answer."

He then laid open to them his whole belief, concealing nothing of his abhorrence of Popery, and his love for the Savior. They used all imaginable arts to induce him to recant; and finding that no argument would prevail with him, "Do you not love your wife and children?" said they to him as the last appeal. "You know," replied he, "that I love them from my heart; and I tell you truly, if the whole world were turned into gold, and given to me, I would freely resign it, so that I might keep these dear pledges with me in my confinement, though I should live upon bread and water."

"Forsake then," said Titlemann, "your heretical opinions, and then you may live with your wife and children as formerly." "I shall never," he replied, "for the sake of wife and children renounce my religion, and sin against God and my conscience, as God shall strengthen me with his grace." He was pronounced a heretic; and being delivered to the

secular arm, he was strangled and burned.[5]

The very idiots of the nation lifted up their voice in reproof of the tyrants, and in condemnation of the tyranny that was scourging the country. The following can hardly be read without horror. At Dixmuyde, in Flanders, lived one Walter Capel, who abounded in almsgiving, and was much beloved by the poor. Among others whom his bounty had fed was a poor simple creature, who hearing that his benefactor was being condemned to death (1553), forced his way into the presence of the judges, and cried out, "Ye are murderers, ye are murderers; ye spill innocent blood; the man has done no ill, but has given me bread." When Capel was burning at the stake, this man would have; thrown himself into the flames and died with his patron, had he not been restrained by force. Nor did his gratitude die with his benefactor. He went daily to the gallows-field where the half-burned carcass was fastened to a stake, and gently stroking the flesh of the dead man with his hand, he; said, "Ah, poor creature, you did no harm, and yet they have spilt your blood. You

gave me my bellyful of victuals." When the flesh was all gone, and nothing but the bare skeleton remained, he took down the bones, and laying them upon his shoulders, he carried them to the house of one of the burgomasters, with whom it chanced that several of the magistrates were at that moment feasting. Throwing his ghastly burden at their feet, he cried out, "There, you murderers, first you have eaten his flesh, now eat his bones." [6]

The following three martyrdoms connect themselves with England. Christian de Queker, Jacob Dienssart, and Joan Konings, of Stienwerk, in Flanders, had found an asylum in England, under Queen Elizabeth. In 1559, having visited their native country on their private affairs, they fell into the hands of Peter Titlemann. Being brought before the inquisitors, they freely confessed their opinions. Meanwhile, the Dutch congregation in London procured letters from the Archbishop of Canterbury and other English prelates, which were forwarded to the magistrates of Furness, where they were confined in prison. The writers said that they had been informed of the

apprehension of the three travelers; that they were the subjects of the Queen of England; that they had gone into the Low Countries for the dispatch of their private affairs, with intent to return to England; that they had avoided disputes and contest by the way, and therefore could not be charged with the breach of any law of the land; that none of the Flemings had been meddled with in England, but that if now those who had put themselves under English jurisdiction, and were members of the English Church, were to be thus treated in other countries, they should be likewise obliged, though much against their wills, to deal out the same measure to foreigners. Nevertheless, they expected the magistrates of Furness to show prudence and justice, and abstain from the spilling of innocent blood.

The magistrates, on receipt of this letter, deputed two of their number to proceed to Brussels, and lay it before the Council. It was read at the Board, but that was all the attention it received. The Council resolved to proceed with the prisoners according to the edicts. A few days

thereafter they were conducted to the court to receive their sentence, their brethren in the faith lining the way, and encouraging and comforting them. They were condemned to die. They went cheerfully to the stake. A voice addressing them from the crowd was heard, saying, "Joan, behave valiantly; the crown of glory is prepared for you." It was that of John Bels, a Carmelite friar. While the executioner was fastening them to the stake, with chains put round their necks and feet, they sang the 130th Psalm, "Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord;" whereupon a Dominican, John Campo, cried out, "Now we perceive you are no Christians, for Christ went weeping to his death;" to which one of the bystanders immediately made answer, "That's a lie, you false prophet." The martyrs were then strangled and scorched, and their bodies publicly hung in chains in the gallows-field. Their remains were soon after taken down by the Protestants of Furness, and buried.[7]

These men, although in number amounting to many thousands, were only the first rank of that greater army of martyrs which was to come after

them. With the exception of a very few, we do not know even the names of the men who so willingly offered their lives to plant the Gospel in their native land. They were known only in the town, or village, or district in which they resided, and did not receive, as they did not seek, wider fame. But what matters it? They themselves are safe, and so too are their names.

Not one of them but is inscribed in a record more lasting than the historian's page, and from which they can never be blotted out. They were mostly men in humble station -- weavers, tapestry-workers, stone-cutters, tanners; for the nobles of the Netherlands, not even excepting the Prince of Orange, had not yet abjured the Popish faith, or embraced that of Protestantism. While the nobles were fuming at the pride of Granvelle, or humbly but uselessly petitioning Philip, or fighting wordy battles at the Council-board, they left it to the middle and lower classes to bear the brunt of the great war, and jeopardise their lives in the high places of the field. These humble men were the true nobles of the Netherlands. Their blood it was

that broke the power of Spain, and redeemed their native land from vassalage. Their halts and stakes formed the basis of that glorious edifice of Dutch freedom which the next generation was to see rising proudly aloft, and which, but for them, would never have been raised.

Footnotes:

1. Bentivoglio.
2. Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, vol. 1., p. 170; Edin., 1859.
3. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 108, 109.
4. *Ibid.*, vol. 1., p. 93.
5. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 94.
6. *Ibid.*, vol. 1., p. 93.
7. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 135.

Chapter 7

Retirement of Granvelle Belgic Confession of Faith

THE murmurs of the popular discontent grew louder every day. In that land the storm is heard long to mutter before the sky blackens and the tempest bursts; but now there came, not indeed the hurricane -- that was deferred for a few years -- but a premonitory burst like the sudden wave which, while all as yet is calm, the ocean sends as the herald of the storm. At Valenciennes were two ministers, Faveau and Mallart, whose preaching attracted large congregations. They were condemned in the autumn of 1561 to be burned. When the news spread in Valenciennes that their favourite preachers had been ordered for execution, the inhabitants turned out upon the street, now chanting Clement Marot's psalms, and now hurling menaces at the magistrates should they dare to touch their preachers. The citizens crowded round the prison, encouraging the ministers, and

promising to rescue them should an attempt be made to put them to death.

These commotions were continued nightly for the space of six months. The magistrates were in a strait between the two evils -- the anger of the cardinal, who was daily sending them peremptory orders to have the heretics burned, and the wrath of the people, which was expressed in furious menaces should they do as Granvelle ordered. At last they made up their minds to brave what they took to be the lesser evil, for they trusted that the people would not dare openly to resist the law. The magistrates brought forth Faveau and Mallart one Monday morning, before sunrise, led them to the market-place, where preparations had been made, tied them to the stake, and were about to light the fires and consume them. At that moment a woman in the crowd threw her shoe at the stake; it was the preconcerted signal. The mob tore down the barriers, scattered the faggots, and chased away the executioners. The guard, however, had adroitly carried off the prisoners to their dungeon. But the people were not to be baulked; they kept

possession of the street; and when night came they broke open the prison, and brought forth the two ministers, who made their escape from the city. This was called "The Day of the Ill-burned," one of the ministers having been scorched by the partially kindled faggots before he was rescued.[1]

A terrible revenge was taken for the slur thus cast upon the Inquisition, and the affront offered to the authority of Granvelle. Troops were poured into the ill-fated city. The prisons were filled with men and women who had participated, or were suspected of having participated, in the riot. The magistrates who had trembled before were furious now. They beheaded and burned almost indiscriminately; the amount of blood spilt was truly frightful -- to be remembered at a future day by the nation, and atonement demanded for it.

We return to the Council-board at Brussels, and the crafty tyrannical man who presided at it -- the minion of a craftier and more tyrannical -- and who, buried in the depths of his cabinet, edited his edicts of blood, and sent them forth to be executed

by his agents. The bickerings still continued at the Council-table, much to the disgust of Granvelle. But besides the rough assaults of Egmont and Horn, and the delicate wit and ridicule of Orange, other assailants arose to embitter the cardinal's existence, and add to the difficulties of his position. The Duchess of Parma became alienated from him. As regent, she was nominal head of the government, but the cardinal had reduced her to the position of a puppet, by grasping the whole power of the States, and leaving to her only an empty title.

However, the cardinal consoled himself by reflecting that if he had lost the favor of Margaret, he could very thoroughly rely on that of Philip, who, he knew, placed before every earthly consideration the execution of his edicts against heresy. But what gave more concern to Granvelle was a class of foes that now arose outside the Council-chamber to annoy and sting him. These were the members of the "Rhetoric Clubs." We find similar societies springing up in other countries of the Reformation, especially in France and Scotland, and they owed their existence to the

same cause that is said to make wit flourish under a despotism. These clubs were composed of authors, poetasters, and comedians; they wrote plays, pamphlets, pasquils, in which they lashed the vices and superstitions, and attacked the despotisms of the age. They not only assailed error, but in many instances they were also largely instrumental in the diffusion of truth. They discharged the same service to that age which the newspaper and the platform fulfill in ours. The literature of these poems and plays was not high; the wit was not delicate, nor the satire polished -- the wood-carving that befits the interior of a cathedral would not suit for the sculpture-work of its front -- but the writers were in earnest; they went straight to the mark, they expressed the pent-up feeling of thousands, and they created and intensified the feeling which they expressed.

Such was the battery that was now opened upon the minion of Spanish and Papal tyranny in the Low Countries. The intelligent, clever, and witty artisans of Ghent, Bruges, and other towns chastised Granvelle in their plays and lampoons,

ridiculed him in their farces, laughed at him in their burlesques, and held him up to contempt and scorn in their caricatures.

The weapon was rough, but the wound it inflicted was rankling. These farces were acted in the street, where all could see them, and the poem and pasquil were posted on the walls where all could read them. The members of these clubs were individually insignificant, but collectively they were most formidable. Neither the sacredness of his own purple, nor the dread of Philip's authority, could afford the cardinal any protection. As numerous as a crowd of insects, the annoyances of his enemies were ceaseless as their stings were countless. As a sample of the broad humor and rude but truculent satire with which Philip's unfortunate manager in the Netherlands was assailed, we take the following caricature. In it the worthy cardinal was seen occupied in the maternal labor of hatching a brood of bishops. The ecclesiastical chickens were in all stages of development. Some were only chipping the shell; some had thrust out their heads and legs; others,

fairly disencumbered from their original envelopments, were running about with mitres on their heads. Each of these fledglings bore a whimsical resemblance to one or other of the new bishops. But the coarsest and most cutting part of the caricature remains to be noticed. Over the cardinal was seen to hover a dark figure, with certain appendages other than appertain to the human form, and that personage was made to say, "This is my beloved son, hear ye him." [2]

Such continued for some years to be the unsatisfactory and eminently dangerous state of affairs in the Low Countries. The regent Margaret, humiliated by the ascendancy of Granvelle, and trembling at the catastrophe to which his rigour was driving matters, proposed that the States should be summoned, in order to concert measures for restoring the tranquillity of the nation. Philip would on no account permit such an assembly to be convoked. Margaret had to yield, but she resorted to the next most likely expedient. She summoned a meeting of the Knights of the Golden Fleece and the Stadtholders of the Provinces. Viglius, one of

the members of Council, but less obnoxious than Granvelle, was chosen to address the knights. He was a learned man, and discoursed, with much plausibility and in the purest Latin, on the disturbed state of the country, and the causes which had brought it into its present condition. But it was not eloquence, but the abolition of the edicts and the suppression of the Inquisition, that was needed, and this was the very thing which Philip was determined not to grant. In vain had the Knights of the Fleece and the Stadtholders assembled. Still some good came of the gathering, although the result was one which Margaret had neither contemplated nor desired.

The Prince of Orange called a meeting of the nobles at his own house, and the discussion that took place, although a stormy one, led to an understanding among them touching the course to be pursued in the future. The Lord of Montigny was sent as a deputy to Spain to lay the state of matters before Philip, and urge the necessity, if his principality of the Netherlands was to be saved, of stopping the persecution. Philip, who appeared to

have devoted himself wholly to one object, the extirpation of heresy, was incapable of feeling the weight of the representations of Montigny. He said that he had never intended, and did not even now intend, establishing the Inquisition in the Low Countries in its Spanish form; and while he bade Montigny carry back this assurance -- a poor one even had it been true -- to those from whom he had come, he sent at the same time secret orders to Granvelle to carry out yet more rigorously the decrees against the heretics.

Orange, Egmont, and Horn, now utterly disgusted and enraged, retired from the Council-table. They wrote a joint letter to the king, stating the fact of their withdrawal, with the reasons which had led to it, and demanding the dismissal of the cardinal as the only condition on which they could resume their place at the Board. They also plainly avowed their belief that should Granvelle be continued in the administration, the Netherlands would be lost to Philip. The answer returned to this letter was meant simply to gain time. While Philip was musing on the steps to be taken, the fire was

spreading. The three seigniors wrote again to the monarch. They begged to say, if the statement had any interest for him, that the country was on the road to ruin. The regent Margaret about the same time wrote also to her brother, the king. As she now heartily hated Granvelle, her representations confirmed those of Orange, although, reared as she had been in the school of Loyola, she still maintained the semblance of confidence in and affection for the cardinal. The king now began to deliberate in earnest. Pending the arrival of Philip's answer, the Flemish grandees, at a great feast where they all met, came to the resolution of adopting a livery avowedly in ridicule of the grand dresses and showy equipages of the cardinal. Accordingly, in a few days, all their retainers appeared in worsted hose, and doublets of coarse grey, with hanging sleeves, but with no ornament whatever, except a fool's cap and bells embroidered upon each sleeve. The jest was understood, but the cardinal affected to laugh at it. In a little while the device was changed. The fool's cap and bells disappeared, and a sheaf of arrows came in the room of the former symbol.[3] The sheaf of

arrows, Granvelle, in writing to Philip, interpreted to mean "conspiracy." Meanwhile the king had made up his mind as to the course to be taken. He dispatched two sets of instructions to Brussels, one open and the other secret. According to the first, the Duchess Margaret was commanded to prosecute the heretics with more rigour than ever; the three lords were ordered to return to their posts at the Council-table; and the cardinal was told that the king, who was still deliberating, would make his resolution known through the regent. But by the secret letter, written at the same time, but sent off from Madrid so as to arrive behind the others, Philip wrote to the cardinal, saying that it appeared to him that it might be well he should leave the Provinces for some days, in order to visit his mother, and bidding him ask permission to depart from the regent, whom he had secretly instructed to give such permission, without allowing it to be seen that these orders had come from the king.

The plan mystified all parties at the time, save Orange, who guessed how the matter really stood; but the examination of Philip's correspondence has

since permitted this somewhat complicated affair to be unravelled. The king had, in fact, yielded to the storm and recalled Granvelle. All were delighted at the cardinal's new-sprung affection for his mother, and trusted that it would not cool as suddenly as it had arisen;[4] in short, that "the red fellow," as they termed him, had taken a final leave of the country. Nor, indeed, did Granvelle ever return.

It is time that we should speak of the summary of doctrines, or Confession of Faith, which was put forth by these early Protestants of the Netherlands. About the year 1561, Guido de Bres, with the assistance of Adrian Saravia, and three other ministers, published a little treatise in French under the title of "A, Confession of the Faith generally and unanimously maintained by the Believers dispersed throughout the Low Countries, who desire to live according to the purity of the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." [5] This treatise was afterwards translated into Dutch. Saravia, who assisted De Bres in the compilation of it, states in a letter which the historian Brandt says he had seen,

that "Guido de Bres communicated this Confession to such ministers as he could find, desiring them to correct what they thought amiss in it, so that it was not to be considered as one man's work, but that none who were concerned in it ever designed it for a rule of faith to others, but only as a scriptural proof of what they themselves believed." In the year 1563, this Confession was published both in high and low Dutch. It consists of thirty-seven articles.

Almost every one of these articles is formally and antithetically set over against some one dogma of Romanism. With the great stream of Reformation theology as set forth in the Confessions of the Protestant Churches, the Belgic Confession is in beautiful harmony. It differs from the Augsburg Confession under the head of the Lord's Supper, inasmuch as it repudiates the idea of consubstantiation, and teaches that the bread and wine are only symbols of Christ's presence, and signs and seals of the blessing. In respect of the true catholicity of the Church, the doctrine of human merit and good works, and the justification

of sinners by faith alone, on the righteousness of Christ, and, in short, in all the fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures, the Belgic Confession is in agreement with the Augustine Creed, and very specially with the Confession of Helvetia, France, Bohemia, England, and Scotland. The Reformation, as we have seen, entered the Low Countries by the gate of Wittemberg, rather than by the gate of Geneva: nevertheless, the Belgic Confession has a closer resemblance to the theology of those countries termed Reformed than to that of those usually styled Lutheran. The proximity of Flanders to France, the asylum sought on the soil of the Low Countries by so many of the Huguenots, and the numbers of English merchants trading with the Netherlanders, or resident in their cities, naturally led to the greater prominence in the Belgic Confession of those doctrines which have been usually held to be peculiar to Calvinism; although we cannot help saying that a very general misapprehension prevails upon this point. With the one exception stated above, the difference on the Lord's Supper namely, the theology of Luther and the theology of Calvin set forth the same views of

Divine truth, and as respects that class of questions confessedly in their full conception and reconciliation beyond the reach of the human faculties, God's sovereignty and man's free agency, the two great chiefs, whatever differences may have come to exist between their respective followers, were at one in their theology. Luther was quite as Calvinistic as Calvin himself.

The Belgic Creed is notable in another respect. It first saw the light, not in any synod or Church assembly, for as yet the Church of the Low Countries as an organised body did not exist; it had its beginning with a few private believers and preachers in the Netherlands. This is a very natural and very beautiful genesis of a creed, and it admirably illustrates the real object and end of the Reformers in framing their Confessions.

They compiled them, as we see these few Flemish teachers doing, to be a help to themselves and to their fellow-believers in understanding the Scriptures, and to show the world what they believed to be the truth as set forth in the Bible. It

did not enter into their minds that they were forging a yoke for the conscience, or a fetter for the understanding, and that they were setting up a barrier beyond which men were not to adventure in the inquiry after truth. Nothing was further from the thoughts of the Reformers than this; they claimed no lordship over the consciences of men. The documents which they compiled and presented to the world they styled not a decree, or a rite, much less a creation, but a Confession, and they issued their Confessions under this reservation, that the Bible alone possessed inherent authority, that it alone was complete and perfect, and that their confession was only an approximation, to be reviewed, altered, amended, enlarged, or abbreviated according as believers advanced in the more precise, full, and accurate understanding of the meaning of the Spirit speaking in the Word. We have nowhere found the views of the Reformers on this point so admirably set forth as in the celebrated John a Lasco's preface to his book on the Sacraments; and as this is a matter on which great misapprehension has been spread abroad, we shall here give his words. Speaking of the union of the

Churches of Zurich and Geneva on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, he says: "Our union is not so to be understood as if we designed to exclude the endeavours of all such as shall attempt to introduce a greater purity of doctrine. We perceive, indeed, that many things are now taught much better than formerly, and that many old ways of speaking, long before used in the Church, are now altered. In like manner it may hereafter happen, that some of our forms of speaking being changed, many things may be better explained. The Holy Ghost will doubtless be present with others, in the Church of Christ after us, as he has vouchsafed to be with us and our ancestors; for he proceeds gradually, or by steps, and gives an insensible increase to his gifts. And since we find that all things tend to farther perfection, I do not know, I own, whether it becomes us to endeavor to confine the gradual increase of his gifts within the compass of our forms of speaking, as within certain palisades and entrenchments; as if that same Spirit were not at liberty, like the wind, to blow how, and when, and where he listeth. I do not pretend to give a loose to the sowing of all kinds of new-fangled doctrines,

but I contend for the liberty of adorning and explaining the foundations when once laid, and with design to show that the Spirit of God does not cease from daily imparting to us more and more light." How truly catholic! and how happily the mean is here struck between those who say that Confessions ought to be abolished because they tyrannically forbid process, and those who hold that they are to be changed in not one iota, because they are already perfect!

This Confession of Faith, being revised by a synod that met in Antwerp in May, 1566, was in that year reprinted and published.[6] Following the example of Calvin in his celebrated letter to the King of France, which accompanied his Institutes, the Reformed in the Netherlands prefaced their Confession of Faith with a letter to the King of Spain. Their Confession was their defense against the charges of heresy and disloyalty which had been preferred against them; it was their "protestation before God and his angels" that what they sought was "to enjoy the liberty of a pure conscience in serving God, and reforming

themselves according to his Word and Holy Commandments;" and it was their appeal to be freed from "the excommunications, imprisonments, banishments, racks and tortures, and other numberless oppressions which they had undergone." They remind the king that it was not their weakness which prompted this appeal to his compassion; and that if they did not resist, it was not because they were few in number -- "there being," say they, "above one hundred thousand souls in these Provinces who profess the same religion, of which they presented him the Confession" -- but to prevent his "stretching out his hand to embue and embathe it in the blood of so many poor innocent men," and thereby bringing calamity upon his kingdom and throne.

They appended to their Confession a "Representation to the magistrates and higher powers throughout the Low Countries. In this Representation we see these Flemish Protestants taking their stand at the very threshold of the modern religious liberties. Nay, they so state the functions of the magistrate, and so define his

jurisdiction, that fairly interpreted their words approximate very nearly, if not altogether, to our own idea of toleration. They indeed condemn those who taught that it is "unlawful for the magistrate to speak of the Scripture, or to judge of doctrines and matters of religion." But these words in their mouths have a very different meaning from that which they would have in ours. The Church of Rome said to the magistrates, You are not to speak of Scripture, nor to judge of doctrines; that belongs exclusively to us: you are to believe that whatever we call heresy, is heresy, and, without farther inquiry, are to punish it with the sword. On the contrary, the Flemish Protestants vindicated the rights of princes and magistrates in this matter. They were not to be the blind tools of the Church in putting to death all whom she may choose to condemn as heretical. They must, for their own guidance, though not for the coercion of others, judge of doctrines and matters of religion. "They are not for going so far," they say, "as those good old fathers who say that our consciences are not to be molested, much less constrained or forced to believe, by any powers on earth, to whom the

sword is only entrusted for the punishment of robbers, murderers, and the like disturbers of civil government." "We acknowledge," they add, "that the magistrate may take cognisance of heresies." But let us mark what sort of heresies they are of which the magistrate may take cognisance. They are heresies which involve "sedition and uproars against the government." [7]

Thus again, when they explain themselves they come back to their grand idea of the freedom of conscience, as respects all human authority, in matters appertaining to God and his worship. Toleration had its birth in the same hour with Protestantism; and, like the twins of classic story, the two powers have flourished together and advanced by equal stages. Luther exhibited toleration in act; Calvin, ten years before the time of which we write, began to formulate it, when he took heresy, strictly so called, out of the jurisdiction of the magistrate, and left him to deal with blasphemy, "which unsettled the foundation of civil order;" and now we behold the Protestants of the Low Countries treading in the steps of the

Reformer of Geneva, and permitting the magistrate to take cognisance of heresy only when it shows itself in disturbances and uproars. It is important to bear in mind that the Reformers had to fight two battles at once. They had to contend for the emancipation of the magistrate, and they had to contend for the emancipation of the conscience. When they challenged for the magistrate exemption from the authority of Rome, they had to be careful not to appear to exempt him from the authority of the law of God. The Papists were ever ready to accuse them of this, and to say that the Reformation had assigned an atheistic position to princes. If at times they appear to deny the toleration which at other times they teach, much, if not all, of this is owing to the double battle which the times imposed upon them -- the emancipation of the magistrate from the enslavement of the Church, and the emancipation of the conscience from the enslavement of both the magistrate and the Church.

Footnotes:

1. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 138, 139.
2. Hooft, 2. 42 -- apud Motley, 1. 178. Brandt, 1. 127,128.
3. Strada, bk. 4., p. 79; Lond., 1667.
4. Strada, bk. 4., p. 80.
5. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 142.
6. Brandt, vol. 1., 158.
7. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 158, 159.

Chapter 8

The Rising Storm

THE cardinal had taken flight and was gone, but the Inquisition remained. So long as the edicts were in force, what could be expected but that the waves of popular tumult would continue to flow? Nevertheless, the three lords -- Orange, Egmont, and Horn -- came to the helm which Granvelle had been compelled to let go, and, along with the regent, worked hard, if haply the shipwreck that appeared to impend over the vessel of the State might be averted. The clear eye of Orange saw that there was a deeper evil at work in the country than the cardinal, and he demanded the removal of that evil. Two measures he deemed essential for the restoration of quiet, and he strenuously urged the instant adoption of these: -- first, the assembling of the States-General; and secondly, the abolition of the edicts. The prince's proposition struck at the evil in both its roots. The States-General, if permitted to meet, would resume its government of the nation after the ancient Flemish fashion, and

the abolition of the edicts would cut the ground from under the feet of the bishops and the inquisitors -- in short, it would break in pieces that whole machinery by which the king was coercing the consciences and burning the bodies of his subjects. These two measures would have allayed all the ferment that was fast ripening into revolt. But what hope was there of their adoption? None whatever while Philip existed, or Spain had a single soldier at her service or a single ducat in her treasury. The Prince of Orange and his two fellow-councillors, however, let slip no opportunity at the Council-board of urging the expediency of these measures if the country was to be saved. "It was a thing altogether impracticable," they said, "to extirpate such a multitude of heretics by the methods of fire and sword. On the contrary, the more these means were employed, the faster would the heretics multiply." [1] Did not facts attest the truth and wisdom of their observation? Neither cords nor stakes had been spared, and yet on every hand the complaint was heard that heresy was spreading.

Waxing yet bolder, at a meeting of Council held towards the end of the year (1564), the Prince of Orange energetically pleaded that, extinguishing their fires, they should give liberty to the people to exercise their religion in their own houses, and that in public the Sacrament should be administered under both kinds. "With commotions and reformations on every side of them," he said, "it was madness to think of maintaining the old state of matters by means of placards, inquisitions, and bishops. The king ought to be plainly informed what were the wishes of his subjects, and what a mistake it was to propose enforcing the decrees of the Council of Trent, while their neighbors in Germany, as well Roman Catholics as Protestants, had indignantly rejected them." "As for himself," he said, in conclusion, "although resolved to adhere to the Roman Catholic religion, he could not approve that princes should aim at any dominion over the souls of men, or deprive them of the freedom of their faith and religion."

The prince warmed as he spoke. His words flowed like a torrent. Hour passed after hour, and

yet there were no signs of his oration drawing to a close. The councillors, who usually sat silent, or contented themselves with merely giving a decorous assent to the propositions of Granvelle, might well be astonished at the eloquence that now resounded through the Council-chamber. It was now seven o'clock of the evening, and the orator would not have ended even yet, had not the Duchess of Parma hinted that the dinner-hour had arrived, and that the debate must be adjourned for the day. Viglius, who had taken the place of the cardinal at the Council-table, went home to his house in a sort of stupefaction at what he had witnessed. He lay awake all night ruminating on the line of argument he should adopt in reply to Orange. He felt how necessary it was to efface the impression the prince's eloquence had made. The dawn found him still perturbed and perplexed. He got up, and was dressing himself, when a stroke of apoplexy laid him senseless upon the floor. The disease left him shattered in mind as in body, and his place at the Council-board had to be supplied by his friend Joachin Hopper, a professor of Louvain, but a man of very humble parts, and

entirely subservient to the regent.[2]

It was resolved to dispatch Count Egmont to Madrid, to petition Philip for permission to the States-General to meet, as also for some mitigation of the edicts. But first the terms of Egmont's instructions had to be adjusted. The people must not cry too loudly, lest their tyrant should heat their furnace seven-fold. But it was no easy matter to find mild epithets to designate burning wrongs. Words that might appear sufficiently humble and loyal on the comparatively free soil of the Low Countries, might sound almost like treason when uttered in the Palace of Spain. This delicate matter arranged, Egmont set out. A most courteous reception awaited the deputy of the Netherlands on his arrival at Madrid. He was caressed by the monarch, feted and flattered by the nobles, loaded with rich gifts; and these blandishments and arts had the effect, which doubtless they were meant to produce, of cooling his ardor as the advocate of his country. If the terms of the remonstrance which Egmont was to lay at the foot of the throne had been studiously selected so as not to grate on the

royal ear, before the ambassador left Flanders, they were still further softened by Egmont now that he stood on Spanish soil. Philip frequently admitted him to a private audience, and consulted with him touching the matters respecting which he had been deputed to his court. The king professed to defer much to Egmont's opinion; he gave no promise, however, that he would change his policy as regarded religious matters, or soften in aught the rigour of the edicts. But to show Egmont, and the seigniors of the Netherlands through him, that in this he was impelled by no caprice of cruelty or bigotry, but on the contrary was acting from high and conscientious motives, Philip assembled a council of divines, at which Egmont assisted, and put to them the question, whether he was bound to grant that liberty of conscience which some of the Dutch towns so earnestly craved of him? The judgment of the majority was that, taking into account the present troubles in the Low Countries - - which, unless means were found for allaying them, might result in the Provinces falling away from their obedience to the king's authority and to their duty to the one true Church -- -his Majesty

might accord them some freedom in matters of religion without sinning against God. On this judgment being intimated to Philip, he informed the Fathers that they had misapprehended the special point of conscience he wished to have resolved. What he desired to know was, whether he must, not whether he might grant the liberty his Flemish subjects desired. The ecclesiastics made answer plainly that they did not think that the king was bound in conscience so to do. Whereupon Philip, falling down before a crucifix, addressed it in these words: -- "I beseech thee, O God and Lord of all things, that I may persevere all the days of my life in the same mind as I am now, never to be a king, nor called so of any country, where thou art not acknowledged for Lord." [3]

Egmont's embassy to the court of Spain being now ended, he set out on his return to the Low Countries. He was accompanied on his journey by the young Prince Alexander of Parma, the nephew of Philip, and son of Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands, and whose destiny it was in after-years to be fatally mixed up with the tragic woes of

that land on which he now set foot for the first time. The results of Egmont's mission were already known at Brussels by letters from Spain, which, although written after his departure from Madrid, had arrived before him; nevertheless, he appeared in the Council on the 5th of May, 1565, and gave in a report of the measures which the king had in contemplation for the pacification of the Provinces. The Prince of Orange clearly saw that the "holy water" of the court had been sprinkled on Egmont, and that the man who had gone forth a patriot had come back a courtier and apologist. The deputy informed the Council that on the matter of the edicts no relaxation was to be expected. Heresy must be rooted out. Touching the meeting of the States-General, the king would send his decision to the regent. This was all. Verily Egmont had gone far and brought back little. But he had a little codicil or postscript in reserve for the Council, to the effect that Philip graciously granted leave for a synod of ecclesiastics, with a few civilians, to convene and concert measures for the instruction of the people, the reformation of the schools, and the purgation of heresy. And further, if the penal laws

now in use did not serve their end, they had Philip's permission to substitute others "more efficacious." The Prince of Orange and others were willing to believe that by the "more efficacious" methods against heresy, milder methods only could be intended, seeing that it would be hard to invent measures more rigorous than those now in use; such, however, was not the, meaning of Philip.[4]

During the absence of Egmont, the persecution did not slacken. In February, Joost de Cruel was beheaded at Rosen. He had been first drawn to the Reformed faith by a sermon by Peter Titlemann, Dean of Rosen, who had since become the furious persecutor we have described above. In the same month, John Disreneaux, a man of seventy years, was burned at Lisle. At the same time, John de Graef was strangled and burned at Hulst, with the New Testament hung round his neck. His persecutors had subjected him while in prison to the extremities of hunger, and thirst, and cold, in the hope of subduing him. Mortification had set in, and he went halting to death, his frost-bitten toes and feet refusing their office. Tranquil and

courageous, notwithstanding, he exhorted the bystanders, if they had attained a knowledge of the truth, not to be deterred by the fear of death from confessing it. In the following month, two youths were discovered outside the town of Tournay reading the Scriptures. An intimacy of the closest kind, hallowed by their love of the Gospel, had knit them together all their lives; nor were they parted now. They were strangled and burned at the same stake.[5] Considering the number and the barbarity of these executions, it does not surprise one that Orange and his associates believed that if the methods of extirpating heresy were to be changed, it could only be for milder inflictions. They had yet to learn the fertility of Philip's inventive genius.

Scarcely had Egmont given in his report of his mission, when new instructions arrived from Philip, to the effect that not only were the old placards to be rigorously enforced, but, over and above, the canons of the Council of Trent were to be promulgated as law throughout the Netherlands. These canons gave the entire power of trying and punishing heretics to the clergy. In short, they

delivered over the inhabitants of the Netherlands in all matters of opinion to the sole irresponsible and merciless jurisdiction of the Inquisition. Alarm, terror, and consternation overspread the Provinces. The nobles, states, and cities sent deputies to the governor to remonstrate against the outrage on their ancient rights about to be perpetrated, and the destruction into which such a policy was sure to drag the country. "There could be no viler slavery," they said, "than to lead a trembling life in the midst of spies and informers, who registered every word, action, look, and even every thought which they pretended to read from thence." The four chief cities of Brabant, Louvain, Brussels, Antwerp, and Bois le Duc sent deputies to the Chancellor and Council of that Province, to say plainly that the orders of Philip were sounding the death-knell of the Province; the foreign merchants were making haste to get away, the commerce of their States was hastening to extinction, and soon their now flourishing country would be a "mere wilderness." The Prince of Orange wrote to the Duchess of Parma to the effect that if this business of burning, beheading, and drowning was to go on, he begged

that some other might be invested with the functions with which his sovereign had clothed him, for he would be no party to the ruin of his country, which he as clearly foresaw as he was powerless to avert. Other Stadtholders wrote to the Duchess of Parma, in reply to her earnest exhortations to assist in carrying out the edicts, saying that they were not inclined to be the lifeguards of the Inquisition. One of the chief magistrates of Amsterdam, a Roman Catholic, happening one day to meet a sheriff who was very zealous in the work of persecution, thus addressed him: "You would do well, when called to appear before the tribunal of God, to have the emperor's placards in your hand, and observe how far they will bear you out." Papers were being daily scattered in the streets, and posted on the gates of the palace of Orange, and of other nobles, calling on them to come to their country's help in its hour of need, to the end that, the axe and the halter being abolished in the affairs of religion, every one might be able to live and die according to his conscience.

On the other hand, the governor was besieged

by remonstrances and outcries from the bishops and monks, who complained that they were withstood in carrying out their sovereign's wish in the matter of the execution of the edicts. The aid they had been encouraged to expect in the work of the extirpation of heresy was withheld from them. The tribunals, prisons, and scaffolds of the country had been made over to them, and all magistrates, constables, and gaolers had been constituted their servants; nevertheless, they were often denied the use of that machinery which was altogether indispensable if their work was to be done, not by halves, but effectually. They had to bear odium and calumny, nay, sometimes they were in danger of their lives, in their zeal for the king's service and the Church's glory. On all sides is heard the cry that heresy is increasing, continued these much-injured men; but how can it be that heretics should not multiply, they asked, when they were denied the use of prisons in which to shut them up, and fires in which to burn them? The position of the Duchess of Parma was anything but pleasant. On the one side she was assailed by the screams and hootings of this brood of Inquisitors; and on the

other was heard the muttered thunder of a nation's wrath.[6]

Rocked thus on the great billows, the Duchess of Parma wrote to her brother, letting him know how difficult and dangerous her position had become, and craving his advice as to how she ought to steer amid tempests so fierce, and every hour growing fiercer. Philip replied that the edicts must ever be her beacon-lights. Philip's will was unalterably fixed on the extirpation of heresy in his kingdom of the Netherlands, and that will must be the duchess's pole-star. Nevertheless, the tyrant was pleased to set his wits to work, and to devise a method by which the flagrancy, but not the cruelty, of the persecution might be abated. Instead of bringing forth the heretic, and beheading or burning him at midday, he was to be put to death in his prison at midnight. The mode of execution was as simple as it was barbarous. The head of the prisoner was tied between his knees with a rope, and he was then thrown into a large tub full of water, kept in the prison for that use. This Christian invention is said to have been the original device of

the "most Catholic king." The plea which Bishop Biro of Wesprim set up in defense of the clemency of the Church of Rome, would have been more appropriate in Philip's mouth, its terms slightly altered, than it was in the mouth of the bishop. "It is a calumny to say that the Church of Rome is bloodthirsty," said the worthy prelate, Biro; "that Church has always been content if heretics were burned."

A new and dreadful rumor which began to circulate through the Netherlands, added to the alarm and terrors of the nation. It was during this same summer that Catherine de Medici and the Duke of Alva held their celebrated conference at Bayonne. Soon thereafter, whispers which passed from land to land, and from mouth to mouth, reached the Low Countries, that a dark plot had been concocted between these two personages, having for its object the utter extirpation of the new opinions. These rumors corresponded with what was said to have been agreed upon at one of the last sessions of the Council of Trent, which had closed its sittings the year before, and on that

account greater stress was laid on these whispers. They appeared to receive still further authentication, at least in the eyes of William, Prince of Orange, from the circumstance that a plot precisely identical had been disclosed to him six years before, by Henry II., when the king and the prince were hunting together in the Wood of Vincennes. The rest of the hunting-party had left them, Henry and William were alone, and the mind of the French king being full of the project, and deeming the prince, then the intimate friend both of Philip II, and the Duke of Alva, a safe depository of the great secret, he unhappily for himself, but most happily for humanity, communicated to the prince the details of the plan.[7] Henry II. told him how apprehensive he was of his throne being swept away in the flood of Protestantism, but he hoped, with the help of his son-in-law Philip II., soon to rid France of the last Huguenot. The monarch went on to explain to the prince how this was to be done, by entrapping the Protestants at the first convenient moment, destroying them at a single blow; and extending the same thorough purgation to all countries to which heresy had spread. William

could not have been more astounded although the earth had suddenly yawned at his feet; however, he carried the secret in his breast from that dark wood, without permitting the French king to read, by word or look of his, the shock the disclosure had given him. And he retained it in his breast for years, without speaking of it to any one, although from the moment of his coming to the knowledge of it, it began to shape his conduct. It is from this circumstance that he received the significant name of "William the Silent."

All three -- the rumors from Bayonne, the tidings from the Council of Trent, and the dark secret imparted to William in the Forest of Vincennes -- -pointed to a storm now gathering, of more than usual severity, and which should burst over all Christendom, in which the Netherlands could not miss having their full share. But what had been plotted at Trent among the Fathers was nearly as little known as what had been agreed on at Bayonne, between Catherine and Alva. The full truth -- -the definite plan -- was locked up in the archives of the Vatican, whence it is probable its

first suggestion had come, and in the breasts of the little coterie that met at the dosing sessions of the Council. But a paper by one of the secretaries of Cardinal Boromeo, since given to the world, has published on the housetops what was then spoken in whispers in the cabinets of kings or the conclaves of ecclesiastical synods. "First, in order that the business may be conducted with the greater authority, they" (the Fathers of the Council) "advise to commit the superintendence of the whole affair to Philip the Catholic king, who ought to be appointed with common consent the head and conductor of the whole enterprise." The Catholic king was to begin by preferring a complaint to his neighbour, Anthony Bourbon, King of Navarre, "that, contrary to the institutions of his predecessors, he entertains and nourishes a new religion." Should the King of Navarre turn a deaf ear to this remonstrance, Philip was to essay him "by fair promises to draw him off from his wicked and unhappy design." He was to hold out to him the hope of having that portion of his ancestral dominions of which he had been stripped, restored, or an equivalent given him in some other part of

Europe. Should Philip succeed in soothing him, "the operations of the future war will then be rendered more easy, short, and expeditious." If he still continued obstinate, the King of Spain was to "intermix some threatenings with his promises and flatteries." Meanwhile Philip was to be collecting an army "as privily as possible;" and in the event of the King of Navarre continuing obdurate, the Spanish king was to fall upon him suddenly and unawares, and chase him from his kingdom, which the leaguers were to occupy.

From the mountains of Navarre the war was to be moved down to the plains. The Huguenots of France were to be extirpated root and branch. For the execution of this part of the programme, the main stress was rested on the zeal of the Duke of Guise, aided by reinforcements from Spain. While the sword was busy drowning the plains of that country in Protestant blood, such of the German princes as were Roman Catholic were to stop the passes into France, lest the Protestant princes should send succor to their brethren. Shut in, and left to contend unaided with two powerful armies,

the fall of French Protestantism could not be doubtful. France, chastised and restored to obedience to the Roman See, would regain her pristine purity and glory.

Matters being thus "ordered in France," Germany was next to be undertaken. "Luther and his era" that hour of portentous eclipse which had thrust itself into Germany's golden day -- -must be razed from the tablets and chronicles of the Fatherland, nor ever be once remembered or spoken of by the generations to come. "It will be necessary," says the document from which we quote, "with men collected from all quarters, to invade Germany, and with the aid of the emperor and the bishops, to render and restore it again to the Holy Apostolic See." It was arranged that this war of purgation should support itself. "The Duke of Guise shall lend to the emperor and the other princes of Germany, and the ecclesiastical lords, all the money that shall be gathered from the spoils and confiscations of so many noble, powerful, and wealthy citizens as shall be killed in France on account of the new religion, which will amount to a

very great sum; the said Lord of Guise taking sufficient caution and security, that so he may, after the conclusion of the war, be reimbursed of all the money employed for that purpose, from the spoils of the Lutherans and others who shall, on account of religion, be slain in Germany."

What of Helvetia while this great conflagration should be raging all round it? At the cry of their brethren the Reformed Swiss would rush from their mountains to aid their co-religionists. To prevent their doing so, work was to be found for them at home. "For fear," says the document, "that the cantons of Switzerland should lend aids, it is necessary that the cantons which continue still obedient to the Roman Church declare war against the rest, and that the Pope assist these cantons that are of his religion, to the utmost of his power."

The branches cut off in France and Germany, a last and finishing blow was to be dealt at the root of the tree in Geneva. "The Duke of Savoy, whilst the war thus embroils France and the Swiss, shall rush suddenly and unexpectedly with all his forces

upon the city of Geneva, on the lake of Lemman, assault it by force, and shall not abandon it nor withdraw his men until he become master and obtain full possession of the said city, putting to the point of the sword, or casting into the lake, every living soul who shall be found therein, without any distinction of age or sex, that all may be taught that the Divine Power in the end hath compensated for the delay of the punishment by the greatness and severity of it." [8]

The tempest seemed about to burst in the days of Henry II., but the fatal tournament which sent that monarch to a premature grave drew off the storm for a time. It continued, however, to lower in the sky of Europe; the dark cloud would at times approach as if about to break, and again it would roll away. At last it exploded in the St. Bartholomew Massacre, and its awful reverberations were reiterated again and again in the wars of Philip II. in the Low Countries, and in the campaigns and battles which for thirty years continued to devastate Germany.

Footnotes:

1. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 149.
2. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 150.
3. Strada, p. 183 -- apud Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 150, 151. Laval, vol. 3, p. 134.
4. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 154. Laval, vol. 3., p. 134.
5. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 158.
6. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 154, 155. Laval, vol. 3., pp. 136, 137.
7. Sleidan, Continuation, bk. 2., p. 27.
8. Discours des Conjurations de ceux de la Maison de Guise, contre le Roy, son Royaume, les Princes de son Sang, et ses Etats; printed in 1565, and republished at Ratisbon in 1712, among the proofs of Satyre Menipee, tom. 3.

Chapter 9

The Confederates or "Beggars"

FINDING that new and more tyrannical orders were every day arriving from Spain, and that the despot was tightening his hold upon their country, the leading nobles of the Netherlands now resolved to combine, in order to prevent, if possible, the utter enslavement of the nation. The "Compromise," as the league of the nobles was called, was formed early in the year 1566. Its first suggestion was made at a conventicle, held on the Prince of Parma's marriage-day (3rd of November, 1565), at which Franciscus Junius, the minister of the Walloon or Huguenot congregation in Antwerp, preached.[1] This Junius, who was a Frenchman and of noble birth, had studied in Geneva, and though not more than twenty years of age, his great learning and extraordinary talents gave his counsel weight with the Flemish nobles who sometimes consulted him in cases of emergency. As he studied

Tully, De Legibus, in his youth, there came one who said to him, in the words of the epicure, "God cares for none of us," and plied Junius with arguments so subtle that he sucked in the poison of this dreary belief. Libertinism laid the reins on the neck of passion. But a marvellous escape from death, which he experienced at Lyons about a year afterwards, arrested him in his wickedness. He opened the New Testament, and the passage on which his eyes first lighted was this: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," etc. As the stars grow dim and vanish when the sun rises, so the wisdom and eloquence of the pagans paled before the surpassing majesty and splendor of the Gospel by St. John. "My body trembled," said he, "my mind was astonished, and I was so affected all that day that I knew not where nor what I was. Thou wast mindful of me, O my God, according to the multitude of thy mercies, and calledst home thy lost sheep into the fold." From that day he studied the Scriptures; his life became pure; and his zeal waxed strong in proportion as his knowledge enlarged. He possessed not a little of the fearless

spirit of the great master at whose feet he had sat. He would preach, at times, with the stake standing in the square below, and the flames in which his brethren were being burned darting their lurid flashes through the windows of the apartment upon the faces of his audience.[2] On the present occasion the young preacher addressed some twenty of the Flemish nobles, and after sermon a league against the "barbarous and violent Inquisition" was proposed. All Brussels was ringing with the marriage festivities of Parma. There were triumphal arches in the street, and songs in the banquet-hall; deep goblets were drained to the happiness of Parma, and the prosperity of the great monarchy of Spain. At the same moment, in the neighboring town of Antwerp, those movements were being initiated which were to loosen the foundations of Philip's empire, and ultimately cast down the tyrant from the pinnacle on which he so proudly, and as he deemed so securely, stood.

The aims of the leaguers were strictly constitutional; they made war only against the

Inquisition, "that most pernicious tribunal, which is not only contrary to all human and divine laws, but exceeds in cruelty the most barbarous institutions of the most savage tyrants in the heathen world." "For these reasons," say they, "we whose names are here subscribed have resolved to provide for the security of our families, goods, and persons; and for this purpose we hereby enter into a secret league with one another, promising with a solemn oath to oppose with all our power the introduction of the above-mentioned Inquisition into these Provinces, whether it shall be attempted secretly or openly, or by whatever name it shall be called...

We likewise promise and swear mutually to defend one another, in all places, and on all occasions, against every attack that shall be made, or prosecution that shall be raised, against any individual among us on account of his concern in this Confederacy." [3] The first three who took the pen to sign this document were Count Brederode, Charles de Mansfeld, and Louis of Nassau. Copies were circulated over the country, and the subscribers rapidly multiplied. In the course of two

months 2,000 persons had appended their names to it. Tidings of the league were wafted to the ears of the governor, and it was added -- a slight exaggeration, it may be -- that it was already 15,000 strong.[4] Roman Catholics as well as Protestants were permitted to sign, and the array now gathering round this uplifted standard was, as may be supposed, somewhat miscellaneous.

The Duchess of Parma was startled by the sudden rise of this organisation, whose numbers increased every day. Behind her stood Philip, whose truculent orders left her no retreat; before her was the Confederacy, a less formidable but nearer danger. In her perplexity the governor summoned the Knights of the Fleece and the Stadtholders of the Provinces, to ask their advice touching the steps to be taken in this grave emergency. Two courses, she said, appeared to be open to her -- the one was to modify the edicts, the other was to suppress the Confederacy by arms; the latter course, she said, was the one to which she leaned, especially knowing how inexorable was the will of the king, but her difficulty lay in finding

one to whom she could safely entrust the command of the troops. Orange was disqualified, having pronounced so strongly against the edicts and in favor of liberty of conscience; and Egmont had positively declined the task, saying that "he would never fight for the penal laws and the Inquisition." [5]

What was to be done?

While the Council was deliberating, the Confederates arrived in a body at Brussels. On the 3rd of April, 1566, a cavalcade of 200 nobles and knights, headed by the tall, military form of Brederode, rode into Brussels. The nobleman who was foremost in the procession traced his lineage backwards 500 years, in unbroken succession, to the old sovereigns of Holland. Amid the chances and turnings of the contest now opening, who could tell whether the sovereignty of the old country might not return to the old line? Such was the vision that may have crossed the mind of Brederode. The day following the number of Confederates in Brussels was augmented by the

arrival of about 100 other cavaliers. Their passage through the streets was greeted, as that of the first had been, by the acclamations of the populace. "There go," said they, "the deliverers of our country." Next day, the 5th of April, the whole body of Confederates, dressed in their richest robes, walked in procession to the old palace of Brabant, and passing through the stately hall in which Charles V. eleven years before had abdicated his sovereignties, they entered the audience chamber of the Regent of the Netherlands. Margaret beheld not without emotion this knightly assemblage, who had carried to her feet the wrongs of an oppressed nation. Brederode acted as spokesman. The count was voluble. Orange possessed the gift of eloquence, but the latter had not yet enrolled himself among the Confederates. William the Silent never retraced his steps, and therefore he pondered well his path before going forward.

He could not throw down the gauntlet to a great monarchy like Spain with the light-hearted, jaunty defiance which many of the signatories of the

Confederacy were now hurling against the tyrant, but whose heroism was likely to be all expended before it reached the battlefield, in those Bacchanalian meetings then so common among the Flemish nobles. Brederode on this occasion was prudently brief.

After defending himself and his associates from certain insinuations which had been thrown out against their loyalty, he read the petition which had been drafted in view of being presented to the duchess, in order that she might convey it to Philip. The petition set forth that the country could no longer bear the tyranny of the edicts: that rebellion was rearing its head, nay, was even at the palace-gates; and the monarch was entreated, if he would not imperil his empire, to abolish the Inquisition and convoke the States-General. Pending the king's answer, the duchess was asked to suspend the edicts, and to stop all executions for religious opinion.[6]

When Brederode had finished, the duchess sat silent for a few minutes. Her emotion was too great

to be disguised, the tears rolling down her cheeks.[7] As soon as she had found words she dismissed the Confederates, telling them that she would consult with her councillors, and give her answer on the morrow. The discussion that followed in the council-hall, after Brederode and his followers had withdrawn, was a stormy one. The Prince of Orange argued strongly in favor of liberty of conscience, and Count Berlaymont, a keen partisan of Rome and Spain, argued as vehemently, if not as eloquently, against the Confederates and the liberty which they craved. This debate is famous as that in which Berlaymont first applied to the Confederates an epithet which he meant should be a brand of disgrace, but which they accepted with pride, and wore as a badge of honor, and by which they are now known in history. "Why, madam," asked Berlaymont of the duchess, observing her emotion, "why should you be afraid of these beggars?" The Confederates caught up the words, and at once plucked the sting out of them. "Beggars, you call us," said they; "henceforth we shall be known as beggars." [8] The term came soon to be the distinguishing appellation

for all those in the Netherlands who declared for the liberties of their country and the rights of conscience.

They never met at festival or funeral without saluting each other as "Beggars." Their cry was "Long live the Beggars!" They had medals struck, first of wax and wood, and afterwards of silver and gold, stamped on the one side with the king's effigies, and on the other with a beggar's scrip or bag, held in two clasped right hands, with the motto, "Faithful to the king, even to beggary." Some adopted grey cloth as livery, and wore the common felt hat, and displayed on their breasts, or suspended round their beavers, a little beggar's wooden bowl, on which was wrought in silver, *Vive le Gueux*. At a great entertainment given by Brederode, after drinking the king's health out of wooden bowls, they hung the dish, together with a beggar's scrip, round their necks, and continuing the feast, they pledged themselves at each potation to play their part manfully as "Beggars," and ever to yield a loyal adherence and stout defense to the Confederacy.[9]

The duchess gave her answer next day. She promised to send an envoy to Spain to lay the petition of the Confederates before Philip. She had no power, she said, to suspend the Inquisition, nevertheless she would issue orders to the inquisitors to proceed with discretion. The discretion of an inquisitor! Much the Beggars marvelled what that might mean. The new project shortly afterwards enlightened them. As elaborated, and published in fifty-three articles, that project amounted to this: that heretics, instead of being burned, were to be beheaded or hanged; but they were to be admitted to this remarkable clemency only if they did not stir up riots and tumults. The people appear to have been but little thankful for this uncommon "moderation," and nicknamed it "murderation." It would appear that few were deemed worthy of the Government's mercy, for not only did blood continue to flow by the axe, but the stake blazed nearly as frequently as before. About this time, four martyrs were burned at Lille.

"They all four," says Brandt, "sung as with one

mouth the first verse of the twenty-seventh Psalm, and concluded their singing and their life together with the hymn of Simeon, ' Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.'" A tapestry weaver of Oudenard, near Ghent, by name John Tiscan, who had committed the indiscretion of snatching the wafer from the hand of the priest and crumbling it into bits, to show the people that it was bread and not God, had his hand cut off, and afterwards his body cast into the flames. Some there were, however, who were judged to fall within the scope of the Government's indulgence, and were permitted to die by the sword. John Cornelius Winter had been minister in the town of Horn, and had spent some thirty years in the quiet but zealous diffusion of the truth. He was apprehended and thrown first into prison at the Hague, and afterwards into the Bishop of Utrecht's prisons, and now this year he was brought forth to be beheaded. He submitted, himself cheerfully, and it was observed that, singing the Te Deum on the scaffold, the executioner struck, and his head was severed from his body just as he had finished the line, "All the martyrs praise thee." [10]

Footnotes:

1. So Brandt affirms, on the authority of a MS. Journal in Junius's own handwriting (vol. 1., p. 162).
2. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 163.
3. Watson; Philip II., vol. 1., pp. 255, 256.
4. Motley, vol. 1., p. 224. Laval, vol. 3., p. 138.
5. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 165.
6. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 165, 166
7. Pontus Peyen, 2., MS. -- apud Motley, vol. 1., p. 254.
8. Gueux. It is a French word, "and seems to be derived," says Brandt," from the Dutch Guits, which signifies as much as rogues, vagabonds, or sturdy beggars."
9. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 167. Laval, vol. 3., p. 139.
10. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 168,169.

Chapter 10

The Field-preachings

THE Confederates had been given proof of what was meant by the discretion of the inquisitors, and the Protestants were able to judge how far their condition was likely to be improved under the promised "Moderation of the Placards." It neither blunted the sword nor quenched the violence of the stake. If the latter blazed somewhat less frequently, the former struck all the oftener; and there was still no diminution of the numbers of those who were called to seal their testimony with their blood. Despairing of a Government that was growing daily milder in word, but more cruel in act, the Protestants resolved that from this time forward they would hold their worshipping assemblies in public, and try what effect a display of their numbers would have upon their oppressors. At a meeting held at Whitsuntide, 1566, at which the Lord of Aldegonde -- -who was destined to play the most distinguished part, next to Orange, in the coming drama -- was present, it was resolved that

"the churches should be opened, and divine service publicly performed at Antwerp as it was already in Flanders." This resolution was immediately acted upon. In some places the Reformed met together to the number of 7,000, in others to that of 15,000. [1] From West Flanders, where preaching in public took its rise, it passed into Brabant, and thence into other provinces. The worshippers at the beginning sought the gloom and seclusion of wood and forest. As they grew bolder, they assembled in the plains and open places; and last of all, they met in villages, in towns, and in the suburbs of great cities. They came to these meetings, in the first instance, unarmed; but being threatened, and sometimes attacked, they appeared with sticks and stones, and at last provided themselves with the more formidable weapons of swords, pistols, and muskets.[2]

It is said that the first field-preaching in the Netherlands took place on the 14th of June, 1566, and was held in the neighborhood of Ghent. The preacher was Herman Modet, who had formerly been a monk, but was now the Reformed pastor at

Oudenard. "This man," says a Popish chronicler, "was the first who ventured to preach in public, and there were 7,000 persons at his first sermon." [3] The Government "scout," as the head of the executive was named, having got scent of the meeting, mounted his horse and galloped off to disperse it. Arriving on the scene, he boldly rode in amongst the multitude, holding a drawn sword in one hand and a pistol in the other, and made a dash at the minister with intent to apprehend him. Modet, making off quickly, concealed himself in a neighboring wood. The people, surprised and without arms, appeared for a moment as if they would disperse; but their courage rallying, they plentifully supplied themselves with stones, in lack of other weapons, and saluted the officer with such a shower of missiles on all sides that, throwing away his sword and pistol, he begged for quarter, to which his captors admitted him. He escaped with his life, although badly bruised.

The second great field-preaching took place on the 23rd, of July following, the people assembling in a large meadow in the vicinity of Ghent. The

"Word" was precious in those days, and the people, thirsting to hear it, prepared to remain two days consecutively on the ground. Their arrangements more resembled an army pitching their camp than a peaceful multitude assembling for worship. Around the worshippers was a wall of barricades in the shape of carts and waggons. Sentinels were planted at all the entrances. A rude pulpit of planks was hastily run up and placed aloft on a cart. Modet was preacher, and around him were many thousands of hearers, who listened with their pikes, hatchets, and guns lying by their side, ready to be grasped on a sign from the sentinels who kept watch all around the assembly. In front of the entrances were erected stalls, whereat pedlars offered prohibited books to all who wished to buy. Along the roads running into the country were stationed certain persons, whose office it was to bid the casual passenger turn in and hear the Gospel. After sermon, water was fetched from a neighboring brook, and the Sacrament of baptism dispensed. When the services were finished, the multitude would repair to other districts, where they encamped after the same fashion, and

remained for the same space of time, and so passed through the whole of West Flanders. At these conventicles the Psalms of David, which had been translated into Low Dutch from the version of Clement Marot, and Theodore Beza, were always sung. The odes of the Hebrew king, pealed forth by from five to ten thousand voices, and borne by the breeze over the woods and meadows, might be heard at great distances, arresting the ploughman as he turned the furrow, or the traveler as he pursued his way, and making him stop and wonder whence the minstrelsy proceeded.

Heresy had been flung into the air, and was spreading like an infection far and near over the Low Countries. The contagion already pervaded all Flanders, and now it appeared in Brabant. The first public sermon in this part of the Netherlands was preached on the 24th of June, in a wood belonging to the Lord of Berghen, not far from Antwerp. It being St. John's-tide, and so a holiday, from four to five thousand persons were present. A rumor had been circulated that a descent would be made on the worshippers by the military; and armed men

were posted at all the avenues, some on foot, others on horseback: no attack, however, took place, and the assembly concluded its worship in peace.[4] Tidings having reached the ear of the governor that field-preachings had commenced at Antwerp, she wrote to the magistrates of that city, commanding them to forbid all such assemblies of the people, and if holden, to disperse them by force of arms. The magistrates replied that they had not the power so to do, nor indeed had they; the burgher-guard was weak, some of them not very zealous in the business, and the conventicle-holders were not only numerous, but every third man went armed to the meeting. And as regards the Protestants, so little were they terrified by the threats of the duchess, that they took forcible possession of a large common, named the Laer, within a mile of Antwerp, and having fortified all the avenues leading into it, by massing waggons and branches of trees in front, and planting armed scouts all around, they preached in three several places of the field at once.[5]

The pestilence, which to the alarm and horror

of the authorities had broken out, they sought to wall in by placards. Every day, new and severer prohibitions were arriving from the Duchess of Parma against the field-preachings. In the end of June, she sent orders to the magistrates of Antwerp to disperse all these assemblies, and to hang all the preachers.[6] Had the duchess accompanied these orders with troops to enforce them, their execution might have been possible; but the governor, much to her chagrin, had neither soldiers nor money. Her musketeers and cross-bowmen were themselves, in many instances, among the frequenters of these illegal meetings. To issue placards in these circumstances was altogether idle. The magistrates of Antwerp replied, that while they would take care that no conventicle was held in the city, they must decline all responsibility touching those vast masses of men, amounting at times to from fifteen to twenty thousand, that were in the practice of going outside the walls to sermon.

About this time Tournay became famous for its field-preachings. Indeed, the town may be said to have become Protestant, for not more than a sixth

of its population remained with the Roman Church. Adjoining France its preachers were Walloons -- that is, Huguenots -- and on the question of the Sacrament, the main doctrinal difference between the Lutheran and the Reformed, the citizens of Tournay were decided Calvinists. Nowhere in the Netherlands had the Protestants as yet ventured on preaching publicly within the walls of a city, and the inhabitants of Tournay, like those of all the Flemish towns, repaired to the fields to worship, leaving for the time the streets silent. One day in the beginning of July, 1566, some 10,000 citizens passed out at its gates to hear Peregrine de la Grange, an eloquent preacher from Provence. La Grange had brought to the Low Countries the warm and impulsive temperament and lively oratory of the South; he galloped with the air of a cavalier to the spot where thousands, gathered round a hastily prepared pulpit, waited his coming; and when he stood up to begin, he would fire a pistol over the heads of his immense audience as a signal to listen. Other two days passed, and another enormous conventicle assembled outside Tournay. A preacher even more popular than Peregrine de la

Grange was this day to occupy the pulpit in the fields, and the audience was twice as large as that which had assembled two days before.

Ambrose Wille had sat at the feet of Calvin, and if the stream of his eloquence was not so rapid, it was; richer and deeper than that of the Provencal; and what the multitudes which thronged to these field-preachings sought was not so much to have their emotions stirred as to have their understandings informed by the truths of Scripture, and above all, to have their consciences set at rest by hearing the way of pardon clearly explained to them. The risks connected with attendance were far too tremendous to be hazarded for the sake of mere excitement. Not only did the minister preach with a price set upon his head, but every one of these 20,000 now before him, by the mere fact of hearing him, had violated the edicts, and incurred the penalty of death. Their silence bespoke their intense anxiety and interest, and when the sermon had ended, the heartiness of their psalm testified to the depth of their joy. It was at the peril of their lives that the inhabitants of the Netherlands sought,

in those days, the bread of their souls in the high places of the fields.

The movement steadily maintained its march northwards. It advanced along that famous seaboard, a mighty silent power, bowing the hearts of young and old, of the noble and the artisan, of the wealthy city merchant and the landward tiller of the soil, and gathering them, in defiance of fiery placards, in tens of thousands round that tree whereon was offered the true Sacrifice for the sins of the world. We have seen the movement advance from Flanders into Brabant, and now we are to follow it from Brabant into Holland. In vain does Philip bid it stop; in vain do the placards of the governor threaten death; it continues its majestic march from province to province, and from city to city, its coming, like that of morning, heralded by songs of joy. It is interesting to mark the first feeble beginnings of Protestant preaching in a country where the Reformation was destined to win so many brilliant triumphs. In an obscure street of Amsterdam, there lived at that time Peter Gabriel, formerly of Bruges, with his wife Elizabeth, who

was childless. He had been a monk, but having embraced the Protestant faith, he threw off the frock, and was now accustomed to explain the Heidelberg catechism every Sunday to a small congregation, who came to him by twos and threes at a time for fear of the magistrates, who were animated by a sanguinary zeal against the Reformation, and trembled lest the plague of field-preaching should invade their city. There also dwelt at Kampen at the same time John Arentson, a basket-maker by trade, but gifted with eloquence, and possessed of a knowledge of the Scriptures. Him a few pious burghers of Amsterdam invited to meet them, that they might confer touching the steps to be taken for commencing the public preaching of the Gospel in Holland. They met near St. Anthony's Gate, outside Amsterdam, for Arentson durst not venture into the city. They were a little congregation of seven, including the preacher; and having prayed for Divine guidance in a crisis so important for their country, they deliberated; and having weighed all the difficulties, they resolved, in spite of the danger that threatened their lives, to essay the public preaching of the

Word in Holland.

Before breaking up they agreed to meet on the same spot, the same afternoon, to devise the practical steps for carrying out their resolution. As they were re-entering Amsterdam, by separate gates, they heard the great bell of the Stadthouse ring out. Repairing to the market-place they found the magistrates promulgating the last placard which had been transmitted from the court. It threatened death against all preachers and teachers, as also against all their harbourers, and divers lesser penalties against such as should attend their preaching. The six worthy burghers were somewhat stumbled. Nevertheless, in the afternoon, at the appointed hour, they returned to their old rendezvous, and having again earnestly prayed, they decided on the steps for having the Gospel openly preached to the people in all parts of Holland. On the 14th of July the first sermon was preached by Arentson, in a field near Horn, in North Holland, the people flocking thither from all the villages around. In the humble basket-maker we see the pioneer of that numerous band of

eloquent preachers and erudite divines, by which Holland was to be distinguished in days to come.[7]

The movement thus fairly commenced soon gathered way. News of what had taken place at Horn spread like lightning all over Holland, and on the following Sunday, the 21st of July, an enormous gathering took place at Overveen, near Haarlem. Proclamation of the intended field-preaching had been made on the Exchange of Amsterdam on the previous day. The excitement was immense; all the boats and waggons in Amsterdam were hired for the transport of those who were eager to be present. Every village and town poured out its inhabitants, and all the roads and canals converging on Haarlem were crowded. The burgomasters of Amsterdam sent notice to the magistrates of Haarlem of what was impending. The Stadthouse bell was rung at nine o'clock of the evening of Saturday, and the magistrates hastily assembled, to be told that the plague of which they had heard such dreadful reports at a distance, was at last at their gates.

Haarlem was already full of strangers; not an inn in it that was not crowded with persons who purposed being present at the field-preaching on the coming day. The magistrates deliberated and thought that they had found a way by which to avert the calamity that hung over them: they would imprison this whole multitude within the walls of their town, and so extinguish the projected conventicle of to-morrow. The magistrates were not aware, when they hit on this clever expedient, that hundreds had already taken up their position at Overeen, and were to sleep on the ground. On Sunday morning, when the travelers awoke and sallied out into the street., they found the city gates locked. Hour passed after hour, still the gates were kept closed. The more adventurous leaped from the walls, swam the moat, and leaving their imprisoned companions behind them, hastened to the place of meeting. A few got out of the town when the watch opened the gates to admit the milk-women, but the great bulk of the conventiclors were still in durance, and among others Peter Gabriel, who was that day to be preacher. It was now eleven o'clock

of the forenoon; the excitement on the streets of Haarlem may be imagined; the magistrates, thinking to dispel the tempest, had shut themselves in with it. The murmurs grew into clamours, the clamours into threatenings, every moment the tempest might be expected to burst. There was no alternative but to open the gates, and let the imprisoned multitude escape.

Citizens and strangers now poured out in one vast stream, and took the road to Overveen. Last of all arrived Peter Gabriel the minister. Two stakes were driven perpendicularly into the ground, and a bar was laid across, on which the minister might place his Bible, and rest his arms in speaking. Around this rude pulpit were gathered first the women, then the men, next those who had arms, forming an outer ring of defense, which however was scarcely needed, for there was then no force in Holland that would have dared to attack this multitude. The worship was commenced with the singing of a psalm. First were heard the clear soft notes of the females at the center; next the men struck in with their deeper voices; last of all the

martial forms in the outer circle joined the symphony, and gave completeness and strength to the music. When the psalm had ended, prayer was offered, and the thrilling peals that a moment before had filled the vault overhead were now exchanged for a silence yet more thrilling. The minister, opening the Bible, next read out as his text the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Here in a few verses, said the minister, was the essence of the whole Bible the "marrow" of all true theology: -- "the gift of God," salvation; its source, "the grace of God;" the way in which it is received, "through faith;" and the fruits ordained to follow, "good works."

It was a hot midsummer day; the audience was not fewer than 5,000; the preacher was weak and infirm in body, but his spirit was strong, and the

lightning-power of his words held his audience captive. The sermon, which was commenced soon after noon, did not terminate till past four o'clock. Then again came prayer. The preacher made supplication, says Brandt, "for all degrees of men, especially for the Government, in such a manner that there was hardly a dry eye to be seen." [8] The worship was closed as it had been commenced, with the melodious thunder of 5,000 voices raised in praise.

So passed this great movement through Holland in the course of a few weeks. Wherever it came it stirred the inhabitants not into wrath, nor into denunciations of the Government, and much less into seditions and insurrections; it awoke within them thoughts which were far too serious and solemn to find vent in tumult and noise. They asked, "What must we do to be saved?" It was the hope of having this the greatest of all questions answered, that drew them out into woods and wildernesses, and open fields, and gathered them in thousands and tens of thousands around the Book of Life and its expositor. While Brederode and his

fellow Confederates were traversing the country, making fiery speeches against the Government, writing lampoons upon the bishops, draining huge bowls of wine, and then hanging them round their necks as political badges -- in short, rousing passions which stronger passions and firmer wills were to quell -- -these others, whom we see searching the Scriptures, and gathering to the field-preachings, were fortifying themselves and leavening their countrymen with those convictions of truth, and that inflexible fidelity to God and to duty, which alone could carry them through the unspeakably awful conflict before them, and form a basis strong enough to sustain the glorious fabric of Dutch liberty which was to emerge from that conflict.

By the middle of August there was no city of note in all Holland where the free preaching of the Gospel had not been established, not indeed within the walls, but outside in the fields. The magistrates of Amsterdam, of all others, offered the most determined resistance. They convoked the town militia, consisting of thirty-six train-bands, and

asked them whether they would support them in the suppression of the field-conventicles. The militia replied that they would not, although they would defend with their lives the magistrates and city against all insurrections.[9] The authorities were thus under the necessity of tolerating the public sermon, which was usually preached outside the Haarlem gate. The citizens of Delft, Leyden, Utrecht, and other places now took steps for the free preaching of the Gospel. The first sermon was preached at Delft by Peter Gabriel at Hornbrug, near the city. The concourse was great. The next city to follow was the Hague. Twenty waggons filled with the burghers of Delft accompanied the preacher thither; they alighted before the mansion of the president, Cornelius Suis, who had threatened the severest measures should such a heretical novelty be attempted in his city. They made a ring with the waggons, placing the preacher in the centre, while his congregation filled the enclosure. The armed portion of the worshippers remained in the waggons and kept the peace. They sang their psalm, they offered their prayer, the preaching of the sermon followed; the hostile

president surveying all the while, from his own window, the proceedings which he had stringently forbidden, but was quite powerless to prevent.

There were only four Protestant ministers at this time in all Holland. Their labors were incessant; they preached all day and journeyed all night, but their utmost efforts could not overtake the vastness of the field. Every day came urgent requests for a preacher from towns and villages which had not yet been visited. The friends of the Gospel turned their eyes to other countries; they cried for help; they represented the greatness of the crisis, and prayed that laborers might be sent to assist in reaping fields that were already white, and that promised so plenteous a harvest. In answer to this appeal some ten pastors were sent, mainly from the north of Germany, and these were distributed among the cities of Holland. Other preachers followed, who came from other lands, or arose from amongst the converts at home, and no long time elapsed till each of the chief towns enjoyed a settled ministration of the Gospel.

Footnotes:

1. Laval, vol. 3., p. 140.
2. Ibid., p. 171.
3. N. Burgund, Hist. Belg., lib. 3., p. 213 -- apud Brandt, vol. 1., p. 171.
4. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 172.
5. Ibid., p. 173.
6. Ibid., p.174.
7. Brandt, vol. 1, pp. 178, 179.
8. Memoirs of Laurence Jacobson Real, an eye-witness -- apud Brandi, vol. 1., pp. 179 -- 181.
9. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 183.

Chapter 11

The Image-breakings

WE have seen the procession of the 300 noblemen who, with Count Brederode at their head, on the 5th of April, 1566, walked two and two on foot to the old palace of Brabant in Brussels, to lay the grievances under which their nation groaned at the feet of Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands. We have also heard the answer which the regent returned. She promised to send their petition by special envoys to Philip, with whom alone the power lay of granting or withholding its request; and meanwhile, though she could not close the Inquisition, she would issue orders to the inquisitors to proceed "with discretion." The noblemen whom Margaret selected to carry the Confederate Petition to Spain were the Marquis de Berghen and the Baron de Montigny. They gladly undertook the mission entrusted to them, little suspecting how fruitless it would prove for their country, and how fatally it would end for themselves. The tyrant, as we shall

afterwards see, chose to consider them not as ambassadors, but as conspirators against his Government. Philip took care, however, to keep the dark purpose he harboured in connection therewith in his breast; and meanwhile he professed to be deliberating on the answer which the two deputies, who he purposed should see the Netherlands no more, were to carry back. While Philip was walking in "leaden shoes," the country was hurrying on with "winged feet."

The progress of the movement so far had been peaceful. The psalms sung and the prayers offered at the field-preachings, and above all the Gospel published from the pulpits, tended only to banish thoughts of vengeance, and inspire to amity and good-will. The consideration of the forgiveness of Heaven, freely accorded to the most enormous offenses, disposed all who accepted it to forgive in their turn. But numerous other causes were in operation tending to embroil the Protestant movement. The whole soil of the Netherlands was volcanic. Though the voice of the pulpit was peace, the harangues which the Confederates were daily

firing off breathed only war. The Protestants were becoming conscious of their strength; the remembrance of the thousands of their brethren who had been barbarously murdered, rankled in their minds -- nay, they were not permitted to forget the past, even had they been willing so to do. Did not their pastors preach to them with a price set upon their heads, and were not their brethren being dragged to death before their eyes? With so many inflammable materials all about, it needed only a spark to kindle a blaze. A mighty conflagration now burst out.

On the 14th of August, the day before the fete of the Assumption of the Virgin, there suddenly appeared in Flanders a band of men armed with staves, hatchets, hammers, ladders, and ropes; some few of them carried guns and swords.[1] This party was composed of the lowest of the people, of idlers, and women of disreputable character, "hallooed on," says Grotius, "by nobody knows whom." [2] They had come forth to make war upon images; they prosecuted the campaign with singular energy, and, being unopposed, with

complete success. As they marched onwards the crosses, shrines, and saints in stone that stood by the roadside fell before them. They entered the villages and lifted up their hammers upon all their idols, and smote them in pieces. They next visited the great towns, where they pulled down the crucifixes that stood at the corners of the streets, and broke the statues of the Virgin and saints. The churches and cathedrals they swept clean of all their consecrated symbols. They extinguished the tapers on the altars, and mounting the wall of the edifice with their ladders, pulled down the pictures that adorned it. They overturned the Madonnas, and throwing their ropes around the massive crosses that surmounted altars and chapels, bore them to the ground; the altars too, in some cases, they demolished; they took a special delight in soiling the rich vestments of the priests, in smearing their shoes with the holy oil, and trampling under foot the consecrated bread; and they departed only when there was nothing more to break or to profane. It was in vain that the doors of some churches and convents were hastily barricaded. This iconoclast army was not to be

withstood. Some sturdy image-hater would swing his hammer against the closed portal, and with one blow throw it open. The mob would rush in, and nothing would be heard but the clang of axes and the crash of falling pictures and overturned images. A few minutes would suffice to complete the desolation of the place. Like the brook when the rains descend, and a hundred mountain torrents keep pouring their waters into it, till it swells into a river, and at last widens into a devastating flood, so this little band of iconoclasts, swelled by recruits from every village and town through which they passed, grew by minutes into an army, that army into a far-extending host, which pursued its march over the country, bursting open the doors of cathedrals and the gates of cities, chasing burgomasters before it, and striking monk and militia-man alike with terror. It seemed even as if iconoclasts were rising out of the soil. They would start up and begin their ravages at the same instant in provinces and cities widely apart. In three days they had spread themselves over all the Low Countries, and in less than a week they had plundered 400 churches.[3] To adapt to this

destroying host the words of the prophet, descriptive of the ravages of another army -- before them was a garden, clothed in the rich blossoms of the Gothic genius and art, behind them was a wilderness strewn over with ruins.

These iconoclasts appeared first in the district of St. Omer, in Flanders, where they sacked the convent of the Nuns of Wolverghen. Emboldened by their success, the cry was raised, "To Ypres, to Ypres!"[4] "On their way thither," says Strada, "their number increased, like a snowball rolling from a mountain-top into the valley."[5] They purged the roads as they advanced, they ravaged the churches around Ypres, and entering the town they inflicted unsparing demolition upon all the images in its sanctuaries. "Some set ladders to the walls, with hammers and staves battering the pictures. Others broke asunder the iron-work, seats, and pulpit. Others casting ropes about the great statues of Our Savior Christ, and the saints, pulled them down to the ground."[6] The day following there gathered "another flock of the like birds of prey," which directed their flight towards Courtray

and Douay, ravaging and plundering as they went onward. Not a penny of property did they appropriate, not a hair of the head of monk or nun did they hurt. It was not plunder but destruction which they sought, and their wrath if fierce was discharged not on human beings, but on graven images. They smote, and defaced, and broke in pieces, with exterminating fury, the statues and pictures in the churches, without permitting even one to escape, "and that with so much security," says Strada, "and with so little regard of the magistrate or prelates, as you would think they had been sent for by the Common Council, and were in pay of the city." [7]

Tidings of what was going on in Flanders were speedily carried into Brabant, and there too the tempest gathered with like suddenness, and expended itself with like fury. Its more terrific burst was in Antwerp, which the wealth and devotion of preceding ages had embellished with so many ecclesiastical fabrics, some of them of superb architectural magnificence, and all of them filled with the beautiful creations of the chisel and

the pencil. The crowning glory of Antwerp was its cathedral, which, although begun in 1124, had been finished only a few years before the events we are narrating. There was no church in all Northern Europe, at that day, which could equal the Notre-Dame of the commercial capital of Brabant, whether in the imposing grandeur of its exterior, or in the variety and richness of its internal decorations. The magnificence of its statuary, the beauty of its paintings, its mouldings in bronze and carvings in wood, and its vessels of silver and gold, made it the pride of the citizens, and the delight and wonder of strangers from other lands. Its spire shot up to a height of 500 feet, its nave and aisles stretched out longitudinally the same length. Under its lofty roof, borne up by columns of gigantic stature, hung round with escutcheons and banners, slept mailed warriors in their tombs of marble, while the boom of organ, the chant of priest, and the whispered prayers of numberless worshippers, kept eddying continually round their beds of still and deep and never-ending repose.

When the magistrates and wealthy burghers of

Antwerp heard of the storm that was raging at no great distance from their gates, their hearts began to fail them. Should the destructive cloud roll hither, how much will remain a week hence, they asked themselves, of all that the wealth and skill and penitence of centuries have gathered into the Church of Our Lady? It needed not that the very cloud that was devastating Flanders should transport itself to the banks of the Scheldt; the whole air was electrical. In every quarter of the firmament the same dark clouds that hung over Flanders were appearing, and wherever stood Virgin, or saint, or crucifix, there the lightnings were seen to fall. The first mutterings of the storm were heard at Antwerp on the fete-day of the Assumption of the Virgin. "Whilst," says Strada, "her image in solemn procession was carried upon men's shoulders, from the great church through the streets, some jeering rascals of the meaner sort of artificers first laughed and hissed at the holy solemnity, then impiously and impudently, with mimic salutations and reproachful words, mocked the effigies of the Mother of God." [8] The magistrates of Antwerp in their wisdom hit upon a

device which they thought would guide the iconoclast tempest past their unrivalled cathedral. It was their little manoeuvre that drew the storm upon them.

The great annual fair was being held in their city;[9] it was usual during that concourse for the image of the Virgin to stand in the open nave of the cathedral, that her rotaries might the more conveniently offer her their worship. The magistrates, thinking to take away occasion from those who sought it, bade the statue be removed inside the choir, behind the iron railing of its gates. When the people assembled next day, they found "Our Lady's" usual place deserted. They asked her in scorn "why she had so early flown up to the roost?" "Have you taken fright," said they sarcastically, "that you have retreated within this enclosure?" As "Our Lady" made them no reply, nor any one for her, their insolence waxed greater. "Will you join us," said they, "in crying, 'Long live the Beggars'?"

It is plain that those who began the iconoclast

riots in Antwerp were more of Confederates than Reformers. A mischievously frolicsome lad, in tattered doublet and old battered hat, ascended the pulpit, and treated the crowd to a clever caricature of the preaching of the friars. All, however, did not approve of this attempt to entertain the multitude. A young sailor rushed up the stairs to expel the caricaturist preacher. The two struggled together in the pulpit, and at last both came rolling to the ground. The crowd took the part of the lad, and some one drawing his dagger wounded the sailor. Matters were becoming serious, when the church officers interfered, and with the help of the margrave of the city, they succeeded with some difficulty in ejecting the mob, and locking the cathedral-doors for the night.[10]

The governor of the city, William of Orange, was absent, having been summoned a few days before to a council at Brussels; and the two burgomasters and magistrates were at their wits' end.

They had forbidden the Gospel to be preached

within the walls of Antwerp, having rejected the petition lately presented to that effect by a number of the principal burghers; but the gates which the Gospel must not enter, the iconoclast tempest had burst open without leave of the Senate. Where the psalm could not be sung, the iconoclast saturnalians lifted up their hoarse voices. The night passed in quiet, but when the day returned, signs appeared of a renewal of the tempest. Crowds began to collect in the square before the cathedral; numbers were entering the edifice, and it was soon manifest that they had come not to perform their devotions, but to stroll irreverently through the building, to mock at the idols in nave and aisle, to peer through the iron railings behind which the Virgin still stood ensconced, to taunt and jeer her for fleeing, and to awaken the echoes of the lofty roof with their cries of "Long live the Beggars!" Every minute the crowd was increasing and the confusion growing. In front of the choir, sat an ancient crone selling wax tapers and other things used in the worship of the Virgin. Zealous for the honor of Mary, whom Antwerp and all Brabant worshipped, she began to rebuke the crowd for

their improper behavior.

The mob were not in a humor to take the admonition meekly. They turned upon their reprover, telling her that her patroness' day was over, and her own with it, and that she had better "shut shop." The huckster thus baited was not slow to return gibe for gibe. The altercation drew the youngsters in the crowd around her, who possibly did not confine their annoyances to words. Catching at such missiles as lay within her reach, the stall-woman threw them at her tormentors. The riot thus begun rapidly extended through all parts of the church. Some began to play at ball, some to throw stones at the altar, some to shout, "Long live the Beggars!" and others to sing psalms. The magistrates hastened to the scene of uproar, and strove to induce the people to quit the cathedral. The more they entreated, the more the mob scowled defiance. They would remain, they said, and assist in singing Ave Maria to the Virgin. The magistrates replied that there would be no vespers that night, and again urged them to go. In the hope that the mob would follow, the magistrates made

their own exit, locking the great door of the cathedral behind them, and leaving open only a little wicket for the people to come out by. Instead of the crowd within coming out, the mob outside rushed in at the wicket, and the uproar was increased.

The margrave and burgomasters re-entered the church once more, and made yet another attempt to quell the riot. They found themselves in presence of a larger and stormier crowd, which they could no more control than they could the waves of an angry sea. Securing what portion they could of the more valuable treasures in the church, they retired, leaving the cathedral in the hands of the rioters.[11]

All night long the work of wholesale destruction still went on. The noise of wrenching, breaking, and shouting, the blows of hammers and axes, and the crash of images and pictures, were heard all over the city; and the shops and houses were closed. The first object of the vengeance of the rioters, now left sole masters of the building and all contained in it, was the colossal image of

the Virgin, which only two days before had been borne in jewelled robes, with flaunt of banner, and peal of trumpet, and beat of drum, through the streets. The iron railing within which she had found refuge was torn down, and a few vigorous blows from the iconoclast axes hewed her in pieces and smote her into dust. Execution being done upon the great deity of the place, the rage of the mob was next discharged on the minor gods. Traversing nave and side-aisle, the iconoclast paused a moment before each statue of wood or stone. He lifted his brawny arm, his hammer fell, and the image lay broken. The pictures that hung on the walls were torn down, the crosses were overturned, the carved work was beaten into atoms, and the stained glass of the windows shivered in pieces. All the altars -- seventy in number -- were demolished;[12] in short, every ornament was rifled and destroyed. Tapers taken from the altar lighted the darkness, and enabled the iconoclasts to continue their work of destruction all through the night.

The storm did not expend itself in the cathedral

only, it extended to the other churches and chapels of Antwerp. These underwent a like speedy and terrible purgation. Before morning, not fewer than thirty churches within the walls had been sacked. When there remained no more images to be broken, and no more pictures and crucifixes to be pulled down, the rabble laid their hands on other things. They strewed the wafers on the floor; they filled the chalices with wine, and drank to the health of the Beggars; they donned the gorgeous vestments of the priests, and, breaking open the cellars, a vigorous tap of the hammer set the red wine a-flowing. A Carmelite, or bare-looted monk, who had languished twelve years in the prison of his monastery, received his liberty at the hands of these image-breakers. The nunneries were invaded,[13] and the sisters, impelled by fright, or moved by the desire of freedom, escaped to the houses of their relatives and friends. Violence was offered to no one. Unpitying towards dead idols, these iconoclasts were tender of living men.

When the day broke a body of the rioters sallied out at the gates, and set to work on the

abbeys and religious houses in the open country. These they ravaged as they had done those of the city. The libraries of some of these establishments they burned. The riotings continued for three days. No attempt to put them down was made by any one. The magistrates did nothing beyond their visit to the cathedral on the first day. The burghal militia were not called out. The citizens kept themselves shut up in their houses, the Protestants because they suspected that the Roman Catholics had conspired to murder them, and the Roman Catholics because they feared the same thing of the Protestants. Though the crowd was immense, the actual perpetrators of these outrages were believed not to number over a hundred. A little firmness on the part of the authorities at the beginning might easily have restrained them. "All these violences, plunderings, and desolations," said those of the Spanish faction, "were committed by about a hundred unarmed rabble at the most." The famous Dutch historian, Hooft, says: "I do not think it strange, since there are good and bad men to be found in all sects, that the vilest of the [Reformed] party showed their temper by these extravagances,

or that others fed their eyes with a sport that grew up to a plague, which they thought the clergy had justly deserved by the rage of their persecutions." "The generality of the Reformed," he adds, "certainly behaved themselves nobly by censuring things which they thought good and proper to be done, because they were brought about by improper methods." [14] In an Apology which they published after these occurrences had taken place the Reformed said: "The Papists themselves were at the bottom of the image-breaking, to the end they might have a pretext for charging those of the Religion with rebellion: this, they added, plainly appeared by the tumult renewed at Antwerp by four Papists, who were hanged for it next day." [15]

It is light and not axes that can root out idols. It is but of small avail to cast down the graven image, unless the belief on which the worship of it is founded be displaced from the heart. This was not understood by these zealous iconoclasts. Cast images out of the breast, said Zwingle, and they will soon disappear from the sanctuary. Of this opinion were the Protestant preachers of the Low

Countries. So far from lifting axe or hammer upon any of the images around them, they strove to the utmost of their power to prevent the rabble doing so. The preacher Modet, in an Apology which he published soon after these disorders, says "that neither he himself nor any of his consistory had any more knowledge of this design of destroying images when it was first contrived than of the hour of their death." It was objected against him that he was in the church while the mob was breaking and defacing the images. This he owns was true; but he adds that "it was at the desire of the magistrates themselves, and at the peril of his own life, that he went thither to quiet the mob, though he could not be heard, but was pulled down from the pulpit, and thrust out of the church; that, moreover, he had gone first to the convent of the Grey Friars, and next to the nunnery of St. Clara, to entreat the people to depart; that of this matter fifty or sixty nuns could testify. That was all the concern he had in that affair." A written address was also presented to the burgomaster by the ministers and elders of the Dutch and Walloon congregations, in which "they called God to witness that what happened in

the taking away and destroying of images was done without either their knowledge or consent; and they declared their detestation of these violent deeds." [16]

This destroying wind passed on to Breda, Bergen-op-Zoom, and other towns of Brabant. Eight men presented themselves at the gates of Lier, and said they had come to ascertain whether the idols had been taken down. The magistrates admitted two of them into the city, led them from church to church, and removed whatever they ordered, without once asking them by whose authority they had come. [17] At Tournay the churches were stripped to the very walls; the treasures of gold and silver which the priests had buried in the earth, exhumed; and the repositories broken into, and the chalices, reliquaries, rich vestments, and precious jewels scattered about as things of no value. At Valenciennes the massacre of the idols took place on St. Bartholomew's Day. "Hardly as many senseless stones," says Motley, "were victims as there were to be living Huguenots sacrificed in a single city upon a Bartholomew

which was fast approaching. In the Valenciennes massacre not a human being was injured." [18]

The storm turned northward, and inflicted its ravages on the churches of Holland. Hague, Delft, Leyden, the Brill, and other towns were visited and purged. At Dort, Gouda, Rotterdam, Haarlem, and other places, the magistrates anticipated the coming of the iconoclasts by giving orders beforehand for the removal of the images. Whether the pleasure or the mortification of the rioters was the greater at having the work thus taken off their hands, it would be hard to affirm. At Amsterdam the matter did not pass off so quietly. The magistrates, hearing that the storm was travelling northwards, gave a hint to the priests to remove their valuables in time. The precaution was taken with more haste than good success. The priests and friars, lading themselves with the plate, chalices, patens, pyxes, and mass-vestments, hurried with them along the open street. They were met by the operatives, who were returning from their labor to dinner.

The articles were deemed public property, and

the clergy in many cases were relieved of their burdens. The disturbances had begun. The same evening, after vespers had been sung, several children were brought for baptism. While the priest was performing the usual exorcisms one of the crowd shouted out, "You priest, forbear to conjure the devil out of him; baptise the child in the name of Jesus, as the apostles were wont to do."

The confusion increased; some mothers had their infants hastily baptised in the mother tongue, others hurried home with theirs unbaptised. Later in the evening a porter named Jasper, sauntering near that part of the church where the pyx is kept, happened to light upon a placard hanging on the wall, having reference to the mystery in the pyx. "Look here," said he to the bystanders, at the same time laying hold on the board and reading aloud its inscription, which ran thus: "Jesus Christ is locked up in this box; whoever does not believe it is damned." Thereupon he threw it with violence on the floor; the crash echoed through the church, and gave the signal for the breakings to begin. Certain boys began to throw stones at the altar. A woman

threw her slipper at the head of a wooden Mary -- an act, by the way, which afterwards cost her her own head. The mob rushed on: images and crucifixes went down before them, and soon a heap of pictures, vases, crosses, and saints in stone, broken, bruised, and blended undistinguishably, covered with their sacred ruins the floors of the churches.[19]

It does not appear from the narratives of contemporary historians that in a single instance these outrages were stimulated, or approved of, by the Protestant preachers. On the contrary, they did all in their power to prevent them. They wished to see the removal of images from the churches, knowing that this method of worship had been forbidden in the Decalogue; but they hoped to accomplish the change peacefully, by enlightening the public sentiment and awakening the public conscience on the matter. He is the true iconoclast, they held, who teaches that "God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit." This is the hammer that is to break in pieces the idols of the nations.

Nor can the destruction of these images, with truth, be laid at the door of the Protestant congregations of the Low Countries. There were fanatical persons in their ranks, no doubt, who may have aided the rioters by voice and hand; but the great body of the Reformers -- all, in short, who were worthy of the name, and had really been baptised into the spirit of Protestantism -- stood aloof from the work of destruction, knowing it to be as useless as it was culpable. These outrages were the work of men who cared as little for Protestantism, in itself, as they did for Roman Catholicism. They belonged to a class found in every Popish country, who, untaught, vindictive, vicious, are ever ready to break out into violence the moment the usual restraints are withdrawn. These restraints had been greatly relaxed in the Low Countries, as in all the countries of Christendom, by the scandals of the priesthood, and yet more by the atrocious cruelty of the Government, which had associated these images in the minds of the people with the 30,000 victims who had been sacrificed during the three or four decades past. And most of all, perhaps, had

Protestantism tended to relax the hold which the Church of Rome exercised over the masses. Protestantism had not enlightened the authors of these outrages to the extent of convincing them of its own truth, but it had enlightened them to the extent of satisfying them that Popery was a cheat; and it is of the nature of the human mind to avenge itself upon the impositions by which it has been deluded and duped. But are we therefore to say that the reign of imposture must be eternal? Are we never to unmask delusions and expose falsehoods, for fear that whirlwinds may come in with the light? How many absurdities and enormities must we, in that case, make up our minds to perpetuate! In no one path of reform should we ever be able to advance a step. We should have to sternly interdict progress not only in religion, but in science, in politics, and in every department of social well-being. And then, how signally unjust to blame the remedy, and hold it accountable for the disturbances that accompany it, and acquit the evil that made the remedy necessary!

Modern times have presented us with two

grand disruptions of the bonds of authority; the first was that produced by Protestantism in the sixteenth century, and the second was that caused by the teachings of the French Encyclopedists in the end of the eighteenth century. In both cases the masses largely broke away from the control of the Roman Church and her priesthood; but every candid mind will admit that they broke away not after the same fashion, or to the same effect. The revolt of the sixteenth century was attended, as we have seen in the Low Countries, by an immense and, we shall grant, most merciless execution of images; the revolt of the eighteenth was followed by the slaughter of a yet greater number of victims; but in this case the victims were not images, but living men. Both they who slew the images in the sixteenth century, and they who slew the human beings in the eighteenth, were reared in the Church of Rome; they had learned her doctrines and had received their first lessons from her priests; and though now become disobedient and rebellious, they had not yet got quit of the instincts she had planted in them, nor were they quite out of her leading-strings.

Footnotes:

1. Strada, lib. 5.
2. Grotius, *Annales*, lib. 1., p. 22 -- apud Brandt, vol. 1., p. 191.
3. Hooft, lib. 3., p. 99. Strada, lib. 5., p. 260. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 191.
4. Strada, lib. 5.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Strada, lib. 5.
8. Strada, lib. 5.
9. Hooft, Strada, etc. -- apud Brandt, vol. 1., p. 192.
10. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 192.
11. Strada, p. 254 -- apud Brandt, vol. 1., p. 193.
12. Ibid., lib. 5.
13. Ibid., pp. 255, 269 -- apud Brandt, vol. 1., p. 193.
14. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 194.
15. Ibid., p. 258.
16. Brandt, vol.1., p.196.
17. Ibid., p. 197.

18. Motley, 1., 282.

19. Hooft, lib. 3. -- apud Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 199,
200.

Chapter 12

Reaction--Submission of the Southern Netherlands

THE first effect of the tumults was favorable to the Reformers. The insurrection had thoroughly alarmed the Duchess of Parma, and the Protestants obtained from her fear concessions which they would in vain have solicited from her sense of justice. At a conference between the leading nobles and the governor at Brussels on the 25th of August, the following treaty was agreed to and signed: -- The duchess promised on her part "that the Inquisition should be abolished from this time forward for ever," and that the Protestants should have liberty of worship in all those places where their worship had been previously established. These stipulations were accompanied with a promise that all past offenses of image-breaking and Beggar manifestoes should be condoned. The nobles undertook on their part to dissolve their Confederacy, to return to the service of the State, to

see that the Reformed did not come armed to their assemblies, and that in their sermons they did not inveigh against the Popish religion.[1] Thus a gleam broke out through the cloud, and the storm was succeeded by a momentary calm.

On the signing of this treaty the princes went down to their several provinces, and earnestly labored to restore the public peace. The Prince of Orange and Counts Egmont, Horn, and Hoogstraten were especially zealous in this matter, nor were their efforts without success. In Antwerp, where Orange was governor, and where he was greatly beloved, quiet was speedily re-established, the great cathedral was again opened, and the Romish worship resumed as aforesaid. It was agreed that all the consecrated edifices should remain in the possession of the Roman Catholics, but a convention was at the same time made with the Dutch and Walloon congregations, empowering them to erect places of worship within the city-walls for their own use. The latter arrangement, -- the privilege, namely, accorded the Reformed of worshipping within the walls -- was a concession

which it cost the bigotry of Margaret a grudge to make. But Orange, in reply to her remonstrances, told her that, in the first place, this was expedient, seeing assemblies of 20,000 or 25,000 persons were greater menaces to the public peace outside the walls, where they were removed from the eye of the magistrate, than they could possibly be within the city, where not only were their congregations smaller, their numbers seldom exceeding 10,000, but their language and bearing were more modest; and, in the second place, this concession, he reminded the duchess, was necessary. The Reformed were now 200,000 strong, they were determined to enjoy their rights, and he had no soldiers to gainsay their demands, nor could he prevail on a single burgher to bear arms against them.[2] In a few days the Walloon congregation, availing themselves of their new liberties, laid the first stone of their future church on a spot which had been allotted them; and their example was speedily followed by the Dutch Reformed congregation. Through the efforts of Orange the troubles were quieted all over Holland and Brabant. His success was mainly owing to the

great weight of his personal character, for soldiers to enforce submission he had none. The churches were given back to the priests, who, doffing the lay vestments in which many of them had encased themselves in their terror, resumed the public celebration of their rites; and the Protestants were contented with the liberty accorded them of worshipping in fabrics of their own creation, which in a few places were situated within the walls, but in the great majority of cases stood outside, in the suburbs, or the open country.

Meanwhile the news of churches sacked, images destroyed, and holy things profaned was travelling to Spain. Philip, who during his stay in Brussels had been wont to spend his nights in the stews, or to roam masked through the streets, satiating his base appetites upon their foul garbage, when the tidings of the profanation reached him, first shuddered with horror, and next trembled with rage. Plucking at his beard, he exclaimed, "It shall cost them dear, I swear it by the soul of my father." [3]

For every image that had been mutilated hundreds of living men were to die; the affront offered to the Roman Catholic faith, and its saints in stone, must be washed out in the blood of the inhabitants of the Netherlands. So did the tyrant resolve.

Meanwhile keeping secret the terrible purpose in his breast, he, began to move toward it with his usual slowness, but with more than his usual doggedness and duplicity. Before the news of the image-breaking had arrived, the king had written to Margaret of Parma, in answer to the petition which the two envoys, the Marquis of Berghen and the Count de Montigny, had brought to Madrid, saying to her -- so bland and gracious did he seem -- that he would pardon the guilty, on certain conditions, and that seeing there was now a full staff of bishops in the Provinces, able and doubtless willing vigilantly to guard the members of their flock, the Inquisition was no longer necessary, and should henceforth cease. Here was pardon and the abolition of the Inquisition: what more could the Netherlanders ask? But if the letter was meant to

read one way in Brussels, it was made to read another way in Madrid. No sooner had Philip indited it than, summoning two attorneys to his closet, he made them draw out a formal protest in the presence of witnesses to the effect that the promise of pardon, being not voluntary but compulsory, was not binding, and that he was not obliged thereby to spare any one whom he chose to consider guilty. As regarded the Inquisition, Philip wrote to the Pope, telling him that he had indeed said to the Netherlanders that he would abolish it, but that need not scandalise his Holiness, inasmuch as he neither could nor would abolish the Inquisition unless the Pope gave his consent. As regarded the meeting of the Assembly of the States for which the Confederates had also petitioned, Philip replied with his characteristic prudence, that he forbade its meeting for the moment; but in a secret letter to Margaret he told her that that moment meant for ever. The two noblemen who brought the petition were not permitted to carry back the answer: that would have been dangerous. They might have initiated their countrymen into the Spanish reading of the letter. They were still, upon

various pretences, detained at Madrid.

Along with this very pleasant letter, which the governor was to make known to all Philip's subjects of the Netherlands, that they might know how gracious a master they had, came another communication, which Margaret was not to make known, but on the contrary keep to herself. Philip announced in this letter that he had sent the governor a sum of money for raising soldiers, and that he wished the new battalions to be enlisted exclusively from Papists, for on these the king and the duchess might rely for an absolute compliance with their will. The regent was not remiss in executing this order; she immediately levied a body of cavalry and five regiments of infantry. As her levies increased her fears left her, and the conciliatory spirit which led her to consent to the Accord of the 25th of August, was changed to a mood of mind very different.

But if the Accord was to be kept, the good effects of which had been seen in a pacified country, and if the guilty were to be pardoned and

the Inquisition abolished, as the king's letter had promised, where was the need of raising armaments? Surely these soldiers are not merely to string beads. A great treachery is meditated, said Orange and his companions, Egmont and Horn. It is not the abolition of the Inquisition, but a rekindling of its fires on a still larger scale, that awaits us; and instead of a resurrection of Flemish liberty by the assembling of the States-General, it is the entire effacement of whatever traces of old rights still remain in these unhappy countries, and the establishment of naked despotism on the ruins of freedom by an armed force, that is contemplated. Of that these levies left Orange in no doubt. In the Council all three nobles expressed their disapprobation of the measure, as a rekindling of the flames of civil discord and sedition.

Every day new proofs of this were coming to light. The train-bands of the tyrant were gathering round the country, and the circle of its privileges and its liberties was contracting from one hour to another. The regent had no cause to complain of the lukewarmness of Egmont and Horn, whatever

suspicious she might entertain of Orange. The prince was now a Lutheran, and he had calmed the iconoclastic tumults all over Brabant, Holland, and Zealand, without staining his hands with a single drop of blood. The Counts Egmont and Horn were Romanists, and their suppression of the image-breakings in Flanders and Tournay had been marked by great severity towards the Reformers. Egmont showed himself an ardent partisan of the Government, and his proceedings spread terror through Flanders and Artois. Thousands of Protestants fled the country; their wives and families were left destitute; the public profession of the Reformed religion was forbidden, despite the Accord; and numbers of its adherents, including ministers, hanged.[4] The chief guilt of these cruelties rests with Egmont's secretary, Bakkerzeel, who had great influence over the count, and who, along with his chief, received his reward in due time from the Government they so zealously and unscrupulously served.

It was much after the same fashion that Tournay was pacified by Count Horn. Five-sixths

of the inhabitants of that important place were Calvinists; Horn, therefore, feared to forbid the public preachings. But no church and no spot inside the walls would Horn permit to be defiled by the Protestant worship; nevertheless, three places outside the gates were assigned for sermon. The eloquent Ambrose Wille, whom we have already met, was the preacher, and his congregation generally numbered from fifteen to twenty thousand hearers. Permission was at last given for the erection of churches on the three spots where the field-preaching had been held; and Councillor Taffen made what he judged an eminently reasonable proposal to the magistrates touching the cost of their erection. The Papists, he said, who were not more than a fourth of the citizens, retained all the old churches; the other three-fourths, who were Protestants, were compelled to build new ones, and in these circumstances he thought it only fair that the community should defray the expense of their erection. The Romanists exclaimed against the proposal. To be compelled to refrain from burning the heretics was much, but to be taxed for the support of heresy was an unheard-

of oppression. Money and materials, however, were forthcoming in abundance: the latter were somewhat too plentiful; fragments of broken images and demolished altars were lying about everywhere, and were freely but indiscreetly used by the Protestants in the erection of their new fabrics. The sight of the things which they had worshipped, built into the walls of a heretical temple, stung the Romanists to the quick as the last disgrace of their idols.

The levies of the regent were coming in rapidly, and as her soldiers increased her tone waxed the bolder. The Accord of the 25th of August, which was the charter of the Protestants, gave her but small concern. She had made it in her weakness with the intention of breaking it when she should be strong. She confiscated all the liberties the Reformed enjoyed under that arrangement. The sermons were forbidden, on the ridiculous pretext that, although the liberty of preaching had been conceded, that did not include the other exercises commonly practiced at the field assemblies, such as singing, praying, and

dispensing the Sacraments. Garrisons were placed by the regent in Tournay, in Valenciennes, and many other towns; the profession of the Reformed religion was suppressed in them; the Roman temples were re-opened, and the Popish rites restored in their former splendor.

The fall of Valenciennes as a Protestant city exerted so disastrous and decisive an influence upon the whole country, that it must detain us for a little while. In the end of the year 1566 -- the last year of peace which the Netherlands were to see for more than a generation -- the regent sent the truculent Noircarmes to demand that Valenciennes should open its gates to a garrison. Strongly fortified, Protestant to all but a fourth or sixth of its population, courageous and united, Valenciennes refused to admit the soldiers of Margaret. Her general thereupon declared it in a state of siege, and invested it with his troops. Its fate engaged the interest of the surrounding villages and distracts, and the peasants, armed with pitchforks, picks, and rusty muskets, assembling to the number of 3,000, marched to its relief. They were met by the troops

of Noircarmes, discomfited, and almost exterminated. Another company also marching to its assistance met a similar fate. Those who escaped the slaughter took refuge in the church of Watrelots, only to be overtaken by a more dreadful death. The belfry, into which they had retreated, was set on fire, and the whole perished. These disasters, however, did not dispirit the besieged.

They made vigorous sallies, and kept the enemy at bay. To cut off all communication between the city and the surrounding country, and so reduce the besieged by famine, orders were given to the soldiers to lay the district waste. The villages were pillaged or burned, the inhabitants slaughtered in cold blood, or stripped naked in the dead of winter, or roasted alive over slow fires to amuse a brutal soldiery. Matrons and virgins were sold in public auction at tuck of drum. While these horrible butcheries were being enacted outside Valenciennes, Noircarmes was drawing his lines closer about the city. In answer to a summons from Margaret, the inhabitants offered to surrender on certain conditions. These were indignantly rejected,

and Noircarmes now commenced to bombard Valenciennes. It was the morning of Palm-Sunday. The bells in the steeples were chiming the air to which the 22nd Psalm, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" as versified by Marot, was commonly sung. The boom of the cannon, the quaking of the houses, the toppling of the chimneys, mingling with the melancholy chimes of the steeples, and the wailings of the women and children in the streets, formed a scene depressing indeed, and which seems to have weighed down the spirits of the inhabitants into despair. The city sent to Noircarmes offering to surrender on the simple condition that it should not be sacked, and that the lives of the inhabitants should be spared. The general gave his promise only to break it. Noircarmes closed the gates when he had entered. The wealthy citizens he arrested; some hundreds were hanged, and others were sent to the stake.[5] There was no regular sack, but the soldiers were quartered on the inhabitants, and murdered and robbed as they had a mind. The elders and deacons and principal members of the Protestant congregation were put to death.[6] The two

Protestant preachers, Guido de Bray and Peregrine de la Grange, the eloquent Huguenot, made their escape, but being discovered they were brought back, cast into a filthy dungeon, and loaded with chains.

In their prison they were visited by the Countess of Reux, who asked them how they could eat and drink and sleep with so heavy a chain, and so terrible a fate in prospect. "My good cause," replied De Bray, "gives me a good conscience, and my good conscience gives me a good appetite." "My bread is sweeter, and my sleep sounder," he continued, "than that of my persecutors." "But your heavy irons?" interposed the countess. "It is guilt that makes a chain heavy," replied the prisoner, "innocence makes mine light. I glory in my chains, I account them my badges of honor, their clanking is to my ear as sweet music; it refreshes me like a psalm." [7]

They were sentenced to be hanged. When their fate was announced to them, says Brandt, "they received it as glad tidings, and prepared as

cheerfully to meet it as if they had been going to a wedding-feast." De Bray was careful to leave behind him the secret of his sound sleep in heavy irons and a filthy dungeon, that others in like circumstances might enjoy the same tranquillity. "A good conscience, a good conscience! " "Take care," said he to all those who had come to see him die, "Take care to do nothing against your conscience, otherwise you will have an executioner always at your heels, and a pandemonium burning within you." Peregrine de la Grange addressed the spectators from the ladder, "taking heaven and earth to witness that he died for no cause save that of having preached the pure Word of God." Guido do Bray kneeled on the scaffold to pray; but the executioner instantly raised him, and compelled him to take his place on the ladder. Standing with the rope round his neck he addressed the people, bidding them give all due reverence to the magistrate, and adhere to the Word of God, which he had purely preached. His discourse was stopped by the hangman suddenly throwing him off. At the instant a strange frenzy seized the soldiers that guarded the market-place. Breaking their ranks,

they ran about the town in great disorder, "nobody knowing what ailed them," firing off their muskets, and wounding and killing Papists and Protestants indiscriminately.[8]

We stand on the threshold of a second great era of persecution to the Church of the Netherlands. The horrors of this era, of which the scaffolds of these two learned and eloquent divines mark the commencement, were to be so awful that the sufferings of the past forty years would not be remembered. The severities that attended the fall of the powerful and Protestant Valenciennes discouraged the other cities; they looked to see the terrible Noircarmes and his soldiers arrive at their gates, offering the alternative of accepting a garrison, or enduring siege with its attendant miseries as witnessed in the case of Valenciennes. They made up their minds to submission in the hope of better days to come. If they could have read the future: if they had known that submission would deepen into slavery; that one terrible woe would depart only to make room for another more terrible, and that the despot of Spain, whose heart

bigotry had made hard as the nether millstone, would never cease emptying upon them the vials of his wrath, they would have chosen the bolder, which would also have been the better part. Had they accepted conflict, the hardest-fought fields would have been as nothing compared with the humiliations and inflictions that submission entailed upon them. Far better would it have been to have died with arms in their hands than with halters round their necks; far better would it have been to struggle with the foe in the breach or in the field, than to offer their limbs to the inquisitor's rack.

But the Flemings knew not the greatness of the crisis: their hearts fainted in the day of trial. The little city of Geneva had withstood single-handed the soldiers of the Duke of Savoy, and the threats of France and Spain: the powerful Provinces of Brabant and Flanders, with their numerous inhabitants, their strong and opulent cities, and their burghal militia, yielded at the first summons. Even Valenciennes surrendered while its walls were yet entire. The other cities seem to have been

conquered by the very name of Noircarmes. The Romanists themselves were astonished at the readiness and abjectness of the submission. "The capture of Valenciennes," wrote Noircarmes to Granvelle, "has worked a miracle. The other cities all come forth to meet me, putting the rope round their own neck." [9] It became a saying, "The governor has found the keys of all the rest of the cities at Valenciennes." [10] Cambray, Hasselt, Maseik, and Maestricht surrendered themselves, as did also Bois-le-Duc. The Reformed in Cambray had driven away the archbishop; now the archbishop returned, accompanied with a party of soldiers, and the Reformed fled in their turn. In the other towns, where hardly a single image had escaped the iconoclast tempest, the Romish worship was restored, and the Protestants were compelled to conform or leave the place. The Prince of Orange had hardly quitted Antwerp, where he had just succeeded in preventing an outbreak which threatened fearful destruction to property and life, when that commercial metropolis submitted its neck to the yoke which it seemed to have cast off with contempt, and returned to a faith

whose very symbols it had so recently trampled down as the mire in the streets. Antwerp was soon thereafter honored with a visit from the governor. Margaret signalled her coming by ordering the churches of the Protestants to be pulled down, their children to be re-baptised, and as many of the church-plunderers as could be discovered to be hanged. Her commands were zealously carried out by an obsequious magistracy,[11] It was truly melancholy to witness the sudden change which the Southern Netherlands underwent. Thousands might be seen hurrying from a shore where freedom and the arts had found a home for centuries, where proud cities had arisen, and whither were wafted with every tide the various riches of a world-wide commerce, leaving by their flight the arts to languish and commerce to die. But still more melancholy was it to see the men who remained casting themselves prostrate before altars they had so recently thrown down, and participating in rites which they had repudiated with abhorrence as magical and idolatrous.

Footnotes:

1. Grotius, *Annales*, lib. 1., p. 23. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 204, 205.
2. Hooft, p. 111. Strada, p. 268. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 206.
3. Letter of Morillon to Granvelle, 29th September, 1566, in Gachard, *Annal. Belg.*, 254 -- apud Motley, vol. 1., p. 284.
4. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 249.
5. Valenciennes MS. (Roman Catholic), quoted by Motley, vol. 1., p. 325.
6. Laval, vol. 3., p. 143.
7. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 250, 251.
8. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 251. Pontus Peyen MS. -- apud Motley, vol. 1., p. 325.
9. Gachard, Preface to William the Silent -- apud Motley, vol. 1., p. 326.
10. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 251.
11. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 254.

Chapter 13

The Council of Blood

"WHIRLWINDS from the terrible land of the South" -- in literal terms, edicts and soldiers from Spain -- were what might now be looked for. The land had been subjugated, but it had yet to be chastised. On every side the priests lifted up the head, the burghers hung theirs in shame. The psalm pealed forth at the field-preaching rose no longer on the breeze, the orison of monk came loud and clear instead; the gibbets were filled, the piles were re-lighted, and thousands were fleeing from a country which seemed only now to be opening the dark page of its history. The future in reserve for the Low Countries was not so closely locked up in the breast of the tyrant but that the Prince of Orange could read it. He saw into the heart and soul of Philip. He had studied him in his daily life; he had studied him in the statesmen and councillors who served him; he had studied him in his public policy; and he had studied him in those secret pages in which Philip had put on record, in the

depth of his own closet, the projects that he was revolving, and which, opened and read while Philip slept, by the spies which William had placed around him, were communicated to this watchful friend of his country's liberties; and all these several lines of observation had led him to one and the same conclusion, that it was Philip's settled purpose, to be pursued through a thousand windings, chicaneries, falsehoods, and solemn hypocrisies, to drag the leading nobles to the scaffold, to hang, burn, or bury alive every Protestant in the Low Countries, to put to death every one who should hesitate to yield absolute compliance with his will, and above the grave of a murdered nation to plant the twin fabrics of Spanish and Romish despotism. That these were the purposes which the tyrant harboured, and the events which the future would bring forth, unless means were found to prevent them, William was as sure as that the revolution of the hours brings at length the night.

Accordingly he invited Horn, Egmont, Hoogstraaten, and Count Louis to all interview at

Dendermonde, in order to concert the measures which it might be advisable to take when the storm, with which the air was already thick, should burst. The sight of Egmont and the other nobles unhappily was not so clear as that of William, and they refused to believe that the danger was so great as the prince represented. Count Egmont, who was not yet disenthralled from the spell of the court, nor fated ever to be till he should arrive at the scaffold, said that "far from taking part in any measure offensive to the king, he looked upon every such measure as equally imprudent and undutiful." This was decisive. These three seigniors must act in concert or not at all. Combined, they might have hoped to make head against Philip; singly, they could accomplish nothing -- -nay, in all likelihood would be crushed. The Prince of Orange resigned all his offices into the hands of the regent, and retired with his family to his ancestral estate of Nassau in Germany, there to await events. Before leaving, however, he warned Count Egmont of the fate that awaited him should he remain in Flanders. "You are the bridge," said he, "by which the Spanish army will pass into the Netherlands, and

no sooner shall they have passed it than they will break it down." [1] The warning was unheeded. The two friends tenderly embraced, and parted to meet no more on earth.

No sooner was William gone (April, 1567) than a cloud of woes descended upon the Netherlands. The disciples of the Reformation fled as best they could from Amsterdam, and a garrison entered it. At Horn, Clement Martin preached his farewell sermon a month after the departure of William, and next day he and his colleague were expelled the town. About the same time the Protestants of Enkhuizen heard their last sermon in the open air. Assemblies were held over-night in the houses of certain of the burghers, but these too were discontinued in no long time. A deep silence -- "a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord" -- fell upon the land. The ministers were chased from many of the cities. The meetings held in out-of-the-way places were surprised by the soldiers; of those present at them some were cut in pieces or shot down on the spot, and others were seized and carried off to the gallows. It was the special delight

of the persecutors to apprehend and hang or behead the members of the consistories. "Thus," says Brandt, "the gallows were filled with carcasses, and Germany with exiles." The minister of Cambray first had his hand cut off, and was then hanged. At Oudenard and other towns the same fate was inflicted on the pastors. Monks, who had ceased to count beads and become heralds of the glorious Gospel rather than return to the cloister, were content to rot in dungeons or die on scaffolds. Some villages furnished as many as a hundred, and others three hundred victims.[2] A citizen of Bommel, Hubert Selkart by name, had the courage to take a Bible to the market-place, and disprove the errors of Popery in presence of the people assembled there. A night or two thereafter he was put into a sack and thrown into the river Wael. There were no more Scripture expositions in the marketplace of Bommel. All the Protestant churches in course of erection were demolished, and their timbers taken for gallows to hang their builders. Two young gentlewomen of the Province of Over-Issel were sentenced to the fire. One of the sisters was induced to abjure on a promise of

mercy. She thought she had saved her life by her abjuration, whereas the mercy of the placards meant only an easier death. When the day of execution arrived, the two sisters, who had not seen each other since they received their sentence, were brought forth together upon the scaffold. For the one who remained steadfast a stake had been prepared; the other saw with horror a coffin, half filled with sand, waiting to receive her corpse as soon as the axe should have severed her head from her body. "This," said the strong sister to the weak one, "this is all you have gained by denying Him before whom you are within an hour to appear." Conscience-stricken she fell upon her knees, and with strong cries besought pardon for her great sin. Then rising up -- a sudden calm succeeding the sudden tempest -- she boldly declared herself a Protestant. The executioner, fearing the effect of her words upon the spectators, instantly stopped her by putting a gag into her mouth, and then he bound her to the same stake with her sister. A moment before, it seemed as if the two were to be parted for ever; but now death, which divides others, had united them in the bonds of an eternal

fellowship:[3] they were sisters evermore.

As regarded the Netherlands, one would have thought that their cup of suffering was already full; but not so thought Philip. New and more terrible severities were in course of preparation at Madrid for the unhappy Provinces.

The King of Spain, after repeated deliberations in his council, resolved to send a powerful army under the command of the Duke of Alva, to chastise those turbulent citizens whom he had too long treated with gentleness, and exact a full measure of vengeance for that outbreak in which they had discovered an equal contempt for the true religion and the royal authority.

The Duke of Alva, setting sail from Carthagená (May 10th, 1567), landed in the north of Italy, and repairing to Asti, there assembled under his standard about 10,000 picked soldiers from the army in Italy, consisting of 8,700 foot and 1,200 cavalry.[4] He now set out at the head of this host to avenge the insulted majesty of Rome and Spain,

by drowning Netherland heresy in the blood of its professors. It was a holy war: those against whom it was to be waged were more execrable than Jews or Saracens: they were also greatly richer. The wealth of the world was treasured up in the cities of the Netherlands, and their gates once forced, a stream of gold would be poured into the coffers of Spain, now beginning to be partially depleted by the many costly enterprises of Philip.

A fitter instrument for the dreadful work which Philip had now in hand than the Duke of Alva, it would have been impossible to find in all Europe. A daring and able soldier, Alva was a very great favourite with the Emperor Charles V., under whom he had served in both Europe and Africa, and some of the more brilliant of the victories that were gained by the armies of Charles were owing to his unquestionable ability, but somewhat headlong courage. He had warred against both the Turks and Lutherans, and of the two it is likely that the latter were the objects of his greatest aversion and deepest hatred. He was now sixty, but his years had neither impaired the rigour of his body nor

quenched the fire of his spirit.

In person he was thin and tall, with small head, leathern face, twinkling eyes, and silvery beard.[5] He was cool, patient, cruel, selfish, vindictive, and though not greedy of wine and the pleasures to which it often incites, was inflamed with a most insatiable greed of gold.

Haughty and over-bearing, he could not tolerate a rival, and the zeal he afterwards showed in dragging Count Egmont to the scaffold is thought to have been inspired, in part at least, by the renown Egmont had acquired over the first generals of France, and which had thrown Alva somewhat into the shade, being compelled to occupy an inglorious position in the north of Italy, while his rival was distinguishing himself on a far more conspicuous theater. But the master-passion of this man's soul was a ferocious fanaticism. Cruel by nature, he had become yet more cruel by bigotry. This overbearing passion had heated his instincts, and crazed his judgment, till in stealthy bloodthirstiness he had ceased to be the man, and

become the tiger.

As was the general, so were the soldiers. The Duke of Alva was, in fact, leading an army of Alvas across the Alps. Their courage had been hardened and their skill perfected in various climes, and in numerous campaigns and battles; they were haughty, stern, and cruel beyond the ordinary measure of Spanish soldiers. Deeming themselves Champions of the Cross, the holy war in which they were fighting not only warranted, but even sanctified in their eyes, the indulgence of the most vindictive and sanguinary passions against those men whom they were marching to attack, and whom they held to be worthy of death in the most terrible form in which they could possibly inflict it.

Climbing the steep sides of Mont Cenis, the duke himself leading the van, this invading host gained the summit of the pass. From this point, where nothing is visible save the little circular lake that fills the crater of a now exhausted volcano, and the naked peaks that environ it, the Spaniards descended through the narrow and sublime gorges

of the mountains to Savoy. Continuing. their march, they passed on through Burgundy and Lorraine,[6] attended by two armies of observation, the French on this side and the Swiss on that, to see that they kept the straight road. Their march resembled the progress of the boa-constrictor, which, resting its successive coils upon the same spot, moves its glittering but deadly body forwards.

Where the van-guard had encamped this night, the main body of the army was to halt the next, and the rear the night following. Thus this Apollyon host went onward.

It was the middle of August when the Spaniards arrived at the frontier of the Low Countries. They found the gates open, and their entrance unopposed. Those who would have suffered the invaders to enter only over their dead bodies were in their graves; the nobles were divided or indifferent; the cities were paralysed by the triumph of the royal arms at Valenciennes; thousands, at the first rising of the tempest, had retreated into the Church of Rome as into a harbour

of safety; tameness and terror reigned throughout the country, and thus the powerful Netherlands permitted Philip to put his chain upon its neck without striking a blow. The only principle which could have averted the humiliation of the present hour, and the miseries of the long years to come, had meanwhile been smitten down.

Cantoning his soldiers in the chief cities, the Duke of Alva in the end of August took up his residence in Brussels, Count Egmont riding by his side as he entered the gates of the Belgian capital. He soon showed that he had arrived with a plenitude of power; that, in fact, he was king. Margaret felt her authority over-topped by the higher authority of the duke, and resigned her office as regent. She accompanied her retirement with a piece of advice to her brother, which was to the effect that if the measures that she feared were in contemplation should be carried out, the result would be the ruin of the Netherlands. Although Philip had been as sure of the issue as Margaret was, he would have gone forward all the same. Meanwhile his representative, without a moment's

delay, opened his career of tyranny and blood. His first act was to arrest the Counts Egmont and Horn, and in manner as crafty as the deed was cruel, he invited them to his house on pretense of consulting with them respecting a citadel which he meant to erect at Antwerp. When the invitation reached these noblemen, they were seated at a banquet given by the Prior of the Knights of St. John. "Take the fleetest horse in your stable," whispered the prior in the ear of Egmont, "and flee from this place." The infatuated nobleman, instead of making his escape, went straight to the palace of the duke. After the business of the citadel had been discussed, the two counts were conducted into separate rooms. "Count Egmont," said the captain of the duke's guard, "deliver your sword; it is the will of the king." Egmont made a motion as if he would flee. A door was thrown open, and he was shown the next apartment filled with Spanish musketeers. Resistance was vain.

The count gave up his sword, saying, "By this sword the cause of the king has been oftener than once successfully defended." [7] He was conducted

up-stairs to a temporary prison; the windows were closed; the walls were hung in black, and lights were burned in it night and day -- a sad presage of the yet gloomier fate that awaited him. Count Horn was treated in a precisely similar way. At the end of fourteen days the two noblemen were conducted, under a strong guard, to the Castle of Ghent. At the same time two other important arrests were made -- Bakkerzeel, the secretary of Egmont; and Straalen, the wealthy Burgomaster of Antwerp.[8]

These arrests spread terror over the whole country. They convinced Romanists equally with Protestants that the policy to be pursued was one of indiscriminate oppression and violence. Count Egmont had of late been, to say the least, no lukewarm friend of the Government; his secretary, Bakkerzeel, had signalled his zeal against Protestantism by spilling Protestant blood, yet now both of these men were on the road to the scaffold. The very terror of Alva's name, before he came, had driven from the Low Countries 100,000 of their inhabitants. The dread inspired by the arrests

now made compelled 20,000 more to flee. The weavers of Bruges and Ghent carried to England their art of cloth-making, and those of Antwerp that of the silk manufacture. Nor was it the disciples of the Reformation only that sought asylum beyond seas. Thomas Tillius forsook his rich Abbey of St. Bernard, in the neighbourhood of Antwerp, and repaired to the Duchy of Cleves. There he threw off his frock, married, and afterwards became pastor, first at Haarlem, and next at Delft.[9]

Every day a deeper gulf opened to the Netherlands. The death of the two Flemish envoys, the Marquis of Berghen and the Baron de Montigny, was immediately consequent on the departure of the duke for the Low Countries. The precise means and manner of their destruction can now never be known, but occurring at this moment, it combined with the imprisonment of Egmont and Horn in prognosticating times of more than usual calamity. The next measure of Alva was to erect a new tribunal, to which he gave the name of the "Council of Tumults," but which came to be known, and ever will be known in history, by the

more dreadful appellation of the "Council of Blood." Its erection meant the overthrow of every other institution. It proscribed all the ancient charters of the Netherlands, with the rights and liberties in which they vested the citizens.

The Council of Tumults assumed absolute and sole jurisdiction in all matters growing out of the late troubles, in opposition to all other law, jurisdiction, and authority whatsoever. Its work was to search after and punish all heretics and traitors. It set about its work by first defining what that treason was which it was to punish. This tribunal declared that "it was treason against the Divine and human Majesties to subscribe and present any petition against the new bishops, the Inquisition, or the placards; as also to suffer or allow the exercise of the new religion, let the occasion or necessity be what it would." [10] Further, it was treason not to have opposed the image-breaking; it was treason not to have opposed the field-preachings; it was treason not to have opposed the presenting of the petition of the Confederate nobles; in fine, it was treason to have

said or thought that the Tribunal of Tumults was obliged to conform itself to the ancient charters and privileges, or "to have asserted or insinuated that the king had no right to take away all the privileges of these Provinces if he thought fit, or that he was not discharged from all his oaths and promises of pardon, seeing all the inhabitants had been guilty of a crime, either of omission or of commission." In short, the King of Spain, in this fulmination, declared that all the inhabitants of the Low Countries were guilty of treason, and had incurred the penalty of death. Or as one of the judges of this tremendous tribunal, with memorable simplicity and pithiness, put it, "the heretical inhabitants broke into the churches, and the orthodox inhabitants did nothing to hinder it, therefore they ought all of them to be hanged together." [11]

The Council of Blood consisted of twelve judges; the majority were Spaniards, and the rest fast friends of the Spanish interest. The duke himself was president. Under the duke, and occupying his place in his absence, was Vargas, a Spanish lawyer. Vargas was renowned among his

countrymen as a man of insatiable greed and measureless cruelty. He it was who proposed the compendious settlement of the Netherlands question to which we have just referred, namely, that of hanging all the inhabitants on one gallows. "The gangrene of the Netherlands," said the Spaniards, "has need of a sharp knife, and such is Vargas." [12] This man was well mated with another Spaniard nearly as cruel and altogether as unscrupulous, Del Rio. This council pronounced what sentences it pleased, and it permitted no appeal.

It would be both wearisome and disgusting to follow these men, step by step, in their path of blood. Their council-chamber resembled nothing so much as the lair of a wild beast, with its precincts covered with the remains of victims. It was simply a den of murder; and one could see in imagination all its approaches and avenues soaked in gore and strewn with the mangled carcasses of men, women, and children. The subject is a horrible one, upon which it is not at all pleasant to dwell.

All was now ready; Alva had erected his Council of Blood, he had distributed his soldiers over the country in such formidable bodies as to overawe the inhabitants, he was erecting a citadel at Antwerp, forts in other places, and compelling the citizens to defray the cost of the instruments of their oppression; and now the Low Countries, renowned in former days for the mildness of their government and the happiness of their people, became literally an Aceldama. We shall permit the historian Brandt to summarise the horrors with which the land was now overspread.

"There was nothing now," says he, "but imprisoning and racking of all ages, sexes, and conditions of people, and oftentimes too without any previous accusation against them. Infinite numbers (and they not of the Religion neither) that had been but once or twice to hear a sermon among the Reformed, were put to death for it. The gallows, says the Heer Hooft in his history, the wheels, stakes, and trees in the highways were loaden with carcasses or limbs of such as had been

hanged, beheaded, or roasted, so that the air which God had made for the respiration of the living, was now become the common grave or habitation of the dead. Every day produced fresh objects of pity and mourning, and the noise of the bloody passing-bell was continually heard, which by the martyrdom of this man's cousin, or t' other's friend or brother, rung dismal peals in the hearts of the survivors. Of banishment of persons and confiscations of goods there was no end; it was no matter whether they had real or personal estates, free or entailed, all was seized upon without regarding the claims of creditors or others, to the unspeakable prejudice both of rich and poor, of convents, hospitals, widows and orphans, who were by knavish evasions deprived of their incomes for many years." [13]

Bales of denunciations were sent in. These were too voluminous to be read by Alva or Vargas, and were remitted to the other councils, that still retained a nominal existence, to be read and reported on. They knew the sort of report that was expected from them, and took care not to

disappoint the expectations of the men of the Blood Council. With sharp reiterated knell came the words, "Guilty: the gallows." If by a rare chance the accused was said to be innocent, the report was sent back to be amended: the recommendation to death was always carried out within forty-eight hours. This bloody harvest was gathered all over the country, every town, village, and hamlet furnishing its group of victims. To-day it is Valenciennes that yields a batch of eighty-four for the stake and the gallows; a few days thereafter, a miscellaneous crowd, amounting to ninety-five, are brought in from different places in Flanders, and handed over by the Blood Council to the scaffold; next day, forty-six of the inhabitants of Malines are condemned to die; no sooner are they disposed of than another crowd of thirty-five, collected from various localities by the sleuth-hounds of the Blood Council, are ready for the fire. Thus the horrible work of atrocity went on, prosecuted with unceasing rigour and a zeal that was truly awful.

Shrovetide (1568) was approaching. The inhabitants of the Netherlands, like those of all

Popish countries, were wont to pass this night in rejoicings. Alva resolved that its songs should be turned into howlings. While the citizens should be making merry, he would throw his net over all who were known to have ever been at a field-preaching, and prepare a holocaust of some thousand heads fittingly to celebrate the close of "Holy Week." At midnight his myrmidons were sent forth; they burst open the doors of all suspected persons, and dragging them from their beds, hauled them to prison. The number of arrests, however, did not answer Alva's expectations; some had got timely warning and had made their escape; those who remained, having but little heart to rejoice, were not so much off their guard, nor so easy a prey, as the officers expected to find them. Alva had enclosed only 500 disciples or favourers of the Gospel in his net -- too many, alas! for such a fate, but too few for the vast desires of the persecuter. They were, of course, ordered to the scaffold.[14]

Terror was chasing away the inhabitants in thousands. An edict was issued threatening severe penalties against all carriers and ship-masters who

should aid any subject of the Netherlands to escape, but it was quite ineffectual in checking the emigration; the cities were becoming empty, and the land comparatively depopulated. Nevertheless, the persecution went on with unrelenting fury. Even Viglius counselled a little lenity; the Pope, it is said, alarmed at the issue to which matters were tending, was not indisposed to moderation. Such advisers ought to have had weight with the King of Spain, but Philip refused to listen even to them. Vargas, whom he consulted, declared, of course, for a continuance of the persecution, telling his sovereign that in the Netherlands he had found a second Indies, where the gold was to be had without even the trouble of digging for it, so numerous were the confiscations. Thus avarice came to the aid of bigotry.

Philip next submitted a "Memorial and Representation" of the state of the Low Countries to the Spanish Inquisition, craving the judgment of the Fathers upon it. After deliberating, the inquisitors pronounced their decision on the 16th of February, 1568. It was to the effect that, "with the

exception of a select list of names which had been handed to them, all the inhabitants of the Netherlands were heretics or abettors of heresy, and so had been guilty of the crime of high treason." On the 26th of the same month, Philip confirmed this sentence by a royal proclamation, in which he commanded the decree to be carried into immediate execution, without favor or respect of persons. The King of Spain actually passed sentence of death upon a whole nation. We behold him erecting a common scaffold for its execution, and digging one vast grave for all the men, and women, and children of the Low Countries. "Since the beginning of the world," says Brandt, "men have not seen or heard any parallel to this horrible sentence." [15]

Footnotes:

1. Strada, bk. 6., p. 286.
2. Meteren, vol. 2., f. 45.
3. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 257.
4. Strada. bk. 6., p. 29.
5. Badovaro MS. -- apud Motley, vol. 1, p. 339.

6. Strada, bk. 6., p. 30. Le Clerq, Hist. des Provinces Unies des Pays Bas, tom. 1., livr. 2., p. 13; Amsterdam, 1723.
7. Strada
8. Bentivoglio, lib. 2., cap. 3, pp. 50, 51. Hooft, vol. 4., pp. 150, 151. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 260.
9. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 260.
10. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 260. Meteren, lib. 3., p. 66.
11. Ibid., vol. 1., p. 261.
12. Le Clerq. Hist. des Provinces Unies, etc., tom. 1., livr. 2., p. 14.
13. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 261.
14. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 263.
15. Ibid., p. 266.

Chapter 14

William Unfurls his Standard Execution of Egmont and Horn

THE Prince of Orange had fled from the Netherlands, as we have already seen, and retired to his patrimonial estates of Nassau. Early in the year 1568 the Duke of Alva cited him to appear before the Council of Blood. It was promised that the greatest lenity would be shown him, should he obey the summons, but William was far too sagacious to walk into this trap. His brother Louis of Nassau, his brother-in-law Count van den Berg, and the Counts Hoogstraaten and Culemborg were summoned at the same time; thrice fourteen days were allowed them for putting in an appearance; should they fail to obey, they were, at the expiration of that period, to incur forfeiture of their estates and perpetual banishment. It is needless to say that these noblemen did not respond to Alva's citation, and, as a matter of course, their estates

were confiscated, and sentence of banishment was recorded against them.

Had they succeeded in ensnaring William of Orange, the joy of Philip and Alva would have been unbounded. His sagacity, his strength of character, and his influence with his countrymen, made his capture of more importance to the success of their designs than that of all the rest of the Flemish nobility. Their mortification, when they found that he had escaped them, was therefore extreme. His figure rose menacingly before them in their closets; he disturbed all their calculations; for while this sagacious and dauntless friend of his country's liberties was at large, they could not be sure of retaining their hold on the Netherlands, their prey might any day be wrested from them. But though his person had escaped them, his property was within their reach, and now his numerous estates in France and the Low Countries were confiscated, their revenues appropriated for the uses of Philip, and his eldest son, Count van Buren, a lad of thirteen, and at the time a student in the University of Louvain, was seized as a hostage

and carried off to Spain.

There was but one man to whom the inhabitants, in the midst of their ever-accumulating misery and despair, could look with the smallest hope of deliverance. That was the man whom we have just seen stripped of his property and declared an outlaw. The eyes of the exiles abroad were also turned to William of Orange. He began to be earnestly importuned by the refugees in England, in Germany, in Cleves and other parts, to unfurl the standard and strike for his country's liberation. William wished to defer the enterprise in the hope of seeing Spain involved in war with some other nation, when it would be more easy to compel her to let go her hold upon the unhappy Netherlands. But the exiles were importunate, for their numbers were being daily swelled by the new horrors that were continually darkening their native country. William therefore resolved to delay no longer, but instantly to gird himself in obedience to the cry from so many countries, and the yet louder cry, though expressed only in groans, that was coming to him from the Netherlands.

His first care was to raise the necessary funds and soldiers. He could not begin the war with a less sum in hand than two hundred thousand florins. The cities of Antwerp, Haarlem, Amsterdam, and others contributed one-half of that sum; the refugee merchants in London and elsewhere subscribed largely. His brother, Count John of Nassau, gave a considerable sum; and the prince himself completed the amount needed by the sale of his plate, furniture, tapestry, and jewels, which were of great value. In this way were the funds provided.

For troops the chief reliance of William was on the Protestant princes of Germany. He represented to them the danger with which their own prosperity and liberties would be menaced, should the Netherlands be occupied by the Spaniards, and their trade destroyed by the foreign occupation of the sea-board, and the conversion of its great commercial cities into camps. The German princes were not insensible to these considerations, and not only did they advance him sums of money they winked at his levying recruits within their

territories. He reckoned, too, on receiving help from the Huguenots of France; nor would the Protestant Queen of England, he trusted, be lacking to him at this crisis. He could confidently reckon on the Flemish refugees scattered all over the northern countries of Europe. They had been warriors as well as traders in their own country, and he could rely on their swelling his ranks with brave and patriotic soldiers. With these resources -- how diminutive when compared with the treasures and the armies of that Power to which he was throwing down the gage of battle! -- -William resolved on beginning his great struggle.

By a fiction of loyalty this war against the king was made in the name of the king. William unfurled his standard to drive out the Spaniards from Philip's dominions of the Netherlands, in order that he might serve the interests of the king by saving the land from utter desolation, the inhabitants from dire slavery, the charters and privileges from extinction, and religion from utter overthrow. He gave a commission to his brother, dated Dillenburg, 6th April, 1568, to levy troops

for the war to be waged for these objects. Louis of Nassau was one of the best soldiers of the age, and had the cause as much at heart as the prince himself. The count was successful in raising levies in the north of Germany. The motto of his arms was "The freedom of the nation and of conscience," and blazoned on his banners were the words "Victory or death." [1]

Besides the soldiers recruited in the north of Germany by Count Louis, levies had been raised in France and in the Duchy of Cleves, and it was arranged that the liberating army should enter the Netherlands at four points. One division was to march from the south and enter by Artois; a second was to descend along the Meuse from the east; Count Louis was to attack on the north; and the prince himself, at the head of the main body of liberators, was to strike at the heart of the Netherlands by occupying Brabant. The attacking forces on the south and east were repulsed with great slaughter; but the attack on the north under Count Louis was signally successful.

On the 24th April, 1568, the count entered the Provinces and advanced to Dam, on the shores of the Bay of Dollart, the site of thirty-three villages till drowned in a mighty inundation of the ocean. Troops of volunteers were daily joining his standard. Here Count Aremberg, who had been sent by Alva with a body of Spanish and Sardinian troops to oppose him, joined battle with him. The Count of Nassau's little army was strongly posted.

On the right was placed his cavalry, under the command of his brother Count Adolphus. On the left his main army was defended by a hill, on which he had planted a strong band of musketeers. A wood and the walls of a convent guarded his rear; while in front stretched a morass full of pits from which peat had been dug. When the Spaniards came in sight of the enemy drawn up in two little squares on the eminence, they were impatient to begin battle, deeming it impossible that raw levies could withstand them for a moment. Their leader, who knew the nature of the ground, strove to restrain their ardor, but in vain; accusations of treachery and cowardice were hurled at him. "Let

us march," said Aremberg, his anger kindled, "not to victory, but to be overcome." The soldiers rushed into the swamp, but though now sensible of their error, they could not retreat, the front ranks being pushed forward by those in the rear, till they were fairly under the enemy's fire. Seeing the Spaniards entangled in the mud, Count Louis attacked them in front, while his brother broke in upon their flank with the cavalry. The musketeers poured in their shot upon them, and one of the squares of foot wheeling round the base of the hill took them in the rear; thus assailed on all sides, and unable to resist, the Spanish host was cut in pieces. Both Adolphus, brother of Louis of Nassau, and Aremberg, the leader of the Spaniards, fell in the battle. The artillery, baggage, and military chest of the Spaniards became the booty of the conquerors.[2]

This issue of the affair was a great blow to Alva. He knew the effect which the prestige of a first victory was sure to have in favor of William. He therefore hastened his measures that he might march against the enemy and inflict on him

summary vengeance for having defeated the veteran soldiers of Spain. The first burst of the tyrant's rage fell, however, not on the patriot army, but on those unhappy persons who were in prison at Brussels. Nineteen Confederate noblemen, who had been condemned for high treason by the Council of Blood, were ordered by Alva for immediate execution. They were all beheaded in the horse-market of Brussels. Eight died as Roman Catholics, and their bodies received Christian burial; the remaining eleven professed the Reformed faith, and their heads stuck on poles, and their bodies fastened to stakes, were left to moulder in the fields.[3] The next day four gentlemen suffered the same fate. Count Culemborg's house at Brussels was razed to the ground, and in the center of the desolated site a placard was set up, announcing that the ill-omened spot had been made an execration because the great "Beggar Confederacy" against king and Church had been concocted here. These minor tragedies but heralded a greater one.

The last hours of Counts Egmont and Horn

were now come. They had lain nine months in the Castle of Ghent, and conscious of entire loyalty to the king, they had not for a moment apprehended a fatal issue to their cause; but both Philip and Alva had from the first determined that they should die. The secretary of Egmont, Bakkerzeel, was subjected to the torture, in the hope of extorting from him condemnatory matter against his master.

His tormentors, however, failed to extract anything from him which they could use against Egmont, whereat Alva was so enraged that he ordered the miserable man to be pulled in pieces by wild horses. The condemnation of the unfortunate noblemen was proceeded with all the same. They were brought from Ghent to Brussels under a strong escort. Alva, faking up one of the blank slips with Philip's signature, of which he had brought a chestful from Spain, drafted upon it the sentence of Egmont, condemning him to be beheaded as a traitor. The same formality was gone through against Count Horn. The main accusation against these noblemen was, that they had been privy to the Confederacy, which had been formed to oppose

the introduction of the Inquisition and edicts; and that they had met with the Prince of Orange at Dendermonde, to deliberate about opposing the entrance of the king's army into the Netherlands. They knew indeed of the Confederacy, but they had not been members of it; and as regarded the conference at Dendermonde, they had been present at that meeting, but they had, as our readers will remember, disapproved and opposed the proposition of Louis of Nassau to unite their endeavours against the entrance of the Spanish troops into Flanders. But innocence or guilt were really of no account to the Blood Council, when it had fixed on the victim to be sacrificed. The two counts were roused from sleep at midnight, to have the sentence of death intimated to them by the Bishop of Ypres.

At eleven o'clock of the following day (5th of May) they were led to execution. The scaffold had been erected in the center of the great square of Brussels, standing hard by if not on the identical spot where the stake of the first martyrs of the Reformation in the Netherlands had been set up. It

was covered with black cloth; nineteen companies of soldiers kept guard around it; a vast assembly occupied the space beyond, and the windows of the houses were crowded with spectators, among whom was Alva himself, who had come to witness the tragedy of his own ordering. Count Egmont was the first to ascend the scaffold, accompanied by the Bishop of Ypres.

He had walked thither, reciting the 51st Psalm: "In the multitude of thy compassions, O God, blot out all mine iniquities," etc. He conducted himself with dignity upon the scaffold. It was vain to think of addressing the spectators; those he wished to reach were too far off to hear him, and his words would have fallen only on the ears of the Spanish soldiers. After a few minutes' conversation with the bishop, who presented him with a silver cross to kiss, and gave him his benediction, the count put off his black mantle and robe of red damask, and taking the Cross of the Golden Fleece from his neck, he knelt down and put his head on the block. Joining his hands as if in the act of supplication, he cried aloud, "O Lord, into thy hands I commit my

spirit." Thereupon the executioner emerged from underneath the scaffold, where till that moment he had been concealed, and at one blow severed his head from his body.

Count Horn was next led upon the scaffold. He inquired whether Egmont were already dead. His eye was directed to a black cloth, which had been hastily thrown over the trunk and severed head of that nobleman, and he was told that the remains of Egmont were underneath. "We have not met each other," he observed, "since the day we were apprehended." The crucifix presented to him he did not kiss; but he kneeled on the scaffold to pray. His devotions ended, he rose up, laid his head on the block, and uttering in Latin the same exclamation which Egmont had used, he received the stroke of the sword. The heads of the two counts were stuck up on iron poles on the scaffold, between burning torches, and exhibited till late in the afternoon. This horrible deed very much deepened the detestation and abhorrence in which both Philip and Alva were held by the Netherlanders.[4]

The dismal tragedy ended, Alva was at liberty to turn his attention to the war. He set out from Brussels with an army of 12,000 foot and 3,000 horse to meet Louis of Nassau. He came up with him (14th of July, 1568) in the neighborhood of Groningen. On the approach of the duke, Count Louis retreated to the small town of Gemmingen on the Ems, where he encamped. His position was not unlike that in which he had joined battle with Aremberg, being strongly defended by morasses and swamps. The soldiers under him were somewhat inferior in numbers, but far more inferior in discipline, to the troops led by Alva. But Count Louis was more in want of money than men. The pay of his soldiers was greatly in arrear, and when they saw the Spaniards approach, and knew that a battle was imminent, they refused to fight till first their arrears had been paid.

Intelligence of this mutinous disposition was duly carried to Alva by spies, and he accordingly chose that moment to attack. Count Louis and the Flemish exiles fought bravely, but deserted by the German mutineers, they were compelled at last to

retreat. The Spanish army rushed into the camp; most of the Germans who had refused to fight were put to the sword; Count Louis, with the remains of his routed host, escaped across the river Ems, and soon thereafter, in company with Count Hoogstraaten, he set out for Germany to join his brother, the Prince of Orange.[5]

Footnotes:

1. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 267.
2. Bentivoglio, lib. 2., cap. 3, p. 52. Strada, lib. 7. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 267.
3. Strada, lib. 7.
4. Strada, lib. 7. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 267.
5. Strada, lib. 7. Watson, Philip II., vol. 1., pp. 329, 330.

Chapter 15

Failure of William's First Campaign

FROM the battle-field of Gemmingen, Alva went on his way by Amsterdam and Utrecht and Bois-le-Duc to Brussels, instituting inquiries in every district through which he passed, touching those of the inhabitants who had been concerned in the late tumults, and leaving his track marked throughout by halts and stakes. At Bois-le-Duc he passed sentence on sixty refugees whom he found in that town, sending some to the gallows and others to the fire. Some noblemen and councillors of Utrecht were at the same time executed, and their estates confiscated. Many in those days perished for no other crime but that of being rich. A gentlewoman of eighty-four years, widow of Adam van Dieman, a former Burgomaster of Utrecht, and who had received under her roof for a single night the minister John Arentson, was sentenced to die. When the day

came, the executioner made her sit in a chair till he should strike off her head. Being a Romanist she knew that her great wealth had as much to do with her death as the night's lodging she had given the Reformed pastor, for when brought upon the scaffold she asked if there was no room for pardon. The officer answered, "None." "I know what you mean," replied the brave old lady; "the calf is fat, and must therefore be killed." Then turning to the executioner, and jesting playfully on her great age, which ought to have procured her respect and favor, she said, "I hope your sword, is sharp, for you will find my neck somewhat tough." The executioner struck, and her head fell.[1]

A month after (25th of September) the widow of Egbert van Broekhuissen, a wine merchant at Utrecht, was beheaded. Her sentence set forth that she had been at a conventicle, but it was strongly rumoured that her real offense was one on which the judicial record was silent. One of the commissioners of the Council of Blood was a customer of her husband's, and was said to be deep in his debt. It would seem that the judge took this

way of paying it, for when the effects of the widow were confiscated for the king's use, the ledger in which the debt was posted could not be found.[2] About the same time three persons were hanged at Haarlem. One of them had mutilated an image; another had been a soldier of Brederode's, the Confederate leader; the third had written a poem, styled the Echo, satirising the Pope. This man was the father of eight children, whose mother was dead. His own mother, a woman of eighty years, earnestly interceded that he might be spared for his children's sake. But no compassion could be shown him. His two companions had already been strangled; his own foot was on the ladder, when a sudden tumult arose round the scaffold. But the persecutors were not to be defrauded of their prey.

They hurried off their victim to the burgomaster's chamber; there they tied him to a ladder, and having strangled him, they hung up his corpse on the public gallows beside the other two. At Delft, Herman Schinkel, one of the lettered printers of those days, was condemned to die for having printed the "Psalm-book, the Catechism,

and the Confession of Faith," or short confession of the Christian doctrine from the Latin of Beza. He made a powerful defence before his judges, but of what avail was it for innocence and justice to plead before such a tribunal? He composed some verses in Latin on his death, which he sent to a friend. He wrote a letter to his infant son and daughters, breathing all the tenderness of a father; and then he yielded up his life.[3]

In Brabant and Flanders the persecution was still more severe. At Ghent, Giles de Meyer, the Reformed pastor, was condemned to the gallows. But the Spaniards who lay there in garrison, deeming this too good a death for the heretical preacher, changed it to one more befitting his demerits.

Putting a gag into his mouth, and throwing him in, bound hand and foot, among a stack of faggots, they set fire to the heap and burned him. Meyer was one of four ministers who all sealed their doctrine with their blood in the same diocese. In the towns and villages around Ghent, men and

women were being every day hanged -- some simply for having taught children to sing psalms; others for having two years before given the use of their barns for sermon. At Bois-le-Duc, on the 28th of August, 1568, 116 men and three women were cited by toll of bell. Every few days a little batch of prisoners were brought forth, and distributed between the gallows and the block, on no principle that one can see, save the caprice or whim of the executioners. Thus the altars of persecution continually smoked; and strangled bodies and headless trunks were perpetually before the eyes of the miserable inhabitants.

Peter van Kulen, a goldsmith by trade, and an elder of the congregation at Breda, was thrown into prison. He had a maid-servant, a fellow-disciple of the same Lord and Master, who ministered to him in his bonds. She brought him his daily meal in the prison; but other Bread, which the guards saw not, she also conveyed to him -- namely, that destined for the food of the soul; and many a sweet and refreshing repast did he enjoy in his dungeon. His faith and courage were thereby greatly

strengthened. This went on for nine months. At last the guards suspected that they had a greater heretic in the servant than in the master, and threw her also into prison. After two months both of them were condemned, and brought out to be burned. As, with cheerful and constant aspect, they were being led to the scaffold, some of their townswomen forced their way through the guards to take their last farewell of them. Van Kulen had the commiseration shown him of being first strangled, and then committed to the fire; but for his pious maid-servant the more pitiless doom was reserved of being burned alive. This woman continued to encourage her master so long as he was capable of understanding her; when her words could no longer be useful to him, she was heard by the bystanders, with invincible courage, magnifying the name of God in the midst of the flames.[4]

It was now that a more dreadful instrument than any which the quick invention of the persecutor had yet devised, was brought into play to prevent the martyrs speaking in their last moments. It was seen how memorable were words

spoken in circumstances so awful, and how deep they sank into the hearts of the hearers. It had been usual to put a wooden gag or ball into the mouth of the person to be burned, but the ball would roll out at times, and then the martyr would confess his faith and glorify God. To prevent this, the following dreadful contrivance was resorted to: two small bits of metal were screwed down upon the tongue; the tip of the tongue was then seared with a red-hot iron; instant swelling ensued, and the tongue could not again be drawn out of its enclosure. The pain of burning made it wriggle to and fro in the mouth, yielding "a hollow sound," says Brandt, "much like that of the brazen bull of the tyrant of Sicily."

"Arnold van Elp," continues the historian, "a man of known sincerity, relates that whilst he was a spectator of the martyrdom of some who were thus tongue-tied, he heard a friar among the crowd saying to his companion, 'Hark! how they sing: should they not dance too?'"[5]

From this horrible, though to Alva congenial,

work, the viceroy was called away by intelligence that William of Orange was approaching at the head of an army to invade Brabant. To open the gates of the Netherlands to his soldiers, William issued a manifesto, setting forth the causes of the war. "There was," he said, "no resource but arms, unless the ancient charters were to be utterly extinguished, and the country itself brought to ruin by a tyranny exercised, not by the king" (so he still affected to believe), "but by Spanish councillors in the king's name, and to the destruction of the king's interest." To avert this catastrophe was he now in arms. The cause, he affirmed, was that of every man in the Low Countries, and no Netherlander "could remain neutral in this struggle without becoming a traitor to his country." In this manifesto the prince made the first public announcement of that great change which his own religious sentiments had undergone. All that is noble in human character, and heroic in human achievement, must spring from some great truth realised in the soul. William of Orange gave a forecast of his future career -- his unselfish devotion, his unwearied toil, his inextinguishable

hope of his country -- when he avowed in this manifesto his conviction that the doctrines of the Reformed Church were more in accordance with the Word of God than were those of the Roman Church. This elevated the contest to a higher basis. Henceforward it was no longer for ancient Flemish charters alone, it was also for the rights of conscience; it allied itself with the great movement of the human soul for freedom.

The Prince of Orange, advancing from Germany, crossed the Rhine near Cologne, with an army, including horse and foot, not exceeding 20,000. The Spanish host was equal in numbers, but better furnished with military stores and provisions. William approached the banks of the Meuse, which he crossed, much to the dismay of Alva, by a bold expedient, to which Julius Caesar had had recourse in similar circumstances. He placed his cavalry in the river above the ford, and the force of the current being thus broken, the army was able to effect a passage. But Alva declined battle. He knew how slender were the finances of William, and that could he prolong the campaign

till the approach of winter, the prince would be under the necessity of disbanding his army. His tactics were completely successful.

Whichever way William turned, Alva followed him; always straitening him, and making it impossible for him to enter any fortified town, or to find provisions for his army in the open country. The autumn wore away in marches and counter-marches, Alva skilfully avoiding battle, and engaging only in slight skirmishes, which, barren of result to William, were profitable to the Spanish general, inasmuch as they helped to consume time. William had expected that Brabant and Flanders would rise at the sight of his standards, and shake off the Spanish yoke. Not a city opened its gates to him, or hoisted on its walls the flag of defiance to the tyrant.

At last both money and provisions failed him. Of the 300,000 guilders which the Flemish Protestants at home and abroad had undertaken to furnish towards the deliverance of the country, barely 12,000 were forthcoming. His soldiers

became mutinous, and the prince had no alternative but to lead back his army into Germany and there disband it. The Flemings lost far more than William did. The offer of freedom had come to their gates with the banners of William, but they failed to perceive the hour of their opportunity. With the retreating standards of the Deliverer liberty also departed, and Belgium sank down under the yoke of Spain and Rome.

The Duke of Alva was not a little elated at his success, and he set about rearing a monument which should perpetuate its fame to after-ages. He caused the cannon taken in the battle of Gemmingen to be melted, and a colossal bronze statue of himself to be cast and set up in the citadel of Antwerp. It pleased Alva to be represented in complete armor, trampling on two prostrate figures, which were variously interpreted, but from the petitions and axes which they held in their hands, and the symbolical devices of the Beggars hung round their necks, they were probably meant to denote the image-breaking Protestants and the Confederates. On the pedestal was the following

inscription in Latin: "To the most faithful minister of the best of kings, Ferdinand Alvarez, Duke of Alva, Governor of the Low Countries for Philip II., King of Spain, who, after having extinguished the tumults, expelled the rebels, restored religion, and executed justice, has established peace in the nation." A truly modest inscription! The duke, moreover, decreed himself a triumphal entry into Brussels, in the cathedral of which a Te Deum was sung for his victory.

Nor was this all. Pius V. sent a special ambassador from Rome to congratulate the conqueror, and to present him with a consecrated hat and sword, as the special champion of the Roman Catholic religion. The sword was richly set, being chased with gold and precious stones, and was presented to the duke by the hands of the Bishop of Mechlin, in church after the celebration of mass. The afternoon of the same day was devoted to a splendid tournament, the place selected for the spectacle being the same square in which the bloody tragedy of the execution of Counts Egmont and Horn had so recently been

enacted.[6]

It was in the midst of these troubles that the persecuted disciples of the Gospel in the Netherlands met to perfect the organisation of their Church. A synod or assembly was at this time held at Embden, at which Jasper von Heiden, then minister at Franken-deal, presided. At this synod rules were made for the holding of consistories or kirk-sessions, of classes or presbyteries, and synods. The first article of the constitution ordained for the Netherland Church was as follows: -- "No Church shall have or exercise dominion over another; no minister, elder, or deacon shall bear rule over another of the same degree; but every one shall beware of his attempting or giving the least cause of suspicion of his aiming at such dominion." "This article," says Brandt, "was levelled chiefly at the prelatie order of Rome, as also at the episcopacy established in some of the countries of the Reformation." The ministers assembled signed the Confession of Faith of the Church of the Netherlands, "as an evidence of their uniformity in doctrine;" as also the Confession of

the Churches of France, "to show their union and conformity with them." It was agreed that all the ministers then absent, and all who should thereafter be admitted to the office of the ministry, should be exhorted to subscribe these articles. It was also agreed that the Geneva catechism should be used in the French or Walloon congregations, and the Heidelberg catechism in those of the Dutch; but if it happened that any of the congregations made use of any other catechism agreeable to the Word of God, they were not to be required to change it.[7] While Alva was scattering and burning the Netherland Church, its members, regardless of the tyrant's fury, were linking themselves together in the bonds of a scriptural organisation. While his motto was "Raze, raze it," the foundations of that spiritual edifice were being laid deeper and its walls raised higher than before.

Footnotes:

1. Brandt, vol., 1., pp. 269, 270.
2. Ibid.
3. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 271.

4. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 275.
5. Ibid.
6. Strada, lib. 7. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 276.
7. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 294

Chapter 16

The "Beggars of the Sea" and Second Campaign of Orange

WILLIAM, Prince of Orange, having consecrated his life to the great struggle for the rights of conscience, carried the first offer of deliverance to Brabant. Had its great and powerful cities heartily entered into his spirit, and risen at the sound of the advancing steps of the deliverer, the issue would have been far different from what it was. But Brabant saw that the struggle must be tremendous, and, rather than gird itself for so terrible a fight, preferred to lie still ingloriously in its chains. Sad in heart William retired to a distance, to await what further openings it might please that great Power, to whose service he had consecrated himself, to present to him.

The night of horrors which had descended on the Low Countries continued to deepen. The triumph of Alva, instead of soothing him, made

him only the more intolerant and fierce. There came new and severer edicts from Spain; there were gathered yet greater crowds of innocent men for the gallows and the stake, and the out flowing tide from that doomed shore continued to roll on. A hundred thousand houses, it is thought, were now left empty. Their inmates transported their trade and handicrafts to other nations. Wives must not correspond with their exiled husbands; and should they venture to visit them in their foreign asylum, they must not return to their native land. The youth of Flanders were forbidden to go abroad to acquire a foreign tongue, or to learn a trade, or to study in any university save that of Rome.

The carelessness with which the trials of the Blood Council were conducted was shocking. Batches were sent off to the gallows, including some whose cause had not been tried at all. When such were inquired for to take their trial, and it was found that their names had been inserted in the death-list, and that they had been sent to the gallows -- a discovery which would have startled and discomposed most judges -- the news was

very coolly received by the men who constituted this terrible tribunal. Vargas on those occasions would console his fellow-judges by saying that "it was all the better for the souls of such that they were innocent."

One member of the Blood Council, John Hassels by name, was accustomed on the bench to sleep through the examinations of the prisoners, and, when awakened to give his vote, he would rub his eyes and exclaim, "To the gallows! to the gallows!"[1] In Valenciennes, in the space of three days, fifty-seven citizens of good position were beheaded. But Alva wanted more than their blood. He had boasted that he would make a stream of gold, three feet in depth, flow from the Netherlands to Spain, and he proceeded to make good his words. He imposed heavier subsidies upon the inhabitants. He demanded, first, the hundredth penny of every man's estate; secondly, the twentieth penny of all immovable property; and, thirdly, the tenth penny of all movable goods. This last was to be paid every time the goods were sold. Thus, if they changed hands five times it is clear

that one-half their value had passed to the Government; and if, as sometimes happened, they changed hands ten times, their entire value was swallowed up by the Government tax. Under such a law no market could be kept open; all buying and selling must cease. The Netherlanders refused to submit to the tax, on the ground that it would bring what remained of their commerce to an utter end, and so defeat itself. After many cajoleries and threats, Alva made a virtue of necessity, and modified the tax.

Such is the melancholy record of the year 1568. Its gloom deepened as the months rolled on. First came the defeat of Count Louis, and the overcasting of the fair morning of a hoped-for deliverance for the miserable Provinces. Next were seen the scaffolds of Egmont and Horn, and of many others among the more patriotic of the Flemish nobility. Then followed the disastrous issue of the attempt of William to emancipate Brabant, and with it the loss of all his funds, and many thousands of lives, and a tightening of the tyrant's grasp upon the country. Wherever one

turned one's eye there was a gibbet; wherever one planted one's foot there was blood. The cities were becoming silent; the air was thick with terror and despair. But if 1568 closed in gloom, 1569 rose in a gloom yet deeper.

In the beginning of this year the sword of persecution was still further sharpened. There came a new edict, addressed to the Stadtholders of the Provinces, enjoining that "when the Host or the holy oil for extreme unction was carried to sick people, strict notice should be taken of the behavior, countenance, and words of every person, and that all those in whom any signs of irreverence were discovered should be punished; that all such dead bodies to which the clergy thought fit to deny Christian burial and the consecrated ground, should be thrown out on the gallows-field; that notice of it should be given to him (Alva), and their estates registered; and that all midwives should report every birth within twenty-four hours after the child had come into the world, to the end that it might be known whether the children were baptised after the Roman manner." [2]

The carrying out of this order necessitated the creation of a new class of agents. Spies were placed at the corners of all the streets, whose duty it was to watch the countenances of the passers-by, and pounce on those whose looks were ill-favored, and hale them to prison. These spies were nicknamed the "Seven penny Men," because the wages of their odious work was paid them in pieces of that value. Thus the gallows and the stake continued to be fed.

The crowd of martyrs utterly defies enumeration. Many of them were of low estate, as the world accounts it, but they were rich in faith, noble in spirit, and heirs of a greater kingdom than Philip's, though they had to pass through the fire to receive possession of it. The deaths of all were the same, yet the circumstances in which it was endured were so varied:, and in many cases so peculiar and tragic, that each differs from the other. Let us give a very few examples. On the 8th of July, 1569, William Tavart was led to the place of execution in Antwerp, in order to undergo death by

burning. While his executioners were binding his hands, and putting the gag into his mouth, being a man of eighty years, and infirm, he fainted in their hands. He was thereupon carried back to his prison, and drowned. Another martyr, also very aged, worn out moreover by a long imprisonment, was kneeling on the faggots in prayer before being bound to the stake. The executioner, thinking that he was spending too much time in his devotions, rushed forward to raise him up and put him into the fire. He found that the old man was dead. The martyr had offered up his life in intention, and his gracious Master, compassionating his age and frailties, had given him the crown, yet spared him the agony of the stake. Richard Willemsen, of Aspern, being pursued by an officer of the Blood Council, was making his escape on the ice. The ice gave way, and the officer fell in, and would have been drowned but for the humanity of the man whom he was pursuing, who, perceiving what had happened, turned back, and stretching out his hand, at the risk of being himself dragged in, pulled out his enemy. The magnanimous act touched the heart of the officer, and he would have let his deliverer

escape; but unhappily the burgomaster happened to come up at the moment, and called out sharply to him, "Fulfil your oath." Thereupon he seized the poor man who but a moment before had saved his life, and conducted him to prison. He was condemned to the fire, and burned without the walls of Aspern, on the side next to Leerdam. While at the stake, a strong east wind springing up, the flames were blown away from the upper part of his body, leaving the lower extremities exposed to the torment of a slow fire. His cries were heard as far as Leerdam. In this fashion was he rewarded for saving his enemy's life at the peril of his own.

About the same time, four parish priests were degraded and burned at the Hague. The bishop first clothing them with their mass-garments, and then stripping them, as is usual on such occasions, said, in the Latin tongue, "I divest you of the robe of Righteousness." "Not so," replied one of the four; "you divest us of the robe of Unrighteousness." "Nor can you," added the other three, "strip us of our salvation as you strip us of these vestments." Whereupon the bishop, with a grave countenance,

laid his hand upon his breast, and calling on God, solemnly declared that "he believed from his heart that the Romish religion was the most certain way to salvation." "You did not always think so," replied Arent Dirkson, a man of seventy years, and known to be learned and judicious; "you knew the truth formerly, but you have maliciously rejected it, and you must answer for it at the great Day of Judgment." The words of the old man found a response in the conscience of the apostate. The bishop shook and trembled before his own prisoner. Nevertheless he went on with the condemnation of the four men, delivering them to the temporal arm with the usual prayer that the magistrate would deal tenderly with them. Upon this, the grey-haired pastor again burst out, "Quam pharisaice! How pharisaically do they treat us!" They were sent back to prison. The same night they celebrated the Lord's Supper for their mutual consolation, and continued till break of day in singing psalms, in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in prayer. The hour of execution being come, the father of one of the martyrs, mingling in the crowd, waited till his son should pass to the stake, that he

might whisper a few words of encouragement. "My dear son," said he, when he saw him approach, "fight manfully for the crown of everlasting life." The guards instantly dragged the old man away to prevent him saying more. His sister now came forward, and spoke to him with equal courage. "Brother," cried she, "be constant; it will not last long; the gate of eternal life is open for you." The scene made a deep impression upon the spectators.

A burgher and bargeman of Amsterdam, Gerrit Cornelison by name, was one day brought out to be burned. In prison he had twice been tortured to force him to betray his associates, but no pain could overcome his constancy. Turning to the people at the stake, he cried, "Good people, eternity is so long, and our suffering here is so short, and yet the combat is very sharp and cruel. Alas! how am I distressed! O my flesh, bear and resist for a little, for this is thy last combat." This, his last battle, he fought courageously, and received the crown.[3]

While these humble men were dying for their

faith, Providence was preparing in high quarters for the deliverance of the country. After the close of his first unsuccessful campaign, William of Orange retired for a short time to France, and was present at the battle of Jarnac, where he witnessed the disaster which there befel the Huguenot arms. It seemed as if a thick cloud was everywhere gathering above the Protestant cause. In a few months he was recalled by his friends to Germany. Disguising himself as a peasant, and accompanied by only five attendants, he crossed the French lines, traversed Flanders in safety, and reached his principality of Nassau. He there learned all that had passed in the Netherlands during his absence. He was told that every day the tyranny of Alva waxed greater, as did also the odium in which both his person and government were held. The unhappy country had but one hope, and if that should misgive it, it must abandon itself to utter despair. That hope was himself. From all sides, from Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, from the exiles abroad and from the sufferers at home, came the most urgent appeals to him to again unfurl the standard of battle. He had consecrated his life to

the defense of the Reformed religion, and the maintenance of his country's liberties, and was ready to respond to the appeal of those who had no human help save in his wisdom and courage. But he recollected what had so largely contributed to the failure of his first attempt, and before un-sheathing the sword he set about collecting the sinews of war. William had already all but beggared himself in his attempt to break the yoke from the neck of the Netherlands; his plate and jewels and furniture had all been sold to pay his soldiers; his paternal estates were heavily burdened; he would give what remained of his possessions, together with his courage and blood, in promotion of the cause; but others also, at home and abroad, must contribute both their money and their blood, and in no stinted measure, if success was to crown their efforts. William took the first step by forming a comprehensive plan for raising the necessary funds.

The Flemish refugees in London and other parts had united together, and had fitted out a great number of armed vessels. These they sent to cruise

on the English and Flemish seas, and make prize of all. Spanish ships that came in their way. Their skill and daring were rewarded by numerous rich captures. As the growing fury of Alva swelled the number of refugees in London and other cities, so did the strength of the privateering fleet continue to increase. While Alva was gathering his taxes on land, they were reaping a rich harvest at sea. They scoured the English Channel, they hovered on the coast of the Netherlands, and preyed upon the merchandise of Spain. These cruisers became renowned under the title of the "Sea Beggars." It occurred to the Prince of Orange that these "terrible beggars" might do good service in the cause of their country's emancipation; and it was ultimately arranged that a fifth of the value of all the prizes which they made should be given to officers appointed by William, and the sum devoted to the support of the war of liberation.

Measures were at the same time adopted to improve the morale and discipline of a fleet that was becoming the terror of Alva and the Spaniards. No one was to exercise authority in it save those to

whom William himself should grant commissions. Every ship was to carry a Protestant minister on board, whose duty it was to conduct regular religious service; and no one who had ever been convicted of a crime was to be permitted to serve in the fleet. The ships of all friendly Powers were to pass untouched, and Alva and his adherents only were the Sea Beggars to regard as lawful prey.

At the same time the prince adopted another method of improving his finances in prospect of the coming war of independence. Commissions were given to the Protestant preachers, who traversed the Provinces in disguise, and collected money from all who were disaffected to the Spanish Government, or inimical to the Romish religion. None knew so well as they to whom to apply, or were so able by their eloquence to recommend the cause. William, besides, acquired by their means an intimate and accurate knowledge of the dispositions of all classes in the Netherlands. Their mission was specially successful in Holland and Zealand, where the Reformed religion had made greater progress than in the southern

Provinces, and where the people, enjoying the natural defences of canals, rivers, and sea-friths, felt less the terror of the Spaniards. On these grounds, too, William resolved to seek in these northern parts a first footing for his enterprise. While these measures were being vigorously prosecuted in Holland, a trustworthy agent, Sonoy, was sent to canvass the Governments and people of Germany, adjuring them in the name of a common faith and a common liberty to put their shoulder to the great enterprise. Not a whisper of what was in preparation was wafted to the ears of Alva, although the prince's designs must have been known to a vast number of persons, so universal was the detestation in which the tyrant was held. Alva himself unconsciously helped to prepare the way for William, and to draw down the first blow of the great conflict.

It was about the end of March, 1572, and the fleet of the Beggars of the Sea was lying off Dover. Spain, smarting from the damage that these daring sea-rovers were constantly inflicting on her merchandise, complained to England that she

opened her harbours to Flemish pirates, and permitted the goods stolen by them from Spanish subjects to be sold in her dominions, and so violated the treaties subsisting between the Spanish and English crowns. Elizabeth, though secretly friendly to the Flemish exiles, was yet unwilling to come to an open rupture with Philip, and accordingly she ordered their ships to quit her ports,[4] and forbade her subjects to supply provisions to their crews. The Sea Beggars instantly weighed anchor, and shot across the German Sea. Half famished they arrived off the mouth of the Meuse, and sailed up its broad channel to Brill. The fleet was under the command of Admiral de la Marck, who held a commission from William of Orange. Coming to anchor opposite Brill, De la Marck sent a herald to summon the town to surrender. "The people," says Strada, "supposed them at first to be merchantmen cast upon their coast by storm, but before they were aware they brought war, not merchandise." [5]

Brill, though a small place, was strongly fortified, but the summons of the Beggars of the

Sea, inspired such a terror that the magistrates fled, and were followed by many of the inhabitants. De la Marck's soldiers battered open the gates, and having entered they hoisted their flag, and took possession of Brill, in the name of William of Orange. Thus on the 1st of April, 1572, were laid the foundations of the Free Protestant Holland, and thus was opened a conflict whose course of thirty years was to be marked by alternate defeats and triumphs, by the tragedies and crimes of a colossal tyranny, and the heroism and self-devotion of a not less colossal virtue and patriotism, till it should end in the overthrow of the mighty Empire of Spain, and the elevation of the little territory of Holland to a more stable prosperity, and a more enviable greatness and renown, than Philip's kingdom could boast in its palmiest days.

Meanwhile Alva was giving reins to a fury which had risen to madness. He was burning the Prince of Orange in effigy, he was dragging his escutcheon through the streets at the tails of horses, and proclaiming William and his offspring infamous to all posterity. At the same time he was

fighting with the inhabitants about "the tenth penny." The consequences of enforcing so ruinous a tax, of which he had been warned, had now been realised: all buying and selling was suspended: the shops were shut, and the citizens found it impossible to purchase even the most common necessities.

Thousands were thrown out of employment, and the towns swarmed with idlers and beggars. Enraged at being thus foiled, Alva resolved to read the shopkeepers of Brussels a lesson which they should not soon forget. He made arrangements that when they awoke next morning they should see eighteen of the leading members of their fraternity hanged at the doors of their own shops. The hangman had the ropes and ladders prepared overnight. But morning brought with it other things to occupy Alva's attention. A messenger arrived with the news that the great Sea Beggar, De la Marek, had made himself master of the town of Brill, and that the standard of William was floating on its walls. Alva was thunderstruck.[6]

The duke instantly dispatched Count Bossu to retake the town. The Spaniards advanced to the walls of Brill and began to batter them with their cannon. A carpenter leaped into the canal, swam to a sluice and with his axe hewed it open, and let in the sea. The rising waters compelled the besiegers to remove to the south side of the town, which chanced to be that on which De la Marck had planted his largest cannon. While the Spaniards were thundering at this gate, La Marck's men, issuing out at the opposite one, and rowing to the Spanish ships, set fire to them. When the Spaniards saw their ships beginning to blaze, and marked the waves steadily rising round them, they were seized with panic, and made a hasty retreat along the dyke. Many perished in the waves, the rest escaping to the fleet crowded into the vessels that remained unburned, weighed anchor and set sail. The inhabitants who had fled at the first surprise now returned, their names were registered, and all swore allegiance to the Prince of Orange, as Stadtholder for Philip.[7]

Misfortune continued to dog the steps of the

Spaniards. Bossu led his troops toward Dort, but the inhabitants, who had heard of the capture of Brill, closed their gates against him.[8] He next took his way to Rotterdam. There too his demand for admission to a garrison in the king's name was met with a refusal. The crafty Spaniard had recourse to a stratagem. He asked leave for his companies to pass through one by one; this was given, but no sooner had the first company entered than Bossu, regardless of his promise, made his soldiers keep open the gates for his whole army. The citizens attempted to close the gates, but were hewn down; and the Spaniards, giving loose to their fury, spread themselves over the city, and butchered 400 of the inhabitants. The sanguinary and brutal ravages which Bossu's soldiers inflicted on Rotterdam had nearly as great an effect as the capture of Brill in spreading the spirit of revolt over Holland.

Flushing, an important town from its position at the mouth of the Scheldt, was the next to mount the flag of defiance to the Spaniards. They drove out the garrison of Alva, and razed the foundations of a

citadel which the governor was preparing as the chain wherewith to bind them. Next day the Spanish fleet appeared in their harbour; the citizens were deliberating in the market-place when a drunken fellow proposed, for three guilders, to mount the ramparts, and fire one of the great guns upon the ships. The effect of that one unexpected shot was to strike the Spaniards with panic. They let slip their cables and stood out to sea.

Two hundred years afterwards we find Flushing commemorating its deliverance from the yoke of Alva. The minutes of the consistory inform us "that the minister, Justus Tgeenk, preached [April 5th, 1772] in commemoration of Flushing's delivery from Spanish tyranny, which was stopped here on the 6th April, 1572, when the citizens, unassisted and unsupported by any foreign Power, drove out the Walloons and opened their gates, and laid the corner-stone of that singular and always remarkable revolution, which placed seven small Provinces in a state of independency, in despite of the utmost efforts of Philip II., then the most powerful monarch in Europe." The Sunday after

(April 12th), the Lord's Supper was dispensed, and "at the table," say the minutes, was used "a silver chalice," the property of the burgomaster E. Clyver, "wherein two hundred years ago the Protestants in this town had, for the first time, celebrated the Lord's Supper in a cellar here at the head of the Great Market, on account of the, unrelenting persecution." [9]

In a few months all the more important towns of Holland and Zealand followed the example of Brill and Flushing, and hung out upon their walls the standard of the man in whom they recognised their deliverer. [10] Haarlem, Leyden, Gouda, Horn, Alkmaar, Enkhuizen, and many others broke their chain. No soldier of the prince, no sea-rover of De la Marck's incited them to revolt: the movement was a thoroughly spontaneous one; it originated with the citizens themselves, the great majority of whom cherished a hatred of the Roman faith, and a detestation of Spanish tyranny. Amsterdam was the only exception that is worth noting in Holland. The flame which had been kindled spread into Friesland, and Utrecht and

other towns placed their names on the distinguished list of cities that came forth at this great crisis to the help of conscience and of liberty against the mighty.

A small incident which happened at this moment was fraught with vast consequences. Count Louis of Nassau, approaching from France, made himself master of the frontier town of Mons in the south.[11] Alva was excessively mortified by this mishap, and he was bent on recovering the place. He was counselled to defer the siege of Mons till he should have extinguished the rising in the north. He was reminded that Holland and Zealand were deeply infected with heresy; that there the Prince of Orange was personally popular; that nature had fortified these Provinces by intersecting them with rivers and arms of the sea, and that if time were given the inhabitants to strengthen their canals and cities, many sieges and battles might not suffice to reduce them to their obedience. This advice was eminently wise, but Alva stopped his ear to it. He went on with the siege of Mons, and while "he was plucking this

thorn out of his foot," the conflagration in the north of the Netherlands had time to spread. He succeeded eventually in extracting the thorn that is, he took Mons -- but at the cost of losing Holland.

William himself had not yet arrived in the Netherlands, but he was now on his way thither at the head of a new army well nigh 20,000 strong, which he had raised in Germany. He caused to be distributed before him copies of a declaration, in which he set forth the grounds of his taking up arms. These were, in brief, "the security of the rights and privileges of the country, and the freedom of conscience." In the instructions which he issued to his deputy in Holland, Diedrich Sonoy, he required him, "first of all, to deliver the towns of that Province from Spanish slavery, and to restore them to their ancient liberties, rights and privileges, and to take care that the Word of God be preached and published there, but yet by no means to suffer that those of the Romish Church should be in any sort prejudiced, or that any impediment should be offered to them in the exercise of their religion." [12]

Meanwhile, Alva was left literally without a penny; and, finding it hard to prosecute the siege of Mons on an empty military chest, he announced his willingness to remit the tax of the tenth penny, provided the States-General would give him "the annual twenty tuns of gold"[13] (about two millions of florins) which they had formerly promised him in lieu of the obnoxious tax; and he summoned the States of Holland to meet at the Hague, on the 15th of July, and consider the matter.

The States of Holland met on the day named, not at the Hague, but at Dort; and in obedience to the summons, not of Alva, but of William. Nor had they assembled to deliberate on the proposal of Alva, and to say whether it was the "tenth penny" or the "twenty tuns of gold" that they were henceforth to lay at his feet. The banner of freedom now floated on their walls, and they had met to devise the means of keeping it waving there. The battle was only beginning: the liberty which had been proclaimed had yet to be fought for. Of this

we find their great leader reminding them. In a letter which William addressed at this time to the States of Holland, he told them, in words as plain as they were weighty, that if in a quarrel like this they should show themselves sparing of their gold, they would incur the anger of the great Ruler, they would make themselves the scorn of foreign nations, and they would bind a bloody yoke on themselves and their posterity for ever. William was not present in the assembly at Dolt, but he was ably represented by St. Aldegonde.

This eloquent plenipotentiary addressed the members in a powerful speech, in which he rehearsed the efforts the Prince of Orange had already made for the deliverance of the land from Spanish cruelty; that he had embarked the whole of his fortune in the struggle; that the failure of the expedition of 1568 was owing to no fault of his, but entirely in his not being adequately supported, not a Fleming having lifted a finger in the cause; that he was again in the field with an army, and that supplies must be found if it was to be kept there, or if it was to accomplish anything for the

country. "Arouse ye, then," were the thrilling words in which St. Aldegonde concluded his oration, "awaken your own zeal and that of your sister cities. Seize Opportunity by the locks, who never appeared fairer than she does to-day."

St. Aldegonde was further instructed by the prince to state the broad and catholic aims that he proposed to himself in the struggle which they were to wage together. If that struggle should be crowned with success, the Papist would have not less cause to rejoice than the Protestant; the two should divide the spoils. "As for religion," said St. Aldegonde, "the desires of the prince are that liberty of conscience should be allowed as well to the Reformed as to the Roman Catholics; that each party should enjoy the public exercise of it in churches or chapels, without any molestation, hindrance, or trouble, and that the clergy should remain free and unmolested in their several functions, provided they showed no tokens of disaffection, and that all things should be continued on this footing till the States-General otherwise directed." In these intentions the States expressed

themselves as at one with the prince.

A patriotic response was made to the prince's appeal by the Northern Netherlands. All classes girded themselves for the great struggle. The aristocracy, the guilds, the religious houses, and the ordinary citizens came forward with gifts and loans. Money, plate, jewellery, and all kinds of valuables were poured into the common treasury. A unanimous resolution of the States declared the Prince of Orange Stadtholder of Holland. The taxes were to be levied in his name, and all naval and land officers were to take an oath of obedience to him. What a contrast between the little territory and the greatness of the contest that is about to be waged! We behold the inhabitants of a small platform of earth, walled in by dykes lest the ocean should drown it, heroically offering themselves to fight the world's battle against that great combination of kingdoms, nationalities, and armies that compose the mighty monarchy of Spain!

Footnotes:

1. "Ad patibulum, ad patibulum." (Brandt)
2. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 280.
3. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 286, 287.
4. Strada, lib. 7.
5. Ibid.
6. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 295.
7. Watson, Philip II., vol. 1., pp. 426-431.
8. Strada, lib. 7.
9. Steven, Hist. Scottish Church, Rotterdam, p. 304.
10. Strada, lib. 7.
11. Bentivoglio, lib. 2., p. 54.
12. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 298.
13. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 298

Chapter 17

William's Second Campaign and Submission of Brabant and Flanders

WILLIAM, Prince of Orange, Stadtholder and virtual King of Holland, Zealand, and Friesland, if the prayers and suffrages of an entire people can avail to invest one with that august office, was approaching the Netherlands at the head of his newly-enrolled levies. He crossed the Rhine on the 7th of July, 1572, with an army of 17,000 foot and 7,000 horse. Advancing as far as Roermonde, he halted before that town to demand a supply of provisions for his soldiers. The government of the place was in the hands of zealous Roman Catholics, and the refusal of Roermonde to comply with the request of the Liberator was rendered still more ungracious by the haughtiness and insolence with which it was accompanied. William stormed the city and took it. Unhappily his soldiers here dishonored the cause for which the prince was in

arms, by putting to death certain priests and monks under circumstances of great barbarity. Germany was at that time a magazine of mercenary soldiers, from which both the Prince of Orange and Alva drew supplies, and troops of this class were but little amenable to discipline when their pay fell into arrears, as was now the case. But William felt that such excesses must be checked at all hazards, otherwise his cause would be disgraced and ultimately ruined; and accordingly he issued an order forbidding all such barbarities in future under pain of death.[1]

For some time his march was a triumphal one. The standards of William shed a gleam through the darkness that shrouded Brabant, and the spirits of its terror-stricken inhabitants for a moment revived. On the first occasion when the Deliverer approached their cities, the Flemings abode within their gates, but now they seemed as if they would rise at his call, and redeem themselves from the yoke of Spain. The important city of Mechlin declared in his favor. Louvain refused to admit a garrison of his soldiers, but sent him a contribution

of 16,000 ducats. Tirlemont, Termonde, Oudenarde, Nivelles, and many other towns and villages opened their gates to the prince; the most part spontaneously, in the eager hope of deliverance from a tyranny which threatened to cease its ravages only when nothing more should be left in the Netherlands to destroy. A successful beginning of the great struggle had been made, but now the prince began to be in straits. The friends of the cause had not yet realised its full grandeur or its immense difficulty, and their scale of giving was totally inadequate. If the tide of bigotry and tyranny now overflowing Christendom was to be stemmed, the friends of liberty, both at home and abroad, must not be sparing either of their blood or their gold. But as yet it was hardly understood that all must be parted with if the pearl of freedom was to be won.

But if the States of Holland, and the refugees in England and other countries, were sending supplies which were disproportionate to the enormous expense to which William had been put in levying, equipping, and maintaining his troops, he had the

best hopes of succours from France. The net was being then woven for the Huguenots, and their great chief, Admiral Coligny, was being caressed at the court of the Louvre. "I will fight Philip of Spain on the soil of the Netherlands," said that consummate dissembler, Charles IX. "William of Orange shall not want for money and soldiers," continued he, with a frankness that seemed the guarantee of a perfect sincerity. Coligny suffered himself to be persuaded of the good faith of the king, and labored to produce the same conviction in the mind of the Prince of Orange, bidding him expect him soon at the head of 15,000 Huguenots. William, believing that France was at his back, thought that the campaign could have but one issue -- namely, the expulsion of the Spaniards, and the liberation of the Netherlands from their unbearable yoke. But his hopes were destined to a cruel overthrow. Instead of an army of Huguenots to help him on to victory, there came tidings that felled him to the earth. Three weeks from the date of Coligny's letter, William received the terrible news of the St. Bartholomew Massacre. The men who were to have emancipated the Low Countries

were watering with their blood and strewing with their corpses the plains of their native land! The Prince of Orange opened his eyes on blank desolation; he saw the campaign ending in inevitable failure, and the dark night of Spanish oppression again closing in around a country which he had believed to be as good as emancipated. The shock was terrible, but the lesson was salutary. Those instruments whom Providence selects to fight the holy battles of religion and freedom need a higher training than ordinary warriors. To genius and courage heroes of this class must add faith; but this quality they can acquire only in the school of repeated disappointment. They can never learn this virtue in the midst of numerous and victorious hosts, where success is won by mere numbers, and where victory is of that ordinary and vulgar sort which the worst as well as the best of causes can command.

The fate of his second campaign had been decided at Paris when the St. Bartholomew was struck, but William still continued to prosecute the war. His attempts, however, to stem the swelling

tide of Spanish tyranny were without success. First, he failed to relieve his brother, who was shut up in the city of Mons, besieged by Alva; next, he himself narrowly escaped being captured by the Spaniards in a night attack on his camp, in which 600 of his soldiers were slain. He owed his escape to a small spaniel which he kept in his bed-chamber, and which awoke him by scratching his face.[2] There followed a mutiny of his troops, provoked by the repeated disasters that had befallen them, and the arrears due to them, but which the prince was unable to discharge; they talked, indeed, of delivering him up to Alva. They soon became ashamed of having harboured so base a design, but the incident convinced William that he had no alternative but to disband his army and retire to Holland, and this course he now adopted.

The departure of the Prince of Orange was the signal for Alva to take a terrible revenge on those cities in Brabant which had hoisted the flag of the Deliverer. Mons surrendered, but the terms of the capitulation were most perfidiously violated by the Spaniards. The citizens were sent in hundreds to

the gallows; murder and spoliation ran riot in its streets; the axe and the halter rested not for well-nigh a whole year, till the awful silence proclaimed that Mons was now little else than a charnel-house. Its commercial prosperity never recovered this terrible blow. Those of its merchants and artisans who had escaped the gibbet were driven away, and only beggars and idlers were left in their room -- a meet population, surely, to wear the yoke of Spain.

In the eyes of Alva, the archiepiscopal city of Mechlin was a greater offender than even Mons, and he resolved to wreak upon it, if possible, a yet more terrible vengeance. Considering the strength of its Romanism, and the rank and influence of its clergy, one would have expected that it would be the last city in Brabant to open its gates to William; it was, as we have seen, the first. The conqueror resolved that it should suffer as pre-eminently as it had sinned. His regiments had recently received no pay, and Alva pointed to the rich city of the priests, and bade them seek their wages in it. The soldiers threw themselves upon the town, like a pack of hungry wolves upon their prey. Some swam the

moat, others battered open the gates, while hundreds, by the help of scaling-ladders, climbed the walls, and swarmed down into the city. Along every street and lane poured a torrent of furious men, robbing, murdering, violating, without making the least distinction between friend and foe, Papist and Protestant.

No age, nor sex, nor rank, nor profession had exemption from the sword, or the worse brutality of the soldiery. Blood flowed in torrents. Churches, monasteries, private dwellings, and public establishments were broken into and pillaged to the last penny. Altars were pulled down, the chalices and other rich vessels used in the mass were carried off, the very Host itself was profaned and trodden under foot by men who professed to regard it as the body and soul of Christ, and who had come from a distant land to avenge the insults which had been offered to it by others. Their rage far exceeded that of the iconoclasts, who had vented their fury on idols alone. Three days this dreadful work went on,[3] and then the soldiers of Alva collected their booty, and carrying it on board ship, sent it off to

Antwerp, to be converted into money.[4] The inhabitants of the other cities which had submitted to William were permitted to redeem their lives by the payment of an enormous ransom.

Not so, however, the cities of Zutphen and Naarden. Zutphen was subjected to the same shocking barbarities which had been inflicted on Mechlin. Here the spoil to be gathered was less, for the town was not so rich as Mechlin, but the licence given to the sword was on that account all the greater; and when the soldiers grew weary with slaughtering, they threw their victims into the Issel, and indulged themselves in the horrid pastime of pelting the drowning men and women with missiles as they rose to the surface before finally sinking. We record the fate of Naarden last, because its doom was the most appalling of the three; for it is a series of horrors which we are thus briefly tracing to its climax. Naarden opened its gates to Don Frederic de Toledo, the son of Alva, on a promise of immunity from sack for a slight equivalent. The promise of Toledo was violated with a shocking perfidy. First the male population were put to the

sword; then their wives and daughters were brutally outraged, and afterwards nearly all were massacred. The dwellings, the convents, and the hospitals were ransacked for treasure and spoil; and when the fiends had satiated to the utmost their bloodthirstiness, lust, and greed, they drove out the few miserable inhabitants that remained into the open fields, and setting fire to Naarden they burned it to the ground. A blackened spot covered with charred ruins, ashes, and the remains of human carcasses marked where the city had stood. It was amid these clouds and tempests that the year 1572 closed. What a contrast to the brilliant promise with which it had opened, when city after city was hanging out the banner of William upon its walls, and men were congratulating themselves float the black night of Spanish usurpation and oppression had come to an end, and the fair morning of independence had dawned! Smitten down by the mailed hand of Alva, the cities of Brabant and Flanders are again seen creeping back into their chains.

Occupied in the siege of Mons and the

reduction of the revolted towns in the Southern Netherlands, the Spanish army were compelled meanwhile to leave the Northern Provinces in peace. The leisure thus afforded them the Hollanders wisely turned to account by increasing the number of their ships, repairing the fortifications of their towns, and enrolling soldiers.

They saw the terrible legions of Alva coming nearer every day, their path marked in ruins and blood; but they were not without hope that the preparations they had made, joined to the natural defences of their country, here intersected by rivers, there by arms of the sea, would enable them to make a more successful resistance than Brabant and Flanders had done. When the tyrant should ask them to bow again their necks to the yoke, they trusted to be able to say, "No," without undergoing the terrible alternative with which Alva chastised refusal in the case of the Brabant cities -- namely, halts for themselves, and horrible outrage for their families. Meanwhile they waited anxiously for the coming of William. He would breathe courage into their hearts, ready to faint at the

dreaded prowess of the Spaniards.

At length William arrived in Holland; but he came alone; of the 24,000 troops which he had led into the Netherlands at the opening of his second campaign, only seventy horsemen now remained; nevertheless, his arrival was hailed with joy, for the Hollanders felt that the wisdom, patriotism, and bravery of the prince would be to them instead of an army. William met the Estates at Haarlem, and deliberated with them on the course to be taken. It was the darkest hour of the Netherlands. The outlook all round was not only discouraging, but appalling. The wealthy Flanders and Brabant were again under the heel of the haughty and cruel Spaniard. Of their populous cities, blackened ruins marked the site of some; those that existed were sitting in sullen silence with the chain around their neck; the battle for liberty of conscience had been forced back into the Northern Holland; here the last stand must be made; the result must be victory or utter extermination. The foe with whom the Hollanders were to do battle was no ordinary one; he was exasperated to the utmost degree; he neither

respected an oath nor spared an enemy; if they should resist, they had in Naarden an awful monument before their eyes of what their own fate would be if their resistance were unsuccessful; and yet the alternative! Submission to the Spanish yoke! Rather ten deaths than endure a slavery so vile. The resolution of the Convention was prompt and decided: they would worship according to their consciences or die.

William now began to prepare for the great struggle. His sagacity taught him that Holland needed other defences besides ships and walls and soldiers, if it was to bear the immense strain to which it was about to be subjected. First of all, he settled the boundaries of his own power, by voluntarily agreeing to do nothing but with the consent of the States. By limiting he strengthened his influence. Next he consolidated the union of the nation by admitting twelve new cities into the Convention, and giving them the same voice in public affairs as the older towns. He next set about re-organising the civil service of the country, which had fallen into great disorder during these

unsettled times. Many of the principal inhabitants had fled; numbers of the judges and officers of the revenue had abandoned their posts, to the great detriment of justice and the loss of the finances. William filled up these vacancies with Protestants, deeming them the only thoroughly trustworthy persons in a contest that was to determine which of the two faiths was to be the established religion of Holland.

Before opening the campaign, the Prince of Orange took a step toward the settlement of the religious question. It was resolved that both Papists and Protestants should enjoy the public exercise of their worship, and that no one should be molested on account of his religion, provided he lived quietly, and kept no correspondence with the Spaniards.[5] In this William obeyed the wishes of the great body of the people of Holland, who had now espoused the Reformed faith, and at the same time he laid a basis for unity of action by purging out, so far as he could, the anti-national element from the public service, and took reasonable precautions against surprise and treachery when

Holland should be waging its great battle for existence.

At the moment that the Hollanders were not unnaturally oppressed with grave thoughts touching the issue of the struggle for which they were girding themselves, uncertain whether their country was to become the burial-place of their liberties and their persons, or the theater of a yet higher civilisation, an incident occurred that helped to enliven their spirits, and confirm them in their resolution to resist. The one city in Holland that remained on the side of Alva was Amsterdam, and thither Toledo, after the butchery at Naarden, marched with his army. In the shallow sea around Amsterdam, locked up in the ice, lay part of the Dutch fleet. The Spanish general sent a body of troops over the frozen waters to attack the ships.

Their advance was perceived, and the Dutch soldiers, fastening on their skates, and grasping their muskets, descended the ships' sides to give battle to the Spaniards. Sweeping with the rapidity of a cloud towards the enemy, they poured a deadly

volley into his ranks, and then wheeling round, they retreated with the same celerity out of reach of his fire. In this fashion they kept advancing and retreating, each time doing murderous execution upon the Spanish lines, while their own ranks remained unbroken. Confounded by this novel method of battle, the Spaniards were compelled to quit the field, leaving some hundreds of their dead upon the ice. Next day a thaw set in, which lasted just long enough to permit the Dutch fleet to escape, while the returning frost made pursuit impossible. The occurrence was construed by the Dutch as a favorable omen.

Established at Amsterdam, the Spanish sword had cut Holland in two, and from this central point it was resolved to carry that sword over North and South Holland, making its cities, should they resist, so many Naardens, and its inhabitants slaves of Alva or corpses. It was agreed to begin with Haarlem, which was some twelve English miles to the south-west of Amsterdam. Toledo essayed first of all to win over the citizens by mediation, thinking that the fate of Naarden had inspired them

with a salutary terror of his arms, and that they only waited to open their gates to him. The tragic end of Naarden had just the opposite effect on the citizens of Haarlem. It showed them that those who submitted and those who resisted met the same fearful destruction. Notwithstanding, two of the magistrates, moved by terror and cowardice, secretly opened negotiations with Toledo for the surrender of Haarlem; but no sooner did this come to the ears of Ripperda, a Friesland gentleman, to whom William had committed the government of the town, than he assembled the citizens and garrison in the marketplace, and warned them against entertaining the idea of submission. What have those gained, he asked, who have trusted the promise of the Spaniards? Have not these men shown that they are as devoid of faith as they are of humanity? Their assurances are only a stratagem for snatching the arms from your hands, and then they will load you with chains or butcher you like sheep. From the blood-sprinkled graves of Mechlin, of Zutphen, and of Naarden the voices of our brethren call on you to resist. Let us remember our oath to the Prince of Orange, whom we have

acknowledged the only lawful governor of the Province; let us think of the righteousness of our cause, and resolve, rather than live the slaves of the Spaniards, to die with arms in our hands, fighting for our religion and our laws. This appeal was responded to by the stout-hearted citizens with enthusiastic shouts. As one man they proclaimed their resolution to resist the Spaniard to the death.

Footnotes:

1. Bor, 6. 398, 399. Strada, 7. 75; Lond., 1667.
2. Strada, 7. 76.
3. Strada, 7. 77.
4. Bor, 6. 409 -- 415.
5. Brandt, vol. 1., bk. 10., p. 298.

Chapter 18

The Siege of Haarlem

BOTH sides began to prepare for the inevitable struggle. The Prince of Orange established himself at Leyden, the town nearest to Haarlem on the south, and only some ten English miles distant from it. He hoped from this point to be able to direct the defense, and forward provisions and reinforcements as the, bravo little town might need them. Alva and his son Toledo, on the other hand, when they learned that Haarlem, instead of opening its gates, had resolved to resist, were filled with rage, and immediately gave orders for the march of their troops on that presumptuous little city which had dared to throw down the gage of battle to the whole power of Spain.

Advancing along the causeway which traverses the narrow isthmus that separates the waters of the Haarlem Lake from the Zuyder Zee, the Spanish army, on the 11th of December, 1572, sat down before Haarlem. Regiment continued to arrive after

regiment till the beleaguering army was swelled to 30,000, [1] and the city was now completely invested. This force was composed of Spaniards, Germans, and Walloons. The population of Haarlem did not exceed 30,000; that is, it was only equal in number to that of the host now encamped outside its walls. Its ramparts were far from strong; its garrison, even when at the highest, was not over 4,000 men [2] and it was clear that the defense of the town must lie mainly with the citizens, whom patriotism had converted into heroes. Nor did the war-spirit burn less ardently in the breasts of the wives and daughters of Haarlem than in those of their fathers and husbands. Three hundred women, all of them of unblemished character, and some of high birth, enrolled themselves in defense of the city, and donning armor, mounted the walls, or sallying from the gates, mingled with their husbands and brothers in the fierce conflicts waged with the enemy under the ramparts. This army of amazons was led by Kenau Hasselaer, a widow of forty-seven years of age, and a member of one of the first families of Haarlem.[3] "Under her command," says Strada, "her females were

emboldened to do soldiers' duty at the bulwarks, and to sally out among the firelocks, to the no less encouragement of their own men than admiration of the enemy."

Toledo's preparations for the siege were favored by a thick mist which hung above the Lake of Haarlem, and concealed his operations. But if the haze favored the Spanish general, it befriended still more the besieged, inasmuch as it allowed provisions and reinforcements to be brought into the city before it was finally invested. Moving on skates, hundreds of soldiers and peasants sped rapidly past the Spanish lines unobserved in the darkness. One body of troops, however, which had been sent by William from Leyden, in the hope of being able to enter the town before its blockade, was attacked and routed, and the cannon and provisions destined for the besieged were made the booty of the Spaniards. About a thousand were slain, and numbers made prisoners and carried off to the gibbets which already bristled all round the walls, and from this time were never empty, relay after relay of unhappy captives being led to

execution upon them.

Don Frederic de Toledo had fixed his headquarters at the Gate of the Cross. This was the strongest part of the fortifications, the gate being defended by a ravelin, but Toledo held the besieged in so great contempt that he deemed it a matter of not the least consequence where he should begin his assault, whether at the weakest or at the strongest point.

Haarlem, he believed, following the example of the Flemish cities, would capitulate at almost the first sound of his cannon. He allotted one week for the capture, and another for the massacring and ravishing. This would be ample time to finish at Haarlem; then, passing on in the same fashion from city to city, he would lay waste each in its turn, till nothing but ruins should remain in Holland. With this programme of triumph for himself, and of overthrow for the Dutch, he set vigorously to work. His cannon now began to thunder against the gate and ravelin. In three days a breach was made in the walls, and the soldiers were ordered to cross the

ditch and deliver the assault. Greedy of plunder, they rushed eagerly into the breach, but the Spaniards met a resistance which they little anticipated. The alarm-bell in Haarlem was rung, and men, women, and children swarmed to the wall to repel the foe. They opened their cannon upon the assailants, the musketry poured in its fire, but still more deadly was the shower of miscellaneous yet most destructive missiles rained from the ramparts on the hostile masses below. Blocks of stone, boiling pitch, blazing iron hoops, which clung to the necks of those on whom they fell, live coals, and other projectiles equally dreadful, which even Spanish ferocity could not withstand, were hurled against the invaders. After contending some time with a tempest of this sort, the attacking party had to retire, leaving 300 dead, and many officers killed or wounded.

This repulse undeceived Toledo. He saw that behind these feeble walls was a stout spirit, and that to make himself master of Haarlem would not be the easy achievement he had fancied it would prove. He now began to make his preparations on a

scale more commensurate with the difficulty of the enterprise; but a whole month passed away before he was ready to renew the assault. Meanwhile, the Prince of Orange exerted himself, not unsuccessfully, to reinforce the city. The continuance of the frost kept the lake congealed, and he was able to introduce into Haarlem, over the ice, some 170 sledges, laden with munitions and provisions, besides 400, veteran soldiers. A still larger body of 2,000 men sent by the prince were attacked and routed, having lost their way in the thick mist which, in these winter days, hung almost perpetually around the city, and covered the camp of the besiegers. Koning, the second in command of this expedition, being made prisoner, the Spaniards cut off his head and threw it over the walls into the city, with an inscription which bore that "this Koning or King was on his road, with two thousand auxiliaries, to raise the siege."

The rejoinder of the Haarlemers was in a vein of equal barbarity. They decapitated twelve of their prisoners, and, putting their heads into a cask, they rolled it down into the Spanish trenches, with this

label affixed: -- "The tax of the tenth penny, with the interest due thereon for delay of payment." The Spaniards retaliated by hanging up a group of Dutch prisoners by the feet in view of their countrymen on the walls; and the besieged cruelly responded by gibbeting a number of Spanish prisoners in sight of the camp. These horrible reciprocities, begun by Alva, were continued all the while that he and his son remained in the Netherlands.

By the end of January, 1573, Toledo was ready to resume the operations of the siege. He dug trenches to protect his men from the fire of the ramparts, a precaution which he had neglected at the beginning, owing to the contempt in which he held the foe. Three thousand sappers had been sent him from the mines of Liege. Thus reinforced he resumed the cannonade. But the vigilance and heroism of the citizens of Haarlem long rendered his efforts abortive. He found it hard by numbers, however great, and skill, however perfect, to batter down walls which a patriotism so lofty defended. The besieged would sally forth at unexpected

moments upon the Spanish camp, slay hundreds of the foe, set fire to his tents, seize his cannon and provisions, and return in triumph into the city. When Toledo's artillery had made an opening in the walls, and the Spaniards crowded into the breach, instead of the instant massacre and plunder which their imaginations had pictured, and which they panted to begin, they would find themselves in presence of an inner battery that the citizens had run up, and that awaited the coming of the Spaniards to rain its murderous fire upon them. The sappers and miners would push their underground trenches below the ramparts, but when just about to emerge upon the streets of the city, as they thought, they would find their progress suddenly stopped by a counter-mine, which brought them face to face in the narrow tunnel with the citizens, and they had to wage a hand-to-hand battle with them. These underground combats were of frequent occurrence. At other times the Haarlemers would dig deeper than the Spaniards, and, undermining them, would fill the excavation with gunpowder and set fire to it. The ground would suddenly open, and vomit forth vast masses of earth, stones, mining

implements, mixed horribly with the dissevered limbs of human beings.

After some days' cannonading, Toledo succeeded in battering down the wall that extended between the Gate of the Cross and that of St. John, and now he resolved to storm the breach with all his forces. Hoping to take the citizens by surprise, he assembled his troops over-night, and assigning to each his post, and particularly instructing all, he ordered them to advance. Before the sentinels on the walls were aware, several of the storming party had gained the summit of the breach, but here their progress was arrested.

The bells of Haarlem rang out the *Mama*, and the citizens, roused from sleep, hurried en masse to the ramparts, where a fierce struggle began with the Spaniards. Stones, clubs, fire-brands, every sort of weapon was employed to repel the foe, and the contest was still going on when the day broke. After morning mass in the Spanish camp, Toledo ordered the whole of his army to advance to the walls. By the sheer force of numbers the ravelin

which defended the Gate of the Cross was carried -
- a conquest that was to cost the enemy dear. The besiegers pressed tumultuously into the fortress, expecting to find a clear path into the city; but a most mortifying check awaited them. The inhabitants, labouring incessantly, had reared a half-moon battery behind the breached portion of the wall,[4] and instead of the various spoil of the city, for which the Spaniards were so greedily athirst, they beheld the cannon of the new erection frowning defiance upon them. The defenders opened fire upon the mass of their assailants pent up beneath, but a yet greater disaster hung over the enemy.

The ravelin had been previously undermined, the citizens foreseeing its ultimate capture, and now when they saw it crowded with the besiegers they knew that the moment was come for firing it. They lighted the match, and in a few moments came the peal of the explosion, and the huge mass, with the hundreds of soldiers and officers whom it enclosed, was seen to soar into the air, and then descend in a mingled shower of stones and

mangled and mutilated bodies. The Spaniards stood aghast at the occurrence. The trumpet sounded a retreat; and the patriots issuing forth, before the consternation had subsided, chased the besiegers to their encampments.[5]

Toledo saw the siege was making no progress. As fast as he battered down the old walls the citizens erected new defences; their constant sallies were taxing the vigilance and thinning the numbers of his troops; more of his men were perishing by cold and sickness than by battle; his supplies were often intercepted, and scarcity was beginning to be felt in his camp; in these circumstances he began to entertain the idea of raising the siege. Not a few of his officers concurred with him, deeming the possession of Haarlem not worth the labor and lives which it was costing. Others, however, were opposed to this course, and Toledo referred the matter to his father, the duke.

The stern Alva, not a little scandalised that his son should for a moment entertain such a thought, wrote commanding him to prosecute the siege, if

he would not show himself unworthy of the stock from which he was sprung. He advised him, instead of storming, to blockade the city; but in whatever mode, he must prosecute the siege till Haarlem had fallen. If he was unwilling to go on, Alva said he would come himself, sick though he was; or if his illness should make this impossible, he would bring the duchess from Spain, and place her in command of the army. Stung by this sarcasm, Toledo, regardless of all difficulties, resumed the operations of the siege.

In the middle of February the frost went off, and the ice dissolving, the Lake of Haarlem became navigable. In anticipation of this occurrence, the Prince of Orange had constructed a number of vessels, and lading them with provisions, dispatched them from Leyden. Sailing along the lake, with a favorable wind, they entered Haarlem in safety. This was done oftener than once, and the spectre of famine was thus kept at a distance. The besieged were in good spirits; so long as they held the lake they would have bread to eat, and so long as bread did not fail them they would

defend their city. Meanwhile they gave the besiegers no rest. The sallies from the town, sometimes from one quarter, sometimes from another, were of almost daily occurrence. On the 25th of March, 1,000 of the soldier-citizens threw themselves upon the outposts of Toledo's army, drove them in, burned 300 tents, and captured cannon, standards, and many waggon-loads of provisions, and returned with them to the city. The exploit was performed in the face of 30,000 men. This attacking party of 1,000 had slain each his man nearly, having left 800 dead in the Spanish camp, while only four of their own number had fallen.[6] The citizens were ever eager to provoke the Spaniards to battle; and with this view they erected altars upon the walls in sight of the camp, and tricked them out after the Romish fashion; they set up images, and walking in procession dressed in canonicals, they derided the Popish rites, in the hope of stinging the champions of that faith into fighting. They feared the approach of famine more than they did the Spanish sword. Alva was amazed, and evidently not a little mortified, to see such valor in rebels and heretics, and was unable to

withhold the expression of his astonishment. "Never was a place defended with such skill and bravery as Haarlem," said he, writing to Philip; "it was a war such as never was seen or heard of in any land on earth." [7]

But now the tide began to turn against the heroic champions of Protestant liberty. Haarlem was more closely invested than ever, and a more terrible enemy than the Spaniards began to make its appearance, gaunt famine namely. Count Bossu, the lieutenant of Toledo, had mustered a fleet of armed vessels at Amsterdam, and entering the Lake of Haarlem, fought a series of naval battles with the ships of the Prince of Orange for the possession of that inland sea. Being a vital point, it was fiercely contested on both sides, and after much bloodshed, victory declared for the Spaniards. This stopped nearly all supplies to the city by water. On the land side Haarlem was as completely blockaded, for Alva had sent forward additional reinforcements; and although William was most assiduous in dispatching relief for the besieged, the city was so strictly watched by the enemy that

neither men nor provisions could now enter it. In the end of May bread failed. The citizens sent to make William aware of their desperate straits. The prince employed a carrier pigeon as the bearer of his answer.[8] He bade them endure a little longer, and to encourage them to hold out he told them that he was assembling a force, and hoped soon to be able to throw provisions into their city. Meanwhile the scarcity became greater every day, and by the beginning of June the famine had risen to a most dreadful height. Ordinary food was no longer to be had, and the wretched inhabitants were reduced to the necessity of subsisting on the most loathsome and abominable substitutes. They devoured horses, dogs, cats, mice, and similar vermin. When these failed, they boiled the hides of animals and ate them; and when these too were exhausted, they searched the graveyards for nettles and rank grass. Groups of men, women, and children, smitten down by the famine, were seen dead in the streets. But though their numbers diminished, their courage did not abate. They still showed themselves on the walls, "the few performed the duties of many;"[9] and if a Spanish helmet ventured to appear above

the earth-works, a bullet from the ramparts, shot with deadly aim, tumbled its owner into the trenches.

They again made the prince aware of the misery to which they were reduced, adding that unless succours were sent within a very short time they would be compelled to surrender. William turned his eyes to the Protestant Queen of England, and the Lutheran princes of Germany, and implored them to intervene in behalf of the heroic little city. But Elizabeth feared to break with Philip; and the tide of Jesuit reaction in Germany was at that moment too powerful to permit of its Protestants undertaking any enterprise beyond their own borders; and so the sorely beleaguered city was left wholly in the hands of the prince. He did all which it was possible for one in his circumstances to do for its deliverance. He collected an army of 5,000, chiefly burghers of good condition in the cities of Holland, and sent them on to Haarlem, with 400 waggon-loads of provisions, having first given notice to the citizens by means of carrier pigeons of their approach. This

expedition William wished to conduct in person, but the States, deeming his life of more value to Holland than many cities, would not suffer him to risk it, and the enterprise was committed to the charge of Count Battenburg. The expedition set out on the evening of the 8th of July, but the pigeons that carried the letters of Orange having been shot, the plan of relief became known to the Spaniards, and their whole army was put under arms to await the coming of Battenburg. He thought to have passed their slumbering camp at midnight, but suddenly the whole host surrounded him; his fresh troops were unable to withstand the onset of those veterans; 2,000 were slain, including their leader; the rest were dispersed, and the convoy of provisions fell into the hands of the victors. William could do no more -- the last hope of Haarlem was gone.[10] The patriots now offered to Surrender on condition that the town were exempt from pillage, and the garrison permitted to march out. Toledo replied that the surrender must be unconditional. The men of Haarlem understood this to mean that Toledo had devoted them to destruction. They had before them death by

starvation or death by the Spaniards. The latter they regarded as by much the more dreadful alternative. The fighting men, in their despair, resolved on cutting their way, sword in hand, through the Spanish camp, in the hope that the enemy would put a curb on his ferocity when he found only women and children, and these emaciated and woe-struck, in the city. But the latter, terror-stricken at the thought of being abandoned, threw themselves down before their husbands and brothers, and clinging to their knees, piteously implored them not to leave them, and so melted them that they could not carry out their purpose.

They next resolved to form themselves into a hollow square, and placing their wives and children in the centre, march out and conquer or die. Toledo learned the desperate attempts which the men of Haarlem were revolving; and knowing that there was nothing of which they were not capable, and that should it happen that only ruins were left him, the fruits and honors of his dearly-won victory would escape him, he straightway sent a trumpeter to say that on payment of 200,000 guilders the city

would be spared and all in it pardoned, with the exception of fifty-seven persons whom he named.[11]

The exceptions were important, for those who had rendered the greatest service in the siege were precisely those who were most obnoxious to Toledo. It was with agony of mind that the citizens discussed the proposal, which would not have been accepted had not the German portion of the garrison insisted on surrender. A deputation was sent to Toledo on the 12th of July, to announce the submission of the city on the proposed terms. At the very moment that Toledo gave the solemn promise which led to this surrender, he had in his possession a letter from the Duke of Alva, commanding him to put the garrison to the sword, with the exception of the Germans, and to hang all the leading citizens of Haarlem.[12]

The first order issued to the Haarlemers after the surrender was to deposit their arms in the town-house; the second was to shut themselves up, the men in the Monastery of Zyl, and the women in the

cathedral. Toledo now entered the city. Implacable, indeed, must that revenge have been which the sights of woe that now met his gaze could not extinguish. After an exposure for seven months to the Spanish cannon, the city was little better than a heap of burning ruins. The streets were blocked up with piles of rubbish, mingled with the skeletons of animals from which the flesh had been torn, and the unburied bodies of those who had fallen in the defense, or died by the famine. But of all the memorials of the siege the most affecting were the survivors. Their protruding bones, parchment skin, hollow cheeks, and sunken eyes made them seem corpses that still retained the power of moving about. If they had been guilty of a crime in defying the soldiers of Spain, surely they had sufficiently atoned for their presumption.

On the third day after the surrender the Duke of Alva visited Haarlem, rode round it, and then took his departure, leaving it to his son to carry out the sequel. The treachery and barbarity of Naarden were repeated here. We shall not shock our readers with details. The fifty-seven persons excepted from

the amnesty were, of course, executed; but the murders were far from ending with these. The garrison, with the exception of the Germans, were massacred; 900 citizens were hanged as if they had been the vilest malefactors; the sick in the hospitals were carried out into the courtyard and dispatched; the eloquent Ripperda, whose patriotic address, already recorded, had so largely contributed to excite the men of Haarlem to resist, was beheaded in company of several noted citizens. Several hundreds of French, English, and Scotch soldiers were butchered. Five executioners, each with a staff of assistants, were kept in constant employment several days. At last, tired of labors and sick with horrors, they took 300 victims that still remained, tied them back to back in couples, and threw them into the lake.[13] The number put to death in cold blood is estimated at about 2,300, in addition to the many thousands that perished in the siege.

So awful was the tragedy of Haarlem! It wore outwardly the guise of victory for the Spaniards and of defeat to the Hollanders; and yet, when

closely examined, it is seen to be just the reverse. It had cost Alva 12,000 men; it had emptied his treasury; and, what was worse, it had broken the spell of invincibility, which lent such power to the Spanish arms. Europe had seen a little town defy the power of Philip for seven long months, and surrender at last only from pressure of famine. There was much here to encourage the other cities of Holland to stand for their liberties, and the renewed exhibition of perfidy and cruelty on the part of Toledo deepened their resolution to do so. It was clear that Spain could not accept of many such victories without eventually overthrowing her own power, and at the same time investing the cause of the adversary she was striving to crush with a moral prestige that would in the issue conduct it to triumph.

Such was the view taken by the Prince of Orange on a calm survey of all the circumstances attending the fall of Haarlem. He saw nothing in it that should cause him to think for one moment of abandoning the prosecution of his great design, or that should shake his confidence in the ultimate

triumph of his cause; and without abating a jot of courage he wrote to his deputy, Sonoy, in North Holland, to inspire the States to resist the power of Spain to the death. "Though God," he said, "had suffered Haarlem to fall, ought men therefore to forsake his Word? Was not their cause a righteous one? was not the Divine arm still able to uphold both it and them? Was the destruction of one city the ruin of the Church? The calamities and woes of Haarlem well deserved their commiseration, but the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church, and having now had a full disclosure made to them of the character and intentions of their enemy, and that in the war he was waging for the utter extirpation of truth, he shrunk from no perfidy and cruelty, and trampled on all laws, Divine and human, they ought the more courageously to resist him, convinced that the great Ruler would in the end appear for the vindication of the cause of righteousness, and the overthrow of wickedness. If Haarlem had fallen, other and stronger towns still stood, and they had been able to put themselves into a better posture of defense from the long detention of the Spaniards under the walls of

Haarlem, which had been subdued at last, not by the power of the enemy, but by the force of famine." The prince wound up his address with a reply to a question the States had put to him touching his foreign alliances, and whether he had secured the friendship of any powerful potentate abroad, on whose aid they could rely in the war. The answer of the prince reveals the depth of his piety, and the strength of his faith. "He had made a strict alliance," he informed the States, "with the Prince of princes for the defense of the good Christians and others of this oppressed country, who never forsook those who trusted in him, and would assuredly, at the last, confound both his and their enemies. He was therefore resolved never to forsake his dear country, but by venturing both life and fortune, to make use of those means which the Lord of Hosts had supplied him with." [14]

Footnotes:

1. Motley, vol. 2., p. 58.
2. Strada, 7. 74.
3. Strada, 7. 74.

4. Hooft, 7. 293.
5. Ibid.
6. Thaunus, tom. 3., p. 218.
7. Correspondance de Philippe II., 2. 1230.
8. "They revived," says Strada,:" the ancient invention of carrier pigeons. For a while before they were blocked up they sent to the prince's fleet, and to the nearest towns of their own party, some of these pigeons..By these winged posts the Prince of Orange encouraged the townsmen to hold out for the last three months; till one of them, tired with flying, lighted upon a tent, and being shot by a soldier, ignorant of the stratagem, the mystery of the letters was discovered." (Bk, 7., p. 74,)
9. Strada, bk. 7., p. 74.
10. Bor, 6. 440. Hooft, 8. 312. Motley, vol. 2., p. 68. Watson, vol. 2., pp. 82, 83.
11. Hooft, 8. 313.
12. Correspondance de Philippe II., 2. 1253
13. Brandt, vol. 1., p.303. Bor, 6. 441. Hooft, 8. 315, 316. Motley, vol. 2, p. 70.
14. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 304.

Chapter 19

Siege of Alkmaar, and Recall of Alva

THE Duke of Alva soon found that if he had taken Haarlem he had crippled himself. The siege had emptied his military chest; he was greatly in arrears with his troops, and now his soldiers broke out into mutiny, and absolutely refused to march to Alkmaar and commence its siege till the sums owing them were paid. Six weeks passed away before the army was reduced to obedience, and the duke enabled to resume his programme of the war. His own prestige as a disciplinarian had also suffered immensely. Alkmaar was situated at the extremity of the peninsula, amid the lagunes of North Holland. It was late in the season when the Spanish army, 16,000 strong, sat down before this little town, with its garrison of 800 soldiers, and its 1,300 citizens capable of bearing arms. Had it been invested earlier in the summer it must have fallen, for it was then comparatively defenceless, and its

population divided between the prince and the duke; but while Alva was quelling the mutiny of his troops, Alkmaar was strengthening its defences, and William was furnishing it with provisions and garrisoning it with soldiers. The commander of the besieging army was still Toledo.

When Governor Sonoy saw the storm rolling up from the south, and when he thought of his own feeble resources for meeting it, he became somewhat despondent, and wrote to the prince expressing a hope that he had been able to ally himself with some powerful potentate, who would supply him with money and troops to resist the terrible Spaniard. William replied to his deputy, gently chiding him for his want of faith. He had indeed contracted alliance, he said, with a mighty King, who would provide armies to fight his own battles, and he bade Sonoy not grow faint-hearted, as if the arm of that King had grown weak. At the very moment that William was striving to inspire himself and his followers, by lifting his eyes to a mightier throne than any on earth, Alva was taking the most effectual means to raise up invincible

defenders of Holland's Protestantism, and so realize the expectations of the prince, and justify his confidence in that higher Power on whom he mainly leaned. The duke took care to leave the people of Alkmaar in no doubt as to the fate in reserve for them should their city be taken. He had dealt gently with Haarlem; he had hanged only 900 of its citizens; but he would wreak a full measure of vengeance on Alkmaar. "If I take Alkmaar," he wrote to Philip, "I am resolved not to leave a single creature alive; the knife shall be put to every throat. Since the example of Haarlem has proved of no use, perhaps an example of cruelty will bring the other cities to their senses." [1] Alva thought that he was rendering certain the submission of the men over whose heads he hung that terrible threat: he was only preparing discomfiture for himself by kindling in their breasts the flame of an unconquerable courage.

Toledo planted a battery on the two opposite sides of the town, in the hope of dividing the garrison. After a cannonade of twelve hours he had breached the walls. He now ordered his troops to

storm. They advanced. in overwhelming numbers, confident of victory, and rending the air with their shouts as if they had already won it. They dashed across the moat, they swarmed up the breach, but only to be grappled with by the courageous burghers, and flung headlong into the ditch below. Thrice were the murderous hordes of Alva repulsed, thrice did they return to the assault. The rage of the assailants was inflamed with each new check, but Spanish fury, even though sustained by Spanish discipline, battled in vain against Dutch intrepidity and patriotism. The round-shot of the cannon ploughed long vacant lines in the beleaguering masses; the musketry poured in its deadly volleys; a terrible rain of boiling oil, pitch, and water, mingled with tarred burning hoops, unslaked lime, and great stones, descended from the fortifications; and such of the besiegers as were able to force their way up through that dreadful tempest to the top of the wall, found that they had scaled the ramparts only to fall by the daggers of their-defenders. The whole population of the town bore its part in the defense. Not only the matrons and virgins of Alkmaar, but the very children, were

constantly passing between the arsenal and the walls, carrying ammunition and missiles of all sorts to their husbands, brothers, and fathers, careless of the shot that was falling thick around them. The apprehension of those far more terrible calamities that were sure to follow the entrance of the Spaniards, made them forgetful of every other danger. It is told of Ensign Solis, that having mounted the breach he had a moment's leisure to survey the state of matters within the city, before he was seized and flung from the fortifications. Escaping with his life, he was able to tell what that momentary glance had revealed to him within the walls. He had beheld no masses of military, no men in armor; on the streets of the beleaguered town he saw none but plain men, the most of whom wore the garb of fishermen. Humiliating it was to the mailed chivalry of Spain to be checked, flung back, and routed by "plain men in the garb of fishermen." The burghers of Alkmaar wore their breastplates under their fisherman's coat -- the consciousness, namely, of a righteous cause.

The assault had commenced at three of the

afternoon; it was now seven o'clock of the evening, and the darkness was closing in. It was evident that Alkmaar would not be taken that day. A thousand Spaniards lay dead in the trenches,[2] while of the defenders only thirteen citizens and twenty-four of the garrison had fallen. The trumpet sounded a recall for the night.

Next morning the cannonade was renewed, and after some 700 shot had been discharged against the walls a breach was made. The soldiers were again ordered to storm. The army refused to obey. It was in vain that Toledo threatened this moment and cajoled the next, not a man in his camp would venture to approach those terrible ramparts which were defended, they gravely believed, by invisible powers. The men of Alkmaar, they had been told, worshipped the devil, and the demons of the pit fought upon the walls of their city, for how otherwise could plain burghers have inflicted so terrible a defeat upon the legions of Spain? Day passed after day, to the chagrin of Toledo, but still the Spaniards kept at a safe distance from those dreaded bulwarks on which invisible champions

kept watch and ward. The rains set in, for the season was now late, and the camping-ground became a marsh. A yet more terrible disaster impended over them, provided they remained much longer before Alkmaar, and of this they had certain information. The Dutch had agreed to cut their dykes, and bury the country round Alkmaar, and the Spanish camp with it, at the bottom of the ocean. Already two sluices had been opened, and the waters of the North Sea, driven by a strong north-west wind, had rushed in and partially inundated the land; this was only a beginning: the Hollanders had resolved to sacrifice, not only their crops, but a vast amount of property besides, and by piercing their two great dykes, to bring the sea over Toledo and his soldiers. The Spaniards had found it hard to contend against the burghers of Alkmaar, they would find it still harder to combat the waves of the North Sea. Accordingly Don Frederic de Toledo summoned a council of his officers, and after a short deliberation it was resolved to raise the siege, the council having first voted that it was no disgrace to the Spanish army to retire, seeing it was fleeing not before man, but

before the ocean.

The humiliations of Alva did not stop here. To reverses on land were added disasters at sea. To punish Amsterdam for the aid it had given the Spaniards in the siege of Haarlem, North Holland fitted out a fleet, and blockaded the narrow entrance of the Y which leads into the Zuyder Zee. Shut out from the ocean, the trade of the great commercial city was at an end. Alva felt it incumbent on him to come to the help of a town which stood almost alone in Holland in its adherence to the Spanish cause. He constructed a fleet of still larger vessels, and gave the command of it to the experienced and enterprising Count Bossu. The two fleets came to a trial of strength, and the battle issued in the defeat of the Spaniards. Some of their ships were taken, others made their escape, and there remained only the admiral's galley. It was named the Inquisition, and being the largest and most powerfully armed of all in the fleet, it offered a long and desperate resistance before striking its flag. It was not till of the 300 men on board 220 were killed, and all the rest but

fifteen were wounded, that Bossu surrendered himself prisoner to the Dutch commander.[3] Well aware that it was of the last consequence for them to maintain their superiority at sea, the Dutch hailed this victory with no common joy, and ordered public thanks to be offered for it in all the churches of Holland.

With the turn in the tide of Spanish successes, the eyes of Philip began to open. Alva, it is true, in all his barbarities had but too faithfully carried out the wishes, if not the express orders, of his master, but that master now half suspected that this policy of the sword and the gallows was destined not to succeed. Nor was Philip alone in that opinion. There were statesmen at Madrid who were strongly counselling the monarch to make trial of more lenient measures with the Netherlanders. Alva felt that Philip was growing cold toward him, and alleging that his health had sustained injury from the moist climate, and the fatigues he had undergone, he asked leave to retire from the government of the Low Countries. The king immediately recalled him, and appointed the Duke

de Medina Coeli, governor in his room. Alva's manner of taking leave of Amsterdam, where he had been staying some time, was of a piece with all his previous career. He owed vast sums to the citizens, but had nothing wherewith to pay. The duke, however, had no difficulty in finding his way out of a position which might have been embarrassing to another man. He issued a proclamation, inviting his creditors to present their claims in person on a certain day. On the night previous to the day appointed, the duke attended by his retinue quitted Amsterdam, taking care that neither by tuck of drum nor salvo of cannon should he make the citizens aware that he was bidding them adieu. He traveled to Spain by way of Germany, and boasted to Count Louis van Koningstein, the uncle of the prince, at whose house he lodged a night, that during his government of five and a half years he had caused 18,000 heretics to be put to death by the hands of the executioner, besides a much greater number whom he had slain with the sword in the cities which he besieged, and in the battles he had fought.[4]

When the Duke de Medina Coeli arrived in the Netherlands, he stood aghast at the terrible wreck his predecessor had left behind him. The treasury was empty, the commerce of the country was destroyed, and though the inhabitants were impoverished, the taxes which were still attempted to be wrung from them were enormous. The cry of the land was going up to heaven, from Roman Catholic as well as Protestant. The cautious governor, seeing more difficulty than glory in the administration assigned to him, "slipped his neck out of the collar," says Brandt, and returned to Spain. He was succeeded by Don Luis de Requesens and Cuniga, who had been governor at Milan. The Netherlanders knew little of their new ruler, but they hoped to find him less the demon, and more the man, than the monstrous compound of all iniquity who for five years had revelled in their blood and treasure. They breathed more freely for a little space. The first act of the new governor was to demolish the statue which Alva had erected of himself in the citadel of Antwerp; Requesens wished the Netherlanders to infer from this

beginning that the policy of Alva had been disavowed at head-quarters, and that from this time forward more lenient measures would be pursued. William was not to be imposed upon by this shallow device. Fearing that the lenity of Requesens might be even more fatal in the end than the ferocity of Alva, he issued an address to the States, in which he reminded them that the new deputy was still a Spaniard -- a name of terrific import in Dutch ears -- that he was the servant of a despot, and that not one Hollander could Requesens slay or keep alive but as Philip willed; that in the Cabinet of Madrid there were abysses below abysses; that though it might suit the monarch of Spain to wear for a moment the guise of moderation, they might depend upon it that his aims were fixed and unalterable, and that what he sought, and would pursue to the last soldier in his army, and the last hour of his earthly existence, was the destruction of Dutch liberty, and the extermination of the Protestant faith; that if they stopped where they were -- in the middle of the conflict -- all that they had already suffered and sacrificed, all the blood that had been shed, the tens

of thousands of their brethren hanged on gibbets, burned at stakes, or slain in battle, their mothers, wives, and daughters subjected to horrible outrage and murder, all would have been endured in vain. If their desire of peace should reduce them into a compromise with the tyrant, it would assuredly happen that the abhorred yoke of Spain would yet be riveted upon their necks. The conflict, it was true, was one of the most awful that nation had ever been called to wage, but the part of wisdom was to fight it out to the end, assured that, come when it might, the end would be good; the righteous King would crown them with victory. These words, not less wise than heroic, revived the spirits of the Dutch.

At this stage of the struggle (1573) a question of the gravest kind came up for discussion -- namely, the public toleration of the Roman worship. In the circumstances of the Netherlanders the delicacy of this question was equal to its difficulty. It was not proposed to proscribe belief in the Romish dogmas, or to punish any one for his faith; it was not proposed even to forbid the

celebration in private of the Romish rites; all that was proposed was to forbid their public exercise. There were some who argued that their contest was, at bottom, a contest against the Roman faith; the first object was liberty, but they sought liberty that their consciences might be free in the matter of worship; their opponents were those who professed that faith, and who sought to reduce them under its yoke, and it seemed to them a virtual repudiation of the justness of their contest to tolerate what in fact was their real enemy, Romanism. This was to protect with the one hand the foe they were fighting against with the other. It was replied to this that the Romanist detested the tyranny of Alva not less than the Protestant, that he fought side by side on the ramparts with his Protestant fellow-subject, and that both had entered into a confederacy to oppose a tyrant, who was their common enemy, on condition that each should enjoy liberty of conscience.

Nevertheless, not long after this, the States of Holland, at an assembly at Leyden, resolved to prohibit the public exercise of the Romish religion.

The Prince of Orange, when the matter was first broached, expressed a repugnance to the public discussion of it, and a strong desire that its decision should be postponed; and when at last the resolution of the States was arrived at, he intimated, if not his formal dissent, his non-concurrence in the judgment to which they had come. He tells us so in his Apology, published in 1580; but at the same time, in justification of the States, he adds, "that they who at the first judged it for the interest and advantage of the country, that one religion should be tolerated as well as the other, were afterwards convinced by the bold attempts, cunning devices, and treacheries of the enemies, who had insinuated themselves among the people, that the State was in danger of inevitable destruction unless the exercise of the Roman religion were suspended, since those who professed it (at least the priests) had sworn allegiance to the Pope, and laid greater stress on their oaths to him than to any others which they took to the civil magistrate." The prince, in fact, had come even then to hold what is now the generally received maxim, that no one ought to suffer the smallest

deprivation of his civil rights on account of his religious belief; but at the same time he felt, what all have felt who have anxiously studied to harmonize the rights of conscience with the safety of society, that there are elements in Romanism that make it impossible, without endangering the State, to apply this maxim in all its extent to the Papal religion. The maxim, so just in itself, is applicable to all religions, and to Romanism among the rest, so far as it is a religion; but William found that it is more than a religion, that it is a government besides; and while there may be a score of religions in a country, there can be but one government in it. The first duty of every government is to maintain its own unity and supremacy; and when it prosecutes any secondary end -- and the toleration of conscience is to a government but a secondary end -- when, we say, it prosecutes any secondary object, to the parting in twain of the State, it contravenes its own primary end, and overthrows itself. The force with which this consideration pressed itself upon the mind of William of Orange, tolerant even to the measure of the present day, is seen from what he says a little

farther on in his Apology. "It was not just," he adds, "that such people should enjoy a privilege by the means of which they endeavored to bring the land under the power of the enemy; they sought to betray the lives and fortunes of the subjects by depriving them not of one, two, or three privileges, but of all the rights and liberties which for immemorial ages had been preserved and defended by their predecessors from generation to generation." [5]

From this time forward the Reformed religion as taught in Geneva and the Palatinate was the one faith publicly professed in Holland, and its worship alone was practiced in the national churches. No Papist, however, was required to renounce his faith, and full liberty was given him to celebrate his worship in private. Mass, and all the attendant ceremonies, continued to be performed in private houses for a long while after. To all the Protestant bodies in Holland, and even to the Anabaptists, a full toleration was likewise accorded. Conscience may err, they said, but it ought to be left free. Should it invade the magistrate's sphere, he has the

right to repel it by the sword; if it goes astray within its own domain, it is equally foolish and criminal to compel it by force to return to the right road; its accountability is to God alone.

Footnotes:

1. Correspondance de Philippe II., 2. 1264.
2. Hooft, 8. 324. Bor, 6. 453. Watson, 2. 95, 96.
3. Thaurus, lib. 4., sec. 7. Meteren, p. 25.
Watson, vol. 2., p. 99.
4. Hooft, lib. 8. 332. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 306.
5. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 307, 308.

Chapter 20

Third Campaign of William and Death of Count Louis of Nassau

THE only town in the important island of Walcheren that now held for the King of Spain was Middelburg. It had endured a siege of a year and a half at the hands of the soldiers of the Prince of Orange. Being the key of the whole of Zeeland, the Spaniards struggled as hard to retain it as the patriots did to gain possession of it. The garrison of Middelburg, reduced to the last extremity of famine, were now feeding on horses, dogs, rats, and other revolting substitutes for food, and the Spanish commander Mondragon, a brave and resolute man, had sent word to Requesens, that unless the town was succored in a very few days it must necessarily surrender. Its fall would be a great blow to the interests of Philip, and his Governor of the Low Countries exerted himself to the utmost to throw supplies into it, and enable it to hold out. He

collected, a fleet of seventy-five sail at Bergen-op-Zoom, another of thirty ships at Antwerp, and storing them with provisions and military equipments, he ordered them to steer for Middelburg and relieve it. But unhappily for Requesens, and the success of his project, the Dutch were masters at sea. Their ships were manned by the bravest and most skillful sailors in the world; nor were they only adventurous seamen, they were firm patriots, and ready to shed the last drop of their blood for their country and their religious liberties.

They served not for wages, as did many in the land armies of the prince, which being to a large extent made up of mercenaries, were apt to mutiny when ordered into battle, if it chanced that their pay was in arrears; the soldiers of the fleet were enthusiastic in the cause for which they fought, and accounted that to beat the enemy was sufficient reward for their valor and blood.

The numerous fleet of Requesens, in two squadrons, was sailing down the Scheldt (27th

January, 1574), on its way to raise the siege of Middelburg, when it sighted near Romerswael, drawn up in battle array, the ships of the Sea Beggars. The two fleets closed in conflict. After the first broadside, ship grappled with ship, and the Dutch leaping on board the Spanish vessels, a hand-to-hand combat with battle-axes, daggers, and pistols, was commenced on the deck of each galley. The admiral's ship ran foul of a sand-bank, and was then set fire to by the Zealanders; the other commander, Romers, hastened to his relief, but only to have the flames communicated to his own ship. Seeing his galley about to sink, Romers jumped overboard and saved his life by swimming ashore. The other ships of the Spanish fleet fared no better. The Zealanders burnt some, they sunk others, and the rest they seized. The victory was decisive. Twelve hundred Spaniards, including the Admiral De Glimes, perished in the flames of the burning vessels, or fell in the fierce struggles that raged on their decks. Requesens himself, from the dyke of Zacherlo, had witnessed, without being able to avert, the destruction of his fleet, which he had constructed at great expense, and on which he

built such great hopes. When the second squadron learned that the ships of the first were at the bottom of the sea, or in the hands of the Dutch, its commander instantly put about and made haste to return to Antwerp. The surrender of Middelburg, which immediately followed, gave the Dutch the command of the whole sea-board of Zealand and Holland.

Success was lacking to the next expedition undertaken by William. The time was come, he thought, to rouse the Southern Netherlands, that had somewhat tamely let go their liberties, to make another attempt to recover them before the yoke of Spain should be irretrievably riveted upon their neck. Accordingly he instructed his brother, Count Louis, to raise a body of troops in Germany, where he was then residing, in order to make a third invasion of the Central Provinces of the Low Countries. There would have been no lack of recruits had Louis possessed the means of paying them; but his finances were at zero; his brother's fortune, as well as his own, was already swallowed up, and before enlisting a single soldier, Louis had

first of all to provide funds to defray the expense of the projected expedition. He trusted to receive some help from the German princes, he negotiated loans from his own relations and friends, but his main hopes were rested on France. The court of Charles IX. was then occupied with the matter of the election of the Duke of Anjou to the throne of Poland, and that monarch was desirous of appearing friendly to a cause which, but two years before, he had endeavored to crush in the St. Bartholomew Massacre; and so Count Louis received from France as many promises as would, could he have coined them into gold, have enabled him to equip and keep in the field ten armies; but of sterling money he had scarce so much as to defray the expense of a single battalion. He succeeded, however, in levying a force of some 4,000 horse and 7,000 foot [1] in the smaller German States, and with these he set out about the beginning of February, 1575, for Brabant. He crossed the Rhine, and advanced to the Meuse, opposite Maestricht, in the hope that his friends in that town would open its gates when they saw him approach. So great was their horror of the

Spaniards that they feared to do so; and, deeming his little army too weak to besiege so strongly fortified a place, he continued his march down the right bank of the river till he came to Roeremonde. Here, too, the Protestants were overawed. Not a single person durst show himself on his side. He continued his course along the river-banks, in the hope of being joined by the troops of his brother, according to the plan of the campaign; the Spanish army, under Avila, following him all the while on a parallel line on the opposite side of the river. On the 13th of April, Louis encamped at the village of Mock, on the confines of Cleves; and here the Spaniards, having suddenly crossed the Meuse and sat down right in his path, offered him battle. He knew that his newly-levied recruits would fight at great disadvantage with the veteran soldiers of Spain, yet the count had no alternative but to accept the combat offered him. The result was disastrous in the extreme. After a long and fierce and bloody contest the patriot army was completely routed. Present on that fatal field, along with Count Louis, were his brother Henry, and Duke Christopher, son of the Elector of the Palatinate;

and repeatedly, during that terrible day, they intrepidly rallied their soldiers and turned the tide of battle, but only to be overpowered in the end. When they saw that the day was lost, and that some 6,000 of their followers lay dead around them, they mustered a little band of the survivors, and once more, with fierce and desperate courage, charged the enemy. They were last seen fighting in the melee. From that conflict they never emerged, nor were their dead bodies ever discovered; but no doubt can be entertained of their fate. Falling in the general butchery, their corpses would be undistinguishable in the ghastly heap of the slain, and would receive a common burial with the rest of the dead.

So fell Count Louis of Nassau. He was a brilliant soldier, an able negotiator, and a firm patriot. In him the Protestant cause lost an enthusiastic and enlightened adherent, his country's liberty a most devoted champion, and his brother, the prince, one who was "his right hand" as regarded the prompt and able execution of his plans. To Orange the loss was irreparable, and was

felt all the more at this moment, seeing that St. Aldegonde, upon whose sagacity and patriotism Orange placed such reliance, was a captive in the Spanish camp. This was the third brother whom William had lost in the struggle against Spain. The repeated deaths in the circle of those so dear to him, as well as the many other friends, also dear though not so closely related, who had fallen in the war, could not but afflict him with a deep sense of isolation and loneliness. To abstract his mind from his sorrows, to forget the graves of his kindred, the captivity and death of his friends, the many thousands of his followers now sleeping their last sleep on the battle-field, his own ruined fortune, the vanished splendor of his home, where a once princely affluence had been replaced by something like penury, his escutcheon blotted, and his name jeered at -- to rise above all these accumulated losses and dire humiliations, and to prosecute with unflinching resolution his great cause, required indeed a stout heart, and a firm faith. Never did the prince appear greater than now.

The gloom of disaster but brought out the

splendor of his virtues and the magnanimity of his soul. The burden of the great struggle now lay on him alone, he had to provide funds, raise armies, arrange the plan of campaigns, and watch over their execution. From a sick-bed he was often called to direct battles, and the siege or defense of cities. Of the friends who had commenced the struggle with him many were now no more, and those who survived were counseling submission; the prince alone refused to despair of the deliverance of his country. Through armies foiled, and campaigns lost, through the world's pity or its scorn, he would march on to that triumph which he saw in the distance. When friends fell, he stayed his heart with a sublime confidence on the eternal Arm. Thus stripped of human defenses, he displayed a pure devotion to country and to religion. It was this that placed the Prince of Orange in the first rank of greatness.

There have been men who have been borne to greatness upon the steady current of continuous good fortune; they never lost a battle, and they never suffered check or repulse. Their labors have

been done, and their achievements accomplished, at the head of victorious armies, and in the presence of admiring senates, and of applauding and grateful nations. These are great; but there is an order of men who are greater still. There have been a select few who have rendered the very highest services to mankind, not with the applause and succor of those they sought to benefit, but in spite of their opposition, amid the contempt and scorn of the world, and amid ever-blackening and ever-bursting disasters, and who lifting their eyes from armies and thrones have fixed them upon a great unseen Power, in whose righteousness and justice they confided, and so have been able to struggle on till they attained their, sublime object. These are the peers of the race, they are the first magnates of the world. In this order of great men stands William, Prince of Orange. On receiving the melancholy intelligence of the death of his brother on the fatal field of Mook, William retreated northward into Holland. He expected that the Spaniards would follow him, and improve their victory while the terror it inspired was still recent; but Avila was prevented pursuing him by a mutiny

that broke out in his army. The pay of his soldiers was three years in arrears, and instead of the barren pursuit of William, the Spanish host turned its steps in the direction of the rich city of Antwerp, resolved to be its own paymaster. The soldiers quartered themselves upon the wealthiest of the burghers. They took possession of the most sumptuous mansions, they feasted on the most luxurious dishes, and daily drank the most delicate wines. At the end of three weeks the citizens, wearied of seeing their substance thus devoured by the army, consented to pay 400,000 crowns, which the soldiers were willing to receive as part payment of the debt due to them. The mutineers celebrated their victory over the citizens by a great feast on the Mere, or principal street of Antwerp. They were busy carousing, gambling, and masquerading when the boom of cannon struck upon their ears. William's admiral had advanced up the Scheldt, and was now engaged with the Spanish fleet in the river. The revelers, leaving their cups and grasping their muskets, hurried to the scene of action, but only to be the witnesses of the destruction of their ships. Some were blazing in the flames, others

were sinking with their crews, and the patriot admiral, having done his work, was sailing away in triumph. We have recorded the destruction of the other division of Philip's fleet; this second blow completed its ruin, and thus the King of Spain was as far as ever from the supremacy of the sea, without which, as Requesens assured him, he would not be able to make himself master of Holland.

Another act of the great drama now opened. We have already recorded the fall of Haarlem, after unexampled horrors. Though little else than a city of ruins and corpses when it fell to the Spaniards, its possession gave them great advantages. It was an encampment between North and South Holland, and cut the Country in two. They were desirous of strengthening their position by adding Leyden to Haarlem, the town next to it on the south, and a place of yet greater importance. Accordingly, it was first blockaded by the Spanish troops in the winter of 1574; but the besiegers were withdrawn in the spring to defend the frontier, attacked by Count Louis. After his defeat, and the extinction of

the subsequent mutiny in the Spanish army, the soldiers returned to the siege, and Leyden was invested a second time on the 26th of May, 1574. The siege of Leyden is one of the most famous in history, and had a most important bearing on the establishment of Protestantism in Holland. Its devotion and heroism in the cause of liberty and religion have, like a mighty torch, illumined other lands besides Holland, and fired the soul of more peoples than the Dutch.

Leyden is situated on a low plain covered with rich pastures, smiling gardens, fruitful orchards, and elegant villas. It is washed by an arm of the Rhine, that, on approaching its walls, parts into an infinity of streamlets which, flowing languidly through the city, fill the canals that traverse the streets, making it a miniature of Venice. Its canals are spanned by 150 stone bridges, and lined by rows of limes and poplars, which soften and shade the architecture of its spacious streets, that present to the view public buildings and sumptuous private mansions, churches with tall steeples, and universities and halls with imposing facades. At the

time of the siege the city had a numerous population, and was defended by a deep moat and a strong wall flanked with bastions. The city was a prize well worth all the ardor displayed both in its attack and defense. Its standing or falling would determine the fate of Holland.

When the citizens saw themselves a second time shut in by a beleaguering army of 8,000 men, and a bristling chain of sixty-four redoubts, they reflected with pain on their neglect to introduce provisions and reinforcements into their city during the two months the Spaniards had been withdrawn to defend the frontier. They must now atone for their lack of prevision by relying on their own stout arms and bold hearts. There were scarce any troops in the city besides the burghal guard. Orange told them plainly that three months must pass over them before it would be possible by any efforts of their friends outside to raise the siege; and he entreated them to bear in mind the vast consequences that must flow from the struggle on which they were entering, and that, according as they should bear themselves in it with a craven heart or with an

heroic spirit, so would they transmit to their descendants the vile estate of slavery or the glorious heritage of liberty.

The defense of the town was entrusted to Jean van der Does, Lord of Nordwyck. Of noble birth and poetic genius, Does was also a brave soldier, and an illustrious patriot. He breathed his own heroic spirit into the citizens. The women as well as men worked day and night upon the walls, to strengthen them against the Spanish guns. They took stock of the provisions in the city, and arranged a plan for their economical distribution. They passed from one to another the terrible words, "Zutphen," "Naarden," names suggestive of horrors not to be mentioned, but which had so burned into the Dutch the detestation of the Spaniards, that they were resolved to die rather than surrender to an enemy whose instincts were those of tigers or fiends.

It was at this moment, when the struggle around Leyden was about to begin, that Philip attempted to filch by a stratagem the victory which

he found it so hard to win by the sword. Don Luis de Requesens now published at Brussels, in the king's name, a general pardon to the Netherlanders, on condition that they went to mass and received absolution from a priest, [2] Almost all the clergy and many of the leading citizens were excepted from this indemnity. "Pardon!" exclaimed the indignant Hollanders when they read the king's letter of grace; "before we can receive pardon we must first have committed offense. We have suffered the wrong, not done it; and now the wrongdoer comes, not to sue for, but to bestow forgiveness! How grateful ought we to be!" As regarded going to mass, Philip could not but know that this was the essence of the whole quarrel, and to ask them to submit on this point was simply to ask them to surrender to him the victory. Their own reiterated vows, the thousands of their brethren martyred, their own consciences -- all forbade.

They would sooner go to the halter. There was now scarcely a native Hollander who was a Papist; and speaking in their name, the Prince of Orange declared, "As long as there is a living man left in

the country, we will contend for our liberty and our religion." [3] The king's pardon had failed to open the gates of Leyden, and its siege now went forward.

Footnotes:

1. Thaurus, lib. 4. Meteren, p. 133.
2. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 310.
3. Archives de la Maison d'Orangc, 5:27 -- apud Motley, vol. 2., p. 122.

Chapter 21

The Siege of Leyden

FOR two months the citizens manned their walls, and with stern courage kept at bay the beleaguering host, now risen from 10,000 to three times that number. At the end of this period provisions failed them. For some days the besieged subsisted on malt-cake, and when that was consumed they had recourse to the flesh of dogs and horses. Numbers died of starvation, and others sickened and perished through the unnatural food on which the famine had thrown them. Meanwhile a greater calamity even than would have been the loss of Leyden seemed about to overtake them.

Struck down by fever, the result of ceaseless toil and the most exhausting anxiety, William of Orange lay apparently at the point of death. The illness of the prince was carefully concealed, lest the citizens of Leyden should give themselves up altogether to despair. Before lying down, the prince had arranged the only plan by which, as it appeared

to him, it was possible to drive out the Spaniards and raise the siege; and in spite of his illness he issued from his sick-bed continual orders respecting the execution of that project. No force at his disposal was sufficient to enable him to break through the Spanish lines, and throw provisions into the starving city, in which the suffering and misery had now risen to an extreme pitch. In this desperate strait he thought of having recourse to a more terrible weapon than cannon or armies. He would summon the ocean against the Spaniards. He would cut the dykes and sink the country beneath the sea. The loss would be tremendous; many a rich meadow, many a fruitful orchard, and many a lovely villa would be drowned beneath the waves; but the loss, though great, would be recoverable: the waves would again restore what they had swallowed up; whereas, should the country be overwhelmed by the power of Spain, never again would it be restored: the loss would be eternal. What the genius and patriotism of William had dared his eloquence prevailed upon the States to adopt.

Putting their spades into the great dyke that shielded their land, they said, "Better a drowned country than a lost country." Besides the outer and taller rampart, within which the Hollanders had sought safety from their enemy the sea, there rose concentric lines of inner and lower dykes, all of which had to be cut through before the waves could flow over the country.

The work was executed with equal alacrity and perseverance, but not with the desired result. A passage had been dug for the waters, but that ocean which had appeared but too ready to overwhelm its barriers when the inhabitants sought to keep it out, seemed now unwilling to overflow their country, as if it were in league with the tyrant from whose fury the Dutch besought it to cover them. Strong north-easterly winds, prevailing that year longer than usual, beat back the tides, and lowering the level of the German Sea, prevented the ingress of the waters. The flood lay only a few inches in depth on the face of Holland; and unless it should rise much higher, William's plan for relieving Leyden would, after all, prove abortive.

At great labor and expense he had constructed a flotilla of 200 fiat-bottomed vessels at Rotterdam and Delft; these he had mounted with guns, and manned with 800 Zealanders, and stored with provisions to be thrown into the famine-stricken city, so soon as the depth of water, now slowly rising over meadow and corn-field, should enable his ships to reach its gates. But the flotilla lay immovable. The expedition was committed to Admiral Boisot; the crews were selected from the fleet of Zealand, picked veterans, with faces hacked and scarred with wounds which they had received in their former battles with the Spaniards; and to add to their ferocious looks they wore the Crescent in their caps, with the motto, "Turks rather than Spaniards." Ships, soldiers, and victuals -- all had William provided; but unless the ocean should cooperate all had been provided in vain.

Something like panic seized on the besiegers when they beheld this new and terrible power advancing to assail them. Danger and death in every conceivable form they had been used to

meet, but they never dreamt of having to confront the ocean. Against such an enemy what could their or any human power avail? But when they saw that the rise of the waters was stayed, their alarm subsided, and they began to jeer and mock at the stratagem of the prince, which was meant to be grand, but had proved contemptible. He had summoned the ocean to his aid, but the ocean would not come. In the city of Leyden despondency had taken the place of elation. When informed of the expedient of the prince for their deliverance they had rung their bells for very joy; but when they saw the ships, laden with that bread for lack of which some six or eight thousand of their number had already died, after entering the gaps in the outer dyke, arrested in their progress to their gates, hope again forsook them. Daily they climbed the steeples and towers, and scanned with anxious eyes the expanse around, if haply the ocean was coming to their aid. Day after day they had to descend with the same depressing report: the wind was still adverse; the waters refused to rise, and the ships could not float. The starvation and misery of Leyden was greater even than that which

Haarlem had endured. For seven weeks there had not been a morsel of bread within the city. The vilest substitutes were greedily devoured; and even these were now almost exhausted. To complete their suffering, pestilence was added to famine. Already reduced to skeletons, hundreds had no strength to withstand this new attack. Men and women every hour dropped dead on the streets. Whole families were found to be corpses when the doors of their houses were forced open in the morning, and the survivors had hardly enough strength left to bury them. The dead were carried to their graves by those who to-morrow would need the same office at the hands of others.

Amid the awful reiteration of these dismal scenes, one passion still survived-resistance to the Spaniards. Some few there were, utterly broken down under this accumulation of sorrows, who did indeed whisper the word "surrender," deeming that even Spanish soldiers could inflict nothing more terrible than they were already enduring. But these proposals were instantly and indignantly silenced by the great body of the citizens, to whom neither

famine, nor pestilence, nor death appeared so dreadful as the entrance of the Spaniards. The citizens anew exchanged vows of fidelity with one another and with the magistrates, and anew ratified their oaths to that Power for whose truth they were in arms. Abandoned outside its walls, as it seemed, by all: pressed within by a host of terrible evils: succor neither in heaven nor on the earth, Leyden nevertheless would hold fast its religion and its liberty, and if it must perish, it would perish free. It was the victory of a sublime faith over despair.

At last heaven heard the cry of the suffering city, and issued its fiat to the ocean. On the 1st of October, the equinoctial gales, so long delayed, gave signs of their immediate approach. On that night a strong wind sprung up from the north-west, and the waters of the rivers were forced back into their channels. After blowing for some hours from that quarter, the gale shifted into the south-west with increased fury. The strength of the winds heaped up the waters of the German Ocean upon the coast of Holland; the deep lifted up itself; its dark flood driven before the tempest's breath with

mighty roar, like shout of giant loosed from his fetters and rushing to assail the foe, came surging onwards, and poured its tumultuous billows over the broken dykes. At midnight on the 2nd of October the flotilla of Boisot was afloat, and under weigh for Leyden, on whose walls crowds of gaunt, famished, almost exanimate men waited its coming. At every short distance the course of the ships was disputed by some half-submerged Spanish fort, whose occupants were not so much awed by the terrors of the deep which had risen to overwhelm them as to be unable to offer battle. But it was in vain. Boisot's fierce Zealanders were eager to grapple with the hated Spaniards; the blaze of canon lighted up the darkness of that awful night, and the booming of artillery, rising above the voice of the tempest, told the citizens of Leyden that the patriot fleet was on its way to their rescue. These naval engagements, on what but a few days before had-been cornland or woodland, but was now ocean -- a waste of water blackened by the scowl of tempest and the darkness of night -- formed a novel as well as awful sight. The Spaniards fought with a desperate bravery, but

everywhere without success. The Zealanders leaped from their fiat-bottomed vessels and pursued them along the dykes, they fired on them from their boats, or, seizing them with hooks fixed to the ends of long poles, dragged them down from the causeway, and put them to the sword. Those who escaped the daggers and harpoons of the Zealanders, were drowned in the sea, or stuck fast in the mud till overtaken and dispatched. In that flight some 1,500 Spaniards perished.

Boisot's fleet had now advanced within two miles of the walls of Leyden, but here, at about a mile's distance from the gates, rose the strongest of all the Spanish forts, called Lammen, blocking up the way, and threatening to render all that had been gained without avail. The admiral reconnoitered it; it stood high above the water; it was of great strength and full of soldiers; and he hesitated attacking it. The citizens from the walls saw his fleet behind the fort, and understood the difficulty that prevented the admiral's nearer approach. They had been almost delirious with joy at the prospect of immediate relief. Was the cup after all to be

dashed from their lips! It was arranged by means of a carrier-pigeon that a combined assault should take place upon the fort of Lammen at dawn, the citizens assailing it on one side, and the flotilla bombarding it on the other. Night again fell, and seldom has blacker night descended on more tragic scene, or the gloom of nature been more in unison with the anxiety and distress of man. At midnight a terrible crash was heard. What that ominous sound, so awful in the stillness of the night, could be, no one could conjecture. A little after came a strange apparition, equally inexplicable. A line of lights was seen to issue from Lammen and move over the face of the deep. The darkness gave terror and mystery to every occurrence. All waited for the coming of day to explain these appearances. At last the dawn broke; it was now seen that a large portion of the city walls of Leyden had fallen overnight, and hence the noise that had caused such alarm. The Spaniards, had they known, might have entered the city at the last hour and massacred the inhabitants; instead of this, they were seized with panic, believing these terrible sounds to be those of the enemy rushing to attack them, and so, kindling

their torches and lanterns, they fled when no man pursued. Instead of the cannonade which was this morning to be opened against the formidable Lammen, the fleet of Boisot sailed under the silent guns of the now evacuated fort, and entered the city gates. On the morning of the 3rd of October, Leyden was relieved.

The citizens felt that their first duty was to offer thanks to that Power to whom exclusively they owed their deliverance. Despite their own heroism and Boisot's valor they would have fallen, had not God, by a mighty wind, brought up the ocean and overwhelmed their foes. A touching procession of haggard but heroic forms, headed by Admiral Boisot and the magistrates, and followed by the Zealanders and sailors, walked to the great church, and there united in solemn prayer. A hymn of thanksgiving was next raised, but of the multitude of voices by which its first notes were pealed forth, few were able to continue singing to the close. Tears choked their voices, and sobs were mingled with the music. Thoughts of the awful scenes through which they had passed, and of the many

who had shared the conflict with them, but had not lived to join in the hymn of victory, rushed with overmastering force into their minds, and compelled them to mingle tears with their praises.

A letter was instantly dispatched to the Prince of Orange with the great news. He received it while he was at worship in one of the churches of Delft, and instantly handed it to the minister, to be read from the pulpit after sermon. That moment recompensed him for the toil and losses of years; and his joy was heightened by the fact that a nation rejoiced with him. Soon thereafter, the States assembled, and a day of public thanksgiving was appointed.

This series of wonders was to be fittingly closed by yet another prodigy. The fair hind of Holland lay drowned at the bottom of the sea. The whole vast plain from Rotterdam to Leyden was under water. What time, what labor and expense would it require to recover the country, and restore the fertility and beauty which had been so sorely marred! The very next day, the 4th of October, the

wind shifted into the north-east, and blowing with great violence, the waters rapidly assuaged, and in a few days the land was bare again, He who had brought up the ocean upon Holland with his mighty hand rolled it back.

Chapter 22

March of the Spanish Army Through the Sea Sack of Antwerp

THE night of this great conflict was far from being at an end, but its darkest hour had now passed. With the check received by the Spanish Power before the walls of Leyden, the first streak of dawn may be said to have broken; but cloud and tempest long obscured the rising of Holland's day.

The country owed a debt of gratitude to that heroic little city which had immolated itself on the altar of the nation's religion and liberty, and before restarting the great contest, Holland must first mark in some signal way its sense of the service which Leyden had rendered it. The distinction awarded Leyden gave happy augury of the brilliant destinies awaiting that land in years to come. It was resolved to found a university within its walls. Immediate effect was given to this resolution. Though the

Spaniard was still in the land, and the strain of armies and battles was upon William, a grand procession was organized on the 5th of February, 1575, at which symbolic figures, drawn through the streets in triumphal cars, were employed to represent the Divine form of Christianity, followed by the fair train of the arts and sciences. The seminary thus inaugurated was richly endowed; men of the greatest learning were sought for to fill its chairs, their fame attracted crowds of students from many countries; and its printing presses began to send forth works which have instructed the men of two centuries. Thus had Leyden come up from the "seas devouring depths" to be one of the lights of the world.[1]

There came now a brief pause in the conflict. The Emperor Maximilian, the mutual friend of Philip of Spain and William of Orange, deemed the moment opportune for mediating between the parties, and on the 3rd of March, 1575, a congress assembled at Breda with the view of devising a basis of peace. The prince gave his consent that the congress should meet, although he had not the

slightest hope of fruit from its labors. On one condition alone could peace be established in Holland, and that condition, he knew, was one which Philip would never grant, and which the States could never cease to demand -- namely, the free and open profession of the Reformed religion. When the commissioners met it was seen that William had judged rightly in believing the religious difficulty to be insurmountable. Philip would agree to no peace unless the Roman Catholic religion were installed in sole and absolute dominancy, leaving professors of the Protestant faith to convert their estates and goods into money, and quit the country. In that case, replied the Protestants, duly grateful for the wonderful concessions of the Catholic king, there will hardly remain in Holland, after all the heretics shall have left it, enough men to keep the dykes in repair, and the country had better be given back to the ocean at once. The conference broke up without accomplishing anything, and the States, with William at their head, prepared to resume the contest, in the hope of conquering by their own perseverance and heroism what they despaired ever

to obtain from the justice of Philip.

The war was renewed with increased exasperation on both sides. The opening of the campaign was signalized by the capture of a few small Dutch towns, followed by the usual horrors that attended the triumph of the Spanish arms. But Governor Requesens soon ceased to push his conquests in that direction, and turned his whole attention to Zeeland, 'where Philip was exceedingly desirous of acquiring harbors, in order to the reception of a fleet which he was building in Spain. This led to the most brilliant of all the feats accomplished by the Spaniards in the war.

In the sea that washes the north-east of Zeeland are situated three large islands -- Tolen, Duyveland, and Schowen. Tolen, which lies nearest the mainland, was already in the hands of the Spaniards; and Requesens, on that account, was all the more desirous to gain possession of the other two. He had constructed a flotilla of fiat-bottomed boats, and these would soon have made him master of the coveted islands; but he dared not

launch them on these waters, seeing the estuaries of Zeeland were swept by those patriot buccaneers whose bravery suffered no rivals on their own element.

Requesens, in his great strait, bethought him of another expedient, but of such a nature that it might well seem madness to attempt it. The island of Duyveland was separated from Tolen, the foothold of the Spaniards, by a strait of about five miles in width; and Requesens learned from some traitor Zealanders that there ran a narrow fiat of sand from shore to shore, on which at ebb-tide there was not more than a depth of from four to five feet of water. It was possible, therefore, though certainly extremely hazardous, to traverse this submarine ford. The governor, however, determined that his soldiers should attempt it. He assigned to 3,000 picked men the danger and the glory of the enterprise. At midnight, the 27th September, 1575, the host descended into the deep, Requesens himself witnessing its departure from the shore, "and with him a priest, praying for these poor souls to the Prince of the celestial militia, Christ

Jesus." [2] A few guides well acquainted with the ford led the way; Don Osorio d'Uiloa, a commander of distinguished courage, followed; after him came a regiment of Spaniards, then a body of Germans, and lastly a troop of Walloons, followed by 200 sappers and miners. The night was dark, with sheet, lightning, which bursting out at frequent intervals, shed a lurid gleam upon the face of the black waters. At times a moon, now in her fourth quarter, looked forth between the clouds upon this novel midnight march. The soldiers walked two and two; the water at times reached to their necks, and they had to hold their muskets above their head to prevent their being rendered useless. The path was so narrow that a single step aside was fatal, and many sank to rise no more. Nor were the darkness and the treacherous waves the only dangers that beset them. The Zealand fleet hovered near, and when its crews discerned by the pale light of the moon and the fitful lightning that the Spaniards were crossing the firth in this meet extraordinary fashion, they drew their ships as close to the ford as the shallows would permit, and opened their guns upon them. Their fire did little

harm, for the darkness made the aim uncertain. Not so, however, the harpoons and long hooks of the Zealanders; their throw caught, and numbers of the Spaniards were dragged down into the sea. Nevertheless, they pursued their dreadful path, now struggling with the waves, now fighting with their assailants, and at last, after a march of six hours, they approached the opposite shore, and with ranks greatly thinned, emerged from the deep.[3]

Wearied by their fight with the sea and with the enemy, the landing of the Spaniards might have been withstood, but accident or treachery gave them possession of the island. At the moment that they stepped upon the shore, the commander of the Zealanders, Charles van Boisot, fell by a shot -- whether from one of his own men, or from the enemy, cannot now be determined. The incident caused a panic among the patriots. The strangeness of the enemy's advance -- for it seemed as if the sea had miraculously opened to afford them passage -- helped to increase the consternation. The Zealanders fled in all directions, and the invading force soon found themselves in possession of

Duyveland.

So far this most extraordinary and daring attempt had been successful, but the enterprise could not be regarded as completed till the island of Schowen, the outermost of the three, had also been occupied. It was divided from Duyveland by a narrow strait of only a league's width. Emboldened by their success, the Spaniards plunged a second time into the sea, and waded through the firth, the defenders of the island fleeing at their approach, as at that of men who had conquered the very elements, and with whom, therefore, it was madness to contend. The Spanish commander immediately set about the reduction of all the forts and cities on the island, and in this he was successful, though the work occupied the whole Spanish army not less than nine months.[4] Now fully master of these three islands (June, 1576), though their acquisition had cost all immense expenditure of both money and lives, Requesens hoped that he had not only cut the communication between Holland and Zealand, but that he had secured a rendezvous for the fleet which he

expected from Spain, and that it only remained that he should here fix the headquarters of his power, and assemble a mighty naval force, in order from this point to extend his conquests on every side, and reconquer Holland and the other Provinces which had revolted from the scepter of Philip and the faith of Rome. He seemed indeed in a fair way of accomplishing all this; the sea itself had parted to give him a fulcrum on which to rest the lever of this great expedition, but an incident now fell out which upset his calculations and dashed all his fondest hopes. Holland was never again to own the scepter of Philip.

Vitelli, Marquis of Cetona, who was without controversy the ablest general at that time in the Netherlands, now died. His death was followed in a few days by that of Governor Requesens. These two losses to Philip were quickly succeeded by a third, and in some respects greater, a formidable mutiny of the troops. The men who had performed all the valorous deeds we have recited, had received no pay. Philip had exhausted his treasury in the war he was carrying on with the Turk, and

had not a single guelden to send them. The soldiers had been disappointed, moreover, in the booty they expected to reap from the conquered towns of Schowen. These laborers were surely worthy of their hire. What dark deed had they ever refused to do, or what enemy had they ever refused to face, at the bidding of their master? They had scaled walls, and laid fertile provinces waste, for the pleasure of Philip and the glory of Spain, and now they were denied their wages. Seeing no help but in becoming their own paymasters, they flew to arms, depose their officers, elected a commander-in-chief from among themselves, and taking an oath of mutual fidelity over the Sacrament, they passed over to the mainland, and seizing on Alost, in Flanders, made it their head-quarters, intending to sally forth in plundering excursions upon the neighboring towns. Thus all the labor and blood with which their recent conquests had been won were thrown away, and the hopes which the King of Spain had built upon them were frustrated at the very moment when he thought they were about to be realized.

As men contemplate the passage of a dark

cloud charged with thunder and destruction through the sky, so did the cities of Brabant and Flanders watch the march of this mutinous host. They knew it held pillage and murder and rape in its bosom, but their worst fears failed to anticipate the awful vengeance it was destined to inflict. The negotiators sent to recall the troops to obedience reminded them that they were tarnishing the fame acquired by years of heroism. What cared these mutineers for glory ~ They wanted shoes, clothes, food, money. They held their way past the gates of Mechlin, past the gates of Brussels, and of other cities; but swarming over the walls of Alost, while the inhabitants slept, they had now planted themselves in the center of a rich country, where they promised themselves store of booty. No sooner had they hung out their flag on the walls of Alost than the troops stationed in other parts of the Netherlands caught the infection. By the beginning of September the mutiny was universal; the whole Spanish army in the Netherlands were united in it, and all the forts and citadels being in their hands, they completely dominated the land, plundered the citizens, pillaged the country, and murdered at their

pleasure. The State Council, into whose hands the government of the Netherlands had fallen on the sudden death of Requesens, were powerless, the mutineers holding them prisoners in Brussels; and though the Council prevailed on Philip to issue an edict against his revolted army, denouncing them as rebels, and empowering any one to slay this rebellious host, either singly or in whole, the soldiers paid as little respect to the edict of their king as to the exhortations of the Council. Thus the instrument of oppression recoiled upon the hands that were wielding it. War now broke out between the Flemings and the army. The State Council raised bands of militia to awe the proscribed and lawless troops, and bloody skirmishes were of daily occurrence between them.

The carnage was all on one side, for the disciplined veterans routed at little cost the peasants and artisans who had been so suddenly transformed into soldiers, slaughtering them in thousands. The rich cities, on which they now cast greedy eyes, began to feel their vengeance, but the awful calamity which overtook Antwerp has

effaced the memory of the woes which at their hands befell some of the other cities.

Antwerp, since the beginning of the troubles of the Netherlands, had had its own share of calamity; its cathedral and religious houses had been sacked by the image-breakers, and its warehouses and mansions had been partially pillaged by mutinous troops; but its vast commerce enabled it speedily to surmount all these losses, and return to its former flourishing condition. Antwerp was once more the richest city in the world. The ships of all nations unloaded in its harbor, and the treasures of all climes were gathered into its warehouses. Its streets were spacious and magnificent; its shops were stored with silver and gold and precious stones, and the palaces of its wealthy merchants were filled with luxurious and costly furniture, and embellished with precious ornaments, beautiful pictures, and fine statues. This nest of riches was not likely to escape the greedy eyes and rapacious hands of the mutineers.

Immediately outside the walls of Antwerp was

the citadel, with its garrison. The troops joined the mutiny, and from that hour Antwerp was doomed. The citizens, having a presentiment of the ruin that hung above their heads, took some very ineffectual measures to secure themselves and their city against it, which only drew it the sooner upon them. The mutineers in the citadel were joined by the rebellious troops from Alost, about 3,000 in number, who were so eager to begin the plundering that they refused even to refresh themselves after their march before throwing themselves upon the ill-fated city. It was Sunday, the 4th of November, and an hour before noon the portals of Alva's citadel were opened, and 6,000 men-at-arms rushed forth. They swept along the esplanade leading to the city. They crashed through the feeble barrier which the burghers had reared to protect them from the apprehended assault. They chased before them the Walloons and the militia, who had come out to withstand them, as the furious tempest drives the cloud before it. In another minute they were over the walls into the city. From every street and lane poured forth the citizens to defend their homes; but though they fought with extraordinary courage it

was all in vain. The battle swept along the streets, the Spanish hordes bearing down all before them, and following close on the rear of the vanquished, till they reached the magnificent Place de Mere, where stood the world-renowned Exchange, in which 7,000 merchants were wont daily to assemble. Here an obstinate combat ensued. The citizens fought on the street, or, retreating to their houses, fired from their windows on the Spaniards. The carnage was great; heaps of corpses covered the pavement, and the kennels ran with blood; but courage availed little against regular discipline, and the citizens were broken a second time.

The battle was renewed with equal obstinacy in the Grand Place. Here stood the Guildhall, accounted the most magnificent in the world. Torches were brought and it was set fire to and burned to the ground. The flames caught the surrounding buildings, and soon a thousand houses, the finest in the city, were ablaze, their conflagration lighting up the pinnacles and the unrivaled spire of the neighboring cathedral, and throwing its ruddy gleam on the combatants who

were struggling in the area below. The battle had now spread over all the city. In every street men were fighting and blood was flowing. Many rushed to the gates and sought to escape, but they found them locked, and were thrown back upon the sword and fire. The battle was going against the citizens, but their rage and hatred of the Spaniards made them continue the fight. Goswyn Verreyek, the margrave of the city, combated the foe with the burgomaster lying dead at his feet, and at last he himself fell, adding his corpse to a heap of slain, composed of citizens, soldiers, and magistrates. While the fire was devouring hundreds of noble mansions and millions of treasure, the sword was busy cutting off the citizens. The Spaniard made no distinction between friend and foe, between Papist and Protestant, between poor and rich. Old men, women, and children; the father at the hearth, the bride at the altar, and the priest in the sanctuary -- the blood of all flooded the streets of their city on that terrible day.

Darkness fell on this scene of horrors, and now the barbarities of the day were succeeded by the

worse atrocities of the night. The first object of these men was plunder, and one would have thought there was now enough within their reach to content the most boundless avarice. Without digging into the earth or crossing the sea, they could gather the treasures of all regions, which a thousand ships had carried thither, and stored up in that city of which they were now masters. They rifled the shops, they broke into the warehouses, they loaded themselves with the money, the plate, the wardrobes, and the jewels of private citizens; but their greed, like the grave, never said it was enough. They began to search for hidden treasures, and they tortured their supposed possessors to compel them to reveal what often did not exist. These crimes were accompanied by infamies of so foul and revolting a character, that by their side murder itself grows pale. The narrators of the "Antwerp Fury," as it has come to be styled, have recorded many of these cruel and shameful deeds, but we forbear to chronicle them. For three days the work of murdering and plundering went on, and when it had come to an end, how awful the spectacle which that city, that three days before had

been the gayest and wealthiest upon earth, presented! Stacks of blackened ruins rising where marble palaces had stood; yawning hovels where princely mansions had been; whole streets laid in ashes; corpses, here gathered in heaps, there lying about, hacked, mutilated, half-burned -- some naked, others still encased in armor! Eight thousand citizens, according to the most trustworthy accounts, were slain. The value of the property consumed by the fire was estimated at £4,000,000, irrespective of the hundreds of magnificent edifices that were destroyed. An equal amount was lost by the pillage, not reckoning the merchandise and jewelry appropriated in addition by the Spaniards. Altogether the loss to the mercantile capital of Brabant was incalculable; nor was it confined to the moment, for Antwerp never recovered the prosperity it had enjoyed before the bloody and plundering hand of the Spaniard was laid upon it.[5]

But this awful calamity held in its bosom a great moral. During fifty years the cry had been going up to heaven, from tens of thousands of

scaffolds, where the axe was shedding blood like water; from prisons, where numberless victims were writhing on the rack; from stakes, where the martyr was consuming amid the flames; from graveyards, where corpses were rotting above-ground; from trees and door-posts and highway gibbets, where human bodies were dangling in the air; from graves which had opened to receive living men and women; from sacked cities; from violated matrons and maidens; from widows and orphans, reared in affluence but now begging their bread; from exiles wandering desolate in foreign lands -- from all, these had the cry gone up to the just Judge, and now here was the beginning of vengeance. The powerful cities of the Netherlands, Antwerp among the rest, saw all these outrages committed, and all these men and women dragged to prison, to the halter, to the stake, but they "forbore to deliver," they "hid themselves from their own flesh."

A callous indifference on the part of a nation to the wrongs and sufferings of others is always associated with a blindness to its own dangers,

which is at once the consequence and the retribution of its estranging itself from the public cause of humanity and justice. Once and again and a third time had the Southern Netherlands manifested this blindness to the mighty perils that menaced them on the side of Spain, and remained deaf to the call of patriotism and religion. When the standards of William first approached their frontier, they were unable to see the door of escape from the yoke of a foreign tyrant thus opened to them. A tithe of the treasure and blood which were lost in the "Antwerp Fury" would have carried the banner of William in triumph from Valenciennes to the extreme north of Zealand; but the Flemings cared not to think that the hour had come to strike for liberty. A second time the Deliverer approached them, but the ease-loving Netherlanders understood not the offer now made to them of redemption from the Spanish yoke. When Alva and his soldiers -- an incarnated ferocity and bigotry -- entered the Low Countries, they sat still: not a finger did they lift to oppose the occupation. When the cry of Naarden, and Zutphen, and Haarlem was uttered, Antwerp was deaf.

Wrapt in luxury and ease, it had seen its martyrs burned, the disciples of the Gospel driven away, and it returned to that faith which it had been on the point of abandoning, and which, by retaining the soul in vassalage to Rome, perpetuated the serfdom of the Spanish yoke; and yet Antwerp saw no immediate evil effects follow. The ships of all nations continued to sail up its river and discharge their cargoes on its wharves. Its wealth continued to increase, and its palaces to grow in splendor. The tempests that smote so terribly the cities around it rolled harmlessly past its gates. Antwerp believed that it had chosen at once the easier and the better part; that it was vastly preferable to have the Romish faith, with an enriching commerce and a luxurious ease, than Protestantism with battles and loss of goods; till one day, all suddenly, when it deemed calamity far away, a blow, terrible as the bolt of heaven, dealt it by the champions of Romanism, laid it in the dust, together with the commerce, the wealth, and the splendor for the sake of which it had parted with its Protestantism.

Footnotes:

1. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 312, 313
2. Strada, bk. 8., p. 11.
3. Bor, lib, 8., pp. 648-650. Strada, bk. 8., pp. 11,12.
4. Strada, bk. 8., pp. 13, 14.
5. Bor, 9:728 -- 732. Hooft, 11:460 -- 465. Meteren, 6. 110. Strada, 8:21, 22. Brandt., 1:325. Motley, 2. 18.5 -- 195.

Chapter 23

The "Pacification of Ghent" and Toleration

THE great struggle which William, Prince of Orange, was maintaining on this foot-breadth of territory for the religion of Reformed Christendom, and the liberty' of the Netherlands, had now reached a well-defined stage. Holland and Zeeland were united under him as Stadtholder or virtual monarch. The fiction was still maintained that Philip, as Count of Holland, was the nominal monarch of the Netherlands, but this was nothing more than a fiction, and to Philip it must have appeared a bitter satire; for, according to this fiction, Philip King of the Netherlands was making war on Philip King of Spain. The real monarch of the United Provinces of Holland and Zeeland was the Prince of Orange. In his hands was lodged the whole administrative power of the country, as also well-nigh the whole legislative functions. He could make peace and he could make war. He appointed

to all offices; he disposed of all affairs; and all the revenues of the kingdom were paid to him for national uses, and especially for the prosecution of the great struggle in which he was engaged for the nation's independence. These revenues, given spontaneously, were larger by far than the sums which Alva by all his taxation and terror had been able to extort from the Provinces. William, in fact, possessed more than the powers of a king. The States had unbounded trust in his wisdom, his patriotism, and his uprightness, and they committed all into his hands.

They saw in him a sublime example of devotion to his country, and of abnegation of all ambitions, save the one ambition of maintaining the Protestant religion and the freedom of Holland. They knew that he sought neither title, nor power, nor wealth, and that in him was perpetuated that order of men to which Luther and Calvin belonged -- men not merely of prodigious talents, but what is infinitely more rare, of heroic faith and magnanimous souls; and so "King of Holland" appeared to them a weak title -- they called him the

"Father of their Country."

The great Powers of Europe watched, with an interest bordering on amazement, this gigantic struggle maintained by a handful of men, on a diminutive half-submerged territory, against the greatest monarch of his day. The heroism of the combat challenged their admiration, but its issues awakened their jealousies, and even alarms. It was no mere Dutch quarrel; it was no question touching only the amount of liberty and the kind of religion that were to be established on this sandbank of the North Sea that was at issue; the cause was a world-wide one, and yet none of the Powers interfered either to bring aid to that champion who seemed ever on the point of being overborne, or to expedite the victory on the powerful side on which it seemed so sure to declare itself; all stood aloof and left these two most unequal combatants to fight out the matter between them. There was, in truth, the same play of rivalries around the little Holland which there had been at a former era around Geneva. This rivalry reduced the Protestant Powers to inaction, and prevented their assisting Holland,

just as the Popish Powers had been restrained from action in presence of Geneva. In the case of the little city on the shores of the Lemman, Providence plainly meant that Protestantism should be seen to triumph in spite of the hatred and opposition of the Popish kingdoms; and so again, in the case of the little country on the shores of the North Sea, Providence meant to teach men that Protestantism could triumph independently of the aid and alliance of the Powers friendly to it. The great ones of the earth stood aloof, but William, as he told his friends, had contracted a firm alliance with a mighty Potentate, with him who is King of kings; and seeing this invisible but omnipotent Ally, he endured in the awful conflict till at last his faith was crowned with a glorious victory.

In England a crowd of statesmen, divines, and private Christians followed the banners of the Prince of Orange with their hopes and their prayers. But nations then had found no channel for the expression of their sympathies, other than the inadequate one of the policy of their sovereign; and Elizabeth, though secretly friendly to William and

the cause of Dutch independence, had to shape her conduct so as to balance conflicting interests. Her throne was surrounded with intrigues, and her person with perils. She had to take account of the pretensions and partisans of the Queen of Scots, of the displeasure of Philip of Spain, and of the daggers of the Jesuits, and these prevented her supporting the cause of Protestantism in Holland with arms or, to any adequate extent, with money. But if she durst not accord it public patronage or protection, neither could she openly declare against it; for in that case France would have made a show of aiding William, and Elizabeth would have seen with envy the power of her neighbor and rival considerably extended, and the influence of England, as a Protestant State, proportionately curtailed and weakened.

France was Roman Catholic and Protestant by turns. At this moment the Protestant fit was upon it: a peace had been made with the Huguenots which promised them everything but secured them nothing, and which was destined to reach the term of its brief currency within the year. The protean

Medici-Valois house that ruled that country was ready to enter any alliance, seeing it felt the obligation to fidelity in none; and the Duke of Anjou: to spite both Philip and Elizabeth, might have been willing to have taken the title of King of the Netherlands, and by championing the cause of Dutch Protestantism for an hour ruined it for ever. This made France to William of Orange, as well as to Elizabeth, an object of both hope and fear; but happily the fear predominating, for the horror of the St. Bartholomew had not yet left the mind of William, he was on his guard touching offers of help from the Court of the Louvre.

But what of Germany, with which the Prince of Orange had so many and so close relationships, and which lay so near the scene of the great conflict, whose issues must so powerfully influence it for good or for ill? Can Germany fail to see that it is its own cause that now stands at bay on the extreme verge of the Fatherland, and that could the voice of Luther speak from the tomb in the Schloss-kirk of Wittemberg, it would summon the German princes and knights around the banner of William of

Orange, as it formerly summoned them to the standard of Frederick of Saxony? But since Luther was laid in the grave the great heart of Germany had waxed cold. Many of its princes seemed to be Protestant for no other end but to be able to increase their revenues by appropriations from the lands and hoards of the Roman establishment, and it was hardly to be expected that Protestants of this stamp would feel any lively interest in the great struggle in Holland. But the chief cause of the coldness of Germany was the unhappy jealousy that divided the Lutherans from the Reformed. That difference had been widening since the evil day of Marburg. Luther on that occasion had been barely able to receive Zwingle and his associates as brethren, and many of the smaller men who succeeded Luther lacked even that small measure of charity; and in the times of William of Orange to be a Calvinist was, in the eyes of many Lutherans, to be a heretic. When the death of Edward VI. compelled the celebrated John Alasco, with his congregation, to leave England and seek asylum in Denmark, West-phalus, a Lutheran divine, styled the wandering congregation of Alasco "the martyrs

of the devil;" whilst another Lutheran, Bugenhagenius, declared that "they ought not to be considered as Christians;" and they received intimation from the king that he would "sooner suffer Papists than them in his dominions; " and they were compelled, at a most inclement season, to embark for the north of Germany, where the same persecutions awaited them, the fondness for the dogma of con-substantiation on the part of the Lutheran ministers having almost stifled in their minds the love of Protestantism.[1] But William of Orange was an earnest Calvinist, and the opinions adopted by the Church of Holland on the subject of the Sacrament were the same with those received by the Churches of Switzerland and of England, and hence the coldness of Germany to the great battle for Protestantism on its borders.

William, therefore, seeing England irresolute, France treacherous, and Germany cold, withdrew his eyes from abroad, in seeking for allies and aids, and fixed them nearer home. Might he not make another attempt to consolidate the cause of Protestant liberty in the Netherlands themselves?

The oft-recurring outbreaks of massacre and rapine were deepening the detestation of the Spanish rule in the minds of the Flemings, and now, if he should try, he might find them ripe for joining with their brethren of Holland and Zeeland in an effort to throw off the yoke of Philip. The chief difficulty, he foresaw, in the way of such a confederacy was the difference of religion. In Holland and Zeeland the Reformed faith was now the established religion, whereas in the other fifteen Provinces the Roman was the national faith. Popery had had a marked revival of late in the Netherlands, the date of this second growth being that of their submission to Alva; and now so attached were the great body of the Flemings to the Church of Rome, that they were resolved "to die rather than renounce their faith." This made the patriotic project which William now contemplated the more difficult, and the negotiation in favor of it a matter of great delicacy, but it did not discourage him from attempting it. The Flemish Papist, not less than the Dutch Calvinist, felt the smart of the Spanish steel, and might be roused to vindicate the

honor of a common country, and to expel the massacring hordes of a common tyrant. It was now when Requesens was dead, and the government was for the time in the hands of the State Council, and the fresh atrocities of the Spanish soldiers gave added weight to his energetic words, that he wrote to the people of the Netherlands to the effect that "now was the time when they might deliver themselves for ever from the tyranny of Spain. By the good providence of God, the government had fallen into their own hands. It ought to be their unalterable resolve to hold fast the power which they possessed, and to employ it in delivering their fellow-citizens from that intolerable load of misery under which they had so long groaned. The measure of the calamities of the people, and of the iniquity of the Spaniards, was now full. There was nothing worse to be dreaded than what they had already suffered, and nothing to deter them from resolving either to expel their rapacious tyrants, or to perish in the glorious attempt." [2] To stimulate them to the effort to which he called them, he pointed to what Holland and Zealand single-handed had done; and if "this handful of cities" had

accomplished so much, what might not the combined strength of all the Provinces, with their powerful cities, achieve?

This appeal fell not to the ground. In November, 1576, a congress composed of deputies from all the States assembled at Ghent, which re-echoed the patriotic sentiments of the prince; the deliberations of its members, quickened and expedited by the Antwerp Fury, which happened at the very time the congress was sitting, ended in a treaty termed the "Pacification of Ghent." This "Pacification" was a monument of the diplomatic genius, as well as patriotism, of William the Silent. In it the prince and the States of Holland and Zealand on the one side, and the fifteen Provinces of the Netherlands on the other, agreed to bury all past differences, and to unite their arms in order to effect the expulsion of the Spanish soldiers from their country. Their soil cleared of foreign troops, they were to call a meeting of the States-General on the plan of that great assembly which had accepted the abdication of Charles V. By the States-General all the affairs of the Confederated

Provinces were to be finally regulated, but till it should meet it was agreed that the Inquisition should be for ever abolished; that the edicts of Philip touching heresy and the tumults should be suspended; that the ancient forms of government should be revived; that the Reformed faith should be the religion of the two States of Holland and Zealand, but that no Romanist should be oppressed on account of his opinion; while in the other fifteen Provinces the religion then professed, that is the Roman, was to be the established worship, but no Protestant was to suffer for conscience sake. In short, the basis of the treaty, as concerned religion, was toleration.[3]

A great many events were crowded upon this point of time. The Pacification of Ghent, which united all the Provinces in resistance to Spain, the Antwerp Fury, and the recovery of that portion of Zealand which the Spaniards by their feats of daring had wrested from William, all arrived contemporaneously to signalize this epoch of the struggle.

This was another mile-stone on the road of the Prince of Orange. In the Pacification of Ghent he saw his past efforts beginning to bear fruit, and he had a foretaste of durable and glorious triumphs to be reaped hereafter. It was an hour of exquisite gladness in the midst of the sorrow and toil of his great conflict. The Netherlands, participating in the prince's joy, hailed the treaty with a shout of enthusiasm. It was read at the market-crosses of all the cities, amid the ringing of bells and the blazing of bonfires.

But the greatest gain in the Pacification of Ghent, and the matter which the Protestant of the present day will be best pleased to contemplate, is the advance it notifies in the march of toleration. Freedom of conscience was the basis on which this Pacification, which foreshadowed the future Dutch Republic, was formed. Calvin, twenty years before, had laid down the maxim that no one is to be disturbed for his religious opinions unless they are expressed in words or acts that are inimical to the State, or prejudicial to social order. William of Orange, in laying the first foundations of the

Batavin Republic, placed them on the principle of toleration, as his master Calvin had defined it. To these two great men-John Calvin and William the Silent -- we owe, above most, this great advance on the road of progress and human freedom. The first had defined and inculcated the principle in his writings; the second had embodied and given practical effect to it in the new State which his genius and patriotism had called into existence.

Footnotes:

1. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 213.
2. Watson, Philip II vol 2., p. 180. See also Letter to States of Brabant, in Bor, lib. 9., p. 695
3. Bor, lib. 9, pp. 738 -- 741. Brandt, vol. 1, pp. 327, 328. Sir William Temple, United Provinces of the Netherlands, p.33; Edin., 1747. Watson, Philip II., vol. 2., pp.193-195

Chapter 24

Administration of Don John and First Synod of Dort

THE great battles of religion and liberty have, as a rule, been fought not by the great, but by the little countries of the world. History supplies us with many striking examples of this, both in ancient and in modern times. The Pacification of Ghent is one of these. It defined the territory which was to be locked in deadly struggle with Spain, and greatly enlarged it. By the side of the little Holland and Zeeland it placed Brabant and Flanders, with their populous towns and their fertile fields. With this vast accession of strength to the liberal side, one would have expected that henceforth the combat would be waged with greater vigor, promptitude, and success. But it was not so, for from this moment the battle began to languish. William of Orange soon found that if he had widened the area, he had diminished the power of the liberal cause. An element of weakness had

crept in along with the new territories. How this happened it is easy to explain. The struggle on both sides was one for religion Philip had made void all the charters of ancient freedom, and abolished all the privileges of the cities, that he might bind down upon the neck of the Netherlands the faith and worship of Rome. On the other hand, William and the States that were of his mind strove to revive these ancient charters, and immemorial privileges, that under their shield they might enjoy freedom of conscience, and be able to profess the Protestant religion. None but Protestants could be hearty combatants in such a battle; religion alone could kindle that heroism which was needed to bear the strain and face the perils of so great and so prolonged a conflict. But the fifteen Provinces of the Southern Netherlands were now more Popish than at the abdication of Charles V. The Protestants whom they contained at that era had since been hanged, or burned, or chased away, and a reaction had set in which had supplied their places with Romanists; and therefore the Pacification, which placed Brabant alongside of Holland in the struggle against Spain, and which gave to the Dutch

Protestant as his companion in arms the Popish Fleming, was a Pacification that in fact created two armies, by proposing two objects or ends on the liberal side. To the Popish inhabitants of the Netherlands the yoke of Spain would in no long time be made easy enough; for the edicts, the Inquisition, and the bishops were things that could have no great terrors to men who did not need their coercion to believe, or at least profess, the Romish dogmas. The professors of the Romish creed, not feeling that wherein lay the sting of the Spanish yoke, could not be expected therefore to make other than half-hearted efforts to throw it off.

But far different was it with the other and older combatants. They felt that sting in all its force, and therefore could not stop half-way in their great struggle, but must necessarily press on till they had plucked out that which was the root of the whole Spanish tyranny. Thus William found that the Pacification of Ghent had introduced among the Confederates divided counsels, dilatory action, and uncertain aims; and three years after (1579) the Pacification had to be rectified by the "Union of

Utrecht," which, without dissolving the Confederacy of Ghent, created an inner alliance of seven States, and thereby vastly quickened the working of the Confederacy, and presented to the world the original framework or first constitution of that Commonwealth which has since become so renowned under the name of the "United Provinces."

Meanwhile, and before the Union of Utrecht had come into being, Don John of Austria, the newly-appointed governor, arrived in the Low Countries. He brought with him an immense prestige as the son of Charles V., and the hero of Lepanto. He had made the Cross to triumph over the Crescent in the bloody action that reddened the waters of the Lepantine Gulf; and he came to the Netherlands with the purpose and in the hope of making the Cross triumphant over heresy, although it should be by dyeing the plains of the Low Countries with a still greater carnage than that with which he, had crimsoned the Greek seas. He arrived to find that the seventeen Provinces had just banded themselves together to drive out the

Spanish army: and to re-assert their independence; and before they would permit him to enter they demanded of him an oath to execute the Pacification of Ghent. This was a preliminary which he did not relish; but finding that he must either accept the Pacification or else return to Spain, he gave the promise, styled the "Perpetual Edict," demanded of him (17th February, 1577), and entered upon his government by dismissing all the foreign troops, which now returned into Italy [1] With the departure of the soldiers the brilliant and ambitious young governor seemed to have abandoned all the great hopes which had lighted him to the Netherlands. There were now great rejoicings in the Provinces: all their demands had been conceded.

But Don John trusted to recover by intrigue what he had surrendered from necessity. No sooner was he installed at Brussels than he opened negotiations with the Prince of Orange, in the hope of drawing him from "the false position" in which he had placed himself to Philip, and winning him to his side. Don John had had no experience of

such lofty spirits as William, and could only see the whims of fanaticism, or the aspirings of ambition, in the profound piety and grand aims of William. He even attempted, through a malcontent party that now arose, headed by the Duke of Aerschot, to work the Pacification of Ghent so as to restore the Roman religion in exclusive dominancy in Holland and Zealand, as well as in the other Provinces. But these attempts of Don John were utterly futile.

William had no difficulty in penetrating the true character and real design of the viceroy. He knew that, although the Spanish troops had been sent away, Philip had still some 15,000 German mercenaries in the Provinces, and held in his hands all the great keys of the country. William immovably maintained his attitude of opposition despite all the little arts of the viceroy. Step by step Don John advanced to his design, which was to restore the absolute dominancy at once of Philip and of Rome over all the Provinces. His first act was to condemn to death Peter Panis, a tailor by trade, and a man of most exemplary life, and whose

only crime had been that of hearing a sermon from a Reformed minister in the neighborhood of Mechlin. The Prince of Orange made earnest intercession for the martyr, imploring the governor "not again to open the old theaters of tyranny, which had occasioned the shedding of rivers of blood;" [2] notwithstanding the poor man was beheaded by the order of Don John. The second act of the viceroy, which was to seize on the Castle of Namur, revealed his real purpose with even more flagrancy. To make himself master of that stronghold he had recourse to a stratagem. Setting out one morning with a band of followers, attired as if for the chase, but with arms concealed under their clothes, the governor and his party took their way by the castle, which they feigned a great desire to see. No sooner were they admitted by the castellan than they drew their swords, and Don John at the same instant winding his horn, the men-at-arms, who lay in ambush in the surrounding woods, rushed in, and the fortress was captured.[3] As a frontier citadel it was admirably suited to receive the troops which the governor expected soon to return from Italy; and he remarked, when

he found himself in possession of the castle, that this was the first day of his regency: it might with more propriety have been called the first day of those calamities that pursued him to the grave.

Intercepted letters from Don John to Philip II. fully unmasked the designs of the governor, and completed the astonishment and alarm of the States. These letters urged the speedy return of the Spanish troops, and dilating on the inveteracy of that disease which had fastened on the Netherlands, the letters said, "the malady admitted of no remedies but fire and sword."

This discovery of the viceroy's baseness raised to the highest pitch the admiration of the Flemings for the sagacity of William, who had given them early warning of the duplicity of the governor, and the cruel designs he was plotting. Thereupon the Provinces a third time threw off their obedience to Philip II., declaring that Don John was no longer Stadtholder or legitimate Governor of the Provinces.[4] Calling the Prince of Orange to Brussels, they installed him as Governor of

Brabant, a dignity which had been bestowed hitherto only on the Viceroys of Spain. As the prince passed along in his barge from Antwerp to Brussels, thousands crowded to the banks of the canal to gaze on the great patriot and hero, on whose single shoulder rested the weight of this struggle with the mightiest empire then in existence. The men of Antwerp stood on this side of the canal, the citizens of Brussels lined the opposite bank, to offer their respectful homage to one greater than kings. They knew the toils he had borne, the dangers he had braved, the princely fortune he had sacrificed, and the beloved brothers and friends he had seen sink around him in the contest; and when they saw the head on which all these storms had burst still erect, and prepared to brave tempests not less fierce in the future, rather than permit the tyranny of Spain to add his native country to the long roll of unhappy kingdoms which it had already enslaved and crushed, their admiration and enthusiasm knew no bounds, and they saluted him with the glorious appellations of the Father of his Country, and the guardian of its liberties and laws?[5]

This was the third time that liberty had offered herself to the Flemings; and as this was to be the last, so it was the fairest opportunity the Provinces ever had of placing their independence on a firm and permanent foundation, in spite of the despot of the Escorial. The Spanish soldiers were withdrawn, the king's finances were exhausted, the Provinces were knit together in a bond for the prosecution of their common cause, and they had at their head a man of consummate ability, of incorruptible patriotism, and they lacked nothing but hearty co-operation and union among themselves to guide the struggle to a glorious issue. With liberty, who could tell the glories and prosperities of that future that awaited Provinces so populous and rich? But, alas! it began to be seen what a solvent Romanism was, and of how little account were all these great opportunities in the presence of so disuniting and dissolving a force. The Roman Catholic nobles grew jealous of William, whose great abilities and pre-eminent influence threw theirs into the shade. They affected to believe that liberty was in danger from the man who had sacrificed all to vindicate it,

and that so zealous a Calvinist must necessarily persecute the Roman religion, despite the efforts of his whole life to secure toleration for all creeds and sects. In short, the Flemish Catholics would rather wear the Spanish yoke, with the Pope as their spiritual father, than enjoy freedom under the banners of William the Silent. Sixteen of the grandees, chief among whom was the Duke of Aerschot, opened secret negotiations with the Archduke Matthias, brother of the reigning emperor, Rudolph, and invited him to be Governor of the Netherlands. Matthias, a weak but ambitious youth, greedily accepted the invitation; and without reflecting that he was going to mate himself with the first politician of the age, and to conduct a struggle against the most powerful monarch in Christendom, he departed from Vienna by night, and arrived in Antwerp, to the astonishment of those of the Flemings who were not in the intrigue.[6] The archduke owed the permission given him to enter the Provinces to the man he had come to supplant. William of Orange, so far from taking offense and abandoning his post, continued to consecrate his great powers to the liberation of

his country. He accepted Matthias, though forced upon him by an intrigue; he prevailed upon the States to accept him, and install him in the rank of Governor of the Netherlands, he himself becoming his lieutenant-general. Matthias remained a puppet by the side of the great patriot, nevertheless his presence did good; it sowed the seeds of enmity between the German and Spanish branches of the House of Austria, and it made the Roman Catholic nobles, whose plot it was, somewhat obnoxious in the eyes both of Don John and Philip. The cause of the Netherlands was thus rather benefited by it. And moreover, it helped William to the solution of a problem which had occupied his thoughts for some time past -- namely, the permanent form which he should give to the government of the Provinces. So far as the matter had shaped itself in his mind, he purposed that a head or Governor should be over the Netherlands, and that under this virtual monarch should be the States-General or Parliament, and under it a State Council or Executive; but that neither the Governor nor the State Council should have power to act without the concurrence of the States-General. Such was the

programme, essentially one of constitutionalism, that William had sketched in his own mind for his native land. Whom he should make Governor he had not yet determined: most certainly it would be neither himself nor Philip of Spain; and now an intrigue of the Roman Catholic nobles had placed Matthias of Austria in the post, for which William knew not where to find a suitable occupant. But first the country had to be liberated; every other work must be postponed for this.

The Netherlands, their former Confederacy ratified (December 7th, 1577) in the "New Union" of Brussels -- the last Confederacy that was ever to be formed by the Provinces -- had thrown down the gauntlet to Philip, and both sides prepared for war, The Prince of Orange strengthened himself by an alliance with England. In this treaty, formed through the Marquis of Havree, the States ambassador, Elizabeth engaged to aid the Netherlanders with the loan of 100,000 pounds sterling, and a force of 5,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry, their commander to have a seat in the State Council. Nor was Don John idle He had collected a

considerable army from the neighboring Provinces, and these were joined by veteran troops from Italy and Spain, which Philip had ordered Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, to lead back into the Netherlands. The States army amounted to about 10,000; that of Spain to 15,000; the latter, if superior in numbers, were still more superior in discipline. On joining battle at Gemblours the army of the Netherlands encountered a terrible overthrow, a result which the bulk of the nation attributed to the cabals and intrigues of the Roman Catholic nobles.

At this stage the two great antagonistic principles which were embodied in the respective policies of Philip and William, and whose struggles with one another made themselves audible in this clash of arms, came again to the front. The world was anew taught that it was a mortal combat between Rome and the Reformation that was proceeding on the theater of the Netherlands. The torrents of blood that were being poured out were shed not to revive old charters, but to rend the chains from conscience, and to transmit to

generations unborn the heritage of religious freedom. In this light did Pope Gregory XIII. show that he regarded the struggle when he sent, as he did at this time, a bull in favor of all who should fight under the banner of Don John, "against heretics, heretical rebels, and enemies of the Romish faith." The bull was drafted on the model of those which his predecessors had been wont to fulminate when they wished to rouse the faithful to slaughter the Saracens and Turks; it offered a plenary indulgence and remission of sins to all engaged in this new crusade in the Low Countries. The bull further authorised Don John to impose a tax upon the clergy for the support of the war, "as undertaken for the defense of the Romish religion." The banners of the Spanish general were blazoned with the sign of the cross, and the following motto: *In hoc signo vici Turcos: in hoc signo vincam hereticos* (" Under this sign I have vanquished the Turks: under this sign I will vanquish the heretics"). And Don John was reported to have said that "the king had rather be lord only of the ground, of the trees, shrubs, beasts, wolves, waters, and fishes of this country, than suffer one single person

who has taken up arms against him, or at least who has been polluted with heresy, to live and remain in it." [7] On the other side Protestantism also lifted itself up. Amsterdam, the capital of Protestant Holland, still remained in the hands of the Romanists.

This state of matters, which weakened the religious power of the Northern States, was now rectified. Mainly by the mediation of Utrecht, it was agreed on the 8th of February, 1578, that Amsterdam should enroll itself with the States of Holland, and swear allegiance to the Prince of Orange as its Stadtholder, on condition that the Roman faith were the only one publicly professed in the city, with right to all Protestants to practice their own worship, without molestation, outside the walls, and privilege of burying their dead in unconsecrated but convenient ground, provided that neither was psalm sung, nor prayer offered, nor any religious act performed at the grave, and that the corpse was followed to the tomb by not more than twenty-six persons. To this was added a not less important concession -- namely, that all

who had been driven away on account of difference of religious opinion should have liberty to return to Amsterdam, and be admitted to their former rights and privileges.[8] This last stipulation, by attracting back crowds of Protestant exiles, led to a revolution in the government of the city. The Reformed faith had now a vast majority of the citizens -- scarcely were there any Romanists in Amsterdam save the magistrates and the friars -- and a plot was laid, and very cleverly executed, for changing the Senate and putting it in harmony with the popular sentiment. On the 26th May, 1578, the Stadthouse was surrounded by armed citizens, and the magistrates were made prisoners.

All the monks were at the same time secured by soldiers and others dispersed through the city. The astonished senators, and the not less astonished friars, were led through the streets by their captors, the crowd following them and shouting, "To the gallows! to the gallows with them, whither they have sent so many better men before them!" The prisoners trembled all over, believing that they were being conducted to execution. They were

conveyed to the river's edge, the magistrates were put on board one boat, and the friars, along with a few priests who had also been taken into custody, were embarked in another, and both were rowed out into deep water. Their pallid faces, and despairing adieus to their relations, bespoke the apprehensions they entertained that the voyage on which they had set out was destined to be fatal. The vessels that bore them would, they believed, be scuttled, and give them burial in the ocean. No such martyrdom, however, awaited them; and the worst infliction that befell them was the terror into which they had been put of a watery death.

They were landed in safety on St. Anthony's Dyke, and left at liberty to go wherever they would, with this one limitation, that if ever again they entered Amsterdam they forfeited their lives. Three days after these melo-dramatic occurrences a body of new senators was elected and installed in office, and all the churches were closed during a week. They were then opened to the Reformed by the magistrates, who, accompanied by a number of carpenters, had previously visited them and

removed all their images. Thus, without the effusion of a drop of blood, was Protestantism established in Amsterdam. The first Reformed pastors in that capital were John Reuchelin and Peter Hardenberg.[9] The Lutherans and Anabaptists were permitted to meet openly for their worship, and the Papists were allowed the private exercise of theirs.

With this prosperous gale Protestantism made way in the other cities of Holland and of Brabant. This progress, profoundly peaceful in the majority of cases, was attended with tumult in one or two instances. In Haarlem the Protestants rose on a Communion Sunday, and coming upon the priests in the cathedral while in the act of kindling their tapers and unfurling their banners for a grand procession, they dispossessed them of their church. In the tumult a priest was slain, but the soldier who did the deed had to atone for it with his life; the other rioters were summoned by tuck of drum to restore the articles they had stolen, and the Papists were assured, by a public declaration, of the free exercise of their religion.[10] The presence of the

Prince of Orange in Brussels, and the Pacification of Ghent, which shielded the Protestant worship from violence, had infused new courage into the hearts of the Reformed in the Southern Netherlands.

From their secret conventicles in some cellar or dark alley, or neighboring wood, they came forth and practiced their worship in the light of day. In Flanders and Brabant the Protestants were increasing daily in numbers and courage. On Sunday, the 16th of May, in the single city of Antwerp, Protestant sermons were preached in not less than sixteen places, and the Sacrament dispensed in fourteen. In Ghent it was not uncommon for Protestant congregations to convene in several places, of four, five, and six hundred persons, and all this in spite of the Union of Brussels (1577), which trenched upon the toleration accorded in the Pacification of Ghent.[11]

The first National Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church met at Dort on the 2nd of June,

1578. This body, in a petition equally distinguished for the strength of its reasonings and the liberality of its sentiments, urged the States-General to make provision for the free exercise of the Reformed religion, as a measure righteous in itself, and the surest basis for the peace of the Provinces. How truly catholic were the Dutch Calvinists, and how much the cause of toleration owes to them, can be seen only from their own words, addressed to the Archduke Matthias and the Council of State.

After having proved that the cruelties practiced upon them had led only to an increase of their numbers, with the loss nevertheless of the nation's welfare, the desolation of its cities, the banishment of its inhabitants, and the ruin of its trade and prosperity, they go on to say that the refusal of the free exercise of their religion reduced them to this dilemma, "either that they must live without any religion, or that they themselves must force a way to the public exercise of it." They object to the first alternative as leading to an epicurean life, and the contempt of all laws human and divine; they dread the second as tending to a breach in the union of

the Provinces, and possibly the dissolution of the present Government. But do they therefore ask exclusive recognition or supremacy? Far from it. "Since the experience of past years had taught them," they say, "that by reason of their sins they could not all be reduced to one and the same religion, it was necessary to consider how both religions could be maintained without damage or prejudice to each other. As for the objection," they continue, "that two religions are incompatible, in the same country, it had been refuted by the experience of all ages. The heathen emperors had found their account more in tolerating the Christians, nay, even in using their service in their wars, than in persecuting them. The Christian emperors had also allowed public churches to those who were of a quite different opinion from them in religious matters, as might be seen in the history of Constantine, of his two sons, of Theodosius, and others. The Emperor Charles V. found no other expedient to extricate himself from the utmost distress than by consenting to the exercise of both religions." After citing many other examples they continue thus: "France is too near for us to be

ignorant that the rivers of blood with which that kingdom is; overflowed can never be dried up but by a toleration of religion. Such a toleration formerly produced peace there; whereas being interrupted the said kingdom was immediately in a flame, and in danger of being quite consumed. We may likewise learn from the Grand Seignior, who knows how to tyrannise as well as any prince, and yet tolerates both Jews and Christians in his dominions without apprehending either tumults or defections, though there be more Christians in his territories who never owned the authority of the Pope, than there are in Europe that acknowledge it." And they concluded by craving "that both religions might be equally tolerated till God should be pleased to reconcile all the opposite notions that reigned in the land." [12]

In accordance with the petition of the Synod of Dort, a scheme of "Religious Peace," drafted by the Prince of Orange and signed by Matthias, was presented to the States-General for adoption. Its general basis was the equal toleration of both religions throughout the Netherlands. In Holland

and Zeeland, where the Popish worship had been suppressed, it was to be restored in all places where a hundred resident families desired it. In the Popish Provinces an equivalent indulgence was to be granted wherever an equal number of Protestant families resided. [Nowhere was the private exercise of either faith to be obstructed; the Protestants were to be eligible to all offices for which they were qualified, and were to abstain from all trade and labor on the great festivals of the Roman Church. This scheme was approved by the States-General, under the name of the "Peace of Religion." William was overjoyed to behold his most ardent hopes of a united Fatherland, and the vigorous prosecution of its great battle against a common tyranny, about to be crowned.

But these bright hopes were only for a moment. The banner of toleration, bravely uplifted by William, had been waved over the Netherlands only to be furled again. The Roman Catholic nobles, with Aerschot and Champagny at their head, refused to accept the "Peace of Religion." In their immense horror of Protestantism they forgot

their dread of the Spaniard, and rather than that heresy should defile the Fatherland, they were willing that the yoke of Philip should be bound down upon it.

Tumults, violences, and conflicts broke out in many of the Provinces. Revenge beget revenge, and animosity on the one side kindled an equal animosity on the other. Something like a civil war raged in the Southern Netherlands, and the sword that ought to have been drawn against the common foe was turned against each other. These strifes and bigotries wrought at length the separation of the Walloon Provinces from the rest, and in the issue occasioned the loss of the greater part of the Netherlands. The hour for achieving liberty had passed, and for three centuries nearly these unwise and unhappy Provinces were not to know independence, but were to be thrown about as mere political make-weights, and to be the property now of this master and now of that.

Meanwhile the two armies lay inactive in the presence of each other. Both sides had recently

received an augmentation of strength. The Netherlands army had been increased to something like 30,000, first by an English levy led by John Casimir, and next by a French troop under the command of the Duke of Alencon, for the Netherlands had become the pivot on which the rival policies of England and France at this moment revolved. The sinews of war were lacking on both sides, and hence the pause in hostilities. The scenes were about to shift in a way that no one anticipated. Struck down by fever, Don John lay a corpse in the Castle of Namur. How different the destiny he had pictured for himself when he entered this fatal land! Young, brilliant, and ambitious, he had come to the Netherlands in the hope of adding to the vast renown he had already won at Lepanto, and of making for himself a great place in Christendom—of mounting, it might be, one of its thrones. But a mysterious finger had touched the scene, and suddenly changed its splendours into blackness, and transformed the imagined theater of triumph into one of misfortune and defeat. Fortune forsook her favourite the moment his foot touched this charmed soil. Withstood and insulted by the

obstinate Netherlanders, outwitted and baffled by the great William of Orange, suspected by his jealous brother Philip II., by whom he was most inadequately supported with men and money, all his hours were embittered by toil, disappointment, and chagrin. The constant dread in which he was kept by the perils and pitfalls that surrounded him, and the continual circumspection which he was compelled to exercise, furrowed his brow, dimmed his eye sapped his strength, and broke his spirit. At last came fever, and fever was followed by delirium. He imagined himself upon the battle-field: he shouted out his orders: his eye now brightened, now faded, as he fancied victory or defeat to be attending his arms. Again came a lucid interval,[13] but only to fade away into the changeless darkness of death. He died before he had reached his thirtieth year. Another hammer, to use Beza's metaphor, had been worn out on the anvil of the Church. [14]

Footnotes:

1. Strada, bk.9., p. 32.

2. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 333
3. Bentivoglio, lib. 10., pp. 192 -- 195
4. Bor, lib, 11., p. 916.
5. Watson, Philip II., vol. 2., p. 221
6. Bor, lib. 11., p. 900. Strada, bk. 9., p. 38.
7. Braudt, vol. 1., p. 333
8. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 334.
9. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 338.
10. Ibid., p. 339
11. Ibid., p. 339.
12. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 339 -- 341. -- Motley in his great history, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, when speaking of the intolerance and bigotry of the religious bodies of the Netherlands, specially emphasises the
13. Strada, bk. 10., p. 16
14. Of the transport of his body through France, and its presentation to Philip II. in the Escorial, Strada (bk. 10.) gives a minute but horrible account. "To avoid those vast expenses and ceremonious contentions of magistrates and priests at city gates, that usually waylay the progress of princes whether alive or dead, he caused him to be taken in pieces, and the

bones of his arms, thighs, legs, breast, and head (the brains being taken out), with other the severed parts, filling three mails, were brought safely into Spain; where the bones being set again, with small wires, they easily rejointed all the body, which being filled with cotton, armed, and richly habited, they presented Don John entire to the king as if he stood only resting himself upon his commander's-staff, looking as if he lived and breathed." On presenting himself thus before Philip, the monarch was graciously pleased to permit Don John to retire to his grave, which he had wished might be beside that of his father, Charles V., in the Escorial.

Chapter 25

Abjuration of Philip, and Rise of the Seven United Provinces

DON John having on his death-bed nominated Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma, to succeed him, and the choice having soon afterwards been ratified by Philip II., the duke immediately took upon him the burden of that terrible struggle which had crushed his predecessor. If brilliant abilities could have commanded corresponding success, Parma would have speedily re-established the dominion of Spain throughout the whole of the Netherlands. His figure was finely moulded, and his features were handsome, despite that the lower part of his face was buried in a bushy beard, and that his dark eye had a squint which warned the spectator to be on his guard. His round compact head was one which a gladiator might have envied; his bearing was noble; he was temperate, methodical in business, but never permitted its pressure to prevent his attendance on morning

mass; his coolness on the battle-field gave confidence to his soldiers; and while his courage and skill fitted him to cope with his antagonists in war, his wisdom, and cunning, and patience won for him not a few victories in the battles of diplomacy. His conduct and valor considerably retrieved at the beginning the affairs of Philip, but the mightier intellect with which he was confronted, and the destinies of the cause against which he did battle, attested in the end their superiority over all the great talents and dexterous arts of Alexander of Parma, seconded by the powerful armies of Spain. After the toil and watchfulness of years, and after victories gained with much blood, to yield not fruit but ashes, he too had to retire from the scene disappointed, baffled, and vanquished.

A revived bigotry had again split up the lately united Fatherland, and these divisions opened an entrance for the arts and the arms of Parma. Gathering up the wreck of the army of Don John, and reinforcing the old battalions by new recruits, Parma set vigorously to work to reduce the

Provinces, and restore the supremacy of both Philip and Rome. Sieges and battles signalized the opening of the campaign; in most of these he was successful, but we cannot stay to give them individual narration, for our task is to follow the footsteps of that Power which had awakened the conflict, and which was marching on to victory, although through clouds so dark and tempests so fierce that a few only of the Netherlanders were able to follow it. The first success that rewarded the arms of Parma was the capture of Maestricht. Its massacre of three days renewed the horrors of former sieges. The cry of its agony was heard three miles off; and when the sword of the enemy rested, a miserable remnant (some three or four hundred, say the old chroniclers)[1] was all that was spared of its thirty-four thousand inhabitants. Crowds of idlers from the Walloon country flocked to the empty city; but though it was easy to repeople it, it was found impossible to revive its industry and prosperity. Nothing besides the grass that now covered its streets would flourish in it but vagabondism. The loss which the cause of Netherland liberty sustained in the fall of

Maestricht was trifling, compared with the injury inflicted by another achievement of Parma, and which he gained not by arms, but by diplomacy. Knowing that the Walloons were fanatically attached to the old religion, he opened negotiations, and ultimately prevailed with them to break the bond of common brotherhood and form themselves upon a separate treaty. It was a masterly stroke. It had separated the Roman from the Batavian Netherlands. William had sought to unite the two, and make of them one nationality, placing the keystone of the arch at Ghent, the capital of the Southern Provinces, and the second city in the Netherlands. But the subtle policy of Parma had cut the Fatherland in twain, and the project of William fell to the ground.

The Prince of Orange anxiously considered how best to parry the blow of Parma, and neutralise its damaging effects. The master-stroke of the Spaniard led William to adopt a policy equally masterly, and fruitful beyond all the measures he had yet employed; this was the "Union of Utrecht." The alliance was formed between the

States of Holland, Zealand, Utrecht, Guelder-land, Zutphen, Overysse, and Groningen. It was signed on the 23rd of January, 1579, and six days thereafter it was proclaimed at Utrecht, and hence its name. This "Union" constituted the first foundation-stone in the subsequently world-renowned Commonwealth of the United Provinces of the Low Countries. The primary and main object of the Confederated States was the defense of their common liberty; for this end they resolved to remain hereafter and for ever united as one Province -- without prejudice, however, to the ancient privileges and the peculiar customs of each several State. As regarded the business of religion, it was resolved that each Province should determine that question for itself -- with this proviso, that no one should be molested for his opinion. The toleration previously enacted by the Pacification of Ghent was to rule throughout the bounds of the Confederacy.[2] When the States contrasted their own insignificance with the might of their great enemy, seven little Provinces banding themselves against an aggregate of nearly twice that number of powerful Kingdoms, they chose as a

fitting representation of their doubtful fortunes, a ship laboring amid the waves without sail or oars, and they stamped his device upon their first coins, with the words *Incertum quo fata ferant* [3] ("We know not whither the fates shall bear us"). Certainly no one at that hour was sanguine or bold enough to conjecture the splendid future awaiting these seven adventurous Provinces.

This attitude on their part made the King of Spain feign a desire for conciliation. A Congress was straightway assembled at Cologne to make what was represented as a hopeful, and what was certainly a laudable, attempt to heal the breach. On the Spanish side it was nothing more than a feint, but on that account it wore externally all the greater pomp and stateliness. In these respects nothing was lacking that could make it a success. The first movers in it were the Pope and the emperor. The deputies were men of the first rank in the State and the Church; they were princes, dukes, bishops, and the most renowned doctors in theology and law. Seldom indeed have so many mitres, and princely stars, and ducal coronets graced any assembly as

those that shed their brilliance on this; and many persuaded themselves, when they beheld this union of rank and office with skill in law, in art, and diplomacy, that the Congress would give birth to something correspondingly magnificent. It met in the beginning of May, 1579, and it did not separate till the middle of November of the same year. But the six months during which it was in session were all too short to enable it to solve the problem which so many conventions and conferences since the breaking out of the Reformation had attempted to solve, but had failed -- namely, how the absolute demands of authority are to be reconciled with the equally inflexible claims of conscience. There were only two ideas promulgated in that assembly; so far the matter was simple, and the prospect of a settlement hopeful; but these two ideas were at opposite poles, and all the stars, coronets, and mitres gathered there could not bridge over the gulf between them. The two ideas were those to which we have already referred -- Prerogative and Conscience.

The envoys of the Netherland States presented

fourteen articles, of which the most important was the one referring to religion. Their proposal was that "His Majesty should be pleased to tolerate the exercise of the Reformed religion and the Confession of Augsburg in such towns and places where the same were at that time publicly professed. That the States should also on their part, presently after the peace was declared, restore the exercise of the Roman Catholic religion in all the aforesaid towns and places, upon certain equitable conditions which should be inviolably preserved." "The Christian religion," said the envoys in supporting their proposal, "was a great mystery, in promoting of which God did not make use of impious soldiers, nor of the sword or bow, but of his own Spirit and of the ministry of pastors, or shepherds sent by him. That the dominion over souls and consciences belonged to God only, and that he only was the righteous Avenger and Punisher of the abuses committed in matters of religion. They insisted particularly upon the free exercise of religion." [4]

The deputies on the king's side refused to listen

to this proposal. They would agree to nothing as a basis of peace, save that the Roman Catholic religion -- all others excluded -- should be professed in all the Provinces; and as regarded such as might refuse to return to the Roman faith, time would be given them to settle their affairs, and retire from the country. [5] Half the citizens well-nigh would have had to exile themselves if this condition had been accepted. Where so large a body of emigrants were to find new seats, or how the towns left empty by their departure were to be re-peopled, or by what hands the arts and agriculture of the country were to be carried on, does not seem to have been provided for, or even thought of, by the Congress.

William of Orange had from the first expected nothing from this Conference. He knew Philip never would grant what only the States could accept -- the restoration, namely, of their charters, and the free exercise of their Protestant faith; he knew that to convene such an assembly was only to excite hopes that could not possibly be fulfilled, and so to endanger the cause of the Provinces; he

knew that mitres and ducal coronets were not arguments, nor could render a whit more legitimate the claims of prerogative; that ingenious and quirky expedients, and long and wordy discussions, would never bring the two parties one hair's-breadth nearer to each other; and as he had foreseen, so did it turn out. When the Congress ended its sitting of six months, the only results it had to show were the thousands of golden guilders needed for its expenses, and the scores of hogsheads of Rhenish wine which had been consumed in moistening its dusty deliberations and debates.

Contemporaneously with this most august and most magnificent, yet most resultless Congress, attempts were made to detach the Prince of Orange from his party and win him over to the king's side. Private overtures were made to him, to the effect that if he would forsake the cause of Netherland independence and retire to a foreign land, he had only to name his "price" and it should be instantly forthcoming, in honor, or in money, or in both.

More particularly he was promised the payment

of his debts, the restitution of his estates, reimbursement of all the expenses he had incurred in the war, compensation for his losses, the liberation of his son the Count of Buren, and should William retire into Germany, his son would be placed in the Government of Holland and Utrecht, and he himself should be indemnified, with a million of money as a gratuity. These offers were made in Philip's name by Count Schwartzenburg, who pledged his faith for the strict performance of them.

This was a mighty sum, but it could not buy William of Orange. Not all the honors which this monarch of a score of kingdoms could bestow, not all the gold which this master of the mines of Mexico and Peru could offer, could make William sell himself and betray his country. He was not to be turned aside from the lofty, the holy object he had set before him the glory of redeeming from slavery a people that confided in him, and of kindling the lamp of a pure faith in the land which he so dearly loved. If his presence were an obstacle to peace on the basis of his country's liberation, he

was ready to go to the ends of the earth, or to his grave; but he would be no party to a plot which had only for its object to deprive the country of its head, and twine round it the chain of a double slavery. [6]

The gold of Philip had failed to corrupt the Patriot: the King of Spain next attempted to gain his end by another and a different stratagem. The dagger might rid him of the man whom armies could not conquer, and whom money could not buy. This "evil thought" was first suggested by Cardinal Granvelle, who hated the prince, as the vile hate the upright, and it was eagerly embraced by Philip, of whose policy it was a radical principle that "the end justifies the means." The King of Spain fulminated a ban, dated 15th March, 1580, against the Prince of Orange, in which he offered "thirty thousand crowns, or so, to any one who should deliver him, dead or alive." The preamble of the ban set forth at great length, and with due formality, the "crimes," in other words the services to liberty, which had induced his patient and loving sovereign to set a price upon the head of William,

and make him a mark for all the murderers in Christendom. But the indignation of the virtuous king call be adequately understood only by perusing the words of the ban itself. "For these causes," said the document, "we declare him traitor and miscreant, enemy of ourselves and of the country. As such we banish him perpetually from all our realms, forbidding all our subjects..... to administer to him victuals, drink, fire, or other necessaries.....We expose the said William as an enemy of the human race, giving his property to all who may seize it. And if any one of our subjects, or any stranger, should be found sufficiently generous of heart to rid us of this pest, delivering him to us, dead or alive, or taking his life, we will cause to be furnished to him, immediately after the deed shall have been done, the sum of twenty-five thousand crowns of gold. If he have committed any crime, however heinous, we promise to pardon him; and if he be not already noble we will ennoble him for his valor."

The dark, revengeful, cowardly, and bloodthirsty nature of Philip II. appears in every

line of this proclamation. In an evil hour for himself had the King of Spain launched this fulmination. It fixed the eyes of all Europe upon the Prince of Orange, it gave him the audience of the whole world for his justification; and it compelled him to bring forward facts which remain an eternal monument of Philip's inhumanity, infamy, and crime. The Vindication or "Apology" of William, addressed to the Confederated, States, and of which copies were sent to all the courts of Europe, is one of the most precious documents of history, for the light it throws on the events of the time, and the exposition it gives of the character and motives of the actors, and more especially of himself and Philip. It is not so much a Defence as an Arraignment, which, breaking in a thunder-peal of moral indignation, must have made the occupant of the throne over which it rolled to shake and tremble on his lofty seat. After detailing his own efforts for the emancipation of the down-trodden Provinces, he turns to review the acts, the policy, and the character of the man who had fulminated against him this ban of assassination and murder. He charges Philip with the destruction,

not of one nor of a few of those liberties which he had sworn to maintain, but of all of them; and that not once, but a thousand times; he ridicules the idea that a people remain bound while the monarch has released himself from every promise, and oath, and law; he hurls contempt at the justification set up for Philip's perjuries -- namely, that the Pope had loosed him from his obligations -- branding it as adding blasphemy to tyranny, and adopting a principle which is subversive of faith among men; he accuses him of having, through Alva, concerted a plan with the French king to extirpate from France and the Netherlands all who favored the Reformed religion, giving as his informant the French king himself, He pleads guilty of having disobeyed Philip's orders to put certain Protestants to death, and of having exerted himself to the utmost to prevent the barbarities and cruelties of the "edicts." He boldly charges Philip with living in adultery, with having contracted an incestuous marriage, and opening his way to this foul couch by the murder "of his former wife, the mother of his children, the daughter and sister of the kings of France." He crowns this list of crimes, of which he

accuses Philip, with a yet more awful deed -- the murder of his son, the heir of his vast dominions, Don Carlos.

With withering scorn he speaks of the King of Spain's attempt to frighten him by raising against him "all the malefactors and criminals in the world." "I am in the hand of God," said the Christian patriot, "he will dispose of me as seems best for his glory and my salvation." The prince concludes his Apology by dedicating afresh what remained of his goods and life to the service of the States. If his departure from the country would remove an impediment to a just peace, or if his death could bring an end to their calamities, Philip should have no need to hire assassins and poisoners: exile would be sweet, death would be welcome. He was at the disposal of the States. They had only to speak -- to issue their orders, and he would obey; he would depart, or he would remain among them, and continue to toil in their cause, till death should come to release him, or liberty to crown them with her blessings.[7]

This Apology was read in a meeting of the Confederated Estates at Delft, the 13th of December, 1580, and their mind respecting it was sufficiently declared by the step they were led soon thereafter to adopt. Abjuring their allegiance to Philip, they installed the Prince of Orange in his room. Till this time Philip had remained nominal sovereign of the Netherlands, and all edicts and deeds were passed in his name, but now this formality was dropped. The Prince of Orange had before this been earnestly entreated by the States to assume the sovereignty, but he had persistently declined to allow himself to be clothed with this office, saying that he would give no ground to Philip or to any enemy to say that he had begun the war of independence to obtain a crown, and that the aggrandisement of his family, and not the liberation of his country, was the motive which had prompted him in all his efforts for the Low Countries. Now, however (5th July, 1581), the dignity so often put aside was accepted conditionally, the prince assuming, at the solemn request of the States of Holland and Zealand, the "entire authority, as sovereign and chief of the

land, as long as the war should continue." [8]

This step was finally concluded on the 26th of July, 1581, by an assembly of the States held at the Hague, consisting of deputies from Brabant, Guelderland, Zutphen, Flanders, Holland, Zealand, Utrecht, Overysse, and Friesland. The terms of their "Abjuration" show how deeply the breath of modern constitutional liberty had entered the Low Countries in the end of the sixteenth century; its preamble enunciates truths which must have shocked the adherents of the doctrine of Divine right. The "Abjuration" of the States declared "that the people were not created by God for the sake of the prince, and only to submit to his commands, whether pious or impious, right or wrong, and to serve him and his slaves; but that, on the contrary, the prince was made for the good of the people, in order to feed, preserve, and govern them according to justice and equity, as a father his children, and a shepherd his flock: that whoever in opposition to these principles pretended to rule his subjects as if they were his bondmen, ought to be deemed a tyrant, and for that reason might be rejected or

deposed, especially by virtue of the resolution of the States of the nation, in case the subjects, after having made use of the most humble supplications and prayers, could find no other means to divert him from his tyrannical purposes, nor to secure their own native rights." [9]

They next proceed to apply these principles. They fill column after column with a history of Philip's reign over the Low Countries, in justification of the step they had taken in deposing him. The document is measured and formal, but the horrors of these flaming years shine through its dry technicalities and its cold phraseology. If ever there was a tyrant on the earth, it was Philip II. of Spain; and if ever a people was warranted in renouncing its allegiance, it was the men who now came forward with this terrible tale of violated oaths, of repeated perfidies, of cruel wars, of extortions, banishments, executions, martyrdoms, and massacrings, and who now renounced solemnly and for ever their allegiance to the prince who was loaded with all these crimes.

The act of abjuration was carried into immediate execution. Philip's seal was broken, his arms were torn down, his name was forbidden to be used in any letters-patent, or public deed, and a new oath was administered to all persons in public office and employment.

This is one of the great revolutions of history. It realized in fact, and exhibited for the first time to the world, Representative Constitutional Government. This revolution, though enacted on a small theater, exemplified principles of universal application, and furnished a precedent to be followed in distant realms and by powerful kingdoms. It is important to remark that this is one of the mightiest of the births of Protestantism.

For it was Protestantism that inspired the struggle in the Low Countries, and that maintained the martyr at the stake and the hero in the field till the conflict was crowned with this ever-memorable victory. The mere desire for liberty, the mere reverence for old charters and municipal privileges, would not have carried the Netherlanders through

so awful and protracted a combat; it was the new force awakened by religion that enabled them to struggle on, sending relay after relay of martyrs to die and heroes to fight for a free conscience and a scriptural faith, without which life was not worth having. In this, one of the greatest episodes of the great drama of the Reformation, we behold Protestantism, which had been proceeding step by step in its great work of creating a new society -- a new world -- making another great advance. In Germany it had produced disciples and churches; in Geneva it had moulded a theocratic republic; in France it had essayed to set up a Reformed throne, but, failing in this, it created a Reformed Church so powerful as to include well-nigh half the nation. Making yet another essay, we see it in the Netherlands dethroning Philip of Spain, and elevating to his place William of Orange. A constitutional State, summoned into being by Protestantism, is now seen amid the despotisms of Christendom, and its appearance was a presage that in the centuries to follow, Protestantism would, in some cases by its direct agency, in others by its reflex influence, revolutionise all the governments

and effect a transference of all the crowns of Europe.

Footnotes:

1. Bor, lib. 13., p. 65; Hooft, lib. 15., p. 633
2. See Articles of Union in full in Brandt; Sir W. Temple; Watson, Philip II.; Motley, Dutch Republic, etc..
3. Temple, United Provinces, etc., chap. 1., p. 38.
4. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 366.
5. Bor, lib. 13., pp. 58, 59. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 366
6. Reidanus, ann. 2., 29. Gachard, Correspondance de Guillaume le Tacit, vol. 4., Preface. Bor, lib. 13., p. 95.
7. The Apology is given at nearly full length in Watson, Philip II., vol. 3., Appendix
8. Bor, lib. 15., pp. 181 -- 185
9. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 383

Chapter 26

Assassination of William the Silent

THE Seven United Provinces -- the fair flower of Netherland Protestantism -- had come to the birth. The clouds and tempests that overhung the cradle of the infant States were destined to roll away, the sun of prosperity and power was to shine forth upon them, and for the space of a full century the number of their inhabitants, the splendor of their cities, the beauty of their country, the vastness of their commerce, the growth of their wealth, the number of their ships, the strength of their armies, and the glory of their letters and arts, were to make them the admiration of Europe, and of the world. Not, however, till that man who had helped above all others to find for Protestantism a seat where it might expand into such a multiform magnificence, had gone to his grave, was this stupendous growth to be, beheld by the world. We have now to attend to the condition in which the dissolution of Philip's

sovereignty left the Netherlands.

In the one land of the Low Countries, there were at this moment three communities or nations. The Walloons, yielding to the influence of a common faith, had returned under the yoke of Spain. The Central Provinces, also mostly Popish, had ranged themselves under the sovereignty of the Duke of Anjou, brother of Henry III. of France. The Provinces of Holland and Zealand had elected (1581), as we have just seen, the Prince of Orange as their king.[1] His acceptance of the dignity was at first provisional. His tenure of sovereignty was to last only during the war; but afterwards, at the earnest entreaty of the States, the prince consented that it should be perpetual. His lack of ambition, or his exceeding sense of honor, made him decline the sovereignty of the Central Provinces, although this dignity was also repeatedly pressed upon him; and had he accepted it, it may be that a happier destiny would have been in store for the Netherlands. His persistent refusal made these Provinces cast their eyes abroad in search of a chief, and in an evil hour their choice lighted upon a son of Catherine de

Medici. The Duke of Anjou, the elect of the Provinces, inherited all the vices of the family from which he was sprung. He was treacherous in principle, cruel in disposition, profuse in his habits, and deeply superstitious in his faith; but his true character had not then been revealed; and the Prince of Orange, influenced by the hope of enlisting on the side of the Netherlands the powerful aid of France, supported his candidature. France had at that moment, with its habitual vacillation, withdrawn its hand from Philip II. and given it to the Huguenots, and this seemed to justify the prince in indulging the hope that this great State would not be unwilling to extend a little help to the feeble Protestants of Flanders. It was rumoured, moreover, that Anjou was aspiring to the hand of Elizabeth, and that the English queen favoured his suit; and to have the husband of the Queen of England as King of the Netherlands, was to have a tolerable bulwark against the excesses of the Spanish Power. But all these prudent calculations of bringing aid to Protestantism were destined to come to nothing. The duke made his entry (February, 1582) into the Netherlands amid

the most joyous demonstrations of the Provinces;[2] and to gratify him, the public exercise of the Popish religion, which for some time had been prohibited in Antwerp, was restored in one of the churches. But a cloud soon overcast the fair morning of Anjou's sovereignty ill the Netherlands. He quickly showed that he had neither the principle nor the ability necessary for so difficult a task as he had undertaken. Bitter feuds sprang up between him and his subjects, and after a short administration, which neither reflected honor on himself nor conferred benefit on the Provinces, he took his departure, followed by the reproaches and accusations of the Flemings. The cause of Protestantism was destined to owe nothing to a son of Catherine de Medici. Matthias, who had dwindled in William's overshadowing presence into a nonentity, and had done neither good nor evil, had gone home some time before. Through neither of these men had the intrigues of the Romanists borne fruit, except to the prejudice of the cause they were intended to further.

The Duke of Anjou being gone, the States of

Brabant and Flanders came to the Prince of Orange (August, 1583) with an offer of their crown; but no argument could induce him to accept the scepter they were so anxious to thrust into his hand. He took the opportunity, however, which his declination offered, of tendering them some wholesome advice. They must, he said, bestir themselves, and contribute more generously, if they wished to speed in the great conflict in which they had embarked. As for himself, he had nothing now to give but his services, and his blood, should that be required. All else he had already parted with for the cause: his fortune he had given; his brothers he had given. He had seen with pleasure, as the fruit of his long struggles for the Fatherland and freedom of conscience, the fair Provinces of Holland and Zeeland redeemed from the Spanish yoke.

And to think that now these Provinces were neither oppressed by Philip, nor darkened by Rome, was a higher reward than would be ten crowns, though they could place them upon his head. He would never put it in the power of Philip

of Spain to say that William of Orange had sought other recompense than that of rescuing his native land from slavery [3]

William, about this time, was deeply wounded by the defection of some friends in whom he had reposed confidence as sincere Protestants and good patriots, and he was not less mortified by the secession of Flanders, with its powerful capital, Ghent, from the cause of Netherland independence to the side of Parma. Thus one by one the Provinces of (the Netherlands, whose hearts had grown faint in the struggle, and whose "strength was weakened: in the way," crept back under the shadow of Spain, little dreaming what a noble heritage they had forfeited, and what centuries of insignificance, stagnation, and serfdom spiritual and bodily awaited them, as the result of the step they had now taken. The rich Southern Provinces, so stocked with cities, so finely clothed, so full of men, and so replenished with commercial wealth, fell to the share of Rome: the sand-banks of Holland and Zealand were given to Protestantism, that it might convert the desert into a garden, and

rear on this narrow and obscure theater an empire which, mighty in arms and resplendent in arts, should fill the world with its light.

The ban which Philip had fulminated against the prince began now to bear fruit. Wonderful it would have been if there had not been found among the malefactors and murderers of the world some one bold enough to risk the peril attendant on grasping the golden prize which the King of Spain held out to them. A year only had elapsed since the publication of the ban, and now an attempt was made to destroy the man on whose head it had set a price. Gaspar Anastro, a Spanish banker in Antwerp, finding himself on the verge of bankruptcy, bethought him of earning Philip's reward, and doing the world a service by ridding it of so great a heretic, and helping himself, at the same time, by retrieving his ruined fortunes. But lacking courage to do the bloody deed with his own hand, he hired his servant to execute it. This man, having received from a priest absolution of his sins, and the assurance that the doors of paradise stood open to him, repaired to the mansion of the prince,

and waited an opportunity to commit the horrible act. As Orange was crossing the hall, from the dinner-table, the miscreant approached him on pretence of handing him a petition, and putting his pistol, loaded with a single bullet, close to his head, discharged it at the prince. The ball, entering a little below the right ear, passed out through the left jaw, carrying with it two teeth. The wound bled profusely, and for some weeks the prince's life was despaired of, and vast crowds of grief-stricken citizens repaired to the churches to beseech, with supplications and tears, the Great Disposer to interpose his power, and save from death the Father of his Country. The prayer of the nation was heard. William recovered to resume his burden, and conduct another stage on the road to freedom the two Provinces which he had rescued from the paws of the Spanish bear. But if the husband survived, the wife fell by the murderous blow of Philip. Charlotte de Bourbon, so devoted to the prince, and so tenderly beloved by him, worn out with watching and anxiety, fell ill of a fever, and died. William sorely missed from his side that gentle but heroic spirit, whose words had so often revived

him in his hours of darkness and sorrow.

The two years that now followed witnessed the progressive disorganisation of the Southern Netherlands, under the combined influence of the mismanagement of the Duke of Anjou, the intrigues of the Jesuits, and the diplomacy and arms of the Duke of Parma. Despite all warnings, and their own past bitter experience, the Provinces of Brabant and Flanders again opened their ear to the "cunning charmers" of Spain and the "sweet singers" of Rome, and began to think that the yoke of Philip was not so heavy and galling as they had accounted it, and that the pastures of "the Church" were richer and more pleasant than those of Protestantism. Many said, "Beware!" and quoted the maxim of the old Book: "They who wander out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead." But the Flemings turned away from these counsellors. Divisions, distractions, and perpetual broils made them fain to have peace, and, to use the forcible metaphor of the Burgomaster of Antwerp, "they confessed to a wolf, and they had a wolf's absolution."

It was in the Northern Provinces only, happily under the scepter of William, who had rescued them. from the general shipwreck of the Netherlands, that order prevailed, and that anything like steady progress could be traced. But now the time was come when these States must lose the wisdom and courage to which they owed the freedom they already enjoyed, and the yet greater degree of prosperity and power in store for them. Twenty years had William the Silent "judged" the Low Countries: now the tomb was to close over him. He had given the labors of his life for the cause of the Fatherland: he was now to give his blood for it. Not fewer than five attempts had been made to assassinate him. They had failed; but the sixth was to succeed. Like all that had preceded it, this attempt was directly instigated by Philip's proscription, In the summer of 1584, William was residing at Delft, having married Louisa de Coligny, the daughter of the admiral, and the widow of Teligny, who perished, as we have seen, in the St. Bartholomew. A young Burgundian, who hid great duplicity and some talent under a mean

and insignificant exterior, had that spring been introduced to the prince, and had been employed by him in some business, though of small moment. This stranger professed to be a zealous Calvinist, the son of a French Protestant of the name of Guion, who had died for his faith. His real name was Balthazar Gerard, and being a fanatical Papist, he had long wished to "serve God and the king" by taking off the arch-heretic. He made known his design to the celebrated Franciscan, Father Gery of Tournay, by whom he was "much comforted and strengthened in his determination." He revealed his project also to Philip's Governor of the Low Countries. The Duke of Parma, who had at that time four ruffians lurking in Delft on the same business, did not dissuade Gerard from his design, but he seems to have mistrusted his fitness for it; although afterwards, being assured on this point, he gave him some encouragement and a little money. The risk was great, but so too were the inducements -- a fortune, a place in the peerage of Spain, and a crown in paradise.

It was Tuesday, the 10th of July, 1584. The

prince was at dinner with his wife, his sister (the Princess of Schwartzenberg), and the gentlemen of his suite. In the shadow of a deep arch in the wall of the vestibule, stood a mean-looking personage with a cloak cast round him. This was Balthazar Gerard. His figure had caught the eye of Louisa de Coligny as, leaning on her husband's arm, she passed through the hall to the dining-room, and his pale, agitated, and darkly sinister countenance smote her with a presentiment of evil. "He has come for a passport," said the prince, calming her alarm, and passed into the dining-hall. At table, the prince, thinking nothing of the muffled spectre in the ante-chamber, was cheerful as usual. The Burgomaster of Leeuwarden was present at the family dinner, and William, eager to inform himself of the religious and political condition of Friesland, talked much, and with great animation, with his guest. At two o'clock William rose from table, and crossed the vestibule on his way to his private apartments above. His foot was already on the second step of the stairs, which he was ascending leisurely, when the assassin, rushing from his hiding-place, fired a pistol loaded with

three balls, one of which passed through the prince's body, and struck the wall opposite. On receiving the shot, William exclaimed: "O my God, have mercy on my soul! O my God, have mercy on this poor people!"[4] He was carried into the dining-room, laid upon a couch, and in a few minutes he breathed his last. He had lived fifty-one years and sixteen days. On the 3rd of August he was laid in his tomb at Delft, mourned, not by Holland and Zeeland only, but by all the Netherlands -- the Walloons excepted -- as a father is mourned.[5]

So closed the great career of William the Silent. It needs not that we paint his character: it has portrayed itself in the actions of his life which we have narrated. Historians have done ample justice to his talents, so various, so harmonious, and each so colossal, that the combination presents a character of surpassing intellectual and moral grandeur such as has rarely been equalled, and yet more rarely excelled. But as the ancient tree of Netherland liberty never could have borne the goodly fruit that clothed its boughs in the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries unless the shoot of Protestantism had been grafted upon it, and new sap infused into the old decaying charters, so the talents of William of Orange, varied, beautiful, and brilliant though they were, unless linked with something diviner, could not have evolved that noble character and done those great deeds which have made the name of William the Silent one of the brightest on the page of history. Humanity, however richly endowed with genius, is a weak thing in itself; it needs to be grafted with a higher Power in order to reach the full measure of greatness. In the case of William of Orange it was so grafted. It was his power of realising One unseen, whose will he obeyed, and on whose arm he leaned, that constituted the secret of his strength. He was the soldier, the statesman, the patriot; but before all he was the Christian. The springs of his greatness lay in his faith. Hence his lofty aims, which, rising high above fame, above power, above all the ordinary objects of ambition, aspired to the only and supreme good. Hence, too, that inflexible principle which enabled him, without turning to the right or to the left, to go

straight on through all the intricacies of his path, making no compromise with falsehood, never listening to the solicitations of self-interest, and alive only to the voice of duty. Hence, too, that unfaltering perseverance and undying hope that upheld him in the darkest hour, and amid the most terrible calamities, and made him confident of ultimate victory where another would have abandoned the conflict as hopeless.

William of Orange persevered and triumphed where a Caesar or a Napoleon would have despaired and been defeated. The man and the country are alike: both are an epic. Supremely tragic outwardly is the history of both. It is defeat succeeding defeat; it is disaster heaped upon disaster, and calamity piled upon calamity, till at last there stands personified before us an Iliad of woes. But by some marvellous touch, by some transforming fiat, the whole scene is suddenly changed: the blackness kindles into glorious light, the roar of the tempest subsides into sweetest music, and defeat grows into victory. The man we had expected to see prostrate beneath the ban of

Philip, rises up greater than kings, crowned with the wreath of a deathless sovereignty; and the little State which Spain had thought to consign to an eternal slavery, rends the chain from her neck; and from her seat amid the seas, she makes her light to circulate along the shores of the islands and continents of the deep, and her power to be felt, and her name revered, by the mightiest kingdoms on the earth.

Footnotes:

1. Bor, lib. 15., pp. 185, 186
2. Bor, lib. 17., pp. 297-301. Hooft, lib. 19., p. 295
3. Message of William to the States-General, MS. -- apud Motley, vol. 2., p. 437
4. "Mon Dieu, ayez pitie de mon ame! mon Dieu, ayez pitie de ce pauvre peuple! "
5. The original authority from which the historians Bor, Meteren, Hooft, and others have drawn their details of the assassination of William of Orange is the "Official Statement," compiled by order of the States-General, of

which there is a copy in the Royal Library at the Hague. The basis of this "Statement" is the Confession of Balthazar Gerard, written by himself. There is a recent edition of this Confession, printed from an old MS. copy, and published by M. Gachard.

Chapter 27

Order and Government of the Netherland Church

THE development of the religious principle is somewhat overshadowed by the struggle in arms which Protestantism had to maintain in the Low Countries. But; the well-defined landing-place at which we have arrived, permits us to pause and take a closer view of the inner and spiritual conflict. Amid the armies that are seen marching to and fro over the soil of the Netherlands; amid the battles that shake it from side to side; amid the blaze of cities kindled by the Spaniard's torch, and fields drowned in blood by the Spanish sword, we can recognize the silent yet not inefficacious presence of a great power. It is here that we find the infant springs of a movement that to the outward eye seems so very martial and complex. It is in closets where the Bible is being read; it is in little assemblies gathered in cellar or thicket or cave, where prayer is being offered up and the

Scriptures are being searched; it is in the prison where the confessor languishes, and at the stake where the martyr is expiring, that we find the beginnings of that impulse which brought a nation into the field with arms in its hands, and raised up William of Orange to withstand the power of Spain. It was not the old charters that kindled the fire in the Netherlands. These were slowly and silently returning to dust, and the Provinces were sinking with them into slavery, and both would have continued uninterruptedly their quiescent repose had not an old Book, which claims a higher than human authorship, awakened conscience, and made it more indispensable to the men of the Netherlands to have freedom of worship than to enjoy goods or estate, or even life itself. It was this inexorability that brought on the conflict.

But was it not a misfortune to transfer such a controversy to the arena of the battle-field? Doubtless it was; but for that calamity the disciples of the Gospel in the Netherlands are not to blame. They waited long and endured much before they betook them to arms. Nearly half a century passed

away after the burning of the first martyrs of Protestantism in Brussels till the first sword was unsheathed in the war of independence. During that period, speaking generally -- for the exact number never can be ascertained -- from 50,000 to 100,000 men and women had been put to death for religion. And when at last war came, it came not from the Protestants, but from the Spaniards. We have seen the powerful army of soldiers which Alva led across the Alps, and we have seen the terrible work to which they gave themselves when they entered the country. The Blood Council was set up, the preaching of the Gospel was forbidden, the ministers were hanged, whole cities were laid in ashes, and, the gibbets being full, the trees of the field were converted into gallows, and their boughs were seen laden with the corpses of men and women whose only crime was that they were, or were suspected of being, converts to Protestantism. As if this were not enough, sentence of death was passed upon all the inhabitants of the Netherlands. Not even yet had a sword been drawn in opposition to a tyranny that had converted the Provinces, recently so flourishing, into a slaughter-house, and

that threatened speedily to make them as silent as a graveyard. Nor did Philip mean that his strangling, burnings, and massacrings should stop at the Netherlands. The orders to his devastating hordes were to follow the steps of Protestantism to every land where it had gone; to march to the shores of the Leman; to the banks of the Thames; to France, should the Guises fail in the St. Bartholomew they were at that moment plotting: everywhere "extermination, utter extermination," was to be inflicted. Protestantism was to be torn up by the roots, although it should be necessary to tear up along with it all human rights and liberties. It is not the Netherlands, with William at their head, for whom we need to offer vindication or apology, for coming forward at the eleventh hour to save Christendom and the world from a catastrophe so imminent and so tremendous; the parties that need to be defended are those more powerful States and princes who stood aloof, or rendered but inadequate aid at this supreme crisis, and left the world's battle to be fought by one of the smallest of its kingdoms. It is no doubt true, as we are often reminded, that the great Defender of the Church is

her heavenly King; but it is equally true that he saves her not by miracle, but by blessing the counsels and the arms, as well as the teaching and the blood of her disciples. There is a time to die for the truth, and there is a time to fight for it; and the part of Christian wisdom is to discern the "times," and the duty which they call for.

Leaving the armed struggles that are seen on the surface, let us look at the under-current, which, from one hour to another, is waxing in breadth and power. Protestantism in the Netherlands does not form one great river, as it did in some other countries. For half a century, at least, it is a congeries of fountains that burst out here and there, and send forth a multitude of streamlets, that are seen flowing through the country and refreshing it with living water. The course of Netherland Protestantism is the exact reverse of that of the great river of the land, the Rhine, which long keeping its floods united, divides at last into an infinity of streams, and falls into the ocean. Netherland Protestantism, long parted into a multitude of courses, gathers at length its waters

into one channel, and forms henceforth one great river. This makes it somewhat difficult to obtain a clear view of the Netherland Protestant Church. That Church is first seen in her martyrs, and it may be truly said that her martyrs are her glory, for they are excelled in numbers, and in holy heroism, by those of no Church in Christendom. The Netherland Church is next seen in her individual congregations, scattered through the cities of Flanders, Brabant, and Holland; and these congregations come into view, and anon disappear, according as the cloud of persecution now rises and now falls; and last of all, that Church is seen in her Synods. Her days of battle and martyrdom come at length to an end; and under the peaceful scepter of the princes of the House of Orange, her courts regularly convene, her seminaries flourish, her congregations fill the land, and the writings of her theologians are diffused through Christendom. The schools of Germany have ceased by this time to be the crowded resort of scholars they once were; the glory of the French Huguenots has waxed dim; and the day is going away in Geneva, where in the middle and end of the sixteenth century it had

shone so brightly; but the light of Holland is seen burning purely, forming the link between Geneva and the glory destined to illuminate England in the seventeenth century.

The order and government established in the Church of Holland may be clearly ascertained from the "Forty Ecclesiastical Laws," which in the year 1577 were drawn up and published in the name of the Prince of Orange as Stadtholder, and of the States of Holland, Zealand, and their allies. The preamble of the Act indicates the great principle of ecclesiastical jurisprudence entertained by the framers, and which they sought to embody in the Dutch Church. "Having," say they, "nothing more at heart than that the doctrine of the holy Gospel may be propagated in its utmost purity in the towns and other places of our jurisdiction, we have thought fit, after mature deliberation, to make the following rules, which we will and require to be inviolably preserved; and we have judged it necessary that the said rules should chiefly relate to the administration of Church government, of which there are to be found in Holy Scripture four

principal kinds: 1. That of Pastors, who are likewise styled Bishops, Presbyters, Ministers in the Word of God, and whose office chiefly consists in teaching the said Word, and in the administration of the Sacraments. 2. That of Doctors, to whose office is now substituted that of Professors of Divinity. 3. That of Elders, whose main business is to watch over men's morals, and to bring transgressors again into the right way by friendly admonitions; and 4. That of Deacons, who have the care of the sick."

According to this programme of Church government, or body of ecclesiastical canons, now enacted by the States, the appointment of ministers was lodged in the hands of the magistrates, who were to act, however, upon "the information and with the advice of the ministers." Towns whose magistrates had not yet embraced the Reformed religion, were to be supplied with pastors from a distance. No one was to assume at his own hands an office so sacred as the ministry: he must receive admission from the constituted authorities of the Church. The minister "elect" of a city had first to

undergo examination before the elders, to whom he must give proofs that his learning was competent, that his pulpit gifts were such as might enable him to edify the people, and, above all, that his life was pure, lest he should dishonor the pulpit, and bring reproach upon "the holy office of the ministry." If found qualified in these three particulars, "he shall be presented," say the canons, "to the magistrate for his approbation, in order to his preaching to the people," that they, too, may be satisfied as to his fitness to instruct them. There still awaits him another ordeal before he can enter a pulpit as pastor of a flock. He has been nominated by the magistrate with advice of the ministers; he has been examined by the elders; he has been accepted by the people; and thus has given guarantees as to his learning, his life, and his power of communicating instruction; but before being ordained to the office of the ministry, "his name shall be published from the pulpit," say the canons, "three Sundays successively, to the end that if any man has aught to object against him, or can show any cause why he should not be admitted, he may have time to do it." We shall suppose that no

objections have been offered -- at least none such as to form a bar to his admission -- the oath of allegiance is then administered to him. In that oath he swears obedience to the lawful authorities "in all things not contrary to the will of God." To this civil oath was appended a solemn vow of spiritual fidelity, in these words: "Moreover, I swear that I will preach and teach the Word of God. after the purest manner, and with the greatest diligence, to the end it may bring forth much fruit in this congregation, as becomes a true and faithful shepherd..... Neither will I forsake this ministry on account of any advantage or disadvantage." It was to the ecclesiastical authorities that this promise was commonly given in other Presbyterian Churches, but in Holland it was tendered to the nation through the magistrate, the autonomy of the Church not being as yet complete. The act of ordination was to be preceded by a sermon on the sacred function, and followed by prayers for a blessing on the pastor and his flock. So simple was the ritual in studied contrast to the shearings, the anointings, and the investitures of the Roman Church, which made the entrance into sacred

orders an affair of so much mystic pomp. "This," the canons add, "we think sufficient, seeing that the ancient ceremonies are degenerated into abominable institutions," and they might have added, had failed to guard the purity of the priesthood.[1]

In these canons we see at least an earnest desire evinced on the part of the civil authorities of Holland to secure learned and pious men for its pulpits, and to provide guarantees, so far as human foresight and arrangement could do so, against the indolent and unfaithful discharge of the office on the part of those entrusted with it. And in this they showed a wise care. The heart of a Protestant State is its Church, and the heart of a Church is its pulpit, and the centuries which have elapsed since the era of the Reformation furnish us with more than one example, that so long as the pulpit retains its purity, the Church will preserve her vigour; and while the Church preserves her vigour, the commonwealth will continue to flourish; and that, on the other hand, when languor invades the pulpit, corruption sets-in in the Church, and from the Church the

leprosy quickly extends to the State; its pillars totter, and its bulwarks fall.

Following an example first originated at Geneva, the ministers of a city and of the parishes around met every fortnight to confer together on religious matters, as also on their studies, and, in short, on whatever concerned the welfare of the Church and the efficiency of her pastors. Every minister, in his turn, preached before his brethren; and if his sermon was thought to contain anything contrary to sound doctrine, the rest admonished him of his error. In order still more to guard the purity and keep awake the vigilance of the ministry, a commission, consisting of two elders and two ministers of the chief town, was to make a yearly circuit through the dependent Provinces, and report the state of matters to the magistrate on their return, "to the end," say the canons, "that if they find anything amiss it may be seasonably redressed." Not fewer than three sermons a week were to be preached "in all public places," and on the afternoon of Sunday the Heidelberg Catechism was to be expounded in all the churches.

Baptism was to be administered by a minister only; it was not to be denied to any infant; it was "pious and praiseworthy" for the parent himself to bring the child to be baptised, and the celebration was to take place in the church in presence of the congregation, unless the child were sick, when the ordinance might be dispensed at home "in presence of some godly persons." The Lord's Supper was to be celebrated four times yearly, care being taken that all who approached the table were well instructed in the faith. The canons, moreover, prescribe the duty of ministers touching the visitation of the sick, the care of prisoners, and attendance at funerals. A body of theological professors was provided for the University of Leyden; and the magistrates planted a school in every town under their jurisdiction, selecting as teachers only those who professed the Reformed faith, "whose business it shall be to instil into them principles of true religion as well as learning."

The elders were chosen, not by the congregation, but by the magistrates of the city.

They were to be selected from their own body, "good men, and not inexperienced in the matters of religion;" they were to sit with the pastors, constituting a court of morals, and to report to the Government such decisions and transactions as it might concern the Government to know. To the deacons was assigned the care of the poor. The State arrangements in Holland for this class of the community made the office of deacon well-nigh superfluous; nevertheless, it was instituted as being an integral part of the Church machinery; and so the canons bid the magistrates take care "that fit and godly stewards be appointed, who understand how to assist the poor according to their necessities, by which means the trade of begging may be prevented, and the poor contained within the bounds of their duty; this will be easily brought about as soon as an end shall be put to our miseries by peace and public tranquillity." [2]

This first framework of the Netherland Reformed Church left the magistrate the highest functionary in it. The final decision of all matters lay with him. In matters of administration and of

discipline, in questions of morals and of doctrine, he was the court of last appeal. This presents us with a notable difference between the Protestant Church of the Netherlands and the Churches of Geneva and France. Calvin aimed, as we have seen, at a complete separation of the civil and the spiritual domain; he sought to exclude entirely the power of the magistrate in things purely spiritual, and he effected this in the important point of admission to the Communion-table; but in Geneva, the Church being the State, the two necessarily touched each other at a great many points, and the Reformer failed to make good the perfect autonomy which he aimed at conferring on the Church. In France, however, as we have also seen, he realized his ideal fully. He established in that country an ascending gradation of Church courts, or spiritual tribunals, according to which the final legislation and administration of all spiritual affairs lay within the Church herself. We behold the French Protestant Church taking her place by the side of the French Government, and exhibiting a scheme of spiritual administration and rule as distinct and complete as that of the civil

government of the country. But in the Netherlands we fail to see a marked distinction between the spiritual and the civil power: the ecclesiastical courts merge into the magistrates tribunal, and the head of the State is to the Church in room of]National Synod and Assembly. One reason of the difference is to be found in the fact that whereas in France the magistrate was hostile, in the Low Countries he was friendly, and was oftener found in the van than in the rear of the Reform. Moreover, the magistrates of Holland could plead a very venerable and a very unbroken precedent for their interference in the affairs of the Church: it had been, they affirmed, the practice of princes from the days of Justinian downwards.[3]

This was one source of the troubles which afterwards afflicted the States, and which we must not pass wholly without notice. Peter Cornelison and Gaspar Koolhaes, ministers in Leyden, were (1579) the first to begin the war which raged so long and so fiercely in Holland on the question of the authority of the Civil Government in Ecclesiastical matters. Peter Cornelison maintained

that elders and deacons ought to be nominated by the Consistory and proposed to the congregation without the intervention of the magistrate. Gaspar Koolhaes, on the contrary, maintained that elders and deacons, on being nominated by the Consistory, should be approved of by the magistrates, and afterwards presented to the congregation. The dispute came before the magistrates, and decision was given in favor of the latter method, that elders and deacons elect should receive the approval of the magistrate before being presented to the people. The States of Holland, with the view of preserving the public peace and putting an end to these quarrels, appointed certain divines to deduce from Scripture, and embody in a concise treatise, the Relations of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Powers -- in other words, to give an answer to the question, what the magistrate may do and what he may not do in the Church. It is almost unnecessary to say that their dissertation on this difficult and delicate question did not meet the views of all parties, and that the tempest was not allayed. The worthy divines took somewhat decided views on the magistrate's functions. His

duty, they said, was "to hinder those who corrupt the Word of God from disturbing the external peace of the Church, to fine and imprison them, and inflict corporal punishments upon them." As an illustration Peter Cornelison, the champion of the Consistorial rights, was dismissed from his charge in Leyden, an apology accompanying the act, in which the magistrates set forth that they "did not design to tyrannise over the Church, but to rid her of violent and seditious men," adding "that the Church ought to be governed by Christ alone, and not by ministers and Consistories." This looked like raising a false issue, seeing both parties admitted that the government of the Church is in Christ alone, and only disputed as to whether that government ought to be administered through magistrates, or through ministers and Consistories.[4]

The National Synod which met at Dort in 1578, and which issued the famous declaration in favor of toleration, noticed in a previous chapter, agreed that a National Synod should be convened once every three years. In pursuance of that enactment,

the Churches of Antwerp and Delft, to whom the power had been given of convoking the assembly, issued circular letters calling the Synod, which accordingly assembled in 1581 at Middelburg in Zeeland. The constitution of the Netherland Reformed Church -- so far framed by the "Ecclesiastical Laws" - this Synod completed on the French model. The Consistories, or Kirk-sessions, it placed under classes or Presbyteries; and the Presbyteries it placed under particular Synods. The other regulations tended in the direction of curtailing the power of the magistrate in Church matters. The Synod entirely shut him out in the choice of elders and deacons, and it permitted him to interfere in the election of ministers only so far as to approve the choice of the people. The Synod likewise decreed that all ministers, elders, deacons, and professors of divinity should subscribe the Confession of Faith of the Netherland Church. In the case of Koolhaes, who had maintained against Cornelison the right of the magistrate to intervene in the election of elders and deacons, the Synod found his doctrine erroneous, and ordained him to make a public

acknowledgement. Nevertheless, he refused to submit to this judgment, and though excommunicated by the Synod of Haarlem next year, he was sustained in the spiritual functions and temporal emoluments of his office by the magistrates of Leyden. The matter was abundantly prolific of strifes and divisions, which had all but ruined the Church at Leyden, until it ended in the recalcitrant resigning his ministry and adopting the trade of a distiller.[5]

Footnotes:

1. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 318, 319
2. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 321, 322
3. See "Reasons of prescribing these Ecclesiastical Laws" -- Brandt, vol. 1., p. 322.
4. Abridgment of Brandt's History, vol. 1., pp. 200 -- 202.
5. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 381, 382.

Chapter 28

Disorganisation of the Provinces

IN proportion as the Reformed Church of the Netherlands rises in power and consolidates her order, the Provinces around her fall into disorganisation and weakness. It is a process of selection and rejection that is seen going on in the Low Countries. All that is valuable in the Netherlands is drawn out of the heap, and gathered round the great principle of Protestantism, and set apart for liberty and glory; all that is worthless is thrown away, and left to be burned in the fire of despotism.

Of the Seventeen Provinces seven are taken to be fashioned into a "vessel of honour," ten are left to become a "vessel of dishonour." The first become the "head of gold," the second are the "legs and feet of clay." Notwithstanding the efforts of the Synod of Middelburg, the peace at large was not

restored; there was still war between the pastors and some of the municipalities. The next move in the battle came from the magistrates of Leyden. Their pride had been hurt by what the Synod of Middelburg had done, and they presented a complaint against it to the States of Holland. In a Synod vested with the power of enacting canons, the magistrates of Leyden saw, or professed to see, another Papacy rising up. The fear was not unwarranted, seeing that for a thousand years the Church had tyrannised over the State. "If a new National Synod is to meet every three years," say the magistrates in their memorial to the States, "the number of ecclesiastical decrees will be so great that we shall have much ado to find the beginning and the end of that link." It was a second canon law which they dreaded. "If we receive the decrees of Synods we shall become their vassals," they reasoned. "We demand," said they in conclusion, "that the civil authority may still reside in the magistrates, whole and undivided; we desire that the clergy may have no occasion to usurp a new jurisdiction, to raise themselves above the Government, and rule over the subjects."

The ministers and elders of the Churches of Holland met the demand for an undivided civil authority on the, part of the magistrates by a demand for an undivided spiritual authority on the part of the Church. They asked that "the government of the Church, which is of a spiritual nature, should still reside, whole and undivided, in the pastors and overseers of the Churches, and that politicians, and particularly those who plainly showed that they were not of the Reformed religion, should have no occasion to exercise an unreasonable power over the Church, which they could no more endure than the yoke of Popery." And they add, "that. having escaped from the Popish tyranny, it behoved them to see that the people did not fall into unlimited licentiousness, or libertinage, tending to nothing but disorder and confusion. The blunted rod should not be thrown away lest peradventure a sharper should grow up in its room." [1] It is true that both the Popish and the Protestant Churches claim a spiritual jurisdiction, but there is this essential difference between the two powers claimed -- the former is lawless, the

latter is regulated by law. The Popish jurisdiction cannot be resisted by conscience, because, claiming to be infallible, it is above conscience. The Protestant jurisdiction, on the contrary, leaves conscience free to resist it, should it exceed its just powers, because it teaches that God alone is Lord of the conscience.

But to come to the root of the unhappy strifes that now tore up the Netherlands, and laid the better half of the Provinces once more at the feet of Rome -- there were two nations and two faiths struggling in that one country. The Jesuits had now had time to bring their system into full operation, and they succeeded so far in thwarting the measures which were concerted by the Prince of Orange with the view of uniting the Provinces, on the basis of a toleration of the two faiths, in a common struggle for the one liberty. Led by the disciples of Loyola, the Romanists in the Netherlands would neither be content with equality for themselves, nor would they grant toleration to the Protestants wherever they had the power of refusing it; hence the failure of the Pacification of

Ghent, and the Peace of Religion. The Fathers kept the populations in continual agitation and alarm, they stirred up seditions and tumults, they coerced the magistrates, and they provoked the Protestants in many places into acts of imprudence and violence. On the framing of the Pacification of Ghent, the Roman Catholic States issued an order requiring all magistrates and priests to swear to observe it. The secular priests of Antwerp took the oath, but the Jesuits refused it, "because they had sworn to be faithful to the Pope, who favored Don John of Austria." [2] Of the Franciscan monks in the city twenty swore the oath, and nineteen refused to do so, and were thereupon conducted peaceably out of the town along with the Jesuits. The Franciscans of Utrecht fled, as did those of other towns, to avoid the oath.

In some places the Peace of Religion was not accepted, and in others where it had been formally accepted, it was not only not kept, it was flagrantly violated by the Romanists. The basis of that treaty was the toleration of both worships all over the Netherlands. It gave to the Protestants in the

Roman Catholic Provinces -- in all places where they numbered a hundred -- the right to a chapel in which to celebrate their worship; and where their numbers did not enable them to claim this privilege, they were nevertheless to be permitted the unmolested exercise of their worship in private. But in many places the rights accorded by the treaty were denied them: they could have no chapel, and even the private exercise of their worship exposed them to molestations of various kinds. The Protestants, incensed by this anti-national spirit and bad faith, and emboldened moreover by their own growing numbers, seized by force in many cities the rights which they could not obtain by peaceable means.

Disorders and seditions were the consequence. Ghent, the city which had given its name to the Pacification, led the van in these disgraceful tumults; and it was remarked that nowhere was the Pacification worse kept than in the city where it had been framed. The Reformed in Ghent, excited by the harangues delivered to them from the pulpit by Peter Dathenus, an ex-monk, and now a

Protestant high-flier, who condemned the toleration granted to the Romanists as impious, and styled the prince who had framed the treaty an atheist, rose upon the Popish clergy and chased them away, voting them at the same time a yearly pension. They pillaged the abbeys, pulled down the convents, broke the images, melted the bells and cast them into cannon, and having fortified the town, and made themselves masters of it they took several villages in the neighborhood and enacted there the same excesses.[3] These deplorable disorders were not confined to Ghent; they extended to Antwerp, to Utrecht, to Mechlin, and to other towns -- the Protestants taking the initiative in some places, and the Romanists in others; but all these violences grew out of the rejection of the Peace of Religion, or out of the flagrant violation of its articles.[4] The commanding influence of the Prince of Orange succeeded in pacifying the citizens in Ghent and other towns, but the tumults stilled for a moment broke out afresh, and raged with greater violence. The country was torn as by a civil war.

This state of matters led to the adoption of other measures, which still more complicated and embarrassed the movement. It was becoming evident to William that his basis of operations must be narrowed if he would make it stable; that the Pacification of Ghent, and the Peace of Re-ligon, in themselves wise and just, embraced peoples that were diverse, and elements that were irreconcilable, and in consequence were failing of their ends. A few Romanists were staunch patriots, but the great body were showing themselves incapable of sympathising with, or heartily co-operating in, the great struggle for the liberation of their native land. Their consciences, in the guidance of the Jesuits, stifled their patriotism. They were awkwardly placed between two alternatives: if Philip should conquer in the war they would lose their country, if victory should declare for the Prince of Orange they would lose their faith. From this dilemma they could be delivered only by becoming Protestants, and Protestants they were determined not to become; they sought escape by the other door -- namely, that of persuading or compelling the Protestants to

become Romanists. Their desire to solve the difficulty by this issue introduced still another element of disorganisation and danger. There came a sudden outburst of propagandist zeal on the part of the priests, and of miraculous virtue on the part of statues and relics. Images began to exude blood, and from the bones of the dead a healing power went forth to cure the diseases of the living. These prodigies greatly edified the piety of the Roman Catholics, but they inflamed their passions against their Protestant fellow subjects, and they rendered them decidedly hostile to the cause of their country's emancipation. The prince had always stood up for the full toleration of their worship, but he now began to perceive that what the Flemish Romanists called worship was what other men called political agitation; and though still holding by the truth of his great maxim, and as ready to tolerate all religions as ever, he did not hold himself bound to tolerate charlatanry, especially when practiced for the overthrow of Netherland liberty. He had proclaimed toleration for the Roman worship, but he had not bound himself to tolerate everything which the Romanist might

substitute for worship, or which it might please him to call worship.

The prince came at length to the conclusion that he had no alternative but to withdraw by edict the toleration which he had proclaimed by edict; nor in doing so did he feel that he was trenching on the rights of conscience, for he recognised on the part of no man, or body of men, a right to plead conscience for feats of jugglery and tricks of legerdemain. Accordingly, on the 26th of December, 1581, an edict was published by the prince and the States of Holland, forbidding the public and private exercise of the Roman religion, but leaving opinion free, by forbidding inquisition into any man's conscience.[5] This was the first "placard" of the sort published in Holland since the States had taken up arms for their liberties; and the best proof of its necessity is the fact that some cities in Brabant, where the bulk of the inhabitants were Romanist-Antwerp and Brussels in particular -- were compelled to have recourse to the same measure, or submit to the humiliation of seeing their Government bearded, and their public peace

hopelessly embroiled. Antwerp chose six "discreet ecclesiastics" to baptise, marry, and visit the sick of their own communion, granting them besides the use of two little chapels; but even these functions they were not permitted to undertake till first they had sworn fidelity to the Government. The rest of the priests were required to leave the town within twenty-four hours under a penalty of 200 crowns.[6] In Brussels the suppression of the Popish worship, which was occasioned by a tumult raised by a seditious curate, brought with it an exposure of the arts which had rendered the edict of suppression necessary. "The magistrates," says the edict, "were convinced that the three bloody Hosts, which were shown to the people by the name of the Sacrament of Miracles, were only a stained cloth; that the clergy had exposed to the people some bones of animals as relics of saints, and deceived the simple many other ways to satisfy their avarice; that they had made them worship some pieces of alder-tree as if they had been a part of our Savior's cross; that in some statues several holes had been discovered, into which the priests poured oil to make them sweat; lastly, that in other

statues some springs had been found by which they moved several parts of their bodies.[7]

These edicts, unlike the terrible placards of Philip, erected no gibbets, and dug no graves for living men and women; they were in all cases temporary, "till public tranquillity should be restored; " they did not proscribe opinion, nor did they deny to the Romanist the Sacraments of his Church; they suppressed the public assembly only, and they suppressed it because a hundred proofs had demonstrated that it was held not for worship but sedition, and that its fruits were not piety but tumults and disturbances of the public peace. Most unwilling was the Prince of Orange to go even this length; it placed him, he saw, in apparent, not real, opposition to his formerly declared views. Nor did he take this step till the eleventh hour, and after being perfectly persuaded that without some such measure he could not preserve order and save liberty.

Footnotes:

1. Brandt, vol. 1., pp. 384 -- 386.
2. Abridgment of Brandt's History, vol. 1., p. 185.
3. Brandt, vol. 1, p. 342.
4. Abridgment of Brandt's History, vol. 1., p. 196.
5. Brandt, vol. 1., p. 383
6. Ibid., p. 382
7. Abridgment of Brandt, vol. 1., p. 207.

Chapter 29

The Synod of Dort

WILLIAM, Prince of Orange, had just fallen, and the murderous blow that deprived of life the great founder of the Dutch Republic was as much the act of Philip of Spain as if his own hand had fired the bullet that passed through the prince's body, and laid him a corpse in the hall of his own dwelling-house. Grief, consternation, despair overspread the Provinces. The very children cried in the streets. Father William had fallen, and the Netherlands had fallen with him; so did men believe, and for a time it verily seemed as if the calamity had all the frightful magnitude in which it presented itself to the nation in the first moments of its surprise and terror. The genius, wisdom, courage, and patriotism of which the assassin's shot had deprived the Low Countries could not possibly be replaced. William could have no successor of the same lofty stature as himself. 'While he lived all felt that they had a bulwark between them and Spanish tyranny; but now that he was dead, the

shadow of Rome and Spain seemed again to approach them, and all trembled, from the wealthy merchant on the exchanges of Antwerp and Brussels, to the rude fisherman on the solitary coast of Zealand. The gloom was universal and tragical. The diplomacy of Parma and the ducats of Spain were instantly set to work to corrupt and seduce the Provinces. The faint-hearted, the lukewarm, and the secretly hostile were easily drawn away, and induced to abandon the great struggle for Netherland liberty and the Protestant faith. Ghent, the key-stone of that arch of which one side was Roman Catholic and the other Protestant, reconciled itself to Philip. Bruges, Brussels, Antwerp, Mechlin, and other towns of Brabant and Flanders, won by the diplomacy or vanquished by the arms of Parma, returned under the yoke. It seemed as if the free State which the labors and sacrifices of William the Silent had called into existence was about to disappear from the scene, and accompany its founder to the tomb.

But the work of William was not so to vanish; its root was deeper. When the first moments of

panic were over, the spirit of the fallen hero asserted itself in Holland. The Estates of that Province passed a resolution, the very day of his murder, "to maintain the good cause, by God's help, to the uttermost, without sparing gold or blood," and they communicated their resolve to all commanders by land and sea. A State Council, or provisional executive board, was established for the Seven Provinces of the Union. At the head of it was placed Prince Maurice, William's second son, a lad of seventeen, who already manifested no ordinary decision and energy of character, and who in obedience to the summons of the States now quitted the University of Leyden, where he had been pursuing his studies, to be invested with many of his father's commands and honors. The blandishments of the Duke of Parma the States strenuously repelled, decreeing that no overture of reconciliation should be received from "the tyrant;" and the city of Dort enacted that whoever should bring any letter from the enemy to any private person "should forthwith be hanged."

It was Protestantism that had fired Holland and

her six sister Provinces with this great resolve; and it was Protestantism that was to build up their State in the face of the powerful enemies that surrounded it, and in spite of the reverses and disasters to which it still continued to be liable. But the Hollanders were slow to understand this, and to see wherein their great strength lay. They feared to trust their future to so intangible and invisible a protector. They looked abroad in the hope of finding some foreign prince who might be willing to accept their crown, and to employ his power in their defense. They hesitated some time between Henry III. of France and Elizabeth of England, and at last their choice fell on the former. Henry was nearer them, he could the more easily send them assistance; besides, they hoped that on his death his crown would devolve on the King of Navarre, the future Henry IV., in whose hands they believed their religion and liberty would be safe. Willingly would Henry III. have enhanced the splendor of his crown by adding thereto the Seven United Provinces, but he feared the wrath of the League, the intrigues of Philip, and the ban of the Pope.

The infant States next repaired to Elizabeth with an offer of their sovereignty. This offer the Protestant queen felt she could neither accept nor decline. To accept was to quarrel with Philip; and the state of Ireland at that moment, and the numbers and power of the Roman Catholics in England, made a war with Spain dangerous to the stability of her own throne; and yet should she decline, what other resource had the Provinces but to throw themselves into the arms of Philip? and, reconciled to the Netherlands, Spain would be stronger than ever, and a stage nearer on its road to England. The prudent queen was in a strait between the two. But though she could not be the sovereign, might she not be the ally of the Hollanders ~ This she resolved to become. She concluded a treaty with them, "that the queen should furnish the States with 5,000 foot and 1,000 horse, to be commanded by a Protestant general of her appointment, and to be paid by her during the continuance of the war; the towns of Brill and Flushing being meanwhile put into her possession as security for the reimbursement to her of the war expenses" It was further stipulated "that should it be found expedient

to employ a fleet in the common cause, the States should furnish the same number of ships as the queen, to be commanded by an English admiral."

The force agreed upon was immediately despatched to Holland under the command of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Leicester possessed but few qualities fitting him for the weighty business now put into his hands. He was vain, frivolous, greedy, and ambitious, but he was an immense favourite with the queen. His showy accomplishments blinded at the first the Hollanders, who entertained him at a series of magnificent banquets (December, 1585), loaded him with honors and posts, and treated him more as one who had already achieved their deliverance, than one who was only beginning that difficult and doubtful task. The Provinces soon began to see that their independence was not to come from the hand of Leicester.

He proved no match for the genius and address of the Duke of Parma, who was daily winning victories for Spain, while Leicester could

accomplish nothing. His prudence failing him, he looked askance on the grave statesmen and honest patriots of Holland and Zealand, while he lavished his smiles on the artful and the designing who submitted to his caprice and flattered his vanity. His ignorance imposed restrictions on their commerce which greatly fettered it, and would ultimately have ruined it, and he gave still deeper offense by expressing contempt for those ancient charters to which the Dutch were unalterably attached. Misfortune attended all that he undertook in the field. He began to intrigue to make himself master of the country. His designs came to light, the contempt of the Provinces deepened into disgust, and just a year after his first arrival in Holland, Leicester returned to England, and at the desire of Elizabeth resigned his government.

The distractions which the incapacity and treachery of the earl had occasioned among the Dutch themselves, offered a most inviting opportunity to Parma to invade the Provinces, and doubtless he would have availed himself of it but for a dreadful famine that swept over the Southern

Netherlands. The famine was followed by pestilence. The number of the deaths, added to the many banishments which had previously taken place, nearly emptied some of the great towns of Brabant and Flanders. In the country the peasants, owing to the ravages of war, had neither horses to plough their fields nor seed wherewith to sow them, and the harvest was a complete failure. In the terrible desolation of the country the beasts of prey so multiplied, that within two miles of the once populous and wealthy city of Ghent, not fewer than a hundred persons were devoured by wolves.

Meanwhile Holland and Zealand presented a picture which was in striking contrast to the desolation and ruin that overspread the Southern and richer Provinces. Although torn by factions, the result of the intrigues of Leicester, and burdened with the expense of a war which they were compelled to wage with Parma, their inhabitants continued daily to multiply, and their wealth, comforts, and power to grow. Crowds of Protestant refugees flocked into the Northern Provinces, which now became the seat of that

industry and manufacturing skill which for ages had enriched and embellished the Netherlands. Having the command of the sea, the Dutch transported their products to foreign markets, and so laid the foundation of that world-wide commerce which was a source of greater riches to Holland than were the gold and silver mines of Mexico and Peru to Spain.[1]

We have seen the throes and agonies amid which the Dutch Republic came to the birth, and before depicting the prosperity and power in which the State culminated, it is necessary to glance at the condition of the Dutch Church. From and after 1603, dissensions and divisions broke out in it, which tended to weaken somewhat the mighty influences springing out of a free conscience and a pure faith, which were lifting the United Provinces to prosperity and renown. Up till the year we have named, the Church of the Netherlands was strictly Calvinistic, but now a party in it began to diverge from what had been the one common theology of the Reformation.

It is an error to suppose that Calvin held and propagated a doctrine peculiar to himself or different from that of his fellow-Reformers. His theology contained nothing new, being essentially that of the great Fathers of the early Christian Church of the West, and agreeing very closely with that of his illustrious fellow laborers, Luther and Zwingle. Our readers will remember the battles which Luther waged with the champions of Rome in defense of the Pauline teaching under the head of the corruption of man's whole nature, the moral inability of his will, and the absolute sovereignty of God. It was on the same great lines that Calvin's views developed themselves. On the doctrine of Divine sovereignty, for instance, we find both Luther and Zwingle expressing themselves in terms fully stronger than Calvin ever employed. Calvin looked at both sides of the tremendous subject. he maintained the free agency of man not less strenuously than he did God's eternal foreordination. He felt that both were great facts, but he doubted whether it lay within the power of created intelligence to reconcile the two, and he confessed that he was not able to do so. Many, however, have

made this attempt. There have been men who have denied the doctrine of God's eternal fore-ordination, thinking thereby to establish that of man's free agency; and there have been men who have denied the doctrine of man's free agency, meaning thereby to strengthen that of the eternal fore-ordination of all things by God; but these reconcilements are not solutions of this tremendous question -- they are only monuments of man's inability to grapple with it, and of the folly of expending strength and wasting time in such a discussion. Heedless of the warnings of past ages, there arose at this time in the Reformed Church of Holland a class of divines who renewed these discussions, and attempted to solve the awful problem by attacking the common theology of Luther, and Zwingle, and Calvin [2] on the doctrines of grace and of the eternal decrees.

The controversy had its beginning thus: the famous Francis Junius, Professor of Divinity at Leyden, died of the plague in 1602; and James Arminius, who had studied theology at Geneva under Beza, and was pastor at Amsterdam, was

appointed to succeed him [3] Arminius was opposed by many ministers of the Dutch Church, on the ground that, although he was accounted learned, eloquent, and pious, he was suspected of holding views inconsistent with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, which since 1570 had possessed authority in the Church. Promulgating his views cautiously and covertly from his chair, a controversy ensued between him and his learned colleague, Gomarus.

Arminius rested God's predestination of men to eternal life on his foresight of their piety and virtue; Gomarus, on the other hand, taught that these were not the causes, but the fruits of God's election of them to life eternal. Arminius accused Gomarus of instilling the belief of a fatal necessity, and Gomarus reproached Arminius with making man the author of his own salvation. The controversy between the two lasted till the death of Arminius, which took place in 1609. He died in the full hope of everlasting life. He is said to have chosen for his motto, *Bona conscientia Paradisus* [4]

After his death, his disciple Simon Episcopius became the head of the party, and, as usually happens in such cases, gave fuller development to the views of his master than Arminius himself had done. From the university, the controversy passed to the pulpit, and the Church was divided. In 1610 the followers of Arminius presented a Remonstrance to the States of Holland, complaining of being falsely accused of seeking to alter the faith, but at the same time craving revision of the standard books of the Dutch Church -- the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism-- and demanding toleration for their views, of which they gave a summary or exhibition in five points, as follow --

1. That the decree of election is grounded on foreseen good works.

2. That Christ died for all men, and procured remission of sins for all.

3. That man cannot acquire saving faith of

himself, or by the strength of his free-will, but needs for that purpose the grace of God.

4. That, seeing man cannot believe at first, nor continue to believe, without the aid of this co-operating grace, his good works are to be ascribed to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

5. That the faithful have a sufficient strength, through the Divine grace, to resist all temptation, and finally to overcome it.

As to the question whether those who have once believed to the saving of the soul can again fall away from faith, and lose the grace of God, the authors of the Remonstrance were not prepared to give any answer. It was a point, they said, that needed further examination; but the logical train of the previous propositions clearly pointed to the goal at which their views touching the "perseverance of the saints" must necessarily arrive; and accordingly, at a subsequent stage of the controversy, they declared, "That those who have a true faith may, nevertheless, fall by their

own fault, and lose faith wholly and for ever."[5]

It is the first receding wave within the Protestant Church which we are now contemplating, and it is both instructive and curious to mark that the ebb from the Reformation began at what had been the starting-point of the Reform movement. We have remarked, at an early stage of our history, that the question touching the Will of man is the deepest in theology. Has the Fall left to man the power of willing and doing what is spiritually good? or has it deprived him of that power, and inflicted upon his will a moral inability? If we answer the first question affirmatively, and maintain that man still retains the power of willing and doing what is spiritually good, we advance a proposition from which, it might be argued, a whole system of Roman theology can be worked out. And if we answer the second question affirmatively, we lay a foundation from which, it might be contended on the other hand, a whole system of Protestant theology can be educed. Pursuing the one line of reasoning, if man still has the power of willing and doing actions

spiritually good, he needs only cooperating grace in the matter of his salvation; he needs only to be assisted in the more difficult parts of that work which he himself has begun, and which, mainly in the exercise of his own powers, he himself carries on to the end. Hence the doctrine of good works, with all the dogmas, rites, penances, and merits that Rome has built upon it. But, following the other line of reasoning, if man, by his fall, lost the power of doing what is spiritually good, then he must be entirely dependent upon Divine grace for his recovery -- he must owe all to God, from whom must come the beginning, the continuance, and the end of his salvation; and hence the doctrines of a sovereign election, an effectual calling, a free justification, and a perseverance to life eternal. The point, to an ordinary eye, seems an obscure one -- it looks a purely speculative point, and one from which no practical issues of moment can flow; nevertheless, it lies at the foundation of all theology, and as such it was the first great battleground at the period of the Reformation. It was the question so keenly contested, as we have already narrated, between Dr. Eck on the one side, and

Carlstadt and Luther on the other, at Leipsic.[6] This question is, in fact, the dividing line between the two theologies.

Of the five points stated above, the third, fourth, and fifth may be viewed as one; they teach the same doctrine -- namely, that man fallen still possesses such an amount of spiritual strength as that he may do no inconsiderable part of the work of his salvation, and needs only cooperating grace; and had the authors of the Remonstrance been at Leipsic, they must have ranged themselves on the side of Eck, and done battle for the; Roman theology. It was this which gave the affair its grave aspect in the eyes of the majority of the pastors of the Church of Holland. They saw in the doctrine of the "Five Points" the ground surrendered which had been won at the beginning of the Reformation; and they saw seed anew deposited from which had sprung the great tree of Romanism.

This was not concealed on either side. The Remonstrants--so called from the Remonstrance given in by them to the States -- put forward their

views avowedly as intermediate between the Protestant and Roman systems, in the hope that they might conciliate not a few members of the latter Church, and lead to peace. The orthodox party could not see that these benefits would flow from the course their opponents were pursuing; on the contrary, they believed that they could not stop where they were -- that their views touching the fall and the power of free-will must and would find their logical development in a greater divergence from the theology of the Protestant Churches, and that by removing the great boundary-line between the two theologies, they were opening the way for a return to the Church of Rome; and hence the exclamation of Gomarus one day, after listening to a statement of his views by Arminius, in the University of Leyden. Rising up and leaving the hall, he uttered these words: "Henceforward we shall no longer be able to oppose Popery." [7]

Peace was the final goal which the Remonstrants sought to reach; but the first-fruits of their labors were schisms and dissensions. The magistrates, sensible of the injury they were doing

the State, strove to put an end to these ecclesiastical wars, and with this view they summoned certain pastors of both sides before them, and made them discuss the points at issue in their presence; but these conferences had no effect in restoring harmony. A disputation, of this sort took place at the Hague in 1611, but like all that had gone before it, it failed to reconcile the two parties and establish concord. The orthodox pastors now began to demand the assembling of a National Synod, as a more legitimate and competent tribunal for the examination and decision of such matters, and a more likely way of putting an end to the dissensions that prevailed; but the Remonstrant clergy opposed this proposal. They had influence enough with the civil authorities to prevent the calling of a Synod for several years; but the war waxing louder and fiercer every day, the States-General at last convoked a National Synod to meet in November, 1618, at Dort.

Than the Synod of Dort there is perhaps no more remarkable Assembly in the annals of the Protestant Church. It is alike famous whether we

regard the numbers, or the learning, or the eloquence of its members. It met at a great crisis, and it was called to review, re-examine, and authenticate over again, in the second generation since the rise of the Reformation, that body of truth and system of doctrine which that great movement had published to the world. The States-General had agreed that the Synod should consist of twenty-six divines of the United Provinces, twenty-eight foreign divines, five theological professors, and sixteen laymen. The sum of 100,000 florins was set apart to defray its estimated expenses. Its sessions lasted six months.

Learned delegates were present in this Assembly from almost all the Reformed Churches of Europe. The Churches of England, Scotland, Switzerland, Geneva, Bremen, Hesse, and the Palatinate were represented in it. The French Church had no delegate in the Synod. That Church had deputed Peter du Moulin and Andrew Rivet, two of the most distinguished theologians of the age, to represent it, but the king forbade their attendance. From England came Dr. George

Carleton, Bishop of Llandaff; Joseph Hall, Dean of Worcester; John Davenant, Professor of Theology and Master of Queen's College, Cambridge; and Samuel Ward, Archdeacon of Taunton, who had been appointed to proceed to Holland and take part in the proceedings at Dort not indeed by the Church of England, but by the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Walter Balcanqual represented Scotland in the Synod.[8]

The Synod was opened on the 16th of November, 1618, with a sermon by Balthazar Lydius, minister of Dort. Thereafter, the members repaired to the hall appointed for their meeting. Lydius offered a prayer in Latin. The commissioners of the States sat on the right of the president, and the English divines on his left. An empty seat was kept for the French deputies. The rest of the delegates took their places according to the rank of the country from which they came. John Bogerman, minister of Leeuwarden, was chosen president; Daniel Heinsius was appointed secretary. Heinsius was an accomplished Latin scholar, and it had been agreed that; that language

should be used in all the transactions of the Assembly, for the sake of the foreign delegates. There came thirty-six ministers and twenty elders, instead of the twenty-six pastors and sixteen laymen which the States-General had appointed, besides deputies from other Provinces, thus swelling the roll of the Synod to upwards of a hundred.

The Synod summoned thirteen of the leading Remonstrants, including Episcopius, to appear within a fortnight. Meanwhile the Assembly occupied itself with arrangements for a new translation of the Bible into Dutch, and the framing of rules about other matters, as the catechising of the young and the training of students for the ministry. On the 5th of December, the thirteen Remonstrants who had been summoned came to Dort, and next day presented themselves before the Assembly. They were saluted by the moderator as "Reverend, famous, and excellent brethren in Jesus Christ," and accommodated with seats at a long table in the middle of the hall. Episcopius, their spokesman, saluting the Assembly, craved more

time, that himself and his brethren might prepare themselves for a conference with the Synod on the disputed points. They were told that they had been summoned not to confer with the Synod, but to submit their opinions for the Synod's decision, and were bidden attend next day.

On that day Episcopius made a speech of an hour and a half's length, in which he discovered all the art and power of an orator. Thereafter an oath was administered to the members of Synod, in which they swore, in all the discussions and determinations of the Synod, to "use no human writing, but only the Word of God, which is an infallible rule of faith," and "only aim at the glory of God, the peace of the Church, and especially the preservation of the purity of doctrine."

The Remonstrants did battle on a great many preliminary points: the jurisdiction of the court, the manner in which they were to lay their opinions before it, and the extent to which they were to be permitted to go in vindicating and defending their five points. In these debates much time was

wasted, and the patience and good temper of the Assembly were severely tried. When it was found that the Remonstrants persisted in declining the authority of the Synod, and would meet it only to discuss and confer with it, but not to be judged by it, the States-General was informed of the deadlock into which the affair had come. The civil authority issued an order requiring the Remonstrants to submit to the Synod. To this order of the State the Remonstrants gave no more obedience than they had done to the authority of the Church. They were willing to argue and defend their opinions, but not to submit them for judgment. After two months spent in fruitless attempts to bring the Remonstrants to obedience, the Assembly resolved to extract their views from their writings and speeches, and give judgment upon them. The examination into their opinions, and the deliberations upon them, engaged the Assembly till the end of April, by which time they had completed a body of canons, that was signed by all the members. The canons, which were read in the Cathedral of Dort with great solemnity, were a summing-up of the doctrine of the Reformation as

it had been held by the first Reformers, and accepted in the Protestant Churches without division or dissent, the article of the Eucharist excepted, until Arminius arose. The decision of the Synod condemned the opinions of the Remonstrants as innovations, and sentenced them to deprivation of all ecclesiastical and academical functions [9] The States-General followed up the spiritual part of the sentence by banishing them from their country. It is clear that the Government of the United Provinces had yet a good deal to learn on the head of toleration; but it is fair to say that while they punished the disciples of Arminius with exile, they would permit no inquisition to be made into their consciences, and no injury to be done to their persons or property. A few years thereafter (1626) the decree of banishment was recalled. The Remonstrants returned to their country, and were permitted freely to exercise their worship. They established a theological seminary at Amsterdam, which was adorned by some men of great talents and erudition, and became a renowned fountain of Arminian theology.

The Synod of Dort was the first great attempt to arrest the begun decline in the theology of the Reformation, and to restore it to its pristine purity and splendor. It did this, but not with a perfect success. The theology of Protestantism, as seen in the canons of Dort, and as seen in the writings of the first Reformers, does not appear' quite the same theology: it is the same in dogma, but it lacks, as seen in the canons of Dort, the warm hues, the freshness, the freedom and breadth, and the stirring spiritual vitalities it possessed as it flowed from the pens, or was thundered from the pulpits, of the Reformers. The second generation of Protestant divines was much inferior, both in intellectual endowments and in spiritual gifts, to the first. In the early days it was the sun of genius that irradiated the heavens of the Church: now it was the moon of culture that was seen in her waning skies. And in proportion to the more restricted faculties of the men, so the theology was narrow, stunted, and cold. It was formal and critical. Turning away somewhat from the grander, objective, soul-inspiring truths of Christianity, it dealt much with the abstruser questions, it searched

into deep and hidden things; it was quicker to discern the apparent antagonisms than the real harmonies between truth and truth; it was prone to look only at one question, or at one side of a question, forgetful of its balancings and modifications, and so was in danger of distorting or even caricaturing truth. The empirical treatment which the doctrine of predestination received -- perhaps we ought to say on both sides -- is an example of this. Instead of the awe and reverence with which a question involving the character and government of God, and the eternal destinies of men, ought ever to inspire those who undertake to deal with a subject so awful, and the solution of which so far transcends the human faculties, it was approached in a proud, self-sufficient, and flippant spirit, that was at once unchristian and unphilosophical. Election and reprobation were singled out, separated from the great and surpassingly solemn subject of which they are only parts, looked at entirely dissociated from their relations to other necessary truths, subjected to an iron logic, and compelled to yield consequences which were impious and revolting. The very

interest taken in these questions marked an age more erudite than religious, and an intellect which had become too subtle to be altogether sound; and the prominence given them, both in the discussions of the schools and the ministrations of the pulpit, reacted on the nation, and was productive of animosities and dissensions.

Nevertheless, these evils were sensibly abated after the meeting of the Synod of Dort. The fountains of truth were again purified, and peace restored to the churches and the schools. The nation, again reunited, resumed its onward march in the path of progress. For half a century the university and the pulpit continued to be mighty powers in Holland the professors and pastors took their place in the first rank of theologians. Abroad the canons of the Synod of Dort met with a very general acquiescence on the part of the Protestant Churches, and continued to regulate the teaching and mould the theology of Christendom. At home the people, imbued with the spirit of the Bible, and impregnate with that love of liberty, and that respect for law, which Protestantism ever

engenders, made their homes bright with virtue and their cities resplendent with art, while their land they taught by their industry and frugality to bloom in beauty and overflow with riches.

Footnotes:

1. Meteren, lib. 4., p. 434.
2. See Calv., Inst., lib. in., cap. 21, 22, etc.
3. Brandt (abridg.), vol. 1., bk. 18., p. 267.
4. Brandt -- "A good conscience is Paradise,"
5. Brandt (abridg.), vol. 10., bk. 19., pp. 307, 308,
6. See ante, vol. 1., bk. 5., chap. 15.
7. Brandt (abridg), vol, 1., bk. 18, p. 285
8. Brandt (abridg.), vol. 2., bk. 23., p, 394.
9. Brandt (abridg.), vol. 2., bks. 23-28., pp. 397-504.

Chapter 30

Grandeur of the United Provinces

WE have narrated the ill success that attended the government of the Earl of Leicester in the Low Countries. These repeated disappointments rebuked the Provinces for looking abroad for defense, and despising the mightier source of strength which existed within themselves; and in due time they came to see that it was not by the arm of any foreign prince that they were to be holden up and made strong, but by the nurturing virtue of that great principle which, rooted in their land by the blood of their martyrs, had at last found for their nation a champion in William of Orange. This principle had laid the foundations of their free Commonwealth, and it alone could give it stability and conduct it to greatness.

Accordingly, after Leicester's departure, at a meeting at the Hague, the 6th of February, 1587,

the States, after asserting their own supreme authority, unanimously chose Prince Maurice as their governor, though still with a reservation to Queen Elizabeth. It was not respect alone for the memory of his great father which induced the States to repose so great a trust, at so momentous a period of their existence, in one who was then only twenty-one years of age. From his earliest youth the prince had given proof of his superior prudence and capacity, and in the execution of his high command he made good the hopes entertained of him when he entered upon it. If he possessed in lower degree than his illustrious sire the faculty of governing men, he was nevertheless superior to him in the military art, and this was the science most needed at this moment by the States. Maurice became the greatest captain of his age: not only was he famous in the discipline of his armies, but his genius, rising above the maxims then in vogue, enabled him to invent or to perfect a system of fortification much more complete, and which soon became common.[1] The marvellous political ability of William, now lost to the States, was supplied in some sort by a school of statesmen that

arose after his death in Holland, and whose patriotic honesty, allied with an uncommon amount of native sagacity and shrewdness, made them a match for the Machiavellian diplomatists with which the age abounded.

Philip II. was at that time getting ready the Armada for the subjugation of England. The Duke of Parma was required to furnish his contingent of the mighty fleet., and while engaged in this labor he was unable to undertake any operation in the Netherlands. Holland had rest, and the military genius of Prince Maurice found as yet no opportunity of displaying itself. But no sooner had Philip's "invincible" Armada vanished in the North Sea, pursued by the English admiral and the tempests of heaven, than Parma made haste to renew the war. He made no acquisition of moment, however the gains of the campaign remained with Prince Maurice; and the power of Spain in the Low Countries began as visibly to sink as that of Holland to rise.

From this time forward blow after blow came

upon that colossal fabric which for so long a period had not only darkened the Netherlands, but had overshadowed all Christendom. The root of the Spanish Power was dried up, and its branch began to wither. Philip, aiming to be the master of the world, plunged into a multitude of schemes which drained his resources, and at length broke in pieces that mighty empire of which he was the monarch. As his years grew his projects multiplied, till at last he found himself warring with the Turks, the Morescoes, the Portuguese, the French, the English, and the Netherlanders. The latter little country he would most certainly have subdued, had his ambition permitted him to concentrate his power in the attempt to crush it. Happily for the Low Countries, Philip was never able to do this. And now another dream misled him -- the hope of seizing the crown of France for himself or his daughter,[2] Clara Eugenia, during the troublous times that followed the accession of Henry of Navarre. In this hope he ordered Parma to withdraw the Spanish troops from the Netherlands, and help the League to conquer Henry IV. Parma remonstrated against the madness of the scheme,

and the danger of taking away the army out of the country; but Philip, blinded by his ambition, refused to listen to the prudent counsels of his general. The folly of the King of Spain gave a breathing-space to the young Republic, and enabled its governor, Prince Maurice, to display that resource, prudence, and promptitude which gained him the confidence and esteem of his subjects, and which, shining forth yet more brilliantly in future campaigns, won for him the admiration of Europe.

When Parma returned from France (1590) he found Holland greatly stronger than he had left it: its frontier was now fortified; several towns beyond the boundary of the United Provinces had been seized by their army; and Parma, with a treasury drained by his campaign, and soldiers mutinous because ill-paid, had to undertake the work of recovering what had been lost. The campaign now opened was a disastrous one both for himself and for Spain. After many battles and sieges he found that the Spanish Power had been compelled to retreat before the arms of the infant Republic, and

that his own prestige as a soldier had been eclipsed by the renown of his opponent, acquired by the prudence with which his enterprises had been concerted, the celerity with which they had been executed, and the success with which they had been crowned. The Duke of Parma was a second time ordered into France to assist the League, and pave Philip's way for mounting the throne of that country; and foolish though he deemed the order, he had nevertheless to obey it. He returned broken in health, only to find that in his absence the Spanish Power had sustained new losses, that the United Provinces had acquired additional strength, and that Prince Maurice had surrounded his name with a brighter glory than ever. In short, the affairs of Spain in the Low Countries he perceived were becoming hopeless. Worn out with cares, eaten up with vexation and chagrin, and compelled the while to strain every nerve in the execution of projects which his judgment condemned as chimerical and ruinous, his sickness increased, and on the 3rd of December, 1592, he expired in the forty-seventh year of his age, and the fourteenth of his government of the Netherlands. "With the Duke

of Parma," says Sir William Temple, "died all the discipline, and with that all the fortunes, of the Spanish arms in Flanders." [3]

There now opened to the United Provinces a career of prosperity that was as uniform and uninterrupted as their previous period of distress and calamity had been continuous and unbroken. The success that attended the arms of Prince Maurice, the vigour with which he extended the dominions of the Republic, the prudence and wisdom with which he administered affairs at home, the truce with Spain, the League with Henry IV. of France, and the various circumstances and methods by which the prince, and the upright and wise counsellors that surrounded him, advanced the credit and power of the United Provinces, belong to the civil history of the country, and hardly come within the scope of our special design. But the mighty growth of the United Provinces, which was the direct product of Protestantism, is one of the finest proofs which history furnishes of the spirit and power of the Reformation, and affords a lesson that the ages to come will not fail to study, and an

example that they will take care to imitate.

On the face of all the earth there is not another such instance of a nation for whom nature had done literally nothing, and who had all to create from their soil upwards, attaining such a pitch of greatness. The Dutch received at the beginning but a sand-bank for a country. Their patience and laborious skill covered it with verdure, and adorned it with cities. Their trade was as truly their own creation as their soil. The narrow limits of their land did not furnish them with the materials of their manufactures; these they had to import from abroad, and having worked them up into beautiful fabrics, they carried them back to the countries whence they had obtained the raw materials. Thus their land became the magazine of the world. Notwithstanding that their country was washed:, and not unfrequently inundated, by the ocean, nature had not given them harbors; these, too, they had to create. Their scanty territory led them to make the sea their country; and their wars with Spain compelled them to make it still more their home. They had an infinity of ships and sailors.

They sent their merchant fleet over every sea -- to the fertile islands of the West, to the rich continents of the East. They erected forts on promontories and creeks, and their settlements were dispersed throughout the world. They formed commercial treaties and political alliances with the most powerful nations. The various wealth that was wafted to their shores was ever greater than that which had flowed in on Spain after the discovery of the mines of Mexico and Peru. Their land, which yielded little besides milk and butter, overflowed with the necessaries and luxuries of all the earth. The wheat, and wine, and oil of Southern Europe; the gold and silver of Mexico; the spices and diamonds of the East; the furs of Northern Europe; silk, cotton, precious woods, and marbles -- everything, in short, which the earth produces, and which can contribute to clothe the person, adorn the dwelling, supply the table, and enhance the comfort of man, was gathered into Holland. And while every wind and tide were bringing to their shores the raw materials, the persecutions which raged in other countries were daily sending crowds of skillful and industrious men to work them up.

And with every increase of their population came a new expansion of their trade, and by consequence a new access to the wealth that flowed from it.

With the rapid growth of material riches, their respect for learning, their taste for intellectual pursuits, and their love of independence still continued with them. They were plain and frugal in habit, although refined and generous in disposition. The sciences were cultivated, and their universities flourished. To be learned or eloquent inferred as great eminence in that country as to be rich or high-born did in others. All this had come out of their great struggle for the Protestant faith.

And, as if to make the lesson still plainer and more striking, by the side of this little State, so illustrious for its virtue, so rich in all good things, and so powerful among the nations of the world, were seen those unhappy Provinces which had retreated within the pale of Rome, and submitted to the yoke of Philip. They were fallen into a condition of poverty and slavery which was as complete as it was deplorable, and which, but a few

years before, any one who had seen how populous, industrious, and opulent they were, would have deemed impossible. Commerce, trade, nay, even daily bread, had fled from that so recently prosperous land. Bankers, merchants, farmers, artisans -- all were sunk in one great ruin. Antwerp, the emporium of the commerce of Europe, with its river closed, and its harbor and wharves forsaken, was reduced to beggary. The looms and forges of Ghent, Bruges, and Namur were idle. The streets, trodden erewhile by armies of workmen, were covered with grass; fair mansions were occupied by paupers; the fields were falling out of cultivation; the farm-houses were sinking into ruins; and, in the absence of men, the beasts of the field were strangely multiplying. To these evils were added the scourge of a mutinous soldiery, and the incessant rapacious demands of Philip for money, not knowing, or not caring to know, into what a plight of misery and penury his tyranny had already sunk them. Spain itself, towards the close of the nineteenth century, is still as great a wreck; but it required three hundred years for despotism and Popery to ripen their fruits in the Iberian

Peninsula, whereas in the Southern Netherlands their work was consummated in a very few years.

We turn once more to their northern sister. The era of the flourishing of the United Provinces was from 1579, when the Union of Utrecht was formed, till 1672 that is, ninety-three years. In the year 1666 we find Holland and her sister States at the acme of their prosperity. They are populous in men; they have a revenue of 40,000,000 florins; they possess a land army of 60,000 men, a fleet of above 100 men-of-war, a countless mercantile navy, a world-wide commerce, and, not content with being one of the great Powers of Europe, they are contesting with England the supremacy of the seas.[4] It is hardly possible not to ask what led to the decline and fall of so great a Power? Sir William Temple, who had studied with the breadth of a statesman, and the insight of a philosopher, both the rise and the fall of the United Provinces, lays their decay at the door of the Arminian controversy, which had parted the nation in two.

At least, this he makes the primary cause, and

the one first led on to others. The Prince of Orange or Calvinist faction, he tells us, contended for the purity of the faith, and the Arminian faction for the liberties of the nation; and so far this was true, but the historian forgets to say that the contest for the purity of the faith covered the nation's liberties as well, and when the sacred fire which had kindled the conflict for liberty was permitted to go out, the flame of freedom sunk down, the nation's heart waxed cold, and its hands grew feeble in defense of its independence. The decay of Holland became marked from the time the Arminian party gained the ascendancy.[5] But though the nation decayed, the line of William of Orange, the great founder of its liberties, continued to flourish. The motto of Prince Maurice, *Tandem fit surculus arbor* ("The twig will yet become a tree"), was made good in a higher sense than he had dreamed, for the epics of history are grander than those of fiction, and the Stadtholder of Holland, in due time, mounted the throne of Great Britain.

Footnotes:

1. Muller, Universal History, 3. P. 67. Sir Willam Temple, United Provinces, chap, 1., p. 48; Eidn., 1747.
2. Muller, 3. 68.
3. The United Provinces, chap. 1., p. 49.
4. Sir William Temple, chap. 7, p. 174.
5. Sir William Temple. Compare chap. 1., p. 59, with chap. 8., p. 179.